

# How Women IAS Officers in Kerala cop with their work

Shoyab. K. A<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *Public administration is an obvious part of the government and this study refers to the women in higher public administration of Kerala state. Though Kerala has acquired the hundred percent literacy, the representation of women in this area is very poor, but once they reach this position they can achieve top positions and act very powerful, Ideal and pragmatic. This article is written based on the primary data collected through a semi-structured interview with the lady IAS officers in the Kerala state. They revealed their emotions and experiences and how they related their family and workplace.*

**Key Words:** *Public administration, Gender discrimination, Indian administrative service, Political executive*

## I. Introduction

Gender equality is an issue of primary importance in the welfare and progress of all nations. Indian administrative service is the backbone of the Indian bureaucracy, it has contributed to stability in terms of peace, the conduct of fair elections, managing disasters and preservation of the unity of the nation. There is no one denying that the civil service has played an important role in preserving unity, providing stability and maintaining order, in a vast country prone to various conflicts like communal, ethnics, regional, etc.

This study reveals how the Indian administrative system reacts with their female members and their gender roles. For this particular study, Kerala state is selected because women in the Kerala state are more educated than other states in India, these women are more progressive and their literacy rate is 92%. Even though the women's representation in the Indian administrative service is below the minimum level.

After the British, rule the first civil service examination was held in 1948. The monopoly of male existed until 1950-in Indian administrative service. Though the constitution of India ensures equality, the Indian administrative service rules of 1954 were discriminatory and disadvantageous to women as “no married women shall be appointed to the service and resign from the service in the event of marriage”. This disqualification and rectification were removed by deleting the very provision from the IAS recruitment rules in 1972 and married women were allowed to join the service and an additional provision of maternity leave was granted under that rule.

Anna Rajam Malhotra 1951 batch IAS officer was the first lady IAS officer in India, she was a Malayali woman from the Kerala state, and she was born in Niranam village of Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. Later

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<sup>1</sup> Shoyab Kasarathi Ali, has done MA Public Administration from Pondicherry Central University, LLB from Mahatma Gandhi University.

she married Mr. Malhotra her IAS batchmate. The next entry of women into Indian civil service was only after ten years, in 1961. At the time of her entry, Anna did not know that she was the first woman to do so. In 1951, she was discouraged from joining the Indian administrative service (IAS) by the distinguished board which interviewed her, that comprised of four ICS (Indian Civil Service) officers and was headed by RN Banerjee, the then chairman of UPSC. Instead of Central service, Foreign Service was offered to Anna since that was “suitable for women.” However, Anna was determined to get the post which her rank deserved. She convincingly argued her case, stood by her ground, choose Madras cadre and pointed her rank. Incredibly her appointment order has the lines “in the event of marriage your service will be terminated.” However, over a couple of years, the rules were changed.

The equality of women is necessary, not merely on the grounds of social justice, but as a basic condition for the social, economic and political development of the nation. In our society, there is a special responsibility for women because of their childbearing function. Safe bearing and rearing of children is an obligation of women But really that has to be shared by the mother, father and, society.

### **Women IAS officers in Kerala**

If we take a particular study about the Kerala cadre, women administrative officers played a significant role throughout the development of the state, though they were in a small number. In Kerala state, the women's participation in the administrative service is below the minimum, Even though Kerala had four women chief secretaries. The civil list in the year 2015-2016 shows that the total number of IAS officers in the Kerala Cadre is 156. The total number of women officers is only 33 in which four of them are trainees.

