



Women in Military

Why in News

Two women officers have been selected to undergo helicopter pilot training for the first time in the Army Aviation Corps. They will join **front-line flying duties** on completion of their training in July 2022.

- Till now, women officers were assigned **only ground duties** in the Army Aviation Corps.

Army Aviation Corps

- Raised in November 1986, it operates the [Dhruv advanced light helicopter](#), **Chetaks, Cheetahs and Cheetal helicopters**.
- It carries out an **important role** in supporting the **army's deployment** in **high altitude areas**, including the [Siachen Glacier](#).

Key Points

▪ Deployment in the Armed Forces:

- The **Army, Air Force and Navy** began inducting women as **short-service commission (SSC)** officers in **1992**.
 - This was the **first time** when women were allowed to join the military outside the **medical stream**.
- One of the **turning points for women in the military** came in **2015** when **Indian Air Force (IAF)** decided to **induct them into the fighter stream**.
- In 2020, the [Supreme Court \(SC\)](#) ordered the central government to grant [permanent commission \(PC\)](#) to women officers in the **Army's non-combat support units** on par with their male counterparts.
 - The SC had rejected the government's stand of women officers' **physiological limitations** as being based on "**sex stereotypes**" and "**gender discrimination against women**".
 - Women officers have been **granted PC in the Indian Army in all the ten branches where women are inducted for SSC**.
 - Women are now eligible to occupy all the **command appointments**, at par with male officers, which would open avenues for further promotions to higher ranks for them.
- In early 2021, the **Indian Navy** deployed **four women officers** on **warships** after a gap of almost 25 years.
 - India's only aircraft carrier **INS Vikramaditya** and fleet tanker **INS Shakti** are the warships that have been assigned their first women crews since the late 1990s.
- In **May 2021**, the **Army** inducted the **first batch of women** into the **Corps of Military**

Police, the first time that women joined the military in the non-officer cadre.

- However, Women are still **not allowed in combat arms** like **Infantry and Armored Corps**.

▪ **Increment in Numbers:**

- It has increased almost **three-fold over the last six years**, with more avenues being opened to them at a steady pace.
- There are **9,118 women** currently serving the **army, navy and air force**.
- According to **2019 figures**, women comprise **only 3.8%** of the world's second-largest army - compared to **13% of the air force** and **6% of the navy**.

▪ **Significance:**

- **Gender is not a Hindrance:** As long as an applicant is qualified for a position, one's gender is arbitrary. In modern high technology battlefield technical expertise and decision-making skills are increasingly more valuable than simple brute strength.
- **Military Readiness:** Allowing a **mixed gender force** keeps the military strong. The armed forces are severely troubled by **falling retention and recruitment rates**. This can be addressed by allowing women in the combat role.
- **Effectiveness:** The blanket restriction for women **limits the ability of commanders** in theater to pick the most capable person for the job.
- **Tradition:** Training will be required to facilitate the integration of women into combat units. Cultures change over time and the masculine subculture can evolve too.
- **Global Scenario:** When **women officially became eligible for combat positions in the American military in 2013**, it was widely hailed as another step towards the equality of sexes. In 2018, the **UK** military lifted a ban on women serving in close combat ground roles, **clearing the way for them to serve in elite special forces**.

Way Forward

- Women were being kept out of **command posts** on the reasoning that the largely rank and file will have problems with women as commanding officers. Thus, changes have to take place in the **culture, norms, and values** of not only the rank and file of the Army but also that of society at large. The responsibility to usher these changes lies with the senior military and political leadership.
- The **United States, Israel, North Korea, France, Germany, Netherlands, Australia and Canada** are among the global militaries that employ women in **front-line combat positions**.
- It is the **right of every woman** to pursue a career of her choice and reach the top since **Equality is a constitutional guarantee**.

[Source: TH](#)

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