

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR SERIES-12

Lecture ::12

(Duration : 1 hour)

GROUP : GROUP BEHAVIOUR IN POLICE

Individuals in a society are not separate entities- isolated in time and space. They are living organisms that exist, survive and develop in relationship to other organisms. People group together on the basis of 'isms', 'ologies', 'sophies', likes, dislikes, professions, occupations, status, sex, age, region, language, strength, weaknesses, castes, sub-castes etc. These groups are, in all senses, necessary, essential and inevitable for human progress and development. Besides these groups which are thus formed, there are other groups like the family, school, neighbourhood, community or groups of similar nature to help a child to develop himself/ herself into a social being - or better a socialised human being. Psychologists and sociologists think that group - life and mutual interaction make the people what they are or should be. They decide very much the basic attitudes, feelings and values which individuals should have in their lives. It is through the medium of group that children learn a culture which, in turn, teaches them and all others how they should behave in society.

Individuals can behave in any way they want if they are alone. But, they cannot behave in any way like when they are in a group. When many individuals get together, there arises group behaviour which may be different from individual behaviours. The policeman representing the police department cannot behave in a manner he likes; rather he should behave in a way he is expected to behave by the police organisation. How does the group behaviour of the police affect the individual behaviour of policeman? This will be discussed later in another lecture.

Human Values and Police Behaviour

GROUP: DIFFERENT TYPES

Groups are classified as primary and secondary. The common practice has been to use the term "primary group" to apply to any group characterised by more or less intimate, face-to-face relationships". Police working in police stations, armed reserve camps, armed battalions can be put under this category, because they have more or less face-to-face and intimate relationship. Just like the members in a family live, they exist and survive in their special set-up as a group.

Secondary groups are "characterised by relationships that are less personal and intimate and more abstract, intellectualised and indirect". Police taken as a whole with all its units come under this classification. In a large organisation like the police, the relationship that exists among its members can not be intimate. There are

different ranks which have to keep some distance- socially and psychologically- among themselves as the organisation is basically hierarchical in structure. Functionally, there are many different units and sub-units which do not have any common interest to share with. Of course, the policemen and officers in uniform meet and mingle in many places and occasions and such interactions may surely develop a feeling of relatedness in their work as a group. Even when there exists some relatedness in their work, there may not be any group relations worth the name.

Police, as stated earlier, taken as a whole is a large group formed to provide many services to the society. Some are statutorily entrusted on them- some are given to them by standing orders and departmental circulars - and some are assumed by them without any legal authority. No single policeman will be able to provide the services which the police as a group can. It requires many

Bureau of Police Research & Development

policemen to manage a law and order situation and it may need several thousands of policeman to manage the jobs connected with the general elections to the parliament. Therefore, many a time, the policeman will have to work in a group and invariably they may show group - behaviour.

GROUP- CULTURE IN POLICE

Culture is defined as " that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of the society. Just like the group influences an individual who is a member of it to behave in a manner acceptable to the group, the culture prevailing in a group also influences the members belonging to that culture to behave in a manner acceptable to the culture.

The police has a sub- culture of behaviour which is to some extent different from the culture of the society. The police (group) culture is to have a clean face- shave every day, to polish the shoes in such a way to see the shining on them, to wear neat dress, to walk smartly, to salute in a dignified manner etc. This behaviour and culture go deep into all members in the service so much so that an officer/ man wearing shabby dress is looked down upon by other members in the service and the general public. There are allegations that police use excessive force always and every time when they lathi- charge the people. As a group behaviour, the allegation is that, the police show more aggressiveness, hostility, cruelty etc. to people in such situations. These two examples may illustrate that group- behaviour should be viewed in two different ways - i.e.

1. How does a policeman, being a member in the police (group) behave? In other words, how do majority of the members in police services behave? for example, if majority of the personnel

in police are found to be honest and decent, we may say that honesty and decency are the group - behaviour of that group called the police. On the other hand, if a good many in the services are seen to be corrupt and dishonest, then it will be said that corruption and dishonesty are the characteristics of the group behaviour of the police.

2. When several policemen/ officers have to behave in a group how do they behave? Allegations are there about custodial violence and custodial rapes, concoction of evidence and production of false witnesses. As a group, the policemen may do it whereas as an individual, many of them may be against these sort of malpractice and misbehaviours. Why do the policemen do so either individually as being a member in a group or jointly as becoming a part of the group while the group is in action? Here comes the influence a group - culture- a culture that tolerates, promotes, encourages, some behavioural patterns which the individuals belonging to the culture internalises or make attempts to internalise. When many individuals internalise such behavioural patterns it becomes a group culture. Every new entrant to the police learns the police sub- culture and he learns the group behaviour through process- namely co-operation, imitation, suggestion or through fighting, assisting, blaming, praising, punishing or like processes.

