



Police Reforms

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The history of Police in India is characterised by trials, errors, vicissitudes, imperatives of an imperial government, changing priorities, and changing context. India, after Independence, retained the basic structure of police organisation, though the nature of policing did change. Police as an institution, as it exists today, has evolved over several centuries, tracing its roots to the long-gone period. It acts as an independent administrative institution in India, however, developed only during the British colonial period, which to a great extent was an amalgamation of various features prevalent during the Medieval ages and some borrowed from the British structure of law and order. The present Police System structurally and functionally owes its existing structure to the various Acts and Enactments promulgated by the colonial rulers.

Police as being a part of the administrative machinery of the State to protect life and property came into existence with the inception of civilised society. It was considered the primary tool of the state/ruling class. The 'police' connotes a system of administration or regulation, but the word is now generally used to indicate the organised body of civil officers in a place whose particular duty is the preservation of law and order.¹ "Indian police history can be seen as the expansion and contraction of an imperial power always set upon an impermeable stratum of village institutions. Structures came and went, but there was no qualitative evolution from one imperial high-point to another."² The present Police System structurally and functionally owes its existing structure to the various Acts and Enactments

promulgated by the colonial rulers. The Indian State has retained, consolidated, and expanded the inherited police structure.

Ancient Period

Policing in the ancient period in India was intricately concurrent with the institutions of religion, community, and ethics. There are several references in ancient texts of India which indicate the existence of a specialised unit to deal with the detection of crime and offences against the State. We get glimpses of a city police organisation in the Arthashastra of Kautilya.³ Police was an important functionary for maintenance of peace which was a necessary pre-condition for the general welfare.⁴ The indigenous Police System in India was organised on the basis of land tenure and also on the

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