Chapter 1

Introduction
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In all societies law enforcement is a highly visible activity in that area of social control usually called 'law and order'. Law enforcement agencies reflect the cultures, which have produced them, and, in turn, play a part in maintaining their social fabrics and preserving their value systems. When change occurs in society new pressures and demands are generated. New social structures and institutions are then required to cope with these changes. The dynamics of society emphatically require institutional responses to keep pace with normative and valuational changes.

"Society recognized the need for order and, via the formal institution of government, established a police force. Police become that part of the society charged with the specific duty of maintaining the Queen's Peace; they are not separated from the public but are an expression of the desire of communities to regulate themselves. Power is granted to police organizations so that an orderly society can be brought about and authority is given to them to exercise that power. Thus is brought about a complex set of relationships between police, central and local government and the community, which begets equally complex problems stemming from the nature of those relationships; the extent to which policing may be subjected to both central and local government interference, is particularly an acute concern of police officers, especially at Chief Constable level" (Rhind: 1979).
In his study of ‘Hill Town’, Homans (1950) had observed that due to the weakening of informal social control the social behavior of the small group underwent changes. In the small township where he undertook the study, primary relations dominated and the fear of gossip and ostracisation was strong enough to fear the consequences of actions. But as secondary relations settle in, weakened social control lead to situations requiring intervention of formal bodies in hitherto areas of informal social control.

Law enforcement agencies reflect the cultures, which have produced them, and, in turn, play a part in maintaining their social fabrics and preserving their value systems. In a period of accelerating and complex social change, tremendous pressures have been generated that bear heavily and confusingly upon our society and the institutions that are charged with the function of maintaining order in society especially, law enforcement agencies. All Women Police Stations [AWPS] are the more recent branching of police stations within Tamil Nadu. Unlike the popular concept of police as an organisation, which deals with violent crimes, AWPS is that branch of police, which focuses on family related problems.

**Sociology of Police**

As regards the sociology of police, like all academic disciplines and specialism, there exist two forms: - the essential and the substantial. It is a relatively easy matter to write about the essential nature of the subject, regardless of whether the essence has been embodied in any actual form. To attempt to
delineate the actual substance of the sociology of police, however, is far from easy. Sociology is a subject of vast potential but relatively recent development and the sociology of police is one of its less prominent and more recent branches. In consequence, though there has been relatively rapid growth of research and writing on the police of the USA, the subject remains in little more than embryonic form in other countries. In the early stages of development of the field of study, the relevant published material is widely scattered and frequently marginalised to the discipline itself. Thus the number of published British texts and research studies specifically on the sociology of police may be numbered on the fingers of both hands (Greenhill, 1975).

Much of the relevant material is to be found in writings of a legal, criminological, political, historical, journalistic or official nature. Such material is of undoubted bearing upon the sociology of police but it is not the subject itself. Of the specifically sociological i.e. those of Banton, Lambert, Cain, Russell, Reiner and Mawby, to which may be added Manning's comparative study of British and American police organization, none is of major proportion in terms of the scope of the research design and of the available research resources.

Mawby's likening of his own work, valuable though it is, to a corner grocery shop is equally apt to the other studies. Moreover, they represent nearly twenty years of sociological interest in the police of U.K and relate empirically to a very limited selection of actual police areas, departments and topics. They give a flavor of British policing and identify some important issue; each in its way makes a
valuable pioneering contribution to the inauguration of sociology of police but, to employ a building analogy, they represent the construction and limited testing of small-scale architects’ models rather than the edifice itself. The reader who based his knowledge and understanding of British police upon these works would undoubtedly acquire a number of valuable insights and hypotheses regarding British policing. For example, he would learn from Banton that police can only have a marginal influence upon social control, which is a function of many other agencies and attributes of the social structure. From Cain he would begin to appreciate the variations in styles of policing which are found in different social environments and to understand the sometimes-conflicting pressures, which impinge upon the constable’s role. From Reiner he would begin to develop an insight into the critical position of police in the class structure, and from Mawby the extraordinary extent to which the police depend upon all sections of the public for both information and results. It is true to say that a similar understanding could be acquired from such historical and journalistic works as those of Critchley, Judge and Whitaker which, if less rigorous in method and precise in exposition, are infinitely more readable, at any rate to the non-specialist.

