

CHAPTER V

PUBLIC OPINION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Any Government, to rule effectively and in a citizen-friendly manner, has to ensure good governance. In this context, one could say that Statecraft is an instrument, which enables government to preserve their authority, pursue their goals and provide security to their citizens. The prime duty of the State is to protect its citizens and promote growth, sustain development and social justice. It is required to defend, its citizens from enemies within and enemies without. Both protection and equity are essential for development. In order to achieve the goals of welfare, peace and order have to be ensured. Otherwise development just cannot take place⁽¹⁾.

Widening Police Functions :

The objectives and functions of police are well understood and well defined. According to the definition in dictionary, “police is a body of people whose job is to keep order and enforce regulations”. “It is also a department of government responsible for the preservation of order, detection of crime and enforcement of civil law”⁽²⁾.

In course of years the functions of police have widened further to cover many more areas of action. The emerging social economic and cultural milieu has thrown up challenges of newer kind before the police administration of the country. Its task is no more confined to maintaining law and order. It encompasses now a greater responsibility of coping with the awareness and fostering the new social order in more responsive humane way. Latest advancements in technology and pace of communication call for bracing up of the resources and forces.

In such a scenario, women police have a greater role to play because all the socio-economic and cultural factors affect the position of women in society. This will result in increase in crime against women in many new forms. Of course, women police can understand these problems better than men. However for this what is needed is good public relations. There is a need for the development of a healthy relationship between women police and women and society at large.

The people have great expectations from the police as it is an ubiquitous grievance redressal machinery of the Government, having the most frequent contact with the daily life of the people. However, an attitude of superciliousness permeates its rank. Majority of policemen treat people with contempt or apathy and

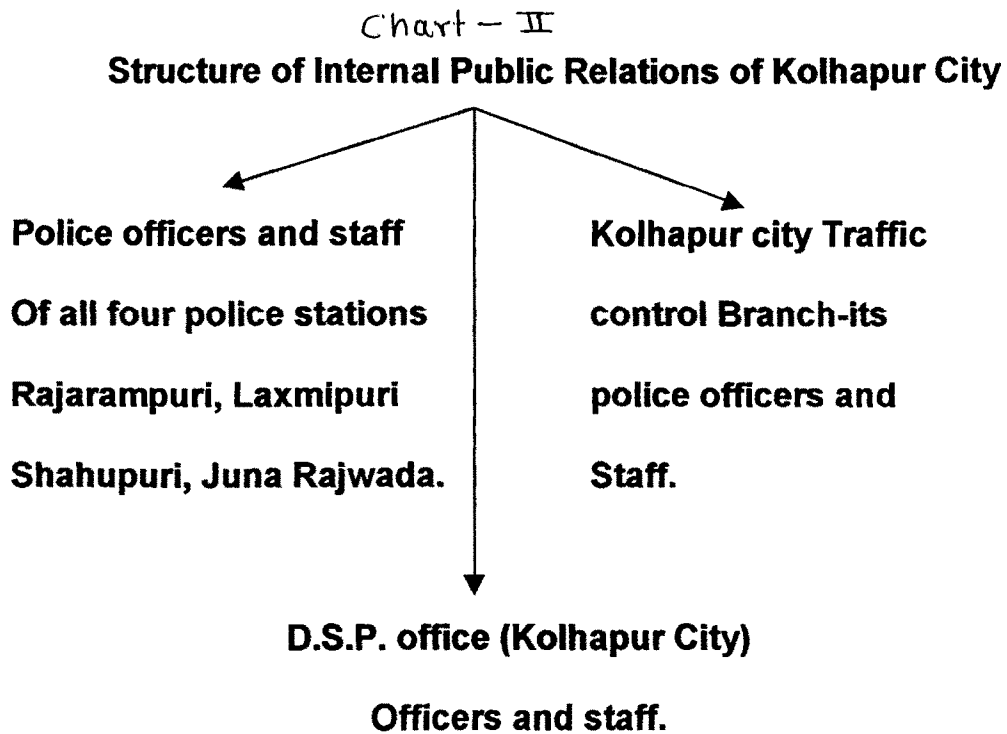
are not averse to abusing their lawful authority from sadism or arrogance, from over enthusiastic, ham-handed or sheer thoughtless performance of duty, or for illegal gain. Trigger-happy brutality is not uncommon while quelling disorder. Custodial torture and death are frequent occurrences. In their mistaken zeal to achieve results, policemen cut corners and use extra-judicial methods for investigation and crime control. Such attitudes, conduct and behavior of policemen as well as decline in the quality of performance have soured the police-public relationship. Most people avoid contact with the police⁽³⁾. In fact, now a days, it is contempt than fear towards police is noticed in society.

