



A SOCIAL OUTLINE OF THE TAMILNADU HOME GUARD: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

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Introduction

The fifth decade of the twentieth century A.D. in India was marked by several paradoxes. On the one hand, the native leadership over the years evolved a spirit of non-violence which generated an expectation in the popular mind pertaining to Free-India while on the other hand inherited an administrative structure out-and-out of colonial nature. Particularly, the system of policing under the colonial masters was characterized by one of suspecting each and every move of the natives and everyman was seen as a potential element with probable design against the Imperial Government. The same set of officers who were trained by the British and made to loyally serve in the Imperial Police were vested with the task of leading the native police force in independent India. These officers predominantly had military orientation than appreciation for the Gandhian ideology and always believed in their professional capacity than anything. However, they innovated a compromise by redesigning the auxiliary police force by a means through which they attempted to balance the colonial administrative structures with the principles of non-violence.

The idea of auxiliary police being apart from balancing colonial structure and indigenous experience that evolved from the national movement was a compulsory requirement as laid down by International Agencies. On an average, 300 police personnel were required per every 100,000 population and even more in poorly informed societies. But a developing country like India could not afford to pay a large workforce, particularly police personnel as it is placed in the service sector and figure on the expenditure side of the GDP. Hence, the top brass in the Government identified areas within broader policing where much professionalism is not required and decided to utilize the services of volunteers whose motive should not be earning money but disposed to the service of the nation and the police force by way of assisting them in law and order maintenance, managing road traffic, etc. It was to say that they were not to be involved in desk work, investigating of crime, etc. Therefore, 'dove' was chosen as the appropriate symbol for such a force and the idea of 'selfless service' as motto which informs the purpose clearly as 'maintaining peace.'

Given the background of the auxiliary police force in India, the present study intends to make a review of the Home Guard Organization with special reference to Tirunelveli district. However, a broad outline of the organization with its administrative detail has been drafted first to place and discuss specific matters pertaining to Tirunelveli district. For the effective handling of the subject under focus, the topic has been divided into Administrative Nuances, Realm of Officers and Problems. In places where it is deemed required, comparisons of administration in the three districts of Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari and Thoothukudi has been made. Hence, a simple narrative method with a comparative undertone has been attempted in the article. The hypothetical statement that guides the enquiry stands on the premise that 'a fragment of the Gandhian idea has been successfully incorporated into the policing system through Home Guards' which is well reflected in the organization at Tirunelveli district. Though a substantial section of the writings appears to be eyewitness accounts of an insider consultation of the Tamil Nadu Home Guards Act of 1963, the Tamil Nadu Home Guards Rules of 1963, Government Orders, High Court Orders, Minutes and Proceedings of the Home Guard Office, etc have been consulted to draft this article. Hence, adequate secondary works on Indian auxiliary police force has not been made, primary sources tended to guide the course of this writing.

Administrative Nuances

The Home Guard organization was reorganized in the year 1962 and along with Fire Service was placed under the Directorate of Civil Defence which was a key component in the Ministry of Home as a consequence of the unexpected twists and turns that occurred at the time of Indian political independence. The violence and chaos that marked the course of independence exposed the weaknesses of the Police Department. Their way of handling violence and insensitiveness to certain issues pertaining to law and order maintenance that included the question of security cover provided to Mahatma Gandhi warranted a rethinking of policies pertaining to policing and the need to revise and revamp. A well thought out idea to contain such developments was to reform the individual and endowing him with some responsibilities and raising his social status in the gaze of the public. In Indian society, Government was and is viewed with such sanctity that a person who has a ray of link with it enjoys a social status irrespective of his caste, religion and gender backgrounds – more so in rural areas which were deemed to be its heart. Hence, a natural interest is generated in the minds of the people who have undergone formal education up to eighth standard (In India the purpose of education in itself is considered as a gateway to well-paid jobs particularly in the Government) and physically fit (unlike requirements fixed for the Police Department like height, weight, running, jumping etc only the normal functioning of the limbs and brain is assessed).



