CHAPTER ONE
COMMUNITY POLICING: THE CONCEPT

1.1 Introduction
Community policing as a concept has its roots in ancient Indian history. This chapter takes a review of the concept as it was visualized in the past and how it has changed over a period of time.

1.2 Historical Review
India has been prominently a feudal society with some tradition of associating citizens in governance during the ancient times. Creation of a police organization and specific powers of law enforcement, with preventive, investigative and prosecuting duties can be traced back to ‘Kautilya’.

Subsequently during the time of ‘Mughals’, police was given secondary importance, with military and collection of revenue being the focused areas. Citizens shut themselves in their community life where they became self sufficient and the orders of the rulers were obeyed without resistance as they dealt mainly with the collection of revenue and not with good governance as such. This wedge between the rulers and the ruled continued during the time of the ‘Mughals’ and the British. Latter in due course replaced the semi military model of policing with civil police system. Castes being self-sufficient, each with a specific task, meeting the overall needs of the agrarian society; citizens were however not involved in the affairs of governance either during the Mughal or British periods.
1.2.1 Being peaceful by nature, policing was in any case not a major issue in the agriculture dominated Indian society. What ever the needs, were met at local levels through various forums such as ‘Panchayats’. It was only during the spate of violent crime like dacoities/robberies (by ‘Thugs’) which increased during the British rule that a need for creation of formal police force in India was felt. Initially the policing was carried out in a rudimentary and later in a more developed form.

1.2.2 Some important landmarks in the journey of introduction of a formal police system in India are as below :

**Introduction of a police system in Sindh 1843,** It was similar to royal Irish Constabulary. Three Collectorates of Sindh viz. Hyderabad, Karachi and Shikarpur were each placed under a British military officer with a European sub-collector under them. These officers performed both revenue and police functions and tried minor criminal cases. At the district level police was under the command of a European lieutenant directly responsible to the Provincial Police Chief (a British army officer) and through him to the Chief Commissioner. Serious offences were tried by a military commission.

**Extension of the above in Bombay** was undertaken by Governor Clerk in 1848. He proposed the office of Commissioner of Police for Mumbai and Superintendents of Police in-charge of police at the district level, working under the district magistrate. He also revived rural policing and most of his suggestions were introduced between 1852 and 1855.

**Police Commission of 1860** that recommended a homogenous police system with far reaching effects. It abolished the military police,
recommended civil constabulary with district based police system. Inspector General was to be the overall in-charge of the province with district superintendents who were to work under the general control and supervision of the district magistrates. Posts of Inspectors, Head constable, Sergeants and Constables were created. Retention of village police was another important feature.

**Indian Penal Code 1860** was introduced with precise definition of each crime, leading to an efficient criminal justice system in the country.

**Police Act 1861** was based on the recommendations of Police Commission 1860. Inspector general of police was made responsible for the working, discipline and efficient running of police in the state. The para-military structure gave way to district police units with uniformity all over the country. Posts of Head constable, Sergeants and Constables were established. Police lines for staff and funds for their uniforms too were introduced. The organization and system proved to be effective in controlling violent crime like robberies and dacoities.

**Indian Evidence Act 1872** introduced the law of evidence for appreciating the investigation carried out by police and presenting the same in the courts. It continues to operate even today with minor changes.

**Second Police Commission of 1902.** It created Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the posts of Range Deputy Inspector Generals (DIGs) by dividing the province into ranges. The Commission further created Railway Police, the cadre of Sub Inspectors and Armed Police at each district head quarter. The system continued till Independence.
Islington 1912 and Lee Commissions 1924 were announced. Their recommendations led to substantial recruitment of Indians in the police force.

Independence of India in 1947 and proclamation of the constitution 1950 are major landmarks in the journey of Indian police. Protection of Fundamental Rights became the most important duty of Indian police. This shift from foreign rulers to democracy changed the atmosphere completely. Law enforcement considered to be a tool for suppressing the local populace became accountable to public. This change in police role has taken considerable time to consolidate and citizens continue to fear the police despite its efforts to portray itself as a ‘service’ and not ‘force’

The appointment of the Kerala Police Re- Organisation Committee in 1949 was followed by a succession of Police Commissions appointed by different State Governments, mainly during sixties and seventies. Local Acts, compilation of State Police Manuals also continued, law enforcement being the state subject.

Criminal Procedure Code 1973 was another major attempt to streamline the investigative and court trial procedures. It brought uniformity and clearly laid down the restriction on state vis-a- vis rights of citizens.

The National Police Commission 1977, the first after Independence headed by Sh. Dharam Vira, produced eight reports and recommended overhauling of police functioning. The Commission aimed at professionalizing police department and suggested measures that would
reduce political interference, bring transparency and accountability to police working. However certain key recommendations have not been implemented.