Population	3,34,06,061
Male	1,60,27,412
Female	1,73,78,649
Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 Males)	1,084
Population Density	860 Sq.km
Urban Population	1,59,34,926
Rural Population	1,74,71,135
Decadal Growth Rate	409%
Literacy Rate (%)	94.0
Male Literacy Rate (%)	96.1
Female Literacy Rate (%)	92.1

### **Socio-Economic Profile at a glance Kerala based on Census 2011**

## **II. Review of literature**

Mary Parker Follet was the premier in women administrative thinkers, and a classic writer in administrative sciences. She explains about conflict resolution, leadership and, authority. Follet says that conflicts are not merely fights, but are differences in opinions and attitudes. These are discussed by Morse S.R (2006) in the article "Prophet of Participation: Mary Parker Follet and Public Participation in Public Administration"

In the article, "Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Backward: The Status of Women's Integration into Public Management" Mary E Guy(1993) says about The Status of Integration of women into Public Management is always influenced by sex-role expectations and tokenism, and further on the glass ceiling that prevents women from reaching top positions. After two decades of public service examinations, from which data was collected, it was found that the number of women in higher administrative position is very low in the US compared to their male counterparts.

In the article "Laying the groundwork for a reconception of the superintendence from feminist postmodern perspectives" Grogan M (2000) shows that public opinion is partial to women because women are more supportive of social policies, more supportive of health care programs, more favorable to gun control. Grogan says that due to the greater social commitments, Women can play a vital role in public sector leadership.

Stivers Camilla(1991), in 'Toward a Feminist Perspective in Public Administration Theory', emanates on a feminist perspective which public administration currently lacks, i.e., one that problematizes women's historical exclusion from public administration theory and raises topics and questions neglected as a result. Four important issues are suggested as areas where a feminist perspective might offer fresh insights: the question of administrative knowledge; the model of the ideal public servant; the nature of administrative discretion; and the dimensions of the administrative state.

Stivers Camilla (1993) in her essay Gender images in public administration, looks public administration through the lens of gender. She uses a gender lens on women in public administration, focusing on issues of status, power, leadership and, legitimacy and develops knowledge to understand the inequality and injustice prevailing in the gender space of public administration.

Mohammed Alcadry (1997) in his essay "The Feminist Mystique of Public Administration, did a critical study on Camilla Stiver's essay, "Gender images in public administration, Legitimacy and the Administrative State." The author criticizes the stivers' idea of masculine and feminine characteristics of public bureaucracies. He also describes that the main characters of a civil servant are Expertise, Leadership, and Virtue, neither considering their gender male or female. Alcadry criticized that Stivers has excessively focused on gender images and describes power and hegemony. He argued that masculinity has nothing to do with power, Slaves are expected to be strong and muscular but they have no power.

## **III. Research Methodology**

The method used for this study is qualitative, I P A method. The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is the new qualitative method introduced by Jonathan Smith and his colleagues in the middle of 1995. IPA includes three stages phenomenology hermeneutics and ideography. This qualitative

method now used increasingly in the areas of psychology, health education, marginalized studies like feminist studies, tribal studies, etc. Within the study, the researcher conducts the interview and take textual transcripts with the participants. The interviews were transcribed word by word and included verbal tics and laughter and expressions, analyzed through multiple reading of the transcripts and writing exploratory notes, developing emergent themes. The enquiring connection across the themes, moving from case to case, and looking out for pattern across cases, analyzed and reached conclusions are the following prescribed procedure of IPA.

In this work data collection was very time consuming and the researcher approached the lady administrative officers four or five times for taking the interview. Officers were holding the apex positions and were in very tight schedules, so most of them reach the office by nearly 9 am and went home by around 9 pm. during this time they attend and conducts many meetings with public and political executives, visits issue related fields and projects, conducting inspections. Those, not being available for an academic interview due to this very busy schedule was the main drawback. So the recently retired lady officers were also included in this study since they are very much experienced.

**Participants:** Collected ten samples from the lady IAS officers and among the collected data, only related four significant samples are given in this article. An in-depth semi-structured interview and observation were used by the researcher as a tool to collect data related to women administrators. The researcher met the samples and interviewed these ladies in their offices, focusing the areas such as gender discrimination in the service, The problems they face at home and office is a woman and the changes they brought out in the administrative system and the changing position of women in administrative and other related aspects, the qualitative data is structured and a part of data is presented as it was given by the samples during the interview.