Another perspective has been provided by Keith Macdonald who questions the police assumption that social disorganization leads to increased crime and that, consequently, police must (if and where necessary) try to encourage and spearhead attempts to promote community feeling. He rightly comments that, “We do not know if “Social collaboration” by police promotes social solidarity or
cohesion" and adds that, "if we genuinely see social disintegration at work and wish to set about the task of reintegration, then are the police best suited to undertake it?". Moreover Macdonald is not persuaded that police involvement in communities is for the best motives and suggests that a wide degree of involvement smacks of totalitarian or 'collectivist' regimes where police are ubiquitous in all forms and levels of social life. He asks if this is 'the beginning of a police state in Britain', the mounting of a huge front operation for which the real reason is more and better "snouts" or "grasses". Even Anne Blaber, in her Exeter evaluation, drew conclusions which questioned the police as 'the appropriate agency to take the lead in this sort of approach'. The fear was also voiced of the police developing a potential power base, of their using other agencies to help in their law enforcement task, even of their usurping the functions of other agencies. Given perspectives of this nature, and the present climate of criticism of malpractice by police, it may well be that the case for police initiatives and leadership are weakened. 'Superior policing' demands superior police, of high moral standards; at this moment it is those standards that are suspect.

A major task for the 1980s is to justify those claims for leadership; the police are no less dependent upon public support than they were when, in 1829, Robert Peel, Charles Rowan, and Richard Mayne laid down the basic principles for a British Police System'. But there are two fundamental matters, which need to be discussed that underpin everything touched upon in his brief paper:
(1) the need for much greater awareness of the evidence suggesting ambiguity, conflict and confusion in a police role which may, from now on, increasingly stress the 'service' as opposed to the 'force' aspect of policing;

(2) the need for much greater attention to be given to the status of the most crucial man in the police service - the uniformed beat officer.

Both of these have been unduly neglected within police organisations. With regard to the first of these, Peter Marshall, commenting in 1974 upon community relations from his (then) position as head of A7 saw the link with the public as fundamental but that, in an age of rapid social change, policemen were 'sometimes confused by the conflicting roles expected of them by society or inherent in their daily duties. Many see their function primarily as law enforcement, others lean toward the social worker approach'. In that same publication Tony Judge encapsulated the dilemma when posing the question: 'Preserver of the peace or social diagnostician?' He was optimistic, however, in feeling that the social diagnostician role could be developed in police officers through direct encouragement and training.

**Indian Police Force and Key Issues**

**Colonial Legacy**

Unlike its counterpart in many other democracies, its compatriots have rarely held the Indian Police in high esteem. Though many in the police may feel
deeply distressed when confronted with the late Justice A.N. Mulla’s much quoted description of the police as ‘a uniformed gang of criminals’, they do reluctantly admit that ‘no self-respecting person would willingly associate with the police – whether as a witness, a complainant or a defendant.’ This when most of us do turn to the police for help, not that we have many other options, when in trouble as victims of crime.

The gulf separating the police from the public is not a new development. The descriptions of the village chowkidar, the medieval kotwal, daroga or patil, more often than not, are about their venality and cruelty. Equally, the modern police force, which can trace its constitution to the colonial Indian Police Act of 1861, modeled interestingly on the Irish rather than the British framework, was structured more as ‘a defender of the establishment’ than as an impartial and professional organisation owing essential accountability to the citizens and the rule of law.

