



Women Get Command Roles in The Indian Army

For Prelims: Gender Equality, Indian Army, Inclusivity.

For Mains: Significance of roles of women in the army as per society and national security is concern.

Why in News?

Recently, in a **significant development** the [Indian Army](#) cleared the **108 women officers** eligible to command units and troops in their respective arms and services for the first time.

- This would be a major step forward in terms of [gender equality](#).
- This decision will also **encourage more women** to join the **Indian Army** and will help to promote **diversity** and [inclusivity](#) within the organization.

What did the Supreme Court Order in 2020?

- In **2019**, the Army changed its rules allowing **Short Service Commission (SSC) officers women officers** to opt for **permanent commission** who would have otherwise retired after **14 years of service**.
- However, **this was not retrospective**, and applied only to the batches of women officers starting their career in the Army in **2020**.
- With the landmark **Supreme Court judgment of 2020, permanent commission was granted to women officers with retrospective effect**.
 - This opened the doors for their further growth and promotions in the Army, which has been of late opening leadership and higher management courses for women.

Why did their Colonel Promotions Come so Late?

- An officer in the Army is promoted to the rank of Colonel only after serving between **16 and 18 years**, based on certain **criteria** such as **annual confidential reports** and various courses.
- Women officers who were inducted into the Army were inducted as **SSC officers in 1992** and in the years after did not have the choice to opt for permanent commission.
- **JAG and Army Education Corps** were exceptions, where a permanent commission was opened for them in **2008**.
- For other **arms and services**, women could not become permanent cadres, and had to retire much before they completed the service period that is mandatory to become a Colonel.

What Does Commanding a Unit Mean?

- Once promoted to the rank of Colonel, an officer is **eligible to command troops dire**
- The **position of Colonel** is considered a **coveted appointment** because it is a **high-ranking position** within the military, but it also allows the officer to **interact directly with troops** on the ground.
- This interaction allows the **Colonel** to have a more hands-on approach to **leadership and**

decision making, which is a unique opportunity not found in **higher-ranking positions** like **Brigadier** or **Major General**.

What are the different Army Domains where Women are not Allowed to Work?

- Women are still not eligible in core combat arms such as **Infantry, Mechanized Infantry** and **Armored Corps** as Army is not open to **women fighting wars** at the borders as foot soldiers. Much of this resistance stems from past instances of **male soldiers** being taken as **prisoners of war** and tortured by the enemy.
- However, the Army has recently decided to **open the Corps of Artillery**, a combat support arm, to women.

What About the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF)?

- Women officers have been **inducted into all branches of the Navy**, and they will be eligible for permanent commission in the future.
- Women officers **can command shore-based units** and, as they join the service and become eligible for permanent commission, they would be able to command ships and air squadrons.
- The **IAF has opened all branches for women officers**, including the fighter stream and the new weapon systems branch.
- As they are granted permanent commission based on eligibility and vacancies, **they will be eligible to command units in the future.**

Which Other Armies Allow Women to hold Command Positions?

- All major countries, including the **United States, United Kingdom, Russia**, and **Israel**, allow women to hold **command positions** within their **national armed forces**. This includes positions such as **officers** and **non-commissioned officers**, as well as roles in **combat units** and **special forces**.

Way Forward

- The Indian Army should provide training and support for women who are in command roles, to ensure that they are able to lead effectively.
- The Indian Army should also actively encourage and recruit more women to join the military, so that there is a larger pool of qualified women who can hold command roles.
- The Indian Army should work to change the culture of the military to be more inclusive of women and to address any biases that may exist.
- The Indian Army should also work to provide better facilities and support for women soldiers like child care, maternity leave and other needs that are specific to women.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. “Though women in post-Independent India have excelled in various fields, the social attitude towards women and feminist movement has been patriarchal.” Apart from women education and women empowerment schemes, what interventions can help change this milieu? **(2021)**

Source: IE

