
Crisis of Policing in India : Developing a Managerial Perspective

*A.P. Maheshwari, IPS **

Whenever we think of police, more so in Indian context, a sharp negative image generally overshadows the human cognitions. One thinks of brutality, high handedness and highly politicized functionary. The visual symbol of power is so perceived that it comes to be regarded as a necessary evil. Can we do without it? The answer to this question is a definite 'No'. This further brings us to a volley of questions ---

- is the perceived reality imaginary or factual ?
- Are the inherent contradictions a reflection of the British legacy ?
- Is the police functioning reflective of inherent social and political peculiarities and inconsistencies in the system ?
- Does it call for an approach where the functioning of police bureaucracy needs to be made congruent with normative role expectations flowing out of law and order parameters ?

The search for a viable 'solution-matrix' takes us through various paradigms and concepts propounded by experts from time to time. The range of expertise varies from sociological theories and analysis to the experiences of field functionaries. It would be imperative to surf through and crystalizing our concept of the "most appropriate".

One of the sociological paradigms, as

propounded by Skolnick, elaborates that the organizational tension in police department is basically due to the internal contradiction between the legal system and bureaucratic pressures. Democratic bureaucracy puts more emphasis on initiative during the process of public administration whereas the rule of law entails strict adherence to the provisions of the law. Thus, Skolnick highlights the tension between the operational consequences of the parameters of order, efficiency and initiative on one hand and strict adherence to legality on the other hand. It may not be realistic to elucidate such a fine demarcation, though it appears to be a sound proposition and conforms to the empirical observations to an extent. Cohen, suggesting the alternative explanation, states that there are inherent tensions between the goal and means of democratic bureaucracy on one hand and the police sub-culture on the other. Police sub-culture is a product of certain conditions inherent in the nature of police work and provides means to accomplish specific tasks, governed by the rule of law. Bureaucracy may be required to maximize its efficiency but not at the cost of the rule of law. Since Police is the most

** Mr. A.P. Maheshwari, I.P.S. DIG (ADM), C.R.P.F.,
C.G.O. Complex Lodi Road,
New Delhi-110003*

visible symbol and ground level agent to enforce the rule of law, structural mechanism has to be provided to safeguard this agency against the bureaucratic pressures so that it can uphold what the rule of law demands. It is observed by social scientists that even such a description of the functional or dysfunctional character of bureaucracy may not be pragmatic.

Weber, while propounding the concept of bureaucracy and in turn perceiving the bureaucratization of the whole society alongwith bureaucratic values, showed his concern for the exploitative tendencies of those manning the bureaucracy. We are caught between the two paradigms. The 'pursuit of power' and the 'pursuit of value'. In the absence of correct rationalities, the imbalance would lead to nothing but a 'bastardised form of bureaucracy'. The various theories provide us with conceptual dimensions in order to develop operational tools for the management of positive change. They are, however, based on generalisations which are subject to certain given conditions which may or may not exist.

The task of the field functionaries is to evolve "specific domains" to cater to the ground realities. Hence, a diagnostic exercise from generalisations to the specifics is a sine-quo-none for deriving the optimal rationality levels.

Police in India is still regulated through the Police Act of 1861. The structure, nature of duties as well as work culture in form of the expectations are still marred by colonial legacy to a great extent. The attitudes of public servants as well as the policy makers towards the police have not changed much. Political and bureaucratic controls have created a situation of goal displacement and contradictions vis-a-vis the basic functions of the police as the law enforcers. The failure of basic institutions of society, increase in population without the growth of proper human resource, lack of inherent social control, lack of proper growth, lack of equal opportunities to all without distributive justice, lack of proper diffusion of welfare ideologies etc. have created an environment where political parties in power make use of police to control the disadvantaged classes and to suppress their agitations when they air their grievances.

Increasing use of laws and enactments to

enforce discipline amidst the situation of the failure of basic institutions of society has given onerous task on the shoulder of the police whereby it is required to assume coercive leadership for social transformation. The role and goal conflicts have enhanced the tension levels and given birth to new contradictions. Yet, no room for initiative is provided to the police agencies. The lack of reasonable insulation from political and bureaucratic control has, thus, created a situation where it has become increasingly difficult to delineate the legitimate balance between domination and participation and define the arena for non-violent politics. The stick (police action) and carrot (concessions) approach towards the less privileged and the glaring gap between them and the traditional elite has given rise to neolite in society who are more political and opportunistic i.e. exploitative in nature and fond of propagating "half-fruths". This has been an offshoot of the mismatch between the idealism presumed by our constitution and the legal enactments on one hand and the ground level organic reality on the other. This, typical political, social and institutional subcultures have envolved in order to survive under the highly disformatted environment. The loss of legitimacy to police is also the direct result of the mismanagement of the emerging crisis and the use of police as a tool according to the whims and fancies of the controlling elite who have set in wrong demonstration-effects.