Expectations that an independent, democratic India would radically overhaul the inherited colonial legacy – structure, role and function – have been unfortunately belied, and perception about the police as an anti-citizen force continues to hold sway. To argue, as some indeed have done, that alienation from the public is to be expected since the police is mandated to exercise force on behalf of the state smacks of essentialism. It takes away from the need to institute changes in structure, composition and working style so that the police is experienced more as a friend and protector.
The widespread dissatisfaction with the functioning of the police – both its behaviour and efficacy – has led to the setting up of many a commission, the latest being the National Police Commission (NPC). It is a marker of the times that since the NPC submitted its recommendations nearly two decades back, the response of the states, irrespective of the regime, has been one of stonewalling if not active disregard. True, we hear periodic fulmination about police reform; also about the constitution of further expert subcommittees. But concerted action remains a distant cry.

National Police Commission

The police system in India was established by the Police Act of 1861. The act, based on the draft prepared by the first Police Commission of 1860, had a limited aim – to perpetuate British rule in this country.

'The police force is far from efficient, it is defective in training and organisation, it is inadequately supervised, it is generally regarded as corrupt and oppressive, and it has utterly failed to secure the confidence and cordial cooperation of the people' (Report of the Indian Police Commission, 1902-03, Government Central Printing Office, Simla, 1903, p. 150).

A colonial system of policing was thus required to function effectively in an environment which became increasingly democratic. The fact that the problems of the police had become highly complex and that the system had failed to meet the challenges was realised by many, including the police themselves. The need for
change and reform was expressed by the Conference of General Inspector of Police on many an occasion. The conference, organised annually by the Central Intelligence Bureau, passed resolutions from time to time, asking the government to set up a National Police Commission (NPC) to examine the problems of the police.

As Dharam Vira, Chairman of the NPC once said, 'If there had been no Emergency there would have been no Police Commission.'

The NPC was appointed by the Government of India to make a comprehensive review of the police system at the national level, with regard to the far-reaching changes that had taken place in the country after the enactment of the Indian Police Act, 1861, the report of the last Police Commission of 1902, and particularly those which had taken place since Independence. Though the Commission was set up on 15 November 1977, the government took time to sanction staff and allot accommodation. The commission actually started functioning effectively only in April 1978. Its first meeting, in fact, was held on 22 December 1978.

The NPC had recommended 100% level of housing satisfaction for policemen. The chief ministers conference decided to make efforts to provide at least 75% over a five-year period. This target was never achieved. By 1985, there was only one state, i.e. Gujarat, which had succeeded in providing family accommodation to even 50% of its constabulary. By 1990, the all-India level of
satisfaction achieved in respect of family accommodation for non-gazetted police personnel had reached only the 36.3% mark. The 1996 data compiled by the Bureau of Police Research and Development reveals an equally dismal picture. It is reported in The Indian Journal of Public Administration (January-March 1998) that there were 11,704 police stations in the country and according to the report Delhi had the best-manned stations.

Perceived Problems

Many of the standard criticisms/suggestions focus on the lack of skills, training, orientation and leadership qualities of the force; a command structure suited more to the armed forces resulting in a perception of the citizen as ‘enemy’; a skewed distribution of scarce resources towards high profile activities like VIP security as against strengthening the thana (police station) and the beat constable; a tendency to create special forces (Rapid Action Force, National Security Guard) while neglecting the main force; and above all, a persistent and unhealthy interference by the bureaucratic and political class. Every scholarly study, reports of official commissions, or accounts by retired police officers highlight the same malaise, come up with similar suggestions just as in two previous issues of Seminar, October 1977 (The Police) and August 1980 (Policing).

Citizen ire against the police is, however, insufficiently cognizant of the conditions under which the force operates – poor pay, abysmal housing conditions, tortuously long hours of work. Self-esteem and professional pride can hardly be
expected to flower in an environment of scarce materials, further compounded by deep suspicion and hostility. Media coverage, with its focus on the venal and the spectacular, too has contributed to a distorted perception about police realities. Equally at fault is the sorry state of our criminal justice system – outmoded laws, insufficient, crowded and ill-equipped courts, a paucity of judges and public prosecutors, and an antediluvian legal process – all of which contribute both to inordinate delays and a poor conviction record.