Membership in the organization requires strong moral and ethical standings. Usually, the number of vacancies against which demand was made was published in almost every vernacular newspaper with details of date, place and time of selection of selection among other details is caused to be published. Willing members who appear before the selection board are made to submit a biodata form from which short-listing of suitable candidates is made. For the post of a jawan, persons with high educational qualification and scope for better employment are not preferred. In a selection conducted at Valliyoor, a driver of an autorickshaw informed that his income was estimated at near about Rs 30,000 per month. Similarly, there were four Engineering Graduates among who one was a Marine Engineer. Mr Uthayakumar, Additional Superintendent of Police and president of the Selection Board opined that the candidates of these kinds should not be recruited for they will hardly remain in the organization for a few days. But as there were no better candidates, these were issued appointment order. But none of them reported for training proving the words of the remarkable officer true.

Once, nursing staff and teachers preferred entry into the Home Guards organization for the reason that they can avoid transfers on the excuse of their voluntary service to the government. They were also able to streamline the workload in the office by pointing to the call-outs they have to attend in the organization as the Home Guard Acts have disempowered every mechanism from stopping a member from attending his duty. From the side of the organization, the moral character of a government employee is also easily verifiable by checking his 'service register.' They were not dependent on the income and hence did not create pressure on the side of government vis-à-vis payment or expenditure and by and large remained as strength to the organization. But gradually employees of the government becoming members of the organization deteriorated. One reason could be the rise in pay and teachers and nurses, at any rate, derived salaries at par with or more pay than Sub-Inspectors of Police who served as a major link between the volunteers and the police department. But they have to salute and responsibly answer the latter which was not probably acceptable in the psychological sense. The myth of police ranks is also well exposed once after coming in direct contact with them. Learned graduates in the Police Department themselves have difficulty in coping with the hierarchy and they prefer to avoid meeting higher officers and not to say about qualifiedly employed Home Guard volunteers.

After shortlisting, the details of the candidates were sent to the respective police stations under whose limit their residential address fall. An undue delay to the tune of minimum four months was spent in the process. In the gap, a few candidates out of frustration decide to opt out while one or two are removed from the list on account of record of FIR in their names. Thereafter, the training is commenced for remaining people. A head-constable and the Home Guard volunteer in-charge of the sub-division undertake the task of training them with the guidance of the Reserve Sub-Inspector. They at the very outset demystify the understanding of the candidates on the difference between regular police and Home Guards. Usually, youth who could not find their place in the regular police opt for Home Guard service and this difference that denies role in the criminal investigation, court proceedings and enquiring the public, make it clear that they could perform only simple duties unlikely to a policeman. There on a few trainees give unwillingness and the remaining decide to continue though their enthusiasm has subsided to a greater amount. It was reflected while allocating of duty and the responsible persons struggle to provide personnel to the level of demand.

Appointment initially was made for three years. The Home Guard Act prescribes to issue a certificate authorizing his association with the organization. But only an appointment order is issued to the effect of his nomination. The difference lies in the prestige that incurs with the former whereas in the latter it is suggestive of mere appointment for economic benefit. The three years appointment is further extended for another three years unless and otherwise, the jawan issues an unwillingness certificate. If he failed to attend minimum expected duties for three continuous months he will be removed. Erroneous conduct also attracts removal. In one case, a jawan was accused of stealing the property of fellow jawans when lodged in a common dormitory when sent for duty in another sub-division. CCTV footage evidence clearly proved the accusation to be fact. He was produced before Mr Sankara Narayanan, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Armed Reserve Police of Tirunelveli District (a wonderful officer who is an expert in Thirukkural) to undergo the process of 'Orderly Room' and defend himself. But as he was not able to defend and his sub-division in-charge Mr Swaminathan was not in good opinion about him, he was removed. Similarly, consuming liquor in uniform, public misbehavior, and being implied in an FIR are reasons that attract removal.

