CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
In this modern era, where occupations have shifted from the age old agricultural economy to the industrial economy, to the present day knowledge economy, competition and high performance indices have become the day-to-day mantras of every employee and of every organisation. One major fall out of this competitive world is the inevitable stress on the employees; the anxiety to perform better and the sense of insecurity have multiplied though job options have increased.

In a country, which has been following the principles of democracy for the past half a century or so, development and economic prosperity did not come in easily, as was expected to happen. This is because, many of the structures built by the British Raj continued not only to exist, but thrives, even though the necessity for change was inevitable.

The Indian police force is one such icon of the British Raj which had to change but did not. The police system is inherently a conflict creating model in a democratic set up. The most affected victim of the conflict between ideology of the state and the law and order maintaining organ of the state are the front line police personnel, who act as via-media for the whole process of policing of a democratic state.

In this conflict model, stress is inevitable. A study of this and the reason thereof will help the state and more specifically the police force to be more true to the democratic values of the system and hopefully improve the life and happiness content of the police personnel who are the people of India and hence part holders of the sovereignty of the nation.

The functioning of the police force for the past half century, with all its inherited qualities from the British Raj, has undoubtedly projected the police in a very bad
light. In a social welfare state the function of the police is multi-faceted. The society demands that a police officer be a protector of the weak; prevent oppression and uphold the rules of law. The traditional role of the police with the above mentioned demands of the police force has created a conflict between the police and society and within the police force itself. This and other inherent factors have resulted in stress among police officers.

The major cause of stress among police officers is their role ambiguity. Police officers by the nature of their duties and existing organisational set up are called to play multiple roles for which they are often ill equipped. But more pitiable and serious is the uncertainty of their roles. This often arises because of the *multiple master syndrome*. Since they deal with crises regularly, they are often baffled and confused as to which interest they should give precedence. Even if they deal with a criminal, a criminal is also a citizen of the country and has certain inalienable rights and claims which the police officer is expected to protect. At the same time he is also expected to protect society against the evil act or the evil consequences of a criminal’s conduct. Added to this may be the directive of a superior, which at times may be contrary to these obligations. This creates ambiguity and the resultant uncertainty causes stress. Therefore, understanding the nature of role ambiguity is crucial to understanding the stress of a police officer.

In the system of Indian socio-political culture, a police officer is rarely recognized or lauded for his correct action or decision. On the other hand, every mistake or wrong action gets projected, amplified and even turned into a political and national issue by those who take advantage of such situations. In such situations, the police officer has to find solace for himself and that would depend on his locus of control. The officers
who have an external locus of control will get siphoned into the blame game and often blame their fate or their superiors or other factors independent of themselves. Multiplicity of such situations will certainly multiply his stress. Whereas, an officer who has an internal locus of control would tend to take responsibility and objectively analyze the situation to find answers or reasons for such consequences and even take necessary remedial measures. The stress caused to an officer with an internal locus of control will certainly be less than to an officer with an external locus of control. Thus, the stress levels between different police officers even within the same rank can be quantitatively and qualitatively different.

Another major factor and area of concern for stress among police officers is the quality of their work life. After independence and the changing role of the state, the public expectations of a police officer’s role have changed. The respect and the status of the police have also undergone a change, towards the negative. With the growing avenues of employment and high remuneration privileges and perks in private employment as well as the other departments of the state, there has arisen a comparison of the quality of work life of a police officer and other professionals.

1.1 FOCUS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The police force, right from its inception been involved in what is popularly called the job of law enforcement. This is a job, which calls upon them to perform their duties in all kinds of adverse situations, be it the scorching heat of the summer, the pouring rain or the freezing winter. The police officer at no point of time is permitted to exhibit
stress, nor allow his personal worries, family concerns or physical health to be an excuse for his inability to effectively fulfill his duties.

A police officer is expected to project an exterior image of discipline and effectively preserve law and order. The police officer is considered as a guide, a saviour, a friend and a referee in disputes; a role, which in effect is like a roller coaster ride, difficult to understand functionally and incomprehensible emotionally. Their job makes great demands on the mental, emotional and physical capabilities and may also destroy his self esteem.

The issue of stress among police officers is a matter of grave concern for the officers themselves, for the organisation as such and for the nation as a whole. For a democratic state to function effectively, it certainly requires competent, efficient and concerned police officers. Whether it is maintaining law and order, detection of a crime or punishment of a criminal, the police officers have a very significant role to play in the life and security of the citizens of the country.

Therefore, this in-depth empirical study of the various causes of stress among police officers should enable the state and the policy makers to devise proper systems and machinery to ensure that stress levels among police officers is reduced substantially, so that they can function effectively and fulfill their obligation toward the state. The findings of this study will help in the formulation of suitable intervention strategies to help the police officer cope with stress. The functioning of the police is not just critical but is also a parameter of democracy as it is the main branch of the administrative wing of the state. The reformation of the police force, their effectiveness, attitudes, the social impression they create would determine the quality of our democracy. This study will also help in understanding better the various causes
of occupational stress, so that the policy makers can incorporate various correctional methods thus, creating a better and more effective police force and of course happy citizens, thereby fulfilling the goal of a democratic state.