Public Relations Of Kolhapur City Police :

First of all we can make two parts in public relations of the Kolhapur city police. One is internal public relation and the other is external public relations⁽⁴⁾. First we will see what is internal public relations.

a) Internal Public Communication – and Relations:

Internal public relations consist of the relations among the police officers from District Police Superintendent of Police to the lowest rank of police in city. Structure of internal public relations are shown in the following flow chart.



Internal Public Relations And Communication In The Police

Organisation Can Be Explained In The Following Ways :

- 1) There is daily roll call at 8 o'clock in the night.
- 2) Regular meetings of police officers and other police staff at police station level.
- 3) Regular guidance of senior officers regarding bandobast at public meetings.
- 4) Facilities like ration store, Mahila Mandals, Bakery, Scholarships to their children, emergency services, help regarding any problems are available at police quarters and at police Head Quarters.

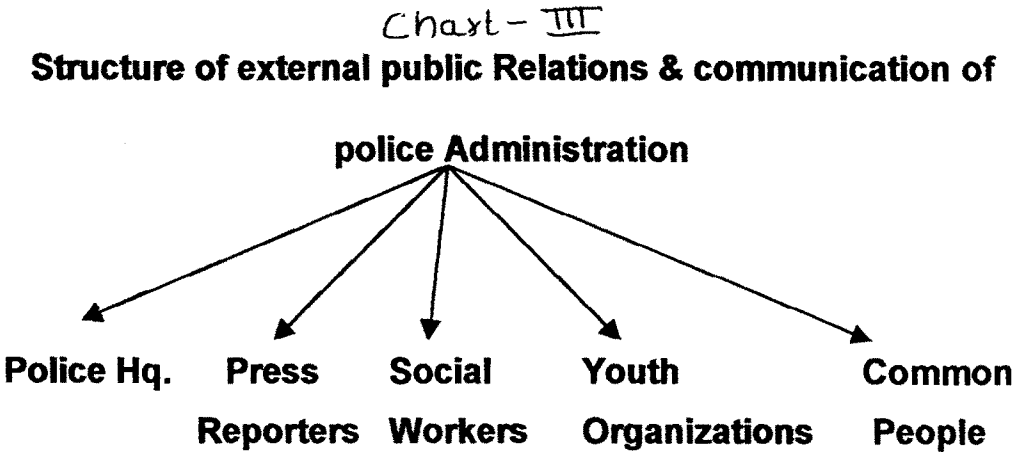
- 5) Organisation and celebration of festivals like Ganeshostav, Shivajayanti, etc.
- 6) Prizes are given for excellent works,
- 7) Rashtrapati Award: In case of detection of special crime and continuous ten years of excellent service without any objectionable remark, those officers or police staff is selected for Rashtrapati Award.
- 8) Celebration of Hutatma Din 31st October.
- 9) Organization of police sports at district, regional and State level.
- 10) The Kolhapur District police co-operative credit society Ltd. Kolhapur: Police staff and officers from police Naiks to Assistant sub-Inspectors are its members. There is a monthly Rs 100/- membership. There is a facility of loan up to Rs. 20000/- on very low interest rate.

Thus, many facilities are provided to police and their family. However, there is no forum or platform for them where they can take their grievances and have solutions. We see unions or organizations in each and every field established to fight for the rights of its members. However, we have no such union for police, to fight for their rights⁽⁵⁾. Now a days we read many news

and views in news papers, about suicide of policemen, or murders by them for some family reasons, miss behavior of policemen etc. Not only men but also women are involved in such cases. All this lead to demoralization of police force. Thus, it is high time to have a serious look over such matters. The Government should take initiative in solving these problems by making some legal provisions and providing a platform for police which will stop such demoralizing trends in future.

ii) External public Relations and Communications.

Structure of external public relations and communications are shown in the following flow chart.