The job of maintaining public order too has become much more complicated. Traffic management, crowd control, and organised crimes are examples of areas, which require high levels of expertise. Specialisation in different aspects of policing, such as intelligence and investigation, should be introduced. Officers should be encouraged to opt for one stream of police administration or the other, depending on their aptitude and inclination. Only a professional body of well-trained and motivated officers can deal with difficult and complicated problems of today. Even a beat constable needs access to modern technology for communication and information about crime and criminals. To function effectively in the age of information revolution, the police require technological upgradation and an element of specialisation and professionalism.

Judge, jury and executioner - that is how policemen, under severe pressure of operating in a society riddled with extra-legal influences, start viewing themselves. The worst among them, basking in the macho image of supercops bestowed on them by the media, do not appear too unhappy with playing the role
of legislature, judiciary and executive simultaneously. They become the role model for the rest of the police force.

Police reforms can no longer be delayed. On top of the reform agenda should be the transformation of the constable, who is the cutting-edge of police administration, into a more responsive and effective police functionary. Almost 80% of the police budget is related to functions performed by the constabulary, but it is the most neglected component of the organization. As recommended by the National Police Commission, a constable must be treated as a skilled worker, and his working and living conditions must be accordingly improved.

To ensure that senior police officers are more sensitive to the needs of the constabulary, officers of the Indian Police Service should serve for some time as constables before promotion to higher ranks. The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in London, the senior-most police officer in Britain, starts his career in the rank of a constable. The time has come for the removal of the artificial distinction between 'officers and men'. A system of accelerated promotions for the more qualified and better performers can be devised to substitute the present 'caste' system.

Police officers should be encouraged to opt for specialisation in various streams of police administration. After a few years of exposure to different police jobs, police officers should be earmarked for different branches depending on their aptitude and performance. Policing is too complicated a job to be handled
efficiently only through commonsense as was the case in the past. Rapid urbanisation and the revolution in information technology and communications has changed all that. Police officers must become true professionals if they are to succeed in controlling crime and criminals. Basic reforms in recruitment methods, training and system of promotions and posting are necessary to make the force more professional and less brutal.

Issues Around Policing

Enforcement Agency Or Service Oriented

How much work of a service nature police undertakes is not easy to estimate. In studies undertaken in three towns in Essex in 1973, Punch and Naylor found 73% of calls of police in a country town were of a 'service' type, 61.1% in an older town, and 49.3% in a new town. This would suggest (and American evidence reinforce the belief) that the service demands on police are far greater than those for law enforcement. The Punch and Naylor research also provides an excellent indication of tasks falling to the police, which go far beyond any statutory demands placed upon them. Of especial relevance is the fact that they found a preference to seek police help amongst the public even when specific statutory agencies exited; the authors stressed that this partly came about from ignorance, but that frequently the police were chosen because of a greater confidence in them as opposed to a skepticism and mistrust of social workers.
Policing is still recognised as very much a masculine environment. Miller (1999) comments on the situation in the US in relation to “traditional” (as opposed to community) policing:

Traditional policing, masculine and paramilitary, has rejected “feminine” traits and skills, banishing them to the periphery of the organization so as not to contaminate the preferred image of the aloof professional or the macho crime fighter. In fact, many observers view the criminal justice and legal system overall as operating with a uniquely masculine voice, a detached and impersonal one that emphasizes the rational at the expense of the relational. Others maintain, however, that a feminine voice could also be present, particularly when decisions are made based on contextual or affiliational factors. Given the ideological preoccupation with masculinity in policing, though, any behavior that appears tied to femininity, weakness, or subjectivity is suspect and denigrated.