**Various national and state level committees** have followed without substantial changes in the police system.

### 1.3 Present Scenario

For a long time the police were used as an effective tool to strengthen the hands of the rulers and to quell various rebellions. It was only after independence that serious thought was given to police as a service and not a tool to exploit the citizens, though even today the service element is many times conspicuously absent. The result has been catastrophic for the system.

#### 1.3.1 Despite putting in unusually long hours of work for any government department, citizens' satisfaction with police is way below the expected levels. This has caused a serious ‘you’ versus ‘us’ divide, unhealthy for any social system. There have been some attempts to salvage the situation, a few meaningful, others superficial. Political leadership after independence has mainly used police for its own ends and not made systematic efforts to strengthen the institution of law enforcement; it has been shortsighted, unable to get out of the temptation to use police for its immediate ends at tremendous long term cost to the society.

#### 1.3.2 Police leadership to be equally held accountable for the current has low image of police in India however carried out some experiments to bring professional content and service element in law enforcement. It has not introduced any far reaching reforms that are needed but has
tinkered with the system and tried to introduce citizens’ participation. One such experiment has been community policing projects introduced by different officers; sometimes backed by the state at other times purely local police leadership initiatives. Some of them received popular support and media attention causing rippling effect. While many community policing projects are pure public relation exercises a few have been genuine attempts to involve citizens in policing ‘themselves’.

1.3.3 The police department in India has of late been facing serious resource crunch in manpower and equipment. It has perforce been made to seek community collaboration in attending to its increasingly vast duties. Citizens’ participation in law enforcement is thus observed across the country especially as the issues of internal security have caused serious strain on the existing over stretched and rickety machinery of law enforcement.

1.4 Definition And Objectives Of Community Policing

1.4.1 The concept of ‘Community Policing’ means, citizens taking lead in identifying the issues of crime / order in their area with police playing the role of facilitators for enabling the citizens to attend to those issues. Besides being a philosophy it is an effective tool and is being tried by police all over the world. Fortunately for Indian police, it started these initiatives in sync with rest of the world and many of projects have successfully brought the citizens and police together. Law enforcement being the state subject, there has not been any one initiative from the top i.e. the Central Government level but many at the local police station, district and state level ones. The downside of this bottom up approach is lack of adequate documentation at field level. The benefit however is that the concept and the strategy are taking roots at the ground level and not
being imposed from the top or outside. This trial and error at the field may in the end lead to a sound and well rounded tool where the stakeholders have owned the end product before its formal launch.

There are many definitions of community policing.

1.4.2 **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)**

while recommending a model for community policing during 2003, has referred to it as ‘normal policing of a society in consultation, cooperation and partnership with the community at large’\(^2\). Objectives of community policing as per the Bureau are ‘To minimize the gap between policemen and citizens to such an extent that the policemen become an integrated part of the community they serve and they earn the acceptance and trust of the community, leading to spontaneous co-operation from people in crime prevention and security in local area and resulting in a lasting partnership between the police and the community’\(^3\). As for the mission of community policing the Bureau recommends “To prevent and detect crime, maintain order and ensure safety and security of the community in partnership with the people and to provide the community efficient, transparent and responsive law-enforcement machinery which perpetuates the rule of law”.

1.4.3 **Utarakhand website** elaborating on Community policing describes it as “A collaborative effort between Police and Community to identify problems of crime, disorder and involves all elements of the community in the search for solutions to these problems. This concept brings the police and community into a closer working relationship and calls for greater responsibility on citizens.”\(^4\)

While emphasizing the collaborative approach of community policing, the above definition makes a point about greater responsibility of the citizens.
It is an often observed phenomenon all over the world that citizens are quick to criticize law enforcement agencies without accepting any responsibility on their part. Through community policing role of citizens gets highlighted leading to their active involvement in policing related issues instead of passive criticism by them.

1.4.4 Andhra Pradesh police website describes Community Policing as the philosophy that “provides an organizational strategy that motivates police officers to solve community problems in new and innovative ways. It envisages that the police must closely work with the people in the community by allowing average citizens a say in the police process, in exchange for their support and participation.”

The above definition highlights community policing as an organizational strategy, thus it is not a philosophical, theoretical proposition but an effective tool. Another attribute mentioned above is innovation that is the natural by product of community policing as each field officer with help of citizens finds innovative and specific issue related solutions. There is no imposition from the top.

1.4.5 Wikipedia describes Community policing or neighbourhood policing as “a policing strategy and philosophy based on the notion that community interaction and support can help control crime, with community members helping to identify suspects, and bring problems to the attention of police.” However this is a very limited definition in its scope as citizens are expected to only ‘interact and support’ police. The term as envisaged in the current study has a wider role for the citizens who not only identify their problems and issues but also solve them and police are the facilitators.
1.4.6 John Riley in his study ‘Community Policing: Perspectives from the Field’ describes Community policing as “…a philosophy of policing that requires police officers to act with increased levels of autonomy and professional discretion to solve problems and to develop partnerships with the community.”

