

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR: SERIES-22

Lecture 22

(Duration: 1 hour)

CROWD CONTROL : POLICE ROLE

At the very outset, let us accept the fact that the police have no much role in crowd control if it does not cause any law and order problems. This would mean that the police role is limited to the extent that they should develop a permissive attitude to have the crowds collected. Ours is a democracy which ensures fundamental freedoms for the citizens to organise themselves into groups and associations. People assemble every where with varied objectives.

Strikes occupy a very important position in a democratic set-up. The students, teachers, government employees, general public, factory workers, political parties, communal groups conduct strikes, processions, jhathas, dharnas, hartals, bandhs, etc. and they do it by the show of people collected together. The intention of all these crowds is to publicise the fact that there exists a situation about which the people gathered are dissatisfied. People, by doing so, want to draw the attention of the authority to the problems that exists in society.

The people who collected may employ many and various tactics with varied objectives. Whenever a trade-union or employees associations calls for a strike, it is usual that they establish a picket or picket line outside the struck vicinity. People sit there and sometimes some leaders come there to address the people involved in the strikes. They shout slogans, collect some funds, make speeches and exhort people to support them in their activities. They do all

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these things strike. As they are doing only legitimate things permitted by law, the policemen need not interfere in their activities. Maximum what is required is to establish another police picket in the struck vicinity so that the presence of the police will work as a control mechanism for their behaviour. Certainty of police action in case they involve in unlawful act, should be ensured by the presence of the police in the area.

The role of the police in such area should be made clear to the striking crowd. The striking crowd should not get the impression or have a feeling that the police are there to aid or support the management. They should be made to understand that the police are there to maintain law and order and nothing more or nothing less. Remember always that the right to picket is not an offence in India provided that it is done in good spirit- peacefully and causing no obstruction to people to use the premises for legitimate purposes. Instances are not rare that the strikers, resort to violence, physical intimidation, use of threat, obstruction of the ways, prevention of

vehicular traffic etc. In such instances, the pickets lose their characters and significance. In such instances the objectives of pickets becomes a weapon of physical coercion and illegal detention and obstructions. Such pickets and the crowd in such pickets are illegal and police action can be initiated to control the crowd. But, the strategy of control should be limited only to remove the obstructions caused to the way or people and nothing more. Use of force or speaking in filthy language may not be necessary at such occasions. Persuasion, appeal, explaining the law, exhortations etc. may be very necessary in such situations. The police may call the leaders and instruct them as to what they can do and what they cannot do. They should be informed about the police role in such occasions and the law which empower the police to initiate action against people who make illegal pickets. Carrying of placards of any size is permitted during pickets and the use of mikes

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and amplifiers is allowed. As long as the strikers perform their acts in a legitimate way, it is the duty of the police to see that their rights to picket and their interest to publicise the issue are protected.

DEMONSTRATIONS

Demonstration is a public assemblage of persons with an objective to show their attitude to an issue or event. It also publicises the matter and is a guaranteed constitutional right of the people in a democracy. The police as the executive organ of the Government to safe guard the constitutional rights of Citizens have a duty to permit such demonstrations organised by people. It may be taken note of that every demonstration is 1. Organised, 2. has leadership, 3. discipline, 4. orderly and non-violent and 5. legal. Every demonstration is organised by some agency, party or people who are powerful. Since it is organised, it has got leadership and the leaders can control it. As the leaders are able to control the participants, it can be seen that the participants are well disciplined, orderly and non-violent. They conduct the demonstrations in a legal way. The police have nothing much to do here expect to see and watch that they.

There may be small scale, medium-scale and large-scale demonstrations. Demonstrators may parade, conduct meetings and rallies with slogans shouted. If the demonstration is small scale with only few people, there is the need only for a policeman to see and watch what they do. If they conduct a rally then there should be sufficient police men in the front and back of the rally and this can be done in police vehicles. The presence of the policemen will ensure law and order management, if the demonstration is of a medium size - with 5000 people or above -

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then it is good sufficient number of policemen are developed for the duty not only in the front and back of the demonstrations, but only along with the demonstrations. A few policemen going along with the demonstrations will further guarantee law and order management. If the demonstration is large or very large - constituting of lakhs of people- then there should be sufficient number of policemen in the front, in the back, in between and on the side etc. both in mufti and in uniform. The deployment of the police strength depends upon the category of the participants/ in such demonstrations or processions. For example, if the procession is purely religious, academic, cultural etc. then it may not be necessary to have larger development of police personnel. Huge number of policemen may have to be deployed if law and order violations are anticipated by the collection of intelligence by the police. There may be instances in which anti- social elements or enemies of the demonstrators infiltrating into the rally to create law and order problems, if such occasions, the police have to take not only control strategies, but also preventive strategies.

Demonstrations may be adhoc or well - planned (*Pukka*). During the demonstrations, people may shout slogans, resort to verbal abuse, make obscene remarks, ridicule the people in authority etc. If the demonstration is organised against the police atrocities, lock- up deaths, custodial violence, lathy- charge or firing etc. the demonstrations may shout anti- police slogans. Don't take serious note of such things as they do not utter anything against individual policemen. Bear in mind, that the demonstrations are not against any particular police officer/ man (in lock- up deaths etc. it may be against some specific police officer who is not present at the spot) and as such, don't take offence against what they speak or do. They may employ chanting, singing, dancing and other means of making noise. Even effigies may be taken for burning them. Don't be serious about them unless they do not cause serious law and order

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problems. Unnecessarily getting provoked at such silly things done for the pent- up emotional release of the demonstrators can cause serious havoc in law and order management.

At the same time, there may be unruly persons who may spit on the police officer's face, strike at the officer with fist, sticks, or crow- bars, pelt stones at the police or police vehicles, government properties or State Transport buses. Arson and looting may find their way in some of the demonstrations. The demonstrators may throw rotten eggs, human excreta, employ cans, eggs. In such instances, what the demonstrators do are nothing but vandalism, goondaism, hooliganism, and outright violation of the law. The police have to take strict measures as per law, to bring such situations under control.

CLASS ROOM EXERCISES

1. Explain how crowds turn into mobs in the following situations.
 1. Student unrest
 2. Labour disputes.
 3. Political agitation
 4. Bandhs and Hartal
 5. Communal conflicts.
2. Discuss the characteristics have that you notice in the behaviour patterns of-
 1. demonstrations by government employees
 2. demonstrations by political parties.
 3. demonstrations by students
 4. demonstrations by industrial workers.

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DISCUSSION

NOTES

1. See. Dr. James Vadackumchery, Criminology and Penology. Kairali, Thiruvanthapuram, 1983.