

Political Influence on Criminal Justice Administration in India: A Critical Socio-Legal Study

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Abstract

The autonomy of the criminal justice system is essential to ensure the rule of law and constitutional democracy in India. While the democratically elected government has the legitimacy to formulate criminal justice policies and oversee administrative functions, questions often arise about the extent to which political authorities can influence police, investigations, prosecution, and criminal law enforcement. Such interference may lead to the erosion of autonomy, integrity, and accountability, undermining the rule of law, equality, and constitutional governance. The relationship between political authorities and the criminal justice system has become a matter of great debate in India.

This study aims to examine the impact of political influence on criminal justice administration in India using a doctrinal socio-legal methodology. The research will be based on the Constitution of India, the Police Act, 1861, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, and other relevant laws. The judgments of the Supreme Court of India, Law Commission of India, National Police Commission, and police reform committees will be examined to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing legal framework in India.

This article concludes that while India has a robust legal framework to ensure the autonomy of the criminal justice system, several challenges related to political interference, administrative control, and institutional weaknesses hinder the effectiveness of criminal justice administration. Institutional autonomy, police reforms, prosecutorial independence, and accountability are needed to ensure the rule of law and constitutional governance in India.

Keywords: Political influence, criminal justice administration, rule of law, police independence, constitutional governance, socio-legal analysis, India.

1. Introduction

The criminal justice system constitutes one of the most significant pillars of a democratic society, ensuring the maintenance of public order, the protection of fundamental rights, and the administration of justice in accordance with the rule of law. In India, the constitutional framework envisages a criminal justice system that functions independently, impartially, and fairly, thereby guaranteeing equality before the law and due process to every individual.¹ The effectiveness of this system depends not only on the quality of legislation but also on the institutional integrity of the police, prosecution, and judiciary. Consequently, maintaining

¹ INDIA CONST. pmb.; INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21.

the independence of these institutions is essential for preserving public confidence in the administration of justice.²

Political influence has emerged as one of the most debated issues affecting the functioning of criminal justice institutions in contemporary India. Democratic governments possess the constitutional authority to formulate criminal justice policies, allocate resources, and supervise public administration. However, concerns arise when political authority extends beyond legitimate policy-making and influences operational decisions relating to criminal investigations, police administration, prosecutorial discretion, or the enforcement of criminal law. Such influence may affect institutional neutrality, create perceptions of selective justice, and weaken the constitutional commitment to fairness and equality before the law.³

The Constitution of India establishes several safeguards designed to protect the administration of justice from arbitrary or unlawful interference. Fundamental Rights, particularly Articles 14 and 21, require that all State action be reasonable, non-arbitrary, and consistent with the principles of fairness and due process.⁴ Judicial independence, the doctrine of the rule of law, and the constitutional principle of separation of powers collectively reinforce the need for impartial criminal justice institutions.⁵ Furthermore, statutory enactments such as the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023,⁶ the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023,⁷ the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023,⁸ and the Police Act, 1861,⁹ provide the legal framework governing criminal investigations, prosecution, evidence, and police administration. The Supreme Court of India has also played a transformative role in strengthening institutional accountability through landmark judgments addressing police reforms, fair investigation, and procedural safeguards.¹⁰

This article adopts a socio-legal approach to critically examine the relationship between political influence and criminal justice administration in India. It analyses the constitutional and statutory framework, judicial interpretation, Law Commission reports,¹¹ National Police Commission recommendations,¹² the Ribeiro Committee Report,¹³ the Padmanabhaiah Committee Report,¹⁴ the Model Police Act prepared by the Soli J. Sorabjee Committee,¹⁵ and the Second Administrative Reforms Commission Report¹⁶ to evaluate whether the existing legal mechanisms adequately protect criminal justice institutions from undue political influence. The article further identifies institutional challenges and proposes reforms aimed at strengthening transparency, accountability, police professionalism, and the rule of law. By integrating legal

² INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21, 32.

³ *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, (1978) 1 S.C.C. 248 (India).

⁴ INDIA CONST. art. 50.

⁵ Police Act, No. 5 of 1861 (India).

⁶ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, No. 45 of 2023 (India).

⁷ Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, No. 46 of 2023 (India).

⁸ Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, No. 47 of 2023 (India).

⁹ *Prakash Singh v. Union of India*, (2006) 8 S.C.C. 1 (India).

¹⁰ *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, (1998) 1 S.C.C. 226 (India).