Total Number	156 (Men and Women)
Total Women	32 (4 of them are trainees)
Direct IAS	120 (Men and Women)
Women	24
From State Civil Service/ Deputy Collector	26 (Men and Women)
Women	6
Higher Officers Directly selected to IAS	9 (Men and Women)
Women	2

**KeralaCadreCivilList2016 As on 31.05.2017**

This study brings out the fact that women administrators are equal or more powerful than their male counterparts and intake strong decisions. They act as good project leaders and complete the project within the prescribed time and lead the nation towards development. They are more understanding of the problems of women and children. These higher administrative officers suffer a lot by balancing work at home and office,

even though they have housemaid and other helpers; they anxiously agree that they have no time to spend with their children and family.

### **Procedure:**

After explaining the purpose and method of research, consent was sought from the lady officers of the Indian Administrative Services, both for conducting interviews as well as recording them. Each participant was asked to respond to the questions verbally which was followed by a detailed transcription and data analysis. Among the number of women officers interviewed, four of them are given here. Naming them and identifying that 'A' to 'D' and also just a very significant portion of each study is given below.

A' is a promoted IAS officer belonging to Kerala Cadre, she joined the Revenue Department as *Deputy Tahasildar* and was later conferred to IAS cadre status, now she works as the secretary of the land board. She also worked as a collector (District Magistrate) of Calicut District and secretary to the Disaster management department for many years. She had only a girl child, who was mentally challenged. Now her child is no more, her husband is also a Govt. Servant and now he has retired from the service, her educational qualification is graduation.

B is a lady IAS officer who has retired from the service in 2017 as chief secretary of the state, she filed a case of workplace sexual harassment against one of the ministers of the state. She is a directly recruited officer and has held many responsible positions in the govt., such as chief electoral officer for 10 years. She took charge of the Home department, transport, and then became the chief secretary of the state. She has only one girl child and she is now studying abroad. Her husband is a retired police officer belonging to the IPS cadre. She got many scholarships for her studies, her qualification is master's Degree in Chemistry and M. Phil in applied economics. She also got MA rural development form Eustanglia University England.

C joined as a deputy collector in the state revenue department and then was conferred IAS. She became the collector of the Kottayam district and secretary to different departments. Now she is working as the secretary to the food and civil supplies department. She is a post-graduate in English literature. She has no children and her husband is an Engineer by profession and working in a private firm.

D. Is a selected IAS officer. Before she came into IAS, she was a Civil Engineer, working in the town planning department of the Kerala State Government. She became the Chief Town Planning officers in the State, during this time the state government recommended her name to the UPSC for selecting to the IAS. In 2008 she was selected into IAS. She became the CEO of many projects like National Games, NORKA, and GIDA, etc. She was also engaged as the collector of the Trissur district. Before joining the Indian Administrative Service she took her post-graduation in town planning, from the school of Architecture and planning in Madras. She has two children, both are now married. They studied Engineering and now are working in the software field. Her husband is a retired engineer from the state government service

.Here take five themes from the study

### **Theme 1 – DETACHMENT FROM CHILDREN**

Detachment from children- Women officers are depressed thinking about their children because they have no time to spend with them.

1. A Said *“I was working as a secretary in the disaster management department. I often had to work overnight....sometimes for 24 hours, when I was working overnight I used to feel anxious about my home and child...my child is no more now.”*

2. B said *“We are doing as much as we can, but there are difficulties that come by its way in my family, my daughter might have felt difficulties. Earlier we had a servant”.*

3. C humbly told that *“I didn’t have children”.*

4. D said that her mother in law and her aunty help her to look after children. Instead of this, she had also a maid for domestic duties. *“I had many difficulties, I can’t fulfill my children’s needs on time to time .... We can’t top up their demands and needs”.*

All officers were very anxious about their children. After the office hours, they reached home at midnight. Sometimes they have official tours for many days. So they have no time to spend with their children. They were not able to give much parental care to their babies. This situation was overcome by the help of senior family members (in-laws, and parents) or with the help of their servants. But that would affect their relationship with their children and causes psychological problems between them.

