

## **UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR SERIES- 1**

Lecture-1

(Duration: 1 Hour)

### **HUMAN VALUES AND POLICE BEHAVIOUR**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Why should police officers/ men study the subject "understanding human behaviour"? The Indian Police Act-1861 has put investigating and detection of crime and criminals as the main twin objectives of the Act. Do investigation and detection require and necessitate police officers/ men to study human behavioural dynamics? yes, they do, because investigation includes interrogation of suspects, interviewing of witnesses, questioning of people, collection of criminal intelligence and contacting a number of people from all walks of life. Today, the police work does not confine only to investigation and detection of crime. It includes managing people during a V.I.P's visit, controlling various crowds, groups, mobs and mob- violence. Police officers/ men are called upon to the scenes of natural calamities, accidents, demonstrations, dharnas, processions and all sorts of organised defiance to authority. All these manifold duties of police require them to have a closer look, understanding and appreciation of human behaviour- not only of the behaviour of the people with whom police interact in their day to day functioning but also of their own behaviour.

Perhaps, the police were considered as an oppressive force in the past. But, today the police are considered as a people - oriented services and that too in a democracy which accepts civil rights, human rights and fundamental freedoms of the citizens. Therefore, the working of the human mind should intrigue everyone in the service so that the police do not make mistakes.

Understanding the self, self is found to be more difficult than understanding others- individually or collectively in a group, crowd or mob. Perhaps, understanding people in a crowd or mob may be more difficult than understanding fellow individuals. With a basic course in human behaviour and the psychology of man, police officers/ men will be better able to understand self and others. This is precisely the reason why the subject Human Behaviour and Police attitude is included in the training curriculum of all categories of police functionaries.

#### **HUMAN VALUES AND POLICE BEHAVIOUR**

The first lecture in this series is about Human Values and Police Behaviour. A case- study is taken here to illustrate this further.

## **CASE STUDY**

Joseph, aged 57, a bullock cart owner cum driver was asked by the Sub-Inspector of Police to report before him at the police station at 8 am. to record his statement in a criminal case. He was a witness in the case. He reached the police station at 7.45 am. and he was asked to wait at the station until 12.30 p.m. and then he was told to come to the station on the following day. He losts day's work and wages. Added to it he had to spend money from his pocket for this travel and meet other incidental expenses.

On his return from the police station, he told his experience in the station to many in his village. To this people reacted-

1. The policemen are always like this.
2. They are inconsiderate to people's troubles and inconvenience.
3. People in general are afraid of the police and as such the police have no reluctance to ask them to wait- to go home- to come back on the next day- days together, particularly when the victims are coming from the poor strata of the society.
4. People have no option other than obeying the police like a dog. If disobeyed their so called authoritative instructions' (pseudo-authority?), the handicapped people might taste the muscle of the police.
5. Police treat witnesses and the suspects alike and thus went on the comments by the public.

What is wrong with the police? Why do the people react in this way? Here comes the question of human values.

## **HUMAN VALUES; WHAT IS IT?**

Every society has certain norms of behaviour and everybody who is a member in that society has his own values. This is called the human values in the society. People living in a particular society have their common values and they are called the social values, e.g.

1. You shall not use filthy expressions to other fellow beings in society
2. You shall not accept bribe for the services you render.
3. You shall respect other people - their time, convenience and hardships.

These are the social norms which are also the human values. The society accepts these human values as desirable for, it is necessary for the well-being and harmonious co-existence of people. The violation of these norms- social and human values- is resented against by the members of the society. This is called the dominant culture existing in a society.

## **DOMINANT CULTURE AND SUB- CULTURE**

Within the dominant culture that exists in a larger society, there will be several groups which may be formed on the basis of caste, sub-caste, power and authority, status and economic positions etc. Such groups may develop their own values-norms which may be different from the dominant culture that is seen in a larger society. This is called the sub-cultural values. For example-

1. Anglo- Indian community in a society may have dancing which they may accept as a desirable act and which may be considered as a undesirable by the dominant culture.
2. People living in slums may indulge themselves in some criminal activities and their sub-cultural values may approve of such activities, but will be reacted against by the dominant cultural values.

Police, as a group within the society has developed certain sub-cultural values which they may consider as quite normal, nevertheless the dominant culture may reject. Going back to the case study given above, the witness was called to the police station. This is in fact against the principles of investigation, yet is a normal practice in police subculture. A time was fixed for recording the statement. Instead of recording the statement the police asked the witness to wait up to 12.30 p.m. Later he was instructed to come on the next day. Everything was quite acceptable, desirable and usual in police sub-cultural, But, the dominant culture could not tolerate the police behaviour rather misbehaviour with the witness. According to the dominant cultural values, the police behaviour was indicative of the don't care attitude towards the witness's time, convenience, expenses and troubles. No civilised society will and can tolerate this as the police behaviour is considered to be violative of the human values upheld, by the dominant culture of the society.

Research studies conducted on the sub-cultural values and police behaviour within the value system of the dominant culture in society shows that many a time these two values conflict each other. "Policemen have to be punctual, just, sincere/ attentive, prompt, industrious, accurate and unselfish if they are to be depended upon by the public. Their service should be made available to the people at the right time at the right place. Delay in police response is adversely commented and police credibility is questioned. Police inertia and lethargy have become subject to criticism by other agencies of criminal justice system, the media and the common man"

## **VIOLATION OF HUMAN VALUES AND FEELINGS OF GUILT**

If the human values entertained by the society is violated by the police, then they should have guilt feelings. Do the police have the guilt feelings when they-

1. make informal arrests of people?
2. detain people in illegal custody?
3. refuse the detained to be produced before the court? if they do not have guilt feelings when they do so, then the society will surely criticise the police activities and misbehaviour. And that is what we are hearing from the public.

### **NATIONAL POLICE COMMISSION AND POLICE SUB-CULTURAL VALUES**

Do the police sub-cultural values go in harmony with the dominant cultural values of the society? The National Police Commission enumerates any number of instances to show that the sub-cultural values get social disapproval. Some of such instances noticed by the Commission are:

1. deliberate handcuffing of a person in police custody merely to humiliate him;
2. non-release of bail after the arrest even in cases where bail can be granted. This is calculated to put the man in more trouble and mental agony.
3. discretionary enforcement of law while dealing with public order situations with emphasis on severity and ruthlessness in regard to persons opposed to the ruling party.

### **CLASS ROOM EXERCISES**

1. Enumerate three instances to show that the sub-cultural norms of the police inflict with the dominant cultural norms of the society.
2. Comment about the following and say whether or not the police values go in tune with the society's values.

- a) Police language
- b) Police interrogation
- c) Police attitude to complaints

3. Why do the police behave the way they do? Is it because.

- a) The society needs such police behaviour
- b) The police do not know how to behave
- c) The police think that they can afford to behave in any way they want.
- d) Police misbehaviour is the proper behaviour in police sub-culture.
- e) The people tolerate police misbehaviour.
- f) Any other (specify.....)

### **POLICE SUB-CULTURAL VALUES: APPRECIATION**

All said and done, studies conducted in police show that the people to have appreciation of the police sub-cultural values. In a survey conducted to elicit public opinion about devotion to work it was

stated by 51 % of the respondents positively that more denotation to work is seen in police when compared with the same in another government services. Hence keep it up.

### **DISCUSSION**

### **NOTES:**

1. Alphonse L. Earayil and James Vadackumchery, Police and the Society. Kairali Books International, Thiruvananthapuram
2. Alphonse L. Earayil & James Vadackumchery,

