

Manjari Jaruhar's *Madam Sir. The Story of Bihar's First Woman IPS Officer*

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Madam Sir: The Story of Bihar's First Lady IPS Officer

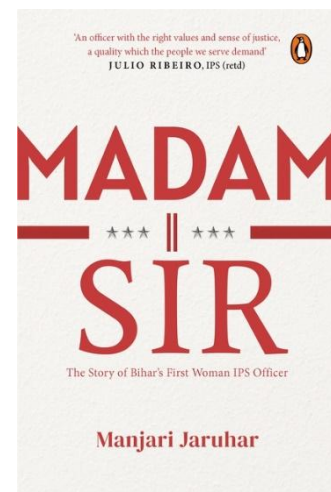
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The autobiography is as much about the individual as about the social; the social is a paradoxical product and producer of human life- there is a continuous and contagious relationship between autobiography and history, self and the other, individual and collective.¹ Robert K Merton talks about 'sociological autobiography':

The sociological autobiography utilises sociological perspectives, ideas, concepts and findings, and the analytical procedures to construct and interpret a narrative text that purports to tell one's own history within the larger history of one's times. Autobiographies are the ultimate participants in a dual participant -observer role, having privileged access in some cases, monopolistic access -to their own inner experience.²

In recent times a few such autobiographies have been written by women in police services in India. The most famous book being *I Dare!* by Kiran Bedi. The book traces her journey as a police officer confronting challenges from political masters, and bureaucratic hierarchies. The book traces the growth of the 'self' -as she embarked on a professional journey with the social deviants such as drug addicts, substance abusers, and prisoners. Her exposure and experiences in United Nations as a civilian police advisor helped her not only expand her territory of work but also lead to an 'inner' spiritual growth. Meeran Chadha Borwarkar's book *Leaves of Life* is a story of a small-town Punjabi girl cracking UPSC examination and negotiating in a male dominated police department. The book is interesting as it is full of real-life anecdotes from her career.

The latest book in the academic/ police orchid of autobiographies is Manjari Jaruhar's *Madam Sir. The Story of Bihar's First Woman IPS Officer*. The book vividly describes her struggle to establish herself in police force/ service, a male bastion even in the twenty-first century. The book reveals how during the initial phase of her career she often got branded as 'lady' officer by her male colleagues. The 'dilemma' of male officers who would

worry of what to do with a 'lady officer'. The book explores how in every step of her professional life she had to 'prove' her mettle. The book reveals how she tried to maintain a balance between her private and public sphere.

The 'masculine' image of woman police officer such as Dr. Kiran Bedi was etched in the mind of the civil society. However, Manjari Jaruhar differentiated her professional and personal space through her police uniform and civil feminine attire during social functions respectively. She added a feminine touch in her work performance, when required in police service. All through her career she remained a non-partisan, gender neutral yet humane. The book explores how she used her leadership qualities to improve the life of common citizens in her jurisdiction. The book gives us a socio-political and cultural history of the late twentieth century Bihar as well as India. Each of her unique experiences are collective experiences of women officers in police fraternity.

There has been plethora of autobiographies written by both male and female police officers after retirement valorising their deeds, pointing to the structural functional deficiencies of the police as an institution and organisation. However, what makes the book different is that of her human qualities...which gets revealed time and again through measures she adapted for the subalterns in police hierarchy- the widows of men in uniform. The last chapter reflects Manjari's persona as a 'humane' police officer. Being in elite Indian Police Service she acknowledges the role of a barely literate Tribal Christian woman Agnes, the caregiver in her family. She writes that Agnes was the backbone of her professional life. She writes, 'if my uniform gave me status, Agnes gave me freedom to wear-there is not a single day that I don't think of Agnes with gratitude or miss her presence in our family'. To acknowledge Agnes in her career makes 'her' a realistic and humane person. The Epilogue reflects the universal emotion- a reflection of relationship between a mother and a daughter.

One is left with a lasting question- do these narratives really end or are they the beginning to (re) search more about those who wrote, about people and places mentioned by the writers, about the times in which they lived and narrated¹? The book is a must read for young souls aspiring for a job in police service as well as for researchers in police studies.

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