The working environment is more akin to the army than police. The difference between both is based on the oath undertaken on passing out. The former undertakes to obey the orders of the immediate higher authority by risking his life whereas the latter obliges to defend the prestige of the society and individual. Mentionable here is the sacrifice of a Home Guard jawan who was killed in the Naxal bombing in the state of Telangana. A jawan shall not wear his uniform unless a responsible police authority commands him to do so and attend duty. Usually, such orders are passed through the Sub-Inspectors who either contact the jawan directly or through the sub-division in-charge. After wearing the uniform, the jawan becomes eligible for protection by as and such law through which regular police officers are protected while on duty. In some districts like



Ariyalur where a shortage of police personnel is found owing to its insensitive nature, jawans are even made to drive police vehicles. Promotions were also made only when the jawan enters the good books of the officers. There were Section Leaders with thirty years of service and Company Commanders with lesser years of service.

By virtue of being a member of the organization, pressure is exerted on a volunteer to maintain his personal discipline and morality. Thereby he remains not only a role model but as an observer of the local developments around him, an informant to the government. In cases of suspicion and confusion, he helps to draw opinions about individuals. For him, differences based on caste, religion, gender, etc are meaningless and a person standing by his side during the parade is another member of the organization equal by pay and if higher it is only by rank which has been rewarded for meritorious service applies equally to oneself also. His activities should be marked by restraint and maturity. Thus he should show an enlightened ethical way through his life practices for others to follow. In actuality, with 45 days of training, his character is redirected and the remaining three years in service would upgrade his ethical conduct. Thereafter, he should leave way for others to enroll and undergo the same training as he underwent and contribute for the sustenance of society. In that way, the predominant number of members in the society will be helped to adhere a truthful living as also existing law and order. The organization trains their mind to realize the fact that changes are only gradual and natural. The spread of this kind of a mentality would in turn arrest anti-institutional agitation.

The 'Sahayak System' associated with the armed forces is absent. In the 45 days of training, importance is not given to instructions – practically or theoretically – on weapon operations. One reason in the case of the Tirunelveli district is the absence of a firing range. If at all practice is to be undertaken, the Vallanadu range which is closer to Tirunelveli and comparatively farther to Tuticorin but falling under the jurisdiction of the latter district has to be used for which permission from the Superintendent of Police there has to be sought. Contacting the Superintendent of Police as per established protocol has to be made by the Superintendent of Police of Tirunelveli District. Since it is a roundabout process, the trainers and other responsible elements most often avoid disturbing the officers with the conviction that in a situation of no possibility to wield arms training in that can be ignored. In training centres like those in Ooty, Nagpur, etc main thrust is given to disaster management, first aid etc than arms. A two-day course on the operation of pistols is undertaken in Tirupur only for officers. However, squat drill meaning parade with arms remains a quintessential part of the Home Guard sports in which the Tirunelveli district unit produces only the numbers.

All of what is mentioned above suggests the semi-armed nature of the organization assumed in Tirunelveli district although the Home Guard Act has vested the responsibility of training the civilians in weapon operations during emergencies. In the bordering states, Home guards are attached with para-military forces such as the Border Security Force. In the recent past, the government is thinking of involving Home Guard jawans in securing Indo-Nepal border. After the Mumbai attack of November 2008 coastal security has assumed importance. Report of the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean and their association with Sri Lankan Navy has sent signals to strengthen the coastal security of the Coromandel Coast. Boat Capsize accident that occurred in a place like Manapad also warranted a reserve force on the coast. Hence, a marine unit of the Home Guard is evoked and placed under a police Inspector and attached with the Indian Coast Guard. With time, the duties may require the employment of weapons and may depart from the Gandhian ideals induced into the force. Yet, a structural change of jawans coming into direct contact with officers above the rank of zonal commander is neither mooted nor in the air to change the operational structure of the system. Therefore, the 'Sahayak System' wherein the lowest rank holder performing works categorized as menial would not emerge.