Delay in initiating police reforms is peculiar to Indian work culture and the unexplained motives of the ruling elite. The high level commissions have suggested many reforms. Their reports are still gathering dust. What has been the intrinsic result ? Ill-equipped and ill-trained force with no clear strategic goals and roles, growing conflicts between the police and the clients (the citizens), catering to the beckonings of the controlling elite rather than important charter of a professional and ideal police force, severely infected by the virus of social stratification, ridden with politicization coupled with criminalisation, a loss of value-orientation, distorted performance evaluation and accountability. The police agencies may cry foul amidst such a situation, yet the police leadership will be required to set its house in order even if the environment inputs do not undergo the desired change. The problem has got deep psychological and behavioural dimensions too. Much will have to be learnt and much will have to be unlearnt.

The task for finding optimal solutions is also not easy when the system has reached a critical point. The problem diagnosis suggests extreme remedial measures. No single model can suggest complete solutions. The integrative system's approach may perhaps provide compact options. The holistic nature of the system's functioning calls for new managerial paradigms.

System's approach provides us with a compact and integrative model. A system exists in a given environment which provides relevant inputs. The environmental diagnosis highlights the threats and weaknesses alongwith the areas of opportunities and strengths. The crucial factors which need proper tuning to make the external environment conducive for healthy police sub-system can be precisely pinpointed:

- Rationalizing the archaic laws and the enforcement procedures.
- Promoting scientific aids and techniques alongwith professionalism.
- Reviving the social and political institutions on healthy line with value orientation.
- Insulating the police system and its sub-systems from the external influence of socio-political elite or the bureaucratic pressures.
- Focusing on growth and development of the society and its economy alongwith equal and fair opportunities to all.

The organization has its own internal goals and the sub-culture which form the internal working environment. The effectiveness would depend upon many factors. When we talk of effectiveness, the major growth paradigms would be as follows :

- growth with specific aim.
- growth with value addition to society.
- growth in form of a social service institution.
- growth with maximum system synergies.

The emerging issues for the police organization may, thus, be categorized as :-

- Delivery of high quality services as evaluation by what citizens value.
- Enhancing the capabilities keeping in mind the need for being 'high-tech' as well as 'high-touch'.

- Proper insulation from political manoeuvring.
- Creating service culture for professionals and respecting such officers and men, disregarding the deadwood and the corrupt.
- Developing the subordinates for proper effectiveness and efficiency levels.
- Ensuring constant research and development for organisational growth alongwith the study of the patterns and impact of neo-crimes.
- Shifting the focus away from 'Bureaucratic-feudal system' to 'Participatory public-management' with full transparency.
- Abiding by law in letter as well as spirit.

These factors also form part of the internal configuration and determine the entropy level of the system. They would also determine the internal processes.

The output of the police sub-system should be measured against the following norms (which would form part of the mission statements) :

- The enforcement of the rule of law and the maintenance of order.
- Service orientation in a positive manner in place of repressive role.
- Participation with the community in policing (treating community members as clients).
- Upholding human dignity and human rights.

The impending changes in the crime scenario, emerging neo-paradigms and the expected roles also form a part of the proposed and refined sub-culture. The capacity for such a reorientation would mean catering to the following issues :

- The emerging social conflicts and violence (due to inequitable distributive justice and uncertainty about the future, leading to the formation of imagined enemies responsible for deprivation).
- Challenges of metropolitan policing, including the impact of organized crimes, sexual crimes, road accidents and deaths etc.
- Neo-economic crimes.
- Mafiosi, including drug syndicates, arm syndicates alongwith their political linkages.

-
- Infiltration, subversions and psychological warfare.
 - Economic invasion and manoeuvring, leading to frictions and disturbance of social peace and order.

This brings us to the arena of desired strategy formulations. Thus, the internal organisational goals and missions need to be redefined with proper linkage between the internal and external environment. The level of congruency between both the environments also needs constant.

The holistic nature of the sub-system and the system in aggregate calls for proper and real-time linkages with each other. This may include coordination services. NGO's, social institution etc. Lack of proper and timely linkage may affect the efficiency as well as the effectiveness of the police agency.

With the adaptation of global values, following points also become relevant for all the sub-systems.

- Flattening of structures and fostering managerial leadership to provide for innovative approach.

- Emphasis on output instead of input.
- Achievement of pre-set performance targets with value orientation.
- Inserting IT back-ups.
- Privatisation of possible services and giving way to free market forces.

The system synergy can be achieved if all the factors are properly taken care of. A mismatch at any level would generate 'blackspots'. This may result in a situation of sub-optimality or secrecy-rhetoric which the system would evolve in order to sustain. Fear would remain the key as long as there is lack of self-actualisation at the individual level and the lack of true modernization at the socio-political level. Police is a crucial sub-system of the aggregate social system. The crisis of policing has got a holistic base. The model developed on the basis of system's approach renders a higher probability of success.