ILLUSTRATION

A policeman when he employs third degree method on a suspect, he does not usually bite and scratch. Why? The main reason is that the group to which he belongs and the sub- culture in which he lives do not behave the way as stated above. The group influences his behavioural patterns and he is suggested to behave in the manner he is taught to behave. Consciously or unconsciously he absorbs the

pattern of behaviour to himself and it becomes a part in his style of functioning. The new entrants to the sub- culture learn them through their association with other fellow beings by several psychological processes called imitation, identification and suggestion etc.

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP : GROUP- BEHAVIOUR IN POLICE

There exists a relationship between the individual and the group to which he/ she is a member. The individual may influence the group behaviour and also the group behaviour may influence the individual behaviour. The behaviour of the sub- inspector influences the group behaviour of the thana police and the group behaviour of the thana police influence the individual behaviour of the sub- inspector in police stations.

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP BEHAVIOUR IN POLICE STATIONS

(Fig: 11)

ILLUSTRATION

The sub-inspector is very punctual in his duties and he insists punctuality among his staff who were not punctual. After a few days, it can be seen that the group-behaviour in police station is changed into "punctuality" as a projected characteristics in thana police. Likewise, the behaviour of the superintendent of police may influence the entire police functionaries in the district. The same process becomes true in the case of the behaviour of the director general of police and its impact on the entire police strength in the state. For effecting a change in the already existing sub-culture,

Human Values and Police Behaviour

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP BEHAVIOUR IN POLICE STATIONS

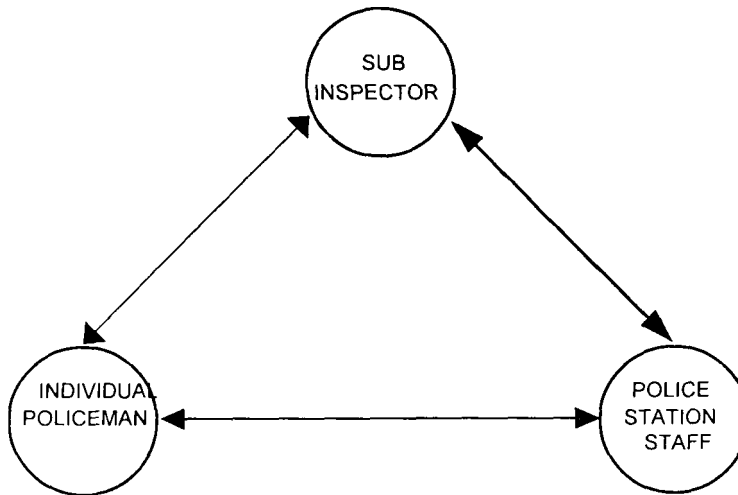


Fig 11

the leader of the group may have to swim across the current and it may be resented against by the group who wants to go along with

the current. Here, the individual interacting with the group changes the group- attitude, outlook and behavioural patterns to issues, individuals and events.

Similarly, the group culture too may change the individual's behaviour. The group teach a lot of ideas, right or wrong, about police uniform, authority power, status, role, ego- concepts to individual officers/ men. Some senior level police officers think that they can make use of their power and authority to write the confidential reports of their subordinates to damage their career prospects. The individual police officers, through their association, with senior levels, study how to write damaging comments in the confidential reports of subordinates. This mode of behaviour among some unscrupulous police officers has given a feeling among the lower ranks that the group behaviour of the senior levels in this area is to use confidential report writing as a weapon to take vengeance against the subordinates.

CLASS ROOM EXERCISES

1. Classify the police into various groups and sub- groups.
2. Enumerate the areas where the police working in various groups / units express relatedness in their work.
3. Describe the characteristics of the group-culture in police.
4. Give a short description to narrate how your values, attitudes, traits and outlook influence the group behaviour of the unit you represent/ likely to represent.
5. Describe how does the group in which you work influence your behavioural patterns.

DISCUSSIONS

Bureau of Police Research & Development

NOTES

1. William F. Ogburn and Mayer F. Nimkoff, A handbook of sociology. Eurasia Publishing House (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, 1972.
2. Ogburn and M.F Nimkoff, op cit
3. Tylor, Primitive Culture. Brentano's. New York. 1924.

