
SHABNAM SAIFI


HANSHUL GUPTA


NARENDER KAUR DOGRA


ANJU DAHIYA


ANITA WADHWA


SUKANYA

HER BEAT, HER STORY

She is the Law

They bust drug rings. They tackle cyber fraud. In their years in the force, these women have proved their mettle — whether it is questioning suspects, analysing evidence, or leading operations. Meet Delhi's six women sleuths leading from the front

PRAGYNESH & SAKSHI CHAND
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THEY WERE once on the margins of police investigations, confined to handling cases of crimes against women. Today, Delhi Police's women sleuths are leading from the front: busting drug syndicates, cracking down on human trafficking, and tackling financial fraud and cybercrime.

The Delhi Police does not tick all boxes of gender equality, but the growing presence of women in investigative roles reflects institutional progress and personal resilience of individual police officers. *The Indian Express* spoke to six women investigators on why they joined the force and what keeps them going.

ANITA WADHWA (45)
Head Constable, Crime Branch, Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF)

It was September 2024. A Crime Branch team, including Anita, were heading to a familiar drug den — Outer Delhi's Sultanpuri. She had been with the premier anti-narcotics unit for two years by then.

"A woman, Alka, was one of the most prominent names in the drugs business in Sultanpuri," recalled Anita. The team entered the three-storey house where Alka lived, and Anita was sent to handcuff her. Then, all hell broke loose.

"I hadn't even touched her when people started to pour out of rooms. More came in through the main gate. There were 60-80 people," Anita said.

Anita's instructions were clear — grab Alka and run towards the police van. "Bricks were flying. One hit my head. The police were surrounded. A head constable was being beaten. I managed to get into the PCR van. Local police had come in, and they rescued my team members," Anita said.

Then, someone smashed the back window of the police vehicle. Shards of glass went into Anita's back and waist. "For the next 10 days, I couldn't sleep on my back and left side," she said.

Anita was born in Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan, and her family moved to Delhi when she was 2 years old. Her father, who tried his hand at a tours-and-travels business before opening a small tailoring shop in their two-room home in Moti Nagar, was a strict disciplinarian. "If we were to be home at 7 pm, and it was 7.01 pm, we would wish we'd never gone out...," Anita recalled.

While in her second year at Delhi University's Janki Devi College in 1999, Anita did a course in stenography and joined a private firm. In 2001, she sat for the Delhi Police Constable exam. When Anita was selected, the family was apprehensive. But then, "who doesn't want a government job for their child?" she said.

Anita's first posting was at Maurice Nagar police station. In 2003, she married Om Prakash Wadhwa, a tours-and-travels businessman. "Our families were well acquainted. One day, he asked my father for my hand in marriage. Never asked me, though," she chuckled.

> **In our culture... women don't have much of a say in household or societal matters... But I wanted to feel acknowledged**
>
> **SHABNAM SAIFI,** SUB-INSPECTOR

In 2009, when there were vacancies for the post of head constable, Anita could not apply because she was pregnant with her second child at the time. But another set of vacancies opened up in 2013. She cleared the test and, in 2022, she got her dream transfer to the Crime Branch.

Anita now awaits another promotion — to Assistant Sub-Inspector.

SUKANYA (38)
Head Constable, Crime Branch, Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU)

This January, Head Constable Sukanya got a lead on two minor sisters who had been missing since October 2024. Her boss, Inspector Virender Kumar, asked Sukanya and Head Constable Anuj to head to a town in Maharashtra.

On January 6, Sukanya and Anuj arrested the man who had lured the sisters through Instagram. "It's hard when you go to another state. The locals are hostile... You don't know the language. You try to act tough where you can. But sometimes it's pure luck," Sukanya said.

In her early days as a constable at the AHTU, Sukanya dealt mainly with paperwork — until Virender nudged her into the field.

Once, while on assignment in Bihar, she had to literally snatch an accused from his people in an open field. "My team was far away. The accused's family would not let me touch him. I followed them as they walked towards their village... For almost 30 minutes, I was fending off a crowd," Sukanya recalled.

The girl from Ladpur village in Haryana's Jhajjhar always had grit. "My father trained me in wrestling for years; I represented my school and college state-level competitions," Sukanya said.

From a young age, she wanted to be in the police. "When they arrived in our village in their jeeps, I marvelled at the attention they got. Everyone wanted to be seen with the kotwal. I wanted that," Sukanya said.

After graduating from Maharshi Dayanand University in Rohtak, Sukanya told her father she wanted to join the police. "He didn't ask me a single question. From the next day, he trained me at the *akhada*. He taught me how to ride a Royal Enfield motorcycle. He prepared me in the best way he could," she recalled.

In 2010, Sukanya cleared the Delhi Police Constable exam and was posted to the Crime Branch. The following year, she married Harish Chakara, a constable in the force, and moved to Kanjhawala. In 2012, the couple had their first child.

In December 2015, Sukanya got one of her early big assignments — an alleged racket in UP in which poor girls were being "sold" to older men. "I went with the raiding party to western UP, and found about 15 minor girls. I was asked to take them out one by one. The way they held my hand... that's the feeling that I work for," Sukanya said.

She has more desk work now. "My son is 13... I have to be there for him. But I still get calls from families who thank me for bringing back their daughter or son," she said.

ANJU DAHIYA (38)
Inspector, Economic Offences Wing (EOW)

Anju's cabin on the first floor of the EOW police station in Mandir Marg looks like a lawyer's chamber — a large desk, many files, and a computer. "I wanted to become a lawyer," she said.

