

*Poornima Garg is a 2017 PPS officer. She is currently serving as the Circle Officer (CO) of Nehru Colony, Dehradun. She previously served as the CO of Special Task Force (STF) in Kumaon. She has served as the CO, Cybercrime in Kumaon region and as the CO in Haridwar City and Sadar region of Haridwar district. She studied BDS in Dehradun*



### **Interview**

1. What motivated you to join the civil services?

**Right from my school days, I always wanted to do something worthwhile. I grew up reading about the serving officers, their responsibilities and work profile. I found it very interesting because their nature of work was such that it was not restricted to one particular thing. It has a lot of avenues to explore and provides services with bigger outreach and greater impact. So, I decided to pursue civil services.**

2. As a woman bureaucrat in India, what unique challenges have you encountered in your career, and how have you overcome them?

**As a serving woman police officer, the biggest challenge is maintaining a balance between your professional and personal life and delivering on both the fronts. I believe**

**that you cannot be in an important position professionally and not perform as efficiently as your male counterpart otherwise you would be a liability to the system. Similarly, on the personal front your responsibility increases if you're a mother and that cannot be neglected. So yes it's challenging but with proper time management, and a supporting family you can achieve that. I have been fortunate to have a strong support system, also the senior officers have been understanding .**

**Also in everyday working you come across small small things. You have to learn to see the bigger picture, remove negativity, ignore petty things and have an open mind.**

3. As someone who has worked in both cybercrime and traditional law enforcement roles, what have you learnt from both of these realms? Do you believe that technology will play a pivotal role in evolving law enforcement in the future?

**My experience in both cybercrime and traditional law enforcement roles have really shown to me the evolving nature of crime. In cybercrime, we need to navigate digital complexities, and emphasize on specialized technological skills for everyone. In traditional law enforcement, we deal with physical threats to public safety, which requires a different kind of training to protect people. With the use of technology, the nature of criminal activity has already changed and cyber crimes are on the rise, not just in developed countries and places, but also in underdeveloped and rural parts of our country-it is very common for people to be scammed. But just as technology has created a new threat, it can provide a solution to that as well and this is what we are working to achieve.**

4. I understand you are currently serving as the Circle Officer (CO) of Nehru Colony, Dehradun. What are some of your roles and responsibilities in this position?

**Certainly. In this post, it is my job to maintain law and order in the precinct, oversee crime prevention strategies, and coordinate with various agencies. Investigative duties also fall under my responsibility. A large part of this role is community engagement. I work towards making law enforcement accessible to the people and bridging barriers between the two. I organize and implement outreach programs to make the public more engaged with and aware of our work, so that we can all work together to prevent crime.**

5. You've previously worked as the Circle Officer in Haridwar City and Sadar region of Haridwar district. How did your experiences differ in urban and rural policing, and what did you find most rewarding about each?

**My tenure as the CO in both regions was very different. In Haridwar City, the challenges were more urban. There was a high population density and developmental activities were to take place, so I had to ensure public consensus with all our decisions, which would often lead to many delays. In the Sadar region, being a rural area, there were different social challenges. Traditional disputes existed between communities primarily on matters of land and farming-related activities. Managing events and large religious gatherings were a big part of my role in both places.**

**I think the rewarding part for me was always the end, when I got through the hurdles, and got to see vibrant communities coming together and cooperating which would ensure the success of a project. The best part of my job is to be able to serve the people of my country, and that is when I felt I was doing it properly and that gave me a sense of satisfaction.**

- 6. Could you share some insights into the trends of cybercrime you've observed in the last few years, particularly against women and children. Why do you think this has become so common in today's world and what measures have you implemented or would you recommend to address these concerns?**

**Over the past few years, there has been a major rise in cybercrime trends targeting women and children in particular. It makes me upset to even say this, but I think we all know that even today these are the more vulnerable sections of society; and people want to exploit that knowledge. There have been so many cases of stalking, and online harassment against teenage girls that I have come across in the last few years.**

**The internet gives a sense of anonymity to people which makes them think they can get away with their actions but that is not true. Nothing can be fully erased from the internet, you will always leave some digital footprint behind. So even though it may seem easy to commit a crime, it is equally easy for us to catch you, and we have been increasingly catching more and more of these cases in recent times.**

**I also feel there should be more emphasis on cybersecurity education in schools and young people should be made aware of what they should and shouldn't do online. Digital literacy is so important and we have been working towards increasing access to it, especially for low-income sections of our society.**

7. In your experience, what steps can be taken to encourage more women to pursue careers in the civil services and policymaking roles?

**One thing that is great in recent times is that the internet has made a lot more information available that wasn't so easily accessible earlier. Now girls are aware of all the various fields they can get into and opportunities in front of them and can make conscious decisions. Information is always key, and though we have already made great strides here there are still parts of our country, especially the rural areas, that lag behind. We should focus on making those girls also aware of the reach of civil services.**

8. What advice would you offer to young women who aspire to pursue careers in policy and governance?

**I would tell them to continue to follow their hearts and not worry about other people's comments and taunts. Work hard, and focus on yourself. It will all pay off eventually.**