External Public Relations and Communications can be better explained in following way :

- 1) Flag hoisting on Shahu Maidan on 26th Jan and 1st May and 15th August.
- 2) Discussions with youth organizations and social workers regarding celebrations of religious and social festivals.
- 3) Demand of their help during social festivals.
- 4) Regular meetings with people of the areas where crime rate is more. Keeping people alert and keeping regular bandobast in such areas.
- 5) Arrangement of social festivals like sankranti festival, Haldi Kunku etc.
- 6) Celebration of Traffic week.
- 7) Traffic education to R.S.P. students.
- 8) Providing police Band for different programmes

Thus police administration tries to communicate with various elements of society through its efforts. Police administration especially strives for betterment of women's status and makes special efforts for solving their problems. These efforts are as under :

1. Mahila Suraksha Samiti :

This samiti has been constituted at the District and the Taluka level. It has been working from 1985 under the orders of Police Commissioner of the State. It consists of District Superintendent of Police as its president with eight women members, seven social workers and one Police Sub-Inspector. At taluka level, there is a separate Mahila Suraksha Samiti. However, Mahila Suraksha Samiti at District level supervises its working. At each police station level, Mahila Dakshata Samiti has been constituted consisting of four members in each and at least one lady Police Constable (If not available, one Head Constable)⁽⁶⁾.

The member's co-ordinate with police to solve the problems. They give directions to police especially in cases involving women. Cases such as family complaints by women against husband or other members in family, petty quarrels on tap water, keeping child victims especially girls in suitable sansthas (institutions) etc. come under its purview.

The main function of Mahila Suraksha samiti is counselling of women victims so that more and more cases dealing with women can be solved in this samiti at social and family levels. Cases like beating by husband, or any member of the family, quarrels with mother-in-law, eve teasing etc are solved. Cases

like rape, molestation, dowry deaths are directly reported to concerned police stations. However, samiti members have to play an important role in counselling in such cases. These members give directions to police in understanding victims side, rehabilitation of girl victims or women as where to keep these women, how to treat them, how to enquire them etc. In case of burns presence of a member of Mahila Suraksha Samiti is compulsory while taking statement or interrogating woman victim⁽⁷⁾.

Many a times it is not possible for poor people to afford counselling. Therefore, free counselling is provided by Mahila Dakshata Samiti as well as at police stations.

The samiti has its monthly meetings, which is headed by D.S.P. who is its President. In case of his absence Dy.S.P. attends the meetings. However, meetings are postponed if both are engaged in emergency work. All-important decisions are taken in this meeting. Because of this, many a times, decisions are delayed. Therefore, the members of samiti want some changes in its structure and functioning to make it more and more effective⁽⁸⁾. Further, these members are appointed for just one year by D.S.P. from 1st January to 31st December. However, in practice many a times this procedure takes a long time and

members get the appointment very late⁽⁹⁾. For example, one gets appointment in the month of May or June. But she has to work only up to December. Thus, some times members get less than a year to do their work. Therefore there is a demand from members to have some changes in this procedure⁽¹⁰⁾.

When the members are asked regarding their response they get from women victims, Mahila Mandals or other women's organizations observed that they are not fully satisfied with their response. They said that no doubt that less number of complaints, less number of crimes, minimum need to approach police are signs⁽¹¹⁾ of good and healthy society we are not yet free from social evils like crime against women, dowry, illiteracy, poverty etc which disturb the harmony in society. In such a situation we need to have awareness among people especially among women. Mahila Mandals, and social organizations working for women's cause. They expect that Mahila Mandals and social organizations instead of engaging themselves in traditional things like get together for, Haldikunku, Sankrant, Vata Poornima etc. they should take interest in women's problems and should co-operate with police in solving these problems. Only then police can reach the doors of need'y people.

The members also mentioned that now a days they are even receiving letters from men that they should also have such samitis to solve men's problems⁽¹²⁾.

2. Mahila Cell:

This cell is in the process of establishment. It has one lady PSI and one lady ASI or Head constable: They work with Mahila Suraksha samiti. They also co-ordinate with the representative of public communication and public relations branch of police. Mahila cell for Kolhapur city was established on 10th March, 1993. Office of Mahila cell is opened in Rajarampuri recently i. e. on 27th September, 2002.

3. Educating Women Of Their Right:

Through seminars, lectures, meetings etc. at various social institutions women are educated and made aware of their rights. Ours is a closed society where women are ignorant about their rights. Further, illiteracy deteriorates the situation. Hence, social institutions should take more initiative in arranging seminars and lectures of experts from different fields, social workers as well as women police officers.