#### **Theme -2EXPERTISE AND MANAGERIAL SKILL-**

Women officers are expert managers and they balance their domestic and official work carefully. They very diplomatically manage the official tie-ups.

1. A Said *“I swear that women are the best management experts in this world, let anyone deny that I won’t get up in the morning due to the heavy works of the previous day. Then doing my domestic duties and going to the office, working there again returning to home and doing domestic and other duties” Thus manage well.*

2. B Said that *“if you couldn’t do a hundred things there are another hundred things that you could do. If I couldn’t understand reading two books for here, I might understand any other two papers and sometimes the later can give more satisfaction”.*

3. C said *“For any urgent matters, I ask help from others, otherwise, usually I manage to do these works. I have developed a system of my own for that within this time. I have tried to make some arrangements”.*

4. D said *“I told about the Paliyekkara<sup>5</sup> Toll Plaza issue. That needed talks with politicians. The district collector was a man, in spite of trying many times, he couldn’t do it. But when I got the charge, I could do it in a diplomatic way”.*

Helene Fisher, an anthropologist predicts that women are psychologically primed to be leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By using natural talents women will change the world. This makes them ideal leaders and successful shapers of business and society. Women officers are very efficient and possess managerial skills.

#### **Theme -3 TAKE POSITIVE DECISION IN THE ISSUES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

1. A has got several opportunities to take decisions on issues affecting women and children. She said that. *“Even now, after coming to this office a lady belonging to the fisherman community came for a “Pattayam” (Land ownership Certificate issued by the government) for her land. According to the current rules,*

*she will get approval from the tribunal, only if she has produced the documents which prove that she had the land in 1964 and '70s. I knew that she was the real owner, the approving officer also knows that the land actually belongs to her, but due to lack of documentary support, the officer is not willing to give the approval. In such situations. I have taken decisions according to my conscience”.*

2. B Said that she tried to understand the problems of her junior women officers, even their family issues. She also said that, while she was working in the secretary of the transport department, she has filed a case of workplace sexual harassment against the minister of the transport department. *“Such a sad incident, I never compromised my principles. So I think I have nothing to say about such an incident. I always work based on a set of principles. I have always reacted in my own way. So there is nothing in that that I have reacted in such situations and also faced the consequences. Those days, there were no rules and acts. We did everything our own”...* she said about the sexual harassment case filed against the transport minister of the state then. Preliminary Court decision was against the minister and he was resigned.

3. C said that the problems of working ladies are very different from the working men, *“our family and career both go together of women and children” she also*

4. D said about a case that happened when she was working as Revenue Divisional Officer, Kasargode district. *“Children abandoned their old mother, after dividing the assets and properties and taking their shares. There was no one to take care of her. She was lying down in her own excreta. As I was the Chairperson of the maintenance tribunal for old age people, I knew it from a newspaper and went there and found out one of her daughters, gave her counseling and then she was ready to take care of her mother. After a month that old mother passed away or else she would have died in the worst condition. I felt very happy that I could do such things with compassion and mercy, nurturing the qualities of a woman. They can act these roles very productively”.* If a male officer was handling this problem, he may arrest the children of the old mother and make it become more complicated. This study reveals that women are more compassionate than men. They can take firm decisions with a human touch

#### **Theme 4 PRINCIPLES AND MORALITY**

Women officers upheld the principles of morality and face consequences

1. A said *“When I was Calicut collector, private Bus operators Association was willing to operate a bus, for only ladies, in a route most of the ladies had to travel. That was a big talk at that time. I always keep the mentality of helping the public that is my principles. I always keep it”.*

2. B Said, *“Yes I did everything standing by my principles and I have satisfaction in that”.*

3. C said *“for a better administration, ability to do work, ability to plan, imagine and a mind to do service for people, all are needed. The one in that post moves forward by using these abilities. Otherwise, we will have to leave by making others tell that we were a failure in that post”.*

4. D said, *“if we are doing the right things at the right time in the right way, there is no problem, we should do our duty”.*

All women officers keep some principles and control their actions and thoughts, that way they keep these principles not only in the personal life but in official life also. Many of them consider this is an opportunity to do service to the people.