¹¹ Law Comm'n of India, 239th Rep., *Expedition Investigation and Trial of Criminal Cases Against Influential Public Personalities* (2012).

¹² Nat'l Police Comm'n, *Eighth Report* (1981).

¹³ Ribeiro Comm., *Committee on Police Reforms* (1999).

¹⁴ K. Padmanabhaiah Comm., *Report on Police Reforms* (2000).

¹⁵ Soli J. Sorabjee Comm., *Model Police Act* (2006).

¹⁶ Second Admin. Reforms Comm'n, *Public Order: Justice for Each ... Peace for All* (5th Rep. 2007).

analysis with institutional realities, the study seeks to contribute to the continuing discourse on democratic governance and the effective administration of criminal justice in India.

2. Constitutional and Statutory Framework

The constitutional and statutory framework governing criminal justice administration in India is founded upon the principles of constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, equality before the law, and procedural fairness. These principles collectively ensure that the exercise of criminal justice powers remains subject to constitutional limitations and judicial oversight. The Constitution of India not only establishes the institutional framework for governance but also imposes substantive and procedural safeguards to prevent arbitrary State action and protect individual liberties.¹⁷

Among the Fundamental Rights, **Article 14** guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws, thereby prohibiting arbitrary discrimination in the exercise of executive power.¹⁸ **Article 21** further provides that no person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law. Through judicial interpretation, the Supreme Court has expanded Article 21 to include the right to a fair investigation, a fair trial, and due process, thereby strengthening the constitutional foundations of criminal justice administration.¹⁹ Additionally, **Articles 32 and 226** empower the Supreme Court and the High Courts respectively to enforce fundamental rights through constitutional remedies, reinforcing judicial supervision over executive action.²⁰

The Constitution also recognises the importance of an independent judiciary through **Article 50**, which directs the State to separate the judiciary from the executive in public services. Although Article 50 forms part of the Directive Principles of State Policy, it has significantly influenced judicial decisions aimed at preserving institutional independence and the rule of law.²¹ These constitutional guarantees collectively require criminal justice institutions—including the police, prosecution, and judiciary—to function impartially and free from improper external influence.

The statutory framework governing criminal justice administration has undergone substantial reform with the enactment of the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS)**, the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS)**, and the **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 (BSA)**. These enactments replaced the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, respectively, with the objective of modernising India's criminal justice system.²² The BNS consolidates substantive criminal law by defining offences and prescribing punishments, while the BNSS regulates criminal investigation, arrest, search, seizure, bail, trial, and appellate procedures. The BSA modernises the law relating to evidence by expressly recognising electronic and digital evidence and introducing updated evidentiary principles suitable for contemporary criminal litigation.²³

¹⁷ INDIA CONST. pmb. l.

¹⁸ INDIA CONST. art. 14.

¹⁹ *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, (1978) 1 S.C.C. 248 (India).

²⁰ INDIA CONST. arts. 32, 226.

²¹ INDIA CONST. art. 50.

²² Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, No. 45 of 2023 (India); Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, No. 46 of 2023 (India); Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, No. 47 of 2023 (India).

²³ Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, No. 47 of 2023 (India).

Despite these legislative reforms, the **Police Act, 1861** continues to govern police organisation and administration in many States. Enacted during the colonial period, the Act was primarily designed to maintain executive control over policing rather than promote democratic accountability or operational independence. Consequently, scholars and judicial authorities have consistently criticised the continued reliance on this legislation and have recommended comprehensive police reforms aimed at ensuring professionalism, accountability, and insulation from undue political influence.²⁴

The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly emphasised that constitutional governance requires investigative agencies to function independently while remaining accountable to the law. In **Prakash Singh v. Union of India**, the Court issued comprehensive directions concerning police reforms, including the establishment of State Security Commissions, fixed tenure for senior police officers, separation of investigation from law-and-order functions, and transparent appointment procedures.²⁵ Similarly, in **Vineet Narain v. Union of India**, the Court underscored that investigative agencies must operate free from extraneous influence to preserve public confidence in the rule of law.²⁶

In addition to judicial intervention, several expert bodies have proposed institutional reforms. The **National Police Commission**, the **Ribeiro Committee**, the **Padmanabhaiah Committee**, the **Soli Sorabjee Committee**, and the **Law Commission of India** have consistently recommended structural reforms designed to strengthen police autonomy, improve investigative professionalism, and establish independent oversight mechanisms.²⁷ Their recommendations continue to influence contemporary debates on criminal justice administration and highlight the need to balance democratic accountability with institutional independence.