The Realm of Officers

The responsibility and ethical standing of a member of the organization are expected to reach every segment of the society, and therefore, the Home Guard Act has provided space for participation even in political elections. If responsibility is the cornerstone of office holding, then technically every jawan appointed in the organization is an officer. He is distinguished from a police constable by being provided with brown shoes in contrast to black shoes. He is allotted a green web-belt. But unfortunately, as the voluntary nature of the organization has failed to impress the members of the society vis-à-vis the regular police, the jawans of the Home Guard organization prefer to wear black shoes and black leather belt and khaki shirts modeled for police constables. Some of them while attending duty carry lathis which are not expected of them. They have stickers mentioning them as police in their vehicles and they make attempts to make a close relationship with regular police personnel and even imitate their behaviour. The police officers-in-charge of their training have time and again have warned the misuse of the police uniform but of little use.

The officers in the organization can be classified into 5 categories namely officers at the directorate level, officers at the range level, direct police officers at the district level, Home Guard officers at the district level and promoted Home Guard officers. All officers are controlled by the Director General of Tamil Nadu Police. Nevertheless, to manage the Home Guard



wing an Additional Director General of Police who is the Director of Home Guards, an Inspector General of Police and an Additional Commandant General in Chief are appointed. Additional Commandant General in Chief is an honorary post equivalent to a selection grade Superintendent of Police whereas the other two officers are Indian Police Service personnel. Mr Muthukaruppan, IPS and Mr A K Viswanath, IPS, were well known efficient Directors of Home Guard. The Directorate receives all communications from out of the state as well as the Head Quarter of Tamil Nadu Police. They collect details of money spent towards honorarium from every district and arrive at a budget estimate and inform the Directorate of Civil Defence of the Central Home Ministry. As grants are based on this estimate maximum attendance by the volunteers is most insisted. The state Directorate of Home Guard is also responsible for training the personnel; represent grievances to the state government, appointing the honorary officers of the Home Guards at the District level and above and etc.

A 'Range' is an administrative unit of the police department which has also been extended to the Home Guard organization. The highest ranking officer at the range level is the Deputy Inspector General of Police. But that position as also the office at zonal level commanded by Inspector General of Police have no direct role in the administration of Home Guards. At times Deputy Inspector General of Police – as in the case of Tirunelveli – are given additional charge of police. On such occasions, the DIGs assume a direct role as commandants. However, the honorary post of Additional Commandant General has been placed at the range level to coordinate the Area Commanders within the range (a Deputy Commissioner of Police and Adjutant Commandant has expressed his ignorance about the post of Additional Commandant General suggestive of the absence of lessons on Auxiliary Police in the Indian Police Training curriculum). He receives a copy of the monthly report sent to the Head Quarters by the Area Commander and maintains a hold over district level developments. He has a say in selecting personnel for awards such as President Medal and Anna Police Medal. Importantly he organizes the sports event at the range level. He invites the Commissioner of Police of Tirunelveli City, Deputy Inspector General of Tirunelveli Range and Superintendents of Police within the Range. The Commandant of the hosting district will preside over the function while other Police Officers in accordance with their busily slotted schedule may or may not come although they prioritize Home Guard functions. It is a convention in Tirunelveli Range that after the DIG assuming office, at the headship of the ACG, the Home Guard officers within the range meet the former and pay their respects. The Tirunelveli City Area Commander and the Deputy Area Commander also join with other officers despite them being placed under a Commandant of higher rank as they are also part of the Tirunelveli Range whereas the City Police is independent of it.

As said already, the Superintendents of Police are the commandants of the Home Guard unit in a district. He has a separate section in the District Police Office to carry out correspondence pertaining to the Home Guards. He issues advertisement in the vernacular newspapers when vacancies from the range of Area Commander to ordinary jawan arise. He constitutes and presides over the interview board meant for selecting Area Commander and Deputy Area Commander. He has the power to choose the most eligible candidate. Usually, he recommends a panel of 3 members to the Director of Home Guards. But in the case of a selection of a Deputy Area Commander, the then Superintendent of Police of Tirunelveli District, Mr Vikraman, IPS, (an efficient officer celebrated for his principle 'an order that cannot be followed should not be issued') was impressed of a particular candidates performance. Hence, while sending the panel, he expressed the preference against the name of the candidate and caused his selection. Similarly, the Commandant also has the power to compromise on the preferential qualification fixed for the posts of Area Commanders and Deputy Area Commanders. As no training is given to the Area Commanders and Deputy Area Commanders, possessing of 'C' Certificate is made a preferred qualification. Similarly, the applicants for these posts should hold respectable social and economic position. But the Commandant can give a chance to persons who do not fulfill such requirements. After the appointment, the commandant has the power to demand the personal appearance of the officers in as and such place he deems fit.

