SMASHING BARRIERS

FEMALE Bouncers THRIVE IN A MALE DOMINATED INDUSTRY

Security agencies estimate that in the past few years the number of female bouncers has seen a three-fold rise.

A female bouncer’s typical shift at a nightclub starts from 8 pm and goes on until as late as 2 am. Their job is to stay vigilant, resolve fights among customers, stop drug abuse in women’s washrooms, look out for men misbehaving with women and throw them out, and drop drunk women to their cars or taxis. This trend, which started with the hospitality sector, has now extended to weddings and other events including IPL matches. Bouncers are also used by private agencies that provide security cover to celebrities and corporates.

“Today is the era of women’s emancipation. They are consolidating their feet in the security agencies. Not just pubs, corporates hire them too to ensure safety of their female staff. Most of them work in shifts of 12 hours to keep a watch on their teenage girls,” said Anubhav Khvani, owner of the Delhi-based Denetin Services.

Khvani added that there is a heavy demand for female bouncers in weddings and private parties.

“The demand is huge. Many times we run out of female bouncers or personal security officers (FSOs).” Khvani said.

“Most of these women bouncers come either from the less affluent areas of the city or belong to the smaller towns. They are often biased in terms of wages, female bouncers are paid more than their male counterparts.”

While the salaries of both male and female bouncers are the same in pubs, during events and weddings, women tend to earn more. According to the approximate figures shared by the security agencies this newspaper contacted, male bouncers get Rs 800-Rs 1200 per shift, whereas female bouncers’ wages range from Rs 1500-Rs 2000 per shift. On average, a female bouncer earns anything between Rs 25,000 to Rs 35,000 a month.

“Clients have often appreciated the work of the female bouncers. The security agencies tend to incentivise these women to maintain their network of female bouncers,” a representative of a Delhi-based security agency told this newspaper.

RISE IN DEMAND

A rise in the number of women frequenting nightclubs and bars has necessitated the need to hire female bouncers to make these places more “women friendly”. As a result, many young and middle-aged women are taking up private security services as a legitimate employment opportunity.

“We all know the male crowd in New Delhi. Women are scared to go out and enjoy themselves because of them. But when they know that a particular pub has a female bouncer, they choose that place over another. More and more bar owners are realising this and that is why we are growing in number,” said Premya, a female bouncer at Elf Cafe & Bar in Hauz Khas.

While there is no study to quantify this growth, the security agencies estimate that in the past few years the number of female bouncers has seen a three-fold rise.

“There has been a phenomenal growth in the number of female bouncers. Earlier employers had inclusions, but now women have proved their potential in this field. Around seven years ago we had around 300 female bouncers, but now the number has increased to 4,000 plus,” Ravi Nair, owner and head human resource and administration, TOPSGRUP, a leading Mumbai-based security company, told The Sunday Guardian.

Nair further noted that the rise in demand for female bouncers can be attributed to higher efficacy and the sincerity factor associated with the women.

“At work, women are generally more vigilant. Also, it becomes very difficult for male bouncers to handle women in pubs or ushering women during an event, or say an IPL match. Female bouncers come in very handy in such situations,” said Nair.

Seconding Nair’s view, Chanda, a female bouncer at ABC Reloaded in Hauz Khas, pointed out that female bouncers are more effective than their male counterparts in not just handling drunk women, but also in managing drunk men. “Rich drunk boys misbehave with male bouncers, making their job tougher. But they cannot do the same with female bouncers. Also there have been instances where drunken women have accused male bouncers of molestation. In view of this, pub owners use female bouncers to handle the situation,” claimed Chanda.

Security agencies and various pub owners unanimously told this newspaper that female bouncers are also effective in checking drug abuse in the pubs or at other events. “Owners tell us to identify the junkies and stop them. Many times boys will hide other high-end drugs in the bags of their female friends. Our job is to detect that and push these people out,” said 40-year-old Kamlesh, a female bouncer at ABC Reloaded. Kamlesh further said that they are always on the lookout for troublemakers and at the slightest sign of nuisance they take swift action. “We are women and we know the male gare. We sense these troublemakers and keep a close watch on them. We are here to protect women from such men and we take our job very seriously as we have daughters back home,” Kamlesh added.

NOT AN EASY JOB

With the increase in the number of bouncers, there is a need to regulate the industry in terms of training and security of these bouncers. Recalling an incident in which she was attacked by a man after her work hours, Nisa asserted that security agencies must provide a good training regime for female bouncers. She also said that there should be adequate security arrangements for them from the employers’ end.

“It’s not an easy job. One day a stranger followed me while I was going back home in an auto-rickshaw. I didn’t panic and acted as if I worked for the police. I fake-called a police inspector and asked him to send a 10-15 constables to that location immediately. The guy got scared and ran away. But not everyone is trained to deal with such situations,” said Nisa.

Another female bouncer, Pooja said that while physical training was not a major requirement, it was their firmness and conflict-resolving techniques that often came in handy. “We rarely see a situation getting out of hand. Even if we do, we have our male colleagues to back us up. A firm and straight voice always does the trick. Security agencies should provide training to deal with various situations,” Pooja said.

Commenting on the security aspect of the female bouncers, Khivani said, “We never send female bouncers without the company of at least one male bouncer. Also, we make sure that the employer provides them a proper pick-up and drop facilities.

Nair also claimed that TOPSGRUP took utmost care of the security of the female bouncers. “We train them from point-to-point. Our control room is in touch with them until they reach home safely,” he said.