Accordingly, India's constitutional and statutory framework provides a robust legal foundation for criminal justice administration. Nevertheless, the effective implementation of these constitutional guarantees depends upon institutional integrity, adherence to judicial directives, and sustained legislative and administrative reforms that ensure criminal justice institutions function impartially, transparently, and in accordance with the rule of law.

3. Political Influence on Criminal Justice Administration

Political influence on criminal justice administration remains one of the most debated issues in contemporary democratic governance. While democratic governments possess the constitutional authority to formulate criminal justice policies, allocate financial resources, and supervise public administration, concerns arise when political considerations extend beyond legitimate governance and affect operational decisions relating to criminal investigations, police administration, prosecution, and law enforcement. Such influence may undermine institutional independence, compromise the rule of law, and diminish public confidence in the justice delivery system.²⁸

²⁴ Police Act, No. 5 of 1861 (India); Nat'l Police Comm'n, *Eighth Report* (1981).

²⁵ *Prakash Singh v. Union of India*, (2006) 8 S.C.C. 1 (India).

²⁶ *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, (1998) 1 S.C.C. 226 (India).

²⁷ Law Comm'n of India, 239th Rep., *Expedition Investigation and Trial of Criminal Cases Against Influential Public Personalities* (2012); Ribeiro Comm., *Committee on Police Reforms* (1999); K. Padmanabhaiah Comm., *Report on Police Reforms* (2000); Soli J. Sorabjee Comm., *Model Police Act* (2006).

²⁸ INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21.

In India, policing is constitutionally a State subject under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, placing the administration of police forces primarily under the control of State Governments.²⁹ Consequently, the executive exercises significant authority over appointments, transfers, promotions, and disciplinary proceedings concerning police officers. Although administrative control is an essential component of democratic accountability, excessive or arbitrary executive intervention may adversely affect the independence and impartiality of criminal investigations. Frequent transfers of investigating officers, politically motivated postings, or administrative pressure in sensitive criminal cases may create perceptions that investigative decisions are influenced by considerations other than legal merit.³⁰

Political influence may also affect the registration and investigation of criminal cases. The criminal justice process begins with the registration of a First Information Report (FIR), followed by investigation, collection of evidence, arrest where necessary, prosecution, and trial. Delays in registering complaints, selective investigation of offences, unequal prioritisation of cases, or interference in investigative strategy may weaken public trust and adversely affect the fairness of criminal proceedings. The Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasised that criminal investigations must remain impartial, objective, and free from external influence in order to preserve constitutional guarantees of equality before the law and fair procedure.³¹

The prosecution system likewise occupies a central position within criminal justice administration. Public Prosecutors perform quasi-judicial functions and are expected to present evidence fairly rather than secure convictions at any cost. However, concerns have occasionally been expressed regarding prosecutorial independence, particularly in cases involving politically sensitive allegations or influential individuals. Any perception that prosecutorial decisions are affected by political considerations may undermine confidence in the fairness of criminal proceedings and the legitimacy of judicial outcomes. Consequently, strengthening prosecutorial independence through transparent appointments, professional standards, and institutional safeguards remains an important aspect of criminal justice reform.³²

Investigative agencies responsible for combating corruption, organised crime, terrorism, and economic offences frequently encounter heightened public scrutiny regarding institutional autonomy. In **Vineet Narain v. Union of India**, the Supreme Court recognised that investigative agencies must function independently and without extraneous influence to preserve the rule of law and maintain public confidence in the criminal justice system.³³ Similarly, in **Prakash Singh v. Union of India**, the Court directed all States and Union Territories to implement structural police reforms intended to reduce arbitrary political interference, including the establishment of State Security Commissions, fixed tenure for senior police officers, and separation of investigation from law-and-order functions.³⁴ These judicial directions demonstrate the constitutional importance of balancing democratic accountability with operational independence.

²⁹ INDIA CONST. sched. VII, List II, Entry 2.

³⁰ Nat'l Police Comm'n, *Eighth Report* (1981); Ribeiro Comm., *Committee on Police Reforms* (1999).

³¹ *Lalita Kumari v. Gov't of Uttar Pradesh*, (2014) 2 S.C.C. 1 (India); *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, (1978) 1 S.C.C. 248 (India).