The Deputy Superintendent of Police of the District Armed Reserve is the Adjutant Commandant of the Home Guards in a district. The Sub-Inspector of Police and the Writer of Home Guards are stationed in his office and work under his direct command. He is a member of the selection committee meant for selecting the jawans as well as the Deputy Area Commander. He nominates a Head Constable for training the trainees. His role is also significant in preparing the promotion roll. Any communication to the Home Guard jawans and officers are sent through him. He is the ultimate authority who signs the salary roll before it leaves for the District Police Office. Any communication to the Head Quarter from the Home Guard side is routed through him as he is the most easily accessible officer for a jawan. He makes surprise visits during nights and checks the duty performance of the jawans. He plays a key role in the 'Orderly Room' procedure meant to enquire delinquent members. He is expected by the Home Guard officers to preside over their farewell and retirement party. In the case of the absence of the Area Commander, the Commandant may even order him to look after the duties of the former. Mr Manoharan, DSP, assumed charge as Area Commander when the person who held the post prior to him demitted office and the incumbent Deputy Area Commander was inexperienced.



Like any other member of the organization, the Area Commander is also appointed for a period of 3 years. Only males are appointed for the post. If he prefers to extend his service a further extension of 3 years can be given and he can continue to serve till he attains 58 years. However, at the time of appointment, he should not have attained 50 years of age. His status is equivalent to that of an Additional Superintendent of Police which is above the rank of a DSP. Since the nature of his office is only honorary, the maintenance of protocol could not be expected. He is allotted a separate office room and is assisted by a Sub-Inspector of Police in initiating office proceedings. But he cannot initiate a proceeding for which he has to depend on the Sub-Inspector. The latter may or may not comply with the ideas of the Area Commander. He also attends the monthly meeting of sub-division level in-charge personnel conducted by the Area Commander suggestive of the fact that the latter cannot work in isolation. Therefore, the Area Commander's ability to maintain a friendly relationship with the police officers alone decides his influence. In case of his being in the good books of the Superintendent of Police and Commandant, he can hope to express his choice of the Sub-Inspector and the Writer who is of the rank a Head Constable (presently Mr John Kennedy, a smart and brilliant person with special interest and talent in sports activities is the writer of the Home Guard unit of Tirunelveli district).

The expenses incurred during the monthly meetings have to be borne by the Area Commander. Apart from tea and snacks, expenses on buying prizes to the first three best duty allotting in-charges have to be borne by the Area Commander. He has to maintain sports team to represent the district at the Range level from where short listing is made to represent the Range at the state level. The circular pertaining to the conducting of sports issued by the Home Guard Head Quarter clearly indicates that there should not be any trace of private sponsorship and the entire expenses should be met out from the government funds allocated for that purpose. The sports costumes and the expenses on snacks during practice session has to be borne from the pocket of the Area Commander. Nonetheless, business magnets cum Area Commanders issue sports wears with names and emblem of their establishments. The Area Commander is also responsible to conduct the Home Guard Day for which there does not seem to be any fund. Home Guard Day which falls on 7th December is celebrated in a date fixed by the Commandant. On that day, breakfast and lunch are provided to the jawans and officers. Medals are given to officers and jawans of the organization and mementoes are given to the chief guests and other participants from the Police Department. The expenses are fully met by the Area Commander. However, the Area Commanders mutually benefit from the network they create which also is applicable to Deputy Area Commanders. They have a uniform party wear – a navy blue colour coat with the Home Guard emblem being embroidered in the pocket at the upper left. They meet from time to time on reasons other than Home Guard and develop a very friendly atmosphere.