### **Theme 5 GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

Gender discrimination in the higher civil service is also true.

1. A said *“These are facts, I had to face this many times (gender discrimination) and there is no equality. I mean there is no gender equality in our society, especially in civil service. Even now my experience makes me believe that”*.

2. B said *“We can’t say a flat answer, yes or no for this, it is a case. As an individual some may have, some may not have. We are doing the jobs which men are doing. But complimentary we can’t say no. There might be gender discrimination, but sometimes it can be an exploitative mechanism, we have to find it out, stay away and adjust”*.

3. C said that *“there is not any gender discrimination in the state civil service”- she told, “Even if men and women are different the opportunities for both are some”*.

4. D said, *“gender discrimination not especially in civil service, commonly what there in the society”*.

As a part of our society gender discrimination is prevailing in the Kerala State Civil Service. Some of them use it as an exploitative mechanism. Many incidents did not get revealed outside, married women did not share openly her experience to others.

### **Theme 6: POLITICAL CHANGE**

Kerala is a state where every five years, political change happens, after the general elections. Because people are politically very conscious.

A. A said that *“Political parties don’t do that only because you have talent.” She said that “If you have political support, you get, higher post. Only with the support of the political executives, you can sit in a post. She said that “No party decides to put you in a higher post because you are talented. And .....As a woman ..... That drawback is always there”*.

B. B said that *“I haven’t experienced. I told that in my retirement speech. Because with both the Government, I have been a collector. I have worked as a registrar of Co-operative societies with both Governments. I have worked as a home secretary with both Governments. I didn’t have any problems. If they understand that we are like this, then there is no problem. The problem arises if we are flexible”*.

C. C said that *“transfers can happen at any time. But I believe, for a good official any political change can give them good opportunities. She had the opinion that more responsibilities, will ask more dedication, so if the authorities give more responsibilities they consider our ability”*.

D. D said that *“I should say, no. From both sides, we have two groups here. I am politically neutral and a hundred percent civil servant. Even if the minister and Chief Minister Calls, I will do something only if I feel that its right, if not, I would not do it”*.

In every five years, political change is a continuing fact in Kerala, most of the officers adjust with this reality, but this issue is seriously affected by women officers because transfer and change of position separated them from their children



#### IV. Conclusion

The study shows that the number of women getting into the administrative service is very small. Only below 20% is the lady representation in higher civil service in the Kerala state, even though a higher percent literacy rate. The representatives of the women in the backward minority communities are very low in the state. Women administrative officers show strong will and capacity to complete big Government projects and they achieve their targets successfully. They upheld principles and face their consequences. Gender disparity, lobbying, political nepotism are still existing in Indian higher civil service. The female officers are easily accessible to women, children and the marginalized. They can understand and solve their problems quickly than their male counterparts. But the local political interference will affect their working output. The local political interference pulls back them from making proper decisions. Due to the busy schedules, they have no time to spend with their children and family that will affect their output. For entering into the IAS, many years of preparation is essential. All people began to start their preparation after the age of 23. This is a crucial time for girls. Their marriage, delivery, children, etc. pull back girls from entering the IAS. Husband, in-laws, and other family members will understand their nature of work and would offer help, that will enhance their career graph. Political support is also essential to continue in a higher post, some officers have godfathers in the political parties, They argue for putting their people in the higher posts. Political nepotism is a curse of the higher civil service of the state. If a political change happens the senior officers get the transfer, or change their positions irrespective of their efficiency. These transfers or changes adversely affect mainly women officers and their family life.

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