It is true that community policing also involves delegation to the field level officers who take on the spot decisions thus decentralizing policing. It also encourages officers to respond fast and in a transparent manner as they are held accountable by the local community. Therefore logically delegation, decentralization, quick response, transparency and participation become essential ingredients of community policing. And all these are hallmarks of good policing.

1.4.7 Community Policing as defined by the U.S. Department of Justice, is “a philosophy that promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and police-community partnerships. Community policing focuses on crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services that include aspects of traditional law enforcement as well as prevention, problem-solving, community engagement, and partnerships. The community policing model balances reactive response to calls for service with proactive problem-solving centered on the causes of crime and disorder. Community policing requires police and citizens to join together as partners in the course of both identifying and effectively addressing these issues.”

The above definition reinforces traditional law enforcement model but adds the problem solving attribute of community policing. History of US law enforcement shows that the old method of a cop taking rounds in his beat with friendly relations with citizens was replaced by a cop in the car,
distant from the community but available in case of emergencies. The traditional bond with the community was replaced with modern gadgets that ensured speed in response but severed the bond between the citizens and the police man. Over a period of time US model of policing became reactive than proactive. Community policing is not only a proactive model but emphasizes citizens’ participation in problem solving of crime/disorder related issues. It thus means identifying the causes of such crime/disorder by the community and the cop together. In this way community policing is long term strategy that goes in to the cause instead of merely reacting to the symptoms.

1.4.8 Web site of common wealth human rights Initiative
Chhattisgarh Project describes Community policing as “developing successful strategies and problem solving techniques to effectively combat crime. Community policing is both an organizational philosophy as well as an operating strategy both to control crime and bridge the growing psychological divide between the communities on the one hand and police on the other.”

That community policing is a bridge between police and common man is very true as far as India is concerned. Having been used by the British to curb citizens during pre independence days, citizens in India still look upon police as a tool of state harassment rather than a friend. Therefore in the Indian scenario, community policing can become a very important tool to win over the support and confidence of citizens.

1.4.9 Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State UK talks of community policing as “not policing done to people; it is policing done with people and with their active co-operation. This is about driving organizational and cultural change in the service. The public is entitled to feel that as users of the
service their views are important, they are listened to and their feedback is acted on to improve the service and drive the change.”

The trend therefore is on recognizing the citizen’s right to demand participative policing and to look upon police as a service provider; the cultural change envisaged in this process is painful for law enforcing agencies in various countries including India. However in tune with the egalitarian thoughts of the modern world, police all over are involved in the process of change that emphasizes community participation.

1.5 Characteristics Of Community Policing
Following are some special features of community policing.

- **Decentralization** of decision making as community policing empowers field level officer to identify the problem with the help of local citizens, devise and execute a strategy to solve the same. He thus takes on the spot decision without waiting for instruction from the top. Tackling of issues at local level leads to speed and efficiency. Field officers welcome the decentralized system that empowers them and the local residents.

- **Citizens’ participation** is the most valuable content in community policing. In-fact they decide the issues they want to take on, priorities them and the police officer is either a catalyst or facilitator. It is pertinent that community policing is an inclusive concept and involves citizens from all strata and walks of life in dialogue and problem solving. It is a broad concept and gives space to the weaker sections of the society including women, youth, and senior citizens. Community policing projects that are not inclusive in their approach remain limited in their output.
• **Problem solving** is at the heart of this approach. Police and citizens meet not for simple interaction but with the specific purpose to delineate the problematic issues and resolve the same. Initially most community policing initiatives are rambling exercises till a clear pattern of problem solving emerges. Forums which fail to have this approach slowly fade away. Thus problem solving is essential to community policing.

• **Consultation** is the process adopted for community policing; a police officer is not expected to decide the issues unilaterally, nor is it expected to be so on the part of citizens. The earlier semi military models of law enforcement had no place for consultation with citizens that is the basic ingredient of modern day policing.

• **Transparency** is an essential characteristic for the success of any community policing project or citizens tend to lose faith it. Identification of local threats and the process to tackle them are to be debated and discussed in open forums before embarking on a particular strategy. Consultative process by definition is expected to be transparent.

### 1.6 Conclusion

Thus community policing in the Indian scenario as well as internationally, involves cultural change as in most of the countries semi-military and highly hierarchical model of policing has been prevalent. It involves intensive training and sensitization of policemen to accept the equal role of citizens. Police as a service provider and directly accountable to citizens is an alien concept and needs cultural change at the organizational level and attitudinal change at the personal level for policemen. It also means training the citizens for meaningful participation and change in their thinking as most of the time community ‘looks up’ to law enforcement instead of engaging itself in the process of decision making as partners.