³² K.N. Chandrasekharan Pillai, *R.V. Kelkar's Criminal Procedure* (7th ed.).

³³ *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, (1998) 1 S.C.C. 226 (India).

³⁴ *Prakash Singh v. Union of India*, (2006) 8 S.C.C. 1 (India).

Beyond institutional considerations, political influence has broader implications for constitutional governance. The perception that criminal law is applied selectively or that similarly situated individuals are treated differently erodes public confidence in legal institutions and weakens the constitutional principle of equality before the law. An effective criminal justice system must therefore operate transparently, consistently, and independently while remaining accountable to constitutional norms and democratic institutions. The rule of law requires that every individual, irrespective of political affiliation, social status, or economic position, be subject to the same legal standards and investigative procedures.³⁵ Several expert bodies have consistently recommended comprehensive police and criminal justice reforms to strengthen institutional autonomy and accountability. The National Police Commission recommended insulating operational policing from improper executive interference while ensuring democratic oversight through independent supervisory bodies.³⁶ The Ribeiro Committee, the Padmanabhaiah Committee, and the Soli Sorabjee Committee similarly emphasised fixed tenure, merit-based appointments, transparent transfer policies, separation of investigative functions, and independent complaints authorities as essential mechanisms for improving police professionalism and public confidence.³⁷ The Law Commission of India has also highlighted the need for expeditious and impartial investigation, particularly in cases involving influential public personalities, recognising that delays and external pressures may adversely affect both the administration of justice and public trust.³⁸

Accordingly, political influence should not be understood solely as an issue of governmental control over administrative institutions. Rather, it represents a broader constitutional challenge concerning the relationship between democratic accountability, institutional independence, and the rule of law. While elected governments legitimately determine criminal justice policy, operational decisions relating to investigation, prosecution, and adjudication must remain insulated from improper influence. Strengthening institutional safeguards, implementing long-pending police reforms, enhancing prosecutorial independence, and ensuring transparent governance are therefore indispensable for maintaining the credibility, impartiality, and constitutional legitimacy of India's criminal justice administration.

4. Judicial Responses and Institutional Challenges

The Indian judiciary has consistently emphasized that the criminal justice system must function independently of political or executive interference to preserve the rule of law and protect constitutional governance. Through a series of landmark judgments, the Supreme Court of India has strengthened the principles of fair investigation, institutional accountability, and police autonomy. These judicial interventions have significantly contributed to the evolution of criminal justice administration by recognizing that impartial investigations and independent prosecutorial processes are indispensable

³⁵ INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21.

³⁶ Nat'l Police Comm'n, *Eighth Report* (1981).

³⁷ Ribeiro Comm., *Committee on Police Reforms* (1999); K. Padmanabhaiah Comm., *Report on Police Reforms* (2000); Soli J. Sorabjee Comm., *Model Police Act* (2006).

³⁸ Law Comm'n of India, 239th Rep., *Expedition Investigation and Trial of Criminal Cases Against Influential Public Personalities* (2012).

components of the constitutional guarantee of equality before the law and the right to life and personal liberty under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.³⁹

One of the most significant milestones in police reform is *Prakash Singh v. Union of India*, wherein the Supreme Court issued comprehensive directives aimed at insulating the police from unwarranted political interference.⁴⁰ The Court directed all States and Union Territories to establish State Security Commissions, prescribe a transparent procedure for the appointment of the Director General of Police, provide a minimum tenure for senior police officers, separate investigation from law-and-order functions, and create Police Establishment Boards and Police Complaints Authorities. These reforms were intended to promote professionalism, operational independence, and accountability within police administration. However, despite the passage of nearly two decades, implementation across several States has remained partial and inconsistent, thereby limiting the effectiveness of these judicial mandates.⁴¹

Similarly, in *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court emphasized that investigative agencies must remain free from external influence while investigating corruption and other serious offences.⁴² The Court recognized that executive interference in criminal investigations undermines public confidence in the justice system and directed structural reforms to ensure greater institutional independence of investigative agencies. The judgment continues to serve as an important constitutional precedent supporting the autonomy of criminal investigation.