But she narrowly failed to clear the judicial services examination. The B.Sc graduate from DU's Kirori Mal College needed a job, and she found one at a call centre. But her mother wanted her to get a government job — so in 2009, Anju sat for the Delhi Police Constable exam.

After joining the force in 2010, Anju was posted to the Shahbad Dairy police station. In 2014, she investigated the rape of a minor. By then, the force was already beginning to see its women officers in a range of other roles.

"Women head constables were assigned rape or molestation cases, or perhaps to contain women members of an accused's family... in my batch, around 85 women head constables were recruited," Anju said.

She was promoted to the rank of Inspector in 2022, when she joined the cyber police station in West Delhi. Anju later served in Anti-Terrorist Operations (ATO) at the Tilak Nagar and Punjabi Bagh police stations.

Alongside work, Anju and her husband, an inspector at Punjabi Bagh police station, were raising their family. "We have two children; we take turns to get them ready for school, to drop and pick them up. My husband is the better cook," she laughed.

Anju was transferred to the EOW in May 2025. After more than 16 years in khaki and on the ground, this was different. "Everyone was in formals, crunching numbers, discussing company law... There were no daily calls about fights, thefts, murders," she said.

Currently, Anju is investigating a case involving a group of people who were duped of more than Rs 1 crore in an alleged land-grab scheme. "I think this is the closest I will come to being a lawyer," she smiled.

NARENDER KAUR DOGRA (48)
Assistant-Sub Inspector, South Western Range, Crime Branch

Narender, a national-level volleyball and kho-kho player, wanted a job that would challenge her to be bold. So in 1996, when she was studying political science in DU's Daulat Ram College, Narender and two of her friends filled in a form to join the police.

She was selected, dropped out of college and joined Delhi Police. In 1997, Narender married Deep Kumar Dogra, whom she had met as a teen during volleyball training. They had two sons, and then Narender returned to college. "I pursued my graduation through open university in 2003," she said.

She recalls one of her early cases, involving a 40-year-old woman who had accused her partner of raping her. "The facts of the case turned out to be different from what she had stated. I presented the facts in court, but I was pulled up," she said.

Then there was the search for a missing girl in Rajasthan. "At the spot, we encountered a water body on one side and dense forest on the other. It had taken us around three weeks to find her, but she ran off into the forest," Narender said.

The team followed her. "It was getting dark, but we knew we couldn't stop. We kept going and, at last, we found her," she said.

Narender's husband has been her huge support. "...During Diwali or any festival, Deep handles the household," Narender said. Deep is in the transport business.

SHABNAM SAIFI (37)
Sub-Inspector, Cyber Unit, Crime Branch

The desire to carve her own identity is what drew Shabnam to the uniform.

"In our culture... women don't have much of a say in household or societal matters... But I wanted to feel acknowledged and respected," she says.

While pursuing a Bachelor's degree in English from a DU college, Shabnam was also running a tuition centre. One of her students happened to be a constable who had enrolled to improve his English. Fluent in the language, Shabnam realised that she, too, had the potential to join the police force.

Before joining the Delhi Police, she worked as a head constable in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police for two years. Her family was not enthused, she says.

"Then I appeared for the Delhi Police SI exam and cleared it with merit... Ever since, there has been no looking back," she says.

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> **SUKANYA,** HEAD CONSTABLE

Her childhood friend was the one she confided in about her goals. Months before joining the force, the two got married. He was from another community — they got married despite the absence of their immediate families at the wedding.

Today, they are parents to an eight-year-old daughter. "Both families took time to come around... Even now, people make insensitive comments in front of my husband...," says Shabnam.

Growing up, Shabnam wanted to be a journalist. "I even enrolled in a journalism school, but the fees were too high, so I couldn't continue," she says.

Shabnam pursued BA and MA in English and multiple courses on women-related issues. She now wants to pursue PhD.

She says there are several cases that she considers feathers in her cap. One such case involved a Kashmiri woman. She had married a man in 2020. But he allegedly sexually assaulted one of her daughters from her first marriage and later kidnapped her. Shabnam was part of the team that arrested him in Dehradun, four years later. "The accused hasn't got bail till now, and I'm proud of that," she says.

Currently, she is focusing on digital arrest cases.

HANSHUL GUPTA (33)
Sub-Inspector, Cyber Police Station, North Delhi

Hanshul joined the force in 2019 and has been working at the North Delhi Cyber police station since its inauguration in December 2021.

For her, cyber investigations are tedious but exciting. "It involves a lot of work — writing emails to platforms, scanning call records, IP addresses, and accounts. The most challenging part is that cyber fraud methods are evolving every single day," Hanshul says.

But her background in BTech and her previous job as a software engineer have proven to be a great asset.

What excites her most is learning new investigative techniques and managing the forensic lab, which she is in charge of.

On average, she meets three to four people who have been duped each day. She says most cases involving women follow a similar pattern. "A man connects with you on social media, starts video calling, but never turns on his own camera. He convinces you to switch on yours, and eventually pressures you to strip or send intimate photos. A woman or young girl should simply refuse. Once that line is crossed, the fraud begins, followed by threats and blackmail," she says.

Hanshul is married. Her husband works in the IT sector and lives in Rajasthan. He makes weekend trips to visit her in Delhi.

In her free time, she loves watching Chinese and K-dramas. Currently, she is hooked to 'Wonderland of Love'.

LONGER VERSION
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