

Essay on Police Reforms

"Our Police is functioning under the outmoded Police Act of 1861, framed by the British to perpetuate their colonial rule and subjugate the natives. The olden Act has since allowed prevailing in spite of recommendations of National Police Commission in 1977 and the State Police Commissions and several other committees, perhaps that the present politicians find the olden Act set .ling their purpose nicely."

It is a known fact that the image of the Police has fallen into the abyss in recent years. People want an efficient Police that serves them in need. The poor want reforms because they are the crude victims of oppression and dictates of the powerful, rich and so they need the true services of the police for their rescue. The National Human Rights Commission demands reforms because it is overwhelmed by public complaints against the police that range from death, rape, and torture in custody to the refusal to file FIR, manipulation coercion and threats to witnesses and demands for money to register, neglect, or pursue a case. The Supreme Court pulled up the police inefficiency, neglect, and corruption that prevailed in many cases and passed serious strictures against the functioning of the police.

Despite demands from all quarters and the necessity to reform the Police force, no concrete or resulting action has so far been initiated by any Government since independence. Paradoxical all it appears, that a country which so emphatically threw off the British yoke is satisfied to be ruled by a colonial Act, whose main objective was to subjugate the population. Every successive government avoided so far the necessary reforms in the police force indicate the obnoxious nexus between the Police, and politicians, the police and the executives and a belief that if the reforms are made, the

benefits being derived by them from the Police will no more be available.

The necessity of a new Police Act is undoubtedly being felt in all segments of society. The new Act needs to state that the Police must act strictly according to the law and not as per whims of any powerful politician, executive. It needs to be systematized by a new statutory framework that fixes the accountability, responsibility, makes it certain that the chains of command lines within the police, their promotions, posting, and punishment do not depend upon the patronage from the political bosses. Greater transparency more accurate mechanism of segregation of work and devolving of responsibility is required.

In 1977, the National Police Commission recommended, analyzing carefully the problems of the police and pressures faced by the police force. The recommendations mainly dealt with two aspects, one insulating the police from undue political pressure and accountability of the police to law alone and not to any person. The Rebeiro Committee has also given its recommendations along similar lines to the NPC, as also the Padmanabha Committee. The Vohra Committee indicated in very clear terms that the Police-Politicians Mafia nexus is ruining the governance, yet nothing has been done so far.

The Central Government argues that it is busy improving the police through modernization, providing improved weapons, and other necessary infrastructure. The improvement in service conditions, making available the modern equipment, weapons undoubtedly necessary, yet, reforms must be given priority, as of adherence to the law, accountability, and autonomy of functioning is no less important aspects. Modernization, without the requisite changes in attitude and re-articulation of what the role of the Police in a democracy must

be, seems nothing more than bringing better facilities and weapons to the aid of a lawless force with no accountability or fixed responsibility. The Centre shows its helplessness as law and order is a State subject. More than fifty percent of the district in the country are affected in some way or the other with civil strife, communal violence, security risks, or other routine disturbances, yet the center has not made resulting efforts to have concrete talks with the State governments in the matter of Police reforms. The ball is being passed from one court to the other.

Immediate Police reforms are too important to neglect and too urgent to delay further. The vicious culture of crime especially under the patronage of politicians against the women which has gripped the entire nation and increasing day by day has reduced the civil people into helpless victims.

The Godhra incident, the Telgi scam, the involvement of GP Mr. in murder and so many other cases can reveal the obnoxiousness of the functioning of the police force.

It would be wrong to undermine the efficiency of the Police force. The quick and effective action at Akshardam by the Gujarat Police is acclaimed by everyone. The brilliant action of the Punjab Police in wiping out the terrorists from the State is worthy of praise. The fault is not with the police functioning but with the system which is to be scrutinized. Under the present circumstances, the Police are accountable only to MLA, MP, or the party workers of a ruling party. One cannot obviously expect the Police to go by the rule book of the Police Manual; they are to go by the rule book of the party in power. This is the reason why the Police in India have earned a bad image among the general public. The general public does not understand that this image is not self-created; it is the reflection of the moribund system under which the police function.

In the U.K., the policeman is nobody's valet, and it is the duty of the Commissioner of police as it is of every chief constable to enforce the law of the land and he is answerable to none but to the law alone. In India, a policeman is like a football to be kicked about by anyone and when he is needed no more he could be dispensed with like a disposable item. The plight of the Police shows the sorry plight and predicament of the entire system. Let us not blame the police if the system, the political and administrative system within which they have to operate has become rotten to the core.

Many believe that improvement can be made even without new laws. If only the Police had the courage to rise above corruption and resist political pressure. But leaving it to superhuman individual efforts in a debased, outdated system, that every day rewards the bad and punishes the good is not the answer. The Police argue that it is needless to reform them without reforming every other segment of the criminal justice system. With millions of cases pending in courts, jails are full of under trials, and every other segment is also involved in flagrant corruption, then merely reforming the police will not serve the purpose.

Whatever is argued by anybody is undisputable that reforms in Police are the need of the hour. It is ridiculous that our police force is still being governed by the outdated Police Act 1861. If police reforms are delayed further, there will be no end to the trauma of the ordinary people, especially those who have no Godfather, no political support.