The judiciary has also repeatedly affirmed that a fair and impartial investigation constitutes an integral part of the right to a fair trial. In *Zahira Habibullah Sheikh v. State of Gujarat*, the Supreme Court observed that the criminal justice system cannot command public confidence unless investigations and prosecutions are conducted honestly, fairly, and without external pressure.⁴³ Likewise, in *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, the Court expanded the scope of Article 21 by holding that every legal procedure affecting life or personal liberty must be just, fair, and reasonable.⁴⁴ These principles collectively reinforce the constitutional obligation of investigative authorities to act impartially irrespective of political considerations.

Despite these judicial safeguards, significant institutional challenges continue to impede the effective administration of criminal justice. Police organizations in many States remain administratively dependent upon the executive for transfers, promotions, and disciplinary control, creating opportunities for political influence over operational decision-making. Delays in implementing police reforms, shortages of trained personnel, inadequate forensic infrastructure, excessive workload, and limited institutional accountability further weaken investigative efficiency.⁴⁵ Moreover, the absence of uniform compliance with judicial directions has resulted in considerable variations in policing standards across different jurisdictions.

Various expert bodies, including the National Police Commission, the Ribeiro Committee, the Padmanabhaiah Committee, the Soli J. Sorabjee Committee, and the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, have repeatedly recommended statutory reforms aimed at strengthening police autonomy,

³⁹ INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21.

⁴⁰ *Prakash Singh v. Union of India*, (2006) 8 S.C.C. 1 (India).

⁴¹ *Id.*; Second Admin. Reforms Comm'n, *Public Order: Justice for Each... Peace for All* (5th Rep. 2007).

⁴² *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, (1998) 1 S.C.C. 226 (India).

⁴³ *Zahira Habibullah Sheikh (5) v. State of Gujarat*, (2004) 4 S.C.C. 158 (India).

⁴⁴ *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, (1978) 1 S.C.C. 248 (India).

⁴⁵ Nat'l Police Comm'n, Eighth Report (1981); Ribeiro Comm., *Committee on Police Reforms* (1999); K. Padmanabhaiah Comm., *Report on Police Reforms* (2000).

transparency, accountability, and professional standards.⁴⁶ Although these recommendations have significantly influenced subsequent policy discussions, comprehensive legislative implementation remains incomplete. Consequently, the continuing gap between judicial directives and institutional practice highlights the necessity for sustained political commitment, statutory reforms, and effective oversight mechanisms to ensure that criminal justice institutions remain independent, impartial, and fully consistent with the constitutional principles of the rule of law.

5. Recommendations

The effectiveness of criminal justice administration in India depends upon maintaining an appropriate balance between democratic accountability and institutional independence. While elected governments have a legitimate role in formulating criminal justice policies, operational decisions concerning investigation, prosecution, and adjudication should remain insulated from improper political influence. Accordingly, comprehensive legal and institutional reforms are necessary to strengthen the integrity and credibility of the criminal justice system.

First, the police reform directives issued by the Supreme Court in *Prakash Singh v. Union of India* should be implemented effectively by all States and Union Territories. These reforms, including the establishment of State Security Commissions, fixed tenure for senior police officers, separation of investigation from law-and-order functions, and transparent appointment procedures, can significantly reduce arbitrary executive interference and improve institutional accountability.⁴⁷

Second, the operational independence of investigative agencies and Public Prosecutors should be strengthened through merit-based appointments, objective transfer policies, professional training, and statutory safeguards against improper external influence. Transparent decision-making processes and independent oversight mechanisms would enhance public confidence in criminal justice institutions.⁴⁸

Third, greater use of technology in criminal investigations should be encouraged to improve transparency, efficiency, and accountability. The adoption of digital case-management systems, electronic evidence management, body-worn cameras, forensic technologies, and secure digital records can reduce opportunities for procedural irregularities while strengthening the integrity of investigations.⁴⁹

Fourth, Parliament and State Legislatures should consider modernising the legal framework governing police administration by replacing or substantially reforming the colonial-era Police Act, 1861, in accordance with the principles reflected in the Model Police Act, 2006, and the recommendations of various expert committees.⁵⁰

Finally, regular training programmes on constitutional values, human rights, ethical policing, and professional standards should be institutionalised for police officers, prosecutors, and investigating agencies. A criminal justice system founded upon independence, transparency, professionalism, and

⁴⁶ Soli J. Sorabjee Comm., *Model Police Act* (2006); Second Admin. Reforms Comm'n, *Public Order: Justice for Each... Peace for All* (5th Rep. 2007).

⁴⁷ *Prakash Singh v. Union of India*, (2006) 8 S.C.C. 1 (India).

