

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR: SERIES-23

Lecture 23

(Duration: 1 hour)

CROWD CONTROL: POLICE ROLE AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

In the previous lecture, the role of police in crowd- situations with special emphasis on picketing and demonstrations has been explained. In this lecture, the police role in other types of crowd - situations is discussed.

1. **GHERAO**

'Gherao' means confinement. To begin with, it was used as a method of coercion by the workman for redressing their grievances suddenly started in west Bengal in March 1967. In law it is known as wrongful confinement under the Indian Penal Code- 1860. As time passed by people started to use this coercive technique to pressurise persons in authority. Today, it is seen in educational institutions, religious centres, political areas etc. Cases have been reported that the vice chancellors were gheraoed, religious men and prayer groups were gheraoed, governments, officials and public men were charged gheraoed etc. Instances have been reported in the press that the crowds which gherao the officials, public men etc. have beaten them, caused serious injuries etc.. This is nothing but outright and naked use of using coercive weapons and therefore such crowds are illegal. Strict legal action should be taken against the members constituting such crowds.

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CIVIL DISTURBANCE

"Civil disturbance is the deliberate public violation of a law with every expectation of arrest, as a protest and in order to dramatise one's sympathy with or opposition to some political, economic or social conditions or movement. It is a calculated attempt to pressurise the government in power to yield to the demands of the people who organise such movements. They involve in the sabotage of trains, massacre of innocent women and children, looting, use of weapons and deadly arms. The destructive activities caused by the groups cause serious friction between the police and the people. In such situations the police have to resort to several preventive strategies to manage the crowds, activities.

PREVENTIVE ROLE OF POLICE

All the situations which threaten law and order management necessitate the police to take up preventive strategies. Advance planning and evaluation of the potential problems must be made at the senior levels. For this purpose, the intelligence units should be alerted to supply advance information relating to the potential problems likely to be created by the crowds.

The police may have to release press notes regarding the management which have been made by the department to tackle the

situations. If necessary, route- marches to show the strength of the force may have to be conducted. Additional strength including the strength of the paramilitary forces of the Government of India will have to be ensured.

Preventive arrests may have to be made. There should be surveillance and shadowing of the leaders likely to involve in such destructive activities. Departmental man power should be mobilised.

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In India, riots may arise out of communal and political issues. The police have special - Rapid Action police and they are available in all states. They should be mobilised. Provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure- 1973 and the Police Act- 1861 should be applied to effect control over people from gathering in specific areas. Intense patrolling should be freely employed and suspicious people should be taken into custody. If necessary, the services of the executive magistrate should be requisitioned. Police may use force to quell violence if that needs be. In employing such forces, care should be taken to use only the minimum force. In acute situations, the police may fire at the crowd to re-establish law and order.

There may be very cruel criticism against the use force against the citizens. In some countries they have riot police who are specially trained to handle any riotous situations without the use of force. Some state governments have police commandos specially trained for the purpose. Their services should be invariably made available in all such situations. If matters become serious and uncontrollable, then the army may have to be called to the scene. But, it should be resorted only in the in the rarest of rare occasions.

As the police are accountable to everything they do, there is a likelihood that an inquiry commission is instituted after every riot control operation. Hence, it is necessary that the police may use movie camera and VCR for taking live pictures (to the Commission) of what was going on at the scene of disturbance. Sufficient policemen in mufti should be made available. There should be ambulance, doctors and nurses to provide immediate emergency services during and after the police operations. Transport facilities for the policemen injured and the captured should be arranged.

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Traffic control should be enforced and if needed emergency response - routes should be found out.

Police should use loud speakers for giving timely instructions to people who are involved in mob- activities. Wireless sets should be operated. Agencies of mass media and other means of communication should be watched during the operation to stop further problems. Bomb squad of the police should be posted to render their services, if need be. Fire engine and first aid facilities must be available. Over and above, the police should have sufficient tear gas shells, arms and ammunition, lathy sticks etc. and if necessary, the presence of the Executive Magistrate at the spot should be ensured. Blockades, curfew, control of sensitive items, creation of barriers must be resorted to. After the operation, there should be a press- release about everything that has happened during the police operations.

After any crowd control operations by the police, there will be a lot of adverse criticism against the police action, principally put forward by the opposition parties. This is to be expected and such criticisms may include allegations that the police did everything without any provocation, without any legal justification and with a lot of aggressiveness and hostility.

Allegations are always heard that the police came to the trouble - spots with stones stored with them in bags and they pelted them to initiate police actions against the people who are peacefully conducting a demonstration or rally. Allegations are also heard that the police did not give announcements before they started to fire at people. Although the police may deny all these allegations, the truth remains that there will be some reality in what the opposition speaks about police strategies. Take the adverse criticisms against the police, in due seriousness, so that the

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department can rectify the short comings at a future time when a similar operations become inevitable.

CLASS ROOM EXERCISES

1. Enumerate a few crowd situations in which the police may take action.
2. What more prevention strategics can be suggested to control crowds.
3. Study a Inquiry Commission report relating to a crowd- control management by police and find out the draw backs committed by police in handling crowd situations.
4. What are the usual criticisms brought against the police after a crowd - control operation? How can such criticism be corrected.

DISCUSSION

NOTE

I. Raymond M. Moboisse, Riots, Revolts And Insurrections. Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, 1970.

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