4. Free Access To Superior Police Officers:

Ours is a democracy where administrators are not rulers but are servants of the common people. Therefore, some argue for free access to superior officers be provided for so that people can take their grievances directly to these police officers. It will also reflect transparency in the police administrations. However, this will over burden the superiors and disturb the organisational hierarchy by violating chain of command. As a result lower rung of the ladder in police department may be demoralised and may further add to apathy of the police force. Hence, unless there are grave reasons / emergency this should not be allowed.

5. Kolhapur Police Web Site:

In the age of information and technology we should have right to information. It is very necessary that common people should get information about the working of police administration. Today inter-net is the best means to provide information to people. Kolhapur police is also not lagging behind in this field. Kolhapur Police has started its web site from 2nd April, 2002 called "Kolhapurpolice.com" where limited information about Kolhapur police is provided. The quality and quantity of information should be increased so that it will help the women's

organisations, researchers and general public to get an idea about how the police force is working and help the police more constructively.

Women Police Public Relations :

We have seen that women police have a great role to play in public relations and communication. Special efforts by women police are made to solve women's problems. For e.g. in Juna Rajwada Police Station (in Jan 2002) a married woman with her father and mother came to lodge a complaint against her husband regarding beating her and torturing at home. At that time a women police was present while filing this case and she was asking a number of questions to that woman. It is observed that woman was comfortably answering those questions⁽¹³⁾. In this women police contribute in solving family problems and help the police force.

It is observed that women generally hesitate to go to police station for lodging complaints. Therefore, special organization such as Mahila Suraksha Sanity, Mahila cell etc. is established with participation of women police as well as some women social workers to encourage women to fight for justice. Presence of

women police in police station has also encouraged women to come to police station to ask for police help.

Women of various status and of various classes of society approach police. However, the response from higher-class women is very less in Kolhapur city as it is a traditional one. Women do not like to visit police station, as they think that will hurt their status in society. Such women can approach Mahila Dakshata Samiti, Mahila cell etc. where they can openly talk of their problems with women police and women social workers. For ex. women of upper society also face problems like torture by husband or mother-in-law or by other family members for different reasons like demand of dowry, cause of sex, giving birth to a daughter etc. These are the problems, which they cannot share with policemen in police station. Therefore, these women approach members of Mahila Dakshata Samiti, Mahila cell etc.

It is observed that women from lower and lower middle class mostly visit police stations. They take even petty quarrels to police station. In most of the cases it is found that these women come with complaints like beating by husband, clashes with son, clashes with mother-in-law, quarrels on tap water, quarrels with the neighbours⁽¹⁴⁾. These women are not aware of the procedure of lodging complaints and they directly enter into police

Inspectors cabin and start crying and talking loudly. It is very difficult for men police to control such women. At times women police have to play important role in controlling such women and making them aware of the procedures. It is quite true that some times they have to use force to control situation. For ex. in the months of April-May which is the season of school holidays and hot summer, most of the houses face shortage of water supplies. Women start quarrelling for tap / tanker water and the matter reaches the police station. Such incidences occur daily. One lady police in Rajarampuri police station mentioned such an incident. Last year (2002) in summer holidays one women came to lodge complaint about the quarrel on tap water. She directly entered the police Inspectors cabin and she was acting so violently that lady police had to control her by holding tightly with her hands⁽¹⁵⁾.

Women police as police not only come in contact with women in society but also other sections of society such as children, men, senior citizens etc. crimes where children are involved the role of women police is proved very significant. Women police because of their psychology are less harsh, more polite and greater capacity for persuasion. Juveniles do not hesitate to talk to them. For ex. When women police were asked about this matter they mentioned that they experience this mostly

in fairs, busy streets, and even in temples at rush hours. There are some petty pick pocketers who are generally poor children⁽¹⁶⁾. They are afraid of men police. Therefore, they are treated by women police. Moreover, not only child criminals but child witnesses are also well treated by women police. For ex. in one case in Rajarampuri Police station a child was the witness of an incident of her mother's molestation by her own nephew who was an adult. The child was very afraid at that time but he comfortably talked to women police⁽¹⁷⁾.

Further, women police are useful and effective in controlling mob during morchas, public meetings, social / religious festivals etc. In case of senior citizens also their role is important because old people can talk to them more freely because they look upon women police as their own daughters.

