Policing

What is the issue?

- Indian police is having a chaotic time, especially the Delhi police, in their bid to maintain law and order as people out in streets protesting.
- So, the floor has been unwittingly yielded to the police and for them to act in the manner they deem fit, and in the interests of public peace.

What is the theoretical proposition?

- Protests and demonstrations no doubt form the core of democracy.
- They are unexceptionable as long as they do not disrupt the life of the common man or cause damage to public property.
- In an ideal world, we may expect this clear-cut theoretical proposition to work perfectly.
- But in the raw, emotion-ridden and violence-prone streets of the present times, this clinical allocation of respective space has repeatedly proved to be mere pontification.
- This is established by events of the past few days in the national capital.

How did the media report?

- Some media reporting has tended to be one-sided.
- They tended to portray the police as the villain of the piece and the protesters as harmless and pacifist.
- This binary picture is deceptive and misleading, because it is blind to the truism that the police do enjoy a measure of operational autonomy, free from the dictates of other state agencies.

What is the observed political influence?

- Public opinion has been built around a few gross **misconceptions** about modern policing.
- It is too simplistic to look upon the police as merely an agency that has been caught in the crossfire between the establishment and protesters.
- The unpleasant changes of **political circumstances** over the decades have **deprived the police the luxury of resting on the statute book** and responding to a developing situation.
- They have to be proactive and react within split seconds to an incendiary

situation arising from contentious political situations.

- While doing so they are bound to overstep the contours of law.
- It is erroneous belief to argue that the police cannot **enter institutions** unless they are invited to do so by its heads.
- There is no law that prohibits the police entry by itself into the institutions, and any attempt to frame such a law will be silly to the core.
- The police are obligated under law to intervene wherever and whenever they apprehend danger to lives.

What is to be said about the quantum of force needed?

- Another bone of contention relates to the **quantum of force** that the police can use in quelling disorder.
- The amount of force used is related mainly to the strength of the mob, its composition, its mood and the kind of weapons it has at its command.
- **Mob control techniques** are a part of the **police curriculum** in major training institutions.
- Their impact depends on the imaginative nature of the instruction.
- In the wake of violence across the country, the police leadership would do well to concentrate on this important aspect of policing.
- In a democracy such as ours we certainly need a civilised and humane police.
- However, this shouldn’t dilute the need to have a potent force that won’t hesitate to use the resources at its command to re-emphasise the dictum that democracy can flourish only when violence is checked.
- The senior police officers should devote time to **improve the quality of policing** in the field.

Source: The Hindu

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