Women in Khaki & Prision Administration – The Challenges

What is the issue?

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- Percentage of women in police service in general & prison management in particular has steadily been raising over the years.
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- While this is a healthy trend, there are also numerous challenges.
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What are the wider implications of more women in policing?

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- A larger percentage of women will increase the accessibility of the police to women.
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- Women police are being involved almost all kinds of policing duties like regulating traffic, managing control rooms, PCR vans.
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- In some cases they also conduct night rounds and investigating serious crimes and supervise large bandobasts.
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- All this would have a large psychological impact that potentially would push the debate on women empowerment to a higher track.
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How have women police personals been placed with prisons?

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- **Numbers -** Their presence in prisons is gradually increasing.
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- From being wardens to jailers and deputies, women handle sensitive duties from managing prison gates, barracks, peripheral and internal security to

sending inmates to courts.
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- Many states like Maharashtra now have 33% reservation for women in prison administration.
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- Their increased number means that they are assigned duties in male prisons too.
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- **Their Assimilation -** Most prison superintendents are however apprehensive of having women staff.
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- Prison staff are steeped in a male-dominated culture that has developed over time.
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- The security of prisons and counting of prisoners is thought to be their main occupation.
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- All this, compounded by the belief that prisons are places for criminals that pose an inherent threat to the society makes it an uphill task for women to assimilate into.
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What has been the status of training programs?

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- **Overall Issue -** The Bureau of Police Research and Development has been tasked to revise the existing syllabi for the training of prison officers/staff – an area that has been long overdue.
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- After basic training during induction, there is hardly any in-service training currently.
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- Training at regular intervals, linking it with promotions and updating technical knowledge deserve the attention of all state.
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- **Prision Administration -** There is a strong need for their reorientational training towards correctional administration.
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- Prison staff need to veer towards an attitude of reformation and rehabilitation shifting focus from the current punitive attitude.
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What are other issues concerning prision administration?

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- Prisons in most metros and district headquarters are over crowded.
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- This is bound to have an adverse effects on the hygiene and health of prisoners and the staff on duty, that is visible now.
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- As security risks in such cases is also enormous, relieving even one staff member for in-service training appears to be a luxury.
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- Thus, besides regular training, filling the around 34% vacancies in prisons currently needs immediate attention.
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How can women specific issues be addressed?

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- Prison administration needs to get its officers and staff in sync with the culture of gender equality, respect and cooperation.
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- Women come with their certain specific strengths that is usually found to be lacking in men and this needs to be harnessed.
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- Notably, they are intuitively found to herald a shift in favour of a correctional administration instead of the traditional punitive mindset which is a big plus with regard to prisions.
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- Women officers working in the pathetic prison conditions have the extra burden of traditional family responsibilities their problems need to be studied further and acted upon.
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- A continued dialogue about problems and possible solutions can greatly help women in prison administration reach their potential.
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Source: Indian Express

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