

## Empowering Women in India's Armed Forces - Milestones at Siachen and INS Trinkat

In a historic stride towards gender inclusivity, the Indian Armed Forces have achieved significant milestones with the deployment of women officers in challenging environments. Captain Geetika Koul, a woman army doctor, has made history as the first woman medical officer of the Indian Army to be deployed at Siachen, the world's highest battlefield. This remarkable achievement follows Captain Shiva Chouhan's deployment at the same location almost a year ago. Concurrently, Lieutenant Commander Perna Deosthalee's command appointment at INS Trinkat adds another chapter to the evolving landscape of women's roles in India's armed forces.



(Source: The Assam Tribune)

## Landmark Deployments at Siachen

### Captain Geetika Koul Breaks the Glass Ceiling

- Captain Geetika Koul's deployment at Siachen marks a groundbreaking moment for gender inclusivity in the Indian Army.
- Successful completion of rigorous training at Siachen Battle School showcases the physical and mental resilience required for high-altitude warfare.

### Captain Shiva Chouhan's Precedent



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- Captain Shiva Chouhan's deployment in January 2023 set the stage for Captain Geetika Koul, breaking barriers in the traditionally male-dominated arena of high-altitude warfare.
- Increasing opportunities for women in challenging environments underscore the commitment to recognizing and leveraging the capabilities of women officers.



(Source: LatestLY)

## Challenges and Achievements at Siachen

Siachen Glacier, strategically controlled by India but claimed by Pakistan, poses severe challenges with temperatures dropping to -45 degrees Celsius. Statistics reveal sacrifices made by Indian Army personnel, with 869 lives lost between 1984 and 2015, primarily attributed to the extreme climate and environment.

## Connectivity Initiatives at Siachen

- A recent development includes the establishment of the first-ever BSNL base transceiver station (BTS) on the Siachen Glacier, enabling soldiers to connect with their families and enhancing communication in this remote region.
- This technological advancement not only facilitates communication but also highlights the commitment to the well-being of the troops stationed in this challenging terrain.



## Siachen's Environmental Challenges

- Siachen's strategic significance is matched only by its harsh environmental conditions, with extreme cold and high altitudes taking a toll on both equipment and personnel.
- The deployment of Captain Geetika Koul emphasizes the resilience required to navigate and operate effectively in this challenging theater of operations.

## Central Roles for Women in Uniform



(Source: The Statesman)

## Evolution of Gender Equality

- Women in India's armed forces are actively assuming central positions on par with their male counterparts, challenging traditional norms.
- From flying fighter planes to serving on warships and taking on command roles, women contribute significantly to diverse military roles.

## Historical Shift in Siachen

- The deployment of women officers like Captain Geetika Koul at Siachen reflects a significant shift, showcasing that women can excel in extreme weather conditions and challenging terrains.
- Captain Shiva Chouhan's deployment set a precedent, challenging the notion of high-altitude warfare being exclusively male-dominated.

## Prime Minister Modi's Emphasis on Women's Contribution

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on strengthening "Nari Shakti" within the armed forces highlights the government's commitment to gender equality.
- Recognition and celebration of Lieutenant Commander Purna Deosthalee's command appointment at INS Trinkat showcase the value placed on women's contributions.

## Navy's Progressive Step

- Lieutenant Commander Purna Deosthalee's appointment as a commanding officer at INS Trinkat is a milestone in providing equal opportunities for women in leadership roles traditionally held by men.
- The Navy's progressive approach aligns with broader societal shifts towards recognizing and utilizing the talent and capabilities of women officers.

## Expanding Horizons: Women in Permanent Commission and NDA Training

### Long-Term Career Prospects

- The transformation is not confined to operational roles alone; women officers are now eligible for permanent commission, indicating a shift towards long-term career prospects.
- This policy change demonstrates a commitment to providing equal opportunities for women to build successful and enduring careers in the armed forces.

### Breaking Gender Barriers at NDA

- Women undergoing training at the National Defence Academy (NDA) is a groundbreaking development, breaking gender barriers in a traditionally male-only institution.
- The inclusion of women in NDA signifies a broader commitment to fostering gender diversity from the earliest stages of military training.

## Siachen: A Testing Ground for Women's Resilience

The induction training at Siachen Battle School is an intense test of physical and mental endurance, covering high-altitude acclimatization, survival tactics, and specialized medical procedures. Captain Geetika Koul's successful completion of this challenging training reflects the expanding opportunities for women in demanding and harsh conditions.

## Siachen Warriors' Sacrifices

1. Siachen Warriors, in collaboration with BSNL, established the first-ever BTS on Siachen Glacier, underlining the commitment to providing better connectivity and communication for soldiers deployed at extreme altitudes.
2. This initiative not only enhances communication but also pays homage to the sacrifices made by soldiers, bringing attention to the human side of the challenges faced in such extreme environments.

Beyond their symbolic significance, these achievements carry profound implications for future generations of women aspiring to serve in the armed forces. Captain Geetika Koul's success at Siachen, a battlefield renowned for its extreme conditions, sends a powerful message – women are not just capable, but indispensable contributors to all facets of military operations. Her deployment is a testament to the adaptability, resilience, and professionalism displayed by women in uniform.

Lieutenant Commander Purna Deosthalee's appointment as a commanding officer at INS Trinkat reflects a sea change in naval operations, challenging stereotypes and biases. Her leadership serves as an inspiration, demonstrating that gender is not a hindrance to assuming critical roles in the defense apparatus.

As these women break barriers, their stories resonate beyond the military, influencing societal perceptions and reinforcing the idea that gender should never be a barrier to pursuing one's passion and capabilities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on "Nari Shakti" gains tangible expression in these groundbreaking appointments, fostering a cultural shift that aligns with the evolving nature of India's armed forces.

In conclusion, Captain Geetika Koul and Lieutenant Commander Purna Deosthalee stand as trailblazers, paving the way for a more inclusive and formidable armed forces. Their achievements mark not just personal victories but signify a collective triumph for a nation progressing towards gender equality in every facet of life. As the Indian Armed Forces continue to evolve, these milestones serve as beacons, guiding the path towards a military that truly reflects the diversity and strength of the nation it serves.

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