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Title - **Gender-Wise**

Women in Research: Possibilities and Perplexities

The very title, stated above, of the **Webinar** that **CERSSE, JAIN** organised evokes two immediate responses: Do we need to discuss women in research? Are we still discussing women in research? When read quickly, both questions sound almost the same. Almost, because the first is tethered to the assumption that gender is unimportant/insignificant and hence, questioning the need for it to be discussed. The second question is tied to the assumption that it “should” be understood that women in research is a pertinent topic and hence, a discussion on it reveals why it is not considered important. The starkly contrasting assumptions informing the two questions reflect how the topic of gender is usually approached. Such assumptions create the need for the academia and research community to introspect and therefore his webinar held on February 18th, 2021, became an engaging space where attempts to unpack such assumptions were rigorously exercised.

The facts pertaining to gender based representations were discussed by the three panelists and the uniqueness came with each panelist and the host, reflecting on our personal journeys as researchers and this journey’s intersection with the construct of gender. Testing the tenacity of the first assumption, **Prof. Ellora Puri, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Jammu**, expressed the pressing need for women in research to build networks which not only welcomed women but, actively promoted their research. She also acknowledged the hurdles to accessing the field, gaining grants and recognition—all familiar tropes of gendered spaces and stereotypes that pose significant challenges for women researchers. Turning the discussion towards women as subjects of research, **Dr. Suparana Katyaini, Assistant Professor, School of Livelihoods and Development, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Hyderabad** dealt with how women are approached as subjects of research by other women. Such researchers carry the burdens of gender carry while grappling with the lived experiences of gendered subjects. Such a consciousness results in unique points of view and research which otherwise would be missed.

Straddling both the assumptions, I tried to approach the perplexity of the topic by introspecting on how the subject matter of research can be gendered. Working on civil-military relations opens up newer masculinities which would not be encountered in the quotidian experience. Here is where I’ll throw in a third



assumption— contingent on my gender, the prevailing assumption was that I would work on women in conflict zones and their lived realities in the civil-military domain. Overcoming this assumption my research studies the masculinity on the military for what it is within authoritarian states. Such an assumption implores the research community (even the social sciences which statistically has more women) to actively engage with gender. Place these three assumptions side-by-side, what will emerge is a rich picture of complexities of how women in research perceive themselves, perceive their research and how the research perceives women. It's interesting that perception comes to the forefront on the discussion when research in its pragmatic sense is driven by positivist traditions. Such assumptions push not only women but all genders across the spectrum to build new narratives within research. After all, the fundamental task of research is to answer questions. In order to fulfill this task, the researcher must have a critical bent of mind. Such criticality must seep into how researchers (whichever gender they identify with) approach their research puzzles by testing the strength of such assumptions. Such critical researchers will create new possibilities for research and over the perplexities.

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Webinar)