The promoted officers represent the grievances to the Area Commander or the Sub-Inspectors of Police deputed to guide them. They execute the government orders at the grassroots level. Their commitment to the organization is well noticeable during retirement parties. Mr Shunmuga Sundaram was a Platoon Commander with near about 30 years of service in the organization and randomly served between Ambasamudram and Cheranmahadevi sub-divisions. He briefly narrated his services which seem to have started in the undivided Tirunelveli district before 1986 (in this year it was divided into Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts). At that time, as a jawan, he had even been sent to serve in the Tiruchendur temple located more than 100 km far from Ambasamudram. As a peasant in uniform, the situation in the Home Guard organization had compelled him to start agricultural activities late than others which he happily obliged no matter the honorarium was just a meager Rs 16. Continuing with the narration, while saying 'to imagine that he could not wear the uniform from tomorrow', his tongue was struck and his eyes were in all tears. The present researcher had attended retirement parties of university personnel that included even the Vice-Chancellor as also has been shared with thoughts and feelings of what it could be to retire from service. Usually, there is a yearning to see their retirement though they derive huge income from their jobs. Probably, the government institutions have been made wretched by a few people in authority. But the outgoing Platoon Commander not only arranged for the party far better than many of the regular government workers with a wonderful breakfast and mementoes for his higher officers, but also he had no heart to leave the organization. Such is the dedication of many of the promoted officers.

Problems

The greatest problem encountered by the higher officers of the Home Guard Unit of Tirunelveli district is that pertaining to the geographical expanse. From Kudankulam in the South-East to Sankarankovil in the North-West, it covers a distance of 130 km. The unit with a three and a half companies and strength of 330 men and 55 women posted in 9 sub-divisions under 11 in-charges could not be pooled at one place on a regular basis. In the case of the unit under Tirunelveli City, the personnel is located within a radius of 7 km and they report for the monthly parade at one place and receive instructions directly from the officers, register their grievances – if any – and use the occasion for expressing and maintaining of discipline. But for the Tirunelveli district unit, the Sub-Inspector of Police responsible for training the Home Guard jawans (presently Mr. Martin, a remarkable officer trained in rapid action and dog-squad in-charge is the SI of Home Guards) has to travel between major



sub-divisions such as Valliyoor, Cheranmahadevi, Ambasamudram, Tenkasi, Puliangudi etc. Yet, he cannot hope to have complete attendance for a jawan located in Kudankulam, Valliyoor is more than 25 km away. Parade attendance is mandatory in the uniformed service because it is where discipline is effectively checked and sharpened. But until the October of 2017, only Rs 55 was paid to a jawan for attending the parade.

After October of 2017, the situation turned worst from worse. A public interest litigation filed by a member of the organization pointed to the number of duties performed by a sincere jawan and the poor pay which is comparably less to any other work performed elsewhere. At the time when the case was admitted, a jawan was given Rs 150 per duty and had a maximum of 24 duties apart from which one mandatory parade has to be attended for an honorarium of Rs 55. The minimum requirement was one parade, two-night duties and one special call out. But the requirement of manpower in the police department was such that even if all the 385 jawans performed 24 duties in a month, still there was a demand. The expenditure met out in a year is usually taken into consideration for the next year allocation and absence on the side of the volunteers affected the matching financial grants. The High Court took into cognizance the voluntary nature of the organization and pay in other states (in the state of Assam the volunteers struck work for increase in pay while in Telangana the state accorded higher pay on simple request) increased Rs 150 to Rs 550 and fixed a slab of 5 call-outs per month each having maximum time limit of 8 hours.