Egon Bittner, a distinguished American student of police, in a powerfully written paper on police research and work, provides an appropriate conclusion to this essay. He writes of the discovery which has overshadowed all others in police research, 'that the vastly pre-ponderant majority of police manpower, time and resources is and must be allocated to activities that have either nothing, or only very little, to do with law enforcement in the strict sense of the term. These activities commonly referred to as peace-keeping, entail the methodical handling of an enormously wide-ranging variety of highly complex and almost invariably very serious human problems. Bittner feels that policemen typically receive no
instruction, no guidance and above all no recognition for doing this work'. He concludes that police research has demonstrated that police work, far from being the kind of low-grade occupation it is thought to be, in fact involves the exercise of judgment and skill in handling problems of great complexity and importance. But in order for the police to become fully equal to the tasks of our times, they must install study and research into their mandate. Only in this way can the police hope to advance and retrain control and direction of their efforts.

Public – Police: Interactions and Perceptions

The police and public relationship is admittedly discordant and often unpleasant. At the heart of the relationship is the functioning of our police stations. Citizens approach a police station only when they have to and that is when they are victims of a crime. Upset, badly jolted and rattled, they hope to get some relief, and eventually justice. It is a painful commentary on the times, and the system, that more often than not, as victims of crime, citizens find their hopes dashed.

To convert the police into a citizen-friendly force, it is essential that its role be completely transformed. Instead of a willing tool in the hands of the rulers, it has to become a servant of the law charged with the responsibility of protection of life and property of citizens. And it cannot perform this role by taking recourse to short cuts. Policemen must treat their job as a profession and not as an instrument of exercising power. Only a well trained, well equipped and a motivated police force will be able to perform this role.
The effective performance of this role will require not only structural changes in police organization, but also major reworking of the laws, procedures and police rules. India, being a plural society, cannot survive without a neutral and professional police force that can function effectively within the legal framework.

The gap between public expectations and police performance has to be narrowed. Catchy slogans and public relations exercises will not achieve the desired objective.

Corruption is another problem that seriously erodes the image of the police. True, the police are not alone in being afflicted with this disease. Possibly, the dubious distinction of being more corrupt rests with other government departments, but undeniably police corruption is resented more than any other form of corruption. Police corruption can take the form of wrongful search and arrest, registration of false cases and use of third-degree methods. A corrupt and unprofessional policeman mounts an assault on a citizen's dignity even more than causing physical harm. Rude and abusive behaviour is the single-most important cause of poor police-public relations.

The police cannot perform its role effectively without public cooperation, and that is not forthcoming because of police ineffectiveness and its unfriendly image. Only comprehensive police reforms will be able to break this vicious circle.

Role of Media

It is often argued that the media contributes to the popular notions of police in the minds of the public which police personnel feel colours the approach to
police personnel even before any interaction. Timeri N. Murrai in his article "Imaging Policemen" discusses this aspect quite eloquently.

“As a majority of us are law-abiding people, our perception of the police and police work comes mainly through the media – either films, TV, novels or newspaper reports. The image of the policeman is shaped partly by the screen and also by our emotional reaction to the story. Good cops/bad cops, they’re all playing their parts in this process. Naturally, it depends on the ‘star’ too. A likeable Harrison Ford makes us like policemen, a bad Richard Gere makes us distrust and fear them”.

Each visual experience of these filmed stories altered our emotions and our ideas of the policeman. They built into us either trust or distrust of the cop. Very few of us actually come into contact with policemen. Maybe for a traffic violation but otherwise he remains remote and distant, a person we don’t usually socialise with, whatever our society. They’re always beyond the normal social intercourse of cocktail parties, dinners, a round of golf, except the very high up officers, police commissioners and above.

In Indian cinema (it’s too early to discover any trend in television series), the policeman also began his screen life as a good man, battling the forces of evil. And like the British counterpart, we have gradually evolved to see him as a dark, more corrupt figure in our society. In fact, in some of the countries, which permit police-unions, the union has often expressed their disagreement about the depiction of
policemen in cinema. "We had gone from light to dark without understanding the grey realities of police work".