⁴⁸ *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, (1998) 1 S.C.C. 226 (India); Law Comm'n of India, 239th Rep., *Expedition Investigation and Trial of Criminal Cases Against Influential Public Personalities* (2012).

⁴⁹ Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, No. 47 of 2023 (India); Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, No. 46 of 2023 (India).

⁵⁰ Police Act, No. 5 of 1861 (India); Soli J. Sorabjee Comm., *Model Police Act* (2006); Nat'l Police Comm'n, *Eighth Report* (1981).

accountability is indispensable for protecting the rule of law and strengthening public trust in India's democratic institutions.

6. Conclusion

The administration of criminal justice is a defining characteristic of a constitutional democracy governed by the rule of law. In India, the Constitution establishes a legal order in which every individual is entitled to equality before the law, procedural fairness, and the protection of life and personal liberty. These constitutional guarantees require criminal justice institutions—including the police, prosecution, and judiciary—to discharge their functions independently, impartially, and in accordance with established legal procedures. The legitimacy of the criminal justice system therefore depends not only upon the existence of comprehensive legal provisions but also upon the integrity, professionalism, and accountability of the institutions responsible for their implementation.⁵¹

This study has demonstrated that political influence in criminal justice administration is a complex constitutional and administrative issue rather than merely a political concern. Democratic governments possess the constitutional authority to formulate criminal justice policies, allocate resources, and exercise administrative supervision over public institutions. However, such authority must remain consistent with constitutional limitations and must not extend to influencing operational decisions concerning criminal investigations, prosecutorial discretion, or judicial processes. Where institutional independence is compromised, public confidence in the fairness and credibility of the criminal justice system may be significantly weakened.⁵²

The constitutional framework, particularly Articles 14, 21, 32, and 50 of the Constitution of India, together with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, and other relevant legislation, provides an extensive legal foundation for the administration of criminal justice. Nevertheless, statutory safeguards alone cannot ensure effective justice unless they are supported by transparent institutional practices, professional policing, independent prosecution, and meaningful accountability mechanisms. The continued operation of the Police Act, 1861 in many jurisdictions further illustrates the need for legislative modernisation consistent with contemporary constitutional values and democratic governance.⁵³

Judicial intervention has played a significant role in strengthening institutional accountability and protecting the rule of law. Decisions of the Supreme Court, particularly *Prakash Singh v. Union of India* and *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, have recognised the constitutional importance of insulating investigative agencies from improper external influence while maintaining democratic accountability through lawful oversight. Similarly, the recommendations of the National Police Commission, the Law Commission of India, the Ribeiro Committee, the Padmanabhaiah Committee, and the Soli Sorabjee Committee collectively provide a comprehensive roadmap for reforming police administration and enhancing the effectiveness of criminal justice institutions. Although many of these recommendations

⁵¹ INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21; *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, (1978) 1 S.C.C. 248 (India).

⁵² *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, (1998) 1 S.C.C. 226 (India); INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21.

⁵³ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, No. 45 of 2023 (India); Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, No. 46 of 2023 (India); Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, No. 47 of 2023 (India); Police Act, No. 5 of 1861 (India).

have influenced policy discussions, their implementation across the States has remained uneven, resulting in continuing institutional challenges.⁵⁴

An effective criminal justice system must therefore balance two equally important constitutional objectives. On the one hand, democratic governments must retain the authority necessary to formulate public policy and ensure administrative accountability. On the other hand, operational decisions relating to criminal investigation, prosecution, and adjudication must remain free from improper political or executive influence. Achieving this balance is essential for safeguarding equality before the law, preserving judicial independence, protecting individual rights, and maintaining public confidence in legal institutions.

In conclusion, strengthening criminal justice administration in India requires more than legislative reform alone. It demands sustained institutional commitment to transparency, professionalism, ethical governance, and constitutional accountability. Effective implementation of police reforms, modernisation of policing legislation, independent oversight mechanisms, capacity building, technological advancement, and adherence to judicial directives are indispensable for promoting impartial investigations and ensuring equal justice for all. By reinforcing these constitutional principles, India can continue to strengthen the rule of law, enhance institutional credibility, and build a criminal justice system that reflects the values of fairness, justice, accountability, and democratic governance.

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⁵⁴ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, No. 45 of 2023 (India); Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, No. 46 of 2023 (India); Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, No. 47 of 2023 (India); Police Act, No. 5 of 1861 (India).

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