Every night the Superintendent of Police of the district contacts the sub-division officers i.e. the Deputy Superintendent of Police and asks for the Human Resource requirements. As recorded in the Home Guard Day Speech by the Superintendent of Police of Tirunelveli District Mr P. Ve. Arunsakthikumar, IPS, (an allopathic doctor by education and Tamil language enthusiast apart from being an outstanding officer and human-being) the demand is more for Home Guard jawans than to the Armed Special Police personnel meaning which the former ones are more manageable to the later, and hence, given priority. In a calendar year, two major events for which maximum strength from the home Guards is used are Aadi Thapasu function of Sankarankovil sub-division and Aadi Amavasai function of Sorimuthu Ayyanar temple under Ambai sub-division. On such occasions, continuous duty has to be performed for three days. The Inspectors of Police under whose station limit the temples fall have to bear the responsibility of food and accommodation (usually they contact some philanthropist to support the force or sometimes the organizing committee comes forward to bear the expenses). A jawan who is issued just one uniform set by the organization undergoes the problem of wearing the same uniform without washing or pressing.

But this recent decree of the High Court has made a reversal in making requirements which in turn has its own implications. A jawan serving duty for three days in a sub-division away from his cannot hope to visit his home. The logical meaning to this is his performing 72 hours of duty in a single call-out. If a slab of 40 hours is maintained then almost every jawan would complete his 5 call-outs in 3 days and will not be available for duty on other days in a context where there is a mounting demand for manpower. Sincere volunteers in the organization prefer permanent status as it was accorded to a few Home Guard volunteers in the Puducherry Union Territory. But with just 45 days of training in basic skill and physical fitness, their efficiency is limited to performing tasks which were commanded to be performed except in some rare cases (Mr Manikandan, Company Commander transferred to Valliyoor from Nagercoil maintains that he has the ability to write FIRs). The Government, in order to tackle the manpower shortage, mooted the idea of youth brigade whose physical requirements match that of the police personnel but willing to serve similar duty in a lower pay only to be inducted into the regular department after a stipulated period of time.

Looking the Home Guard organization as a source of employment is a pitiable and unexpected development. Hard work and dedication need reward. It is unfortunate that recognition of sincere service and loyalty is also linked with the funding capacity of the organization. Mr Nambi was a Platoon Commander in the Home Guard unit of the Tirunelveli city who met with an accident. He got admitted in the general ward of the Government Hospital and there was no financial support to him from the organization. He was an ace vocalist and musician with commendable skill in playing several musical instruments. Yet he got chance in orchestras once in a while and his income from that skill was minimal. After delivering 25 years of flawless service, he struggled for food and maintenance while undergoing treatment that spanned for a period more than two months in the hospital. His frustration was prevented when he heard the news of his being shortlisted for the President's Medal. Subsequently, he was also elevated to the rank of a Company Commander.

This example of Mr Nambi is better. His counterpart in Tirunelveli district Mr Durai Singh, senior most Company Commander with more than 27 years of service and wide knowledge in the organizational administration, has not received either Anna Medal or President's Medal. A cadet in his three years service in the National Cadet Corps wears a medal that matches his involvement in activities and attending camps. Such practice is not followed in the Home Guard organization though they attend training in places like Nagpur, Ooty, Palani etc apart from participating in events meant for disseminating



general awareness, blood donation, sports etc. The Tirunelveli District Home Guard has very strong men's volleyball and kabaddi teams (the volleyball team defeated the Special Force of the regular police in 3-0) whose members appear during range and state level competitions and disappear. They are not given promotions or medals either during Independence Day or Republic Day for the virtue of being sportsmen.

Though medals and promotions give a chance to get closer to officers, they do not have a corresponding effect in the pay. On the event of Home Guard day observance, 77 members were promoted while a few volunteered to stagnate in previous posts. The event was attended 185 members and another 20 or 30 can be added as serious members. In a Force with a rough strength of 220 personnel, promoting 77 members appear to be top heavy. Therefore, an effective check of fall-outs that range to the tune of 165 personnel has to be checked and arrested to make the scheme of promotion logical and meaningful. Mr Durai Singh volunteered to stagnate in the post of Company Commander because the same remuneration provided for a jawan could be claimed. He avoided further promotion to the rank of Zonal Commander for the reason that it totally denied remuneration of any kind.

