

Women Permanent Commission

March 13, 2020

Source: *The Hindu*

Manifest pedagogy: Supreme court has ensured that the SSC women officers get their overdue of getting permanent commission. Its background and the verdict have to be studied. One more awaited reform is getting the women officers into combat role. One needs to form an opinion about it.

In news: Supreme Court has declared that Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers are eligible for permanent commission.

Placing it in syllabus: Military reforms (explicitly mentioned)

Static dimensions: Background of the issue

Current dimensions: SC judgment on permanent commission

Content:

Background of the issue:

- In **2010, Delhi High Court** had held that *women Short Service Commission(SSC) officers in Indian Army and Air Force should be awarded permanent commission at par with male SSC officers.*
- The defence ministry had contested this ruling.
- In **February 2019, the Centre had issued a notification** in this regard where it allowed **permanent commission to SSC women officers of Indian Army.**
- The central government's proposal was that **SSC women officers with upto 14 years of service** were considered for permanent commission.
- Whereas, women officers with **more than 14 years of service would only be allowed to serve upto 20 years**

without being considered for permanent commission after which they were released with retirement benefits.

- The **note had shown women officers in a poor light**, and they would have to heed to the call of pregnancy, childbirth and family.
- It had stated that **women are physiologically weaker than men** and women ran the risk of capture by enemy and taken prisoner of war.
- In September 2019, the Centre issued a policy statement that **extended Permanent Commission to women officers in eight streams**.
- These eight streams were – *Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Army Air Defence, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Army Service Corps, Army Ordnance Corps and Intelligence*.
- This was **apart from the existing two streams of Judge Advocate General (JAG) and Army Education Corps (AEC)**.
- So, permanent commission **is now open in 10 departments**.

SC judgment on permanent commission:

- The SC has declared that **SSC women officers are eligible for permanent commission and command posts in the Army irrespective of their years of service**.
- The verdict came on the appeal filed by the government against the March 12, 2010 decision of the Delhi High Court.
- The **court dismissed the government's stand that only women officers with less than 14 years of service ought to be considered for permanent commission**, and those with over 20 years service should be pensioned immediately.
- **Applying the judgment retrospectively**, the court declared that all serving women officers would be eligible for permanent commission.
- The court found the **remarks in the centre's note as constitutionally invalid and discriminatory**, thus

affecting the dignity of women officers.

- It countered the centre's remarks by stating that **30% of women officers were deputed in conflict zones.**
- The SC bench has quoted that the members of the Indian Army – both men and women, serve as equal citizens in a common mission and **women officers in the Army are not adjuncts to a male dominated establishment.**
- However, the bench has held that **this judgement will not be applicable to the combat roles.**
- It has ordered the government to **implement its judgment in three months.**