"I do wonder whether the policeman changed or we changed in the darkness of the cinema and in front of the flickering light of television? We moved from innocent belief in their goodness to the cynical vision of their corruption and brutality". - Murrai

Yet over this time, one doubts whether policemen and their work did really change. Right from the very start of civilisation someone or a group of men, were made the chowkidars of that society. They were given the authority to deal with the crimes, track down the perpetrators and deliver them to a judicial system. Once we hand over authority to someone to control us, this immediately puts him above us. We are expected to obey the laws he has been asked to enforce, one way or another. For centuries, the criteria for recruiting these cops was almost always the same – they had to be physically capable of controlling violent people and they needed a limited amount of intelligence."

Heidensohn (1992) mentioned that 'myths about the nature of policing', is so efficiently created and perpetuated by the media, that women police suffer prejudice which is a product of the media 'image' of women police. Reiner (1992) claimed that television gives the impression that law-enforcers always 'solve or foil crime(s)...through the exercise of remarkable personal skill or daring' – certainly not a reflection of real policing. The media generally depicts women police as
either 'super masculine' or as 'brash, sexy, plainclothes specialist' detectives. This sexist image remains in the minds of the viewers, including future police officers. The Police Force and the general public exaggerate the violent aspect of crime control in policing. This concept is reflected in the lower number of women in the force as also the training programs designed for men and women police recruits.

Need for the Study

Policing is perceived to be a masculine domain and police stations are physical spaces where power is negotiated in its rawest form. Enforcement – the term itself encapsulates the message of force being used to convince and enforcement remains the prime role of the police force.

The experience of violence is gendered. In societies where feminity is constructed in a manner to convey that violence- physical or emotional is to be borne by the “ideal” woman, the act of taking a complaint against the provider to the police station is by itself against the norm. However it is heartening to note that the decision makers were sensitive to the needs of the female population and have made operational organizations like All Women Police Stations [AWPS] which are offering services contrary to the popular image of a police station – a mix of family counseling centers and formal social control agents.

Though AWPS have been operational in India since 1973, and in Tamil Nadu since 1993 very little is known about their functioning. There is a lag in information about the organization and what it deals with. In such an environment,
the current study seeks to describe the functioning of the AWPS and also provide an insight into the interactions of the various people who either serve at the AWPS or access the services. Thus the present research would address the lacunae in information about AWPS and also draw attention to the existent needs of the functionaries and the beneficiaries of the police station.

The thesis is presented in the following manner:

**Chapter I** is introductory in nature and introduces the concepts. It traces the role of police and discusses the colonial legacy of Indian police. The current concerns within policing centre around the nature of policing itself, whether it should be just an enforcement agency or service oriented; ways to enhance public – police interactions as well as the perceptions and the role of media are shared in this chapter.

**Chapter II** of the thesis reviews the literature and resource material available, related to the study. The literature review included review of books, journal articles, research databases, online information and all other resource material available on the subject. Information was also sought from Bureau of Police Research and Development and other states that have All Women Police Stations in India, the State Women’s Commission among others. Since there were very few studies related to the topic directly, the focus of the review was split into a) Status of women- literature to assess the particular factors in order to identify the social, political, cultural and economic issues that coalesce to the status of
women in the world and in India. b) Police Women – To trace the history of women police from a global level to the state of Tamil Nadu.

**Chapter III** gives an appraisal of All Women Police Stations in the country and at the state level of Tamil Nadu.

**Chapter IV** explains the methodology adopted by the researcher, including research design, objectives, hypotheses, tools of data collection and data analysis. The study tries to analyze the problem from a gender perspective and is mainly influenced by liberal feminist strain of thought.

**Chapter V** presents the data analysis of the study. Tabulation, interpretation and statistical tests have been used to explain the relationship between variables. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis were done. Since there were three groups for the study, the analysis is presented according to the groups.

**Chapter VI** consolidates the data analysis and lists the findings, conclusions and suggestions from the study. Recommendations for further research as well as the limitations of this study are mentioned in this chapter.