In contrast to the overall practice in Tirunelveli, Home Guard volunteers in Kanyakumari district not only get promotion on time but also are exposed to welfare schemes to the tune of offering concessional housing facility. As said already, some of its members like Mr Manikandan, Company Commander, have the skill to write FIRs also for which a command in law is most essential. In terms of infrastructure also they are better. They have a well maintained multi-chambered office, a separate government maintained vehicle for the official transportation of the Area Commander and they perform remarkable service at times of emergency needs. During 'Ockhi Storm' the well maintained and disciplined unit of Kanyakumari district served the affected peoples with utmost dedication what inspired Mr Balamurugan, Area Commander of Thoothukudy District to donate liberally. The foundation for such an efficient output was laid by its previous Area Commanders, particularly, Mr Prakash who is presently Additional Commandant General. Though Mr V Rengarajan, former Area Commander of Tirunelveli District has done his best, Tirunelveli district would have to wait long to reach on par with Kanyakumari district. Irrespective of district difference, the officers at the level of Area Commanders have to establish contact with administrative staff in the District Police Office and have to keep them in good spirit for they have the potential to influence the course of an adverse development both positively and negatively.

It has also been alleged by a segment of people as there is the problem of gender discrimination and caste bias. One of the Deputy Area Commanders – a woman and recipient of Anna Police Medal – encountered a police complaint preferred by a private individual. The police officer who received the complaint had framed an FIR. Usually, a government servant who is arrested and taken into judicial or police custody and held for more than 48 hours without being issued bail will be suspended for further enquiry. But the case in which the Deputy Area Commander was targeted was not a case of such magnitude and the FIR itself can be challenged and nullified through an appropriate court by legal means. Before that could happen, an insider had taken the FIR to the notice of the Head Quarter and caused her discharge from service. Though this can also be challenged, the discharged officer lost her morale. In Indian society, women are expected to be treated with considerable modesty and respect. Administrative moves of these kinds definitely underestimate their previous services in the role of women. Similarly, a very efficient sub-division in-charge conducted his retirement party at a place which is far away from his sub-division as his subordinates have had the record of not cooperating with him on grounds of caste difference.

Conclusion

Though experiences of caste or gender-based discrimination could be recorded now and then, one has to view the importance placed on moral and ethical standing by the organization. A society that is pulled in all directions towards the path of violence and other heinous crimes need people in the uniform of such character to prevent anomie. The Home Guard unit of Tirunelveli district with about 200 active jawans and officers – out of the total 385 – largely send out god signals though there is scope for development. This development for sure is gradual but that is important for the smooth sustenance of the overall society. Alongside is also important the ability to sacrifice from the range of shedding life as in the recent case of Telangana to the willingness to give up basic amenities during duty period at far off places. It is very unfortunate that some people see this service as a source of income and livelihood. But that has become a reality of social life and cannot be ruled out. Moreover, while taking into consideration the way they are expected to mould themselves and the demand placed on them, this cannot be done merely on a voluntary basis.

The role at the level of officers at the level of Area Commanders and above is also significant. Rarely does an ordinary police constable follows the protocol and salutes them even when they appear in uniform. They have to keep not only higher-ranking police officers in good humour but also the ministerial staff in the District Police office. Yet they prefer to serve in the organization as they have the realization of the uselessness of hierarchy vis-à-vis the Home Guards in the place of service. A jawan in the Home Guard like cases mentioned above stand for several benefits admissible for usual government



employees not to say that they are not even given priority in Government jobs. In such conditions, the Area Commanders play the role of trustees and not only support the aggrieved but also efficiently integrate them with the organization. Hence, the Home Guard Organization – especially of Tirunelveli district – is characterized by a combination of great ideals propounded by Mahatma Gandhi namely trusteeship and self-sacrifice. Therefore, the hypothesis ‘a fragment of the Gandhian idea has been successfully incorporated into the policing system through Home Guards which is well reflected in the organization at Tirunelveli district’ stands proved.