In spite of all this, women police are not free from some bitter experiences in practice. They do receive respect from society but some times they are also humiliated by some sections of society. Some times, people behave very arrogantly with women police when they are on duty. They do not listen to the instructions given to them. However, they have to pay for this. For eg. one such experience was noticed by researcher. This incident happened at Maruti Mandir in Rafarampuri April 2003. One old

man was talking very arrogantly with a women police who was on traffic duty. The women police was asking some questions to two ladies who must have violated traffic rules. However, the old man unnecessarily involved himself with them. This was not tolerated by the women police and she took him to the police station. After some time he was released on warning⁽¹⁸⁾.

When women police were asked more about such experiences, they said that change in uniform has made this problem vigorous. Women police themselves are in favour of and are comfortable with new uniform. But it has made a great change in the approach of people towards them. Some times they are teased by people. For ex. some times on traffic duties some college boys try to overmart them. However, they are punished for this.

Though the guilty of such incidences are punished time and again, it does affect the status of women police in society to some extent.

Expectations Of People From Women Police :

People expect more from Women police. Entry of women in police administration is a great help and achievement for society. Women police are a great asset to the society. Since the society

takes birth from or originates from woman she can understand her sons and daughters i.e. the whole society without much difficulty.

When the people of different age groups are interviewed and asked regarding their expectations from women police they came out with a lot of expectations and they were confident that if the government, administration as-well as society have positive and progressive approach towards them then women police will surely fulfill their expectations⁽¹⁹⁾.

Some of the important expectation of the people in Kolhapur city is listed below according to their age group.

1. Expectations of children (Age upto 14)⁽²⁰⁾:

In today's age of computer and Internet even a child knows what policeman is, though their feelings are little bit childish, they have their own expectations. They expect that women police should take care of them when they are going to school by bus / rickshaw, while crossing the road, in festivals and fairs. They are little affraid of men police because of their gruff voice and harsh, look so they expect women police to do these duties.

For ex. Now-a-day's children go to school by rikshaw. When they were asked about their security they told that they need security in rush hours as well as in the days of various strikes. However, they want their security through women police because they can talk to them without hesitation. At the time of fairs and festivals also they expect women police to take care of them. For e.g. at the time of Ganpati processions many a times children miss their parents. In such a situation these children can be well treated by women police than policemen.

2. Expectations Of Teenagers (Age Group From 13 To 18)⁽²¹⁾:

Teenagers are also little bit affraid of men police and want women police to work for them. They feel that women police be more sympathetic and look forward for fair treatment. There has been an increase in crime in this age-group for e.g. eve teasing, one sided love, petty thefts, leaving home and quarrels with parents, misbehavior in schools. In such a situation women police have a greater role to play. Teenagers either victims or criminals of such crimes are not aware of the effects of such crimes, they commit crimes generally due to their passion / emotions. They are also not aware of shackles of police procedure and afraid of

police. In such a situation, women police can communicate with them more easily because of their less harsh behaviour.

3. Expectations Of Youth (Age Group From 18 To 26)⁽²²⁾:

There has been an increase in crime within this age group. Crimes such as eve teasing, ragging in college, one-sided love prostitution, thefts, terrorist activities are committed by them. It is expected that victims of these crimes as well as criminals can communicate with women police in a better way. Experience shows that they can talk about their problems with them openly. Thus, here also women police have a greater role to play.

For ex. Now-a-days, colleges have various days of celebration like Friendship day, Rose day, Valentine day, Annual Gathering etc. At that time incidences of teasing girls, quarrels among various groups for gaining attention from girls, misbehavior with girls or even with women teachers do happen. In such a situation, when the matters approach police station women police treat such matters very ably.

4. Expectations of people from 26 to 55 and above ⁽²³⁾:

Generally, people from age group of 26 to 55 belong to working class, they have very complex and corrupted image of

police procedures before their eyes. Further, people above 55 years of age are fed up of all the difficult and lengthy police procedures. Because of all these reasons, they expect more positive and active role from women police. The general feeling is more and more women should enter to this field and try to attain top position. If it happens, it will definitely strengthen and boost the morale of police in society.

The discussion preceded point out that, even after fifty years of our independence one can notice distrust of police by public and a sort of aloofness of police towards public in day-to-day interaction. For this State of affairs, both public and police are responsible. Some people do not have confidence in the efficiency of women police. They doubt their capacity. However, in fact, men and women police are equally qualified and trained in the same way. There is no difference in their duties or capacities.

To sum up, it is necessary that men as well as women police should be well trained for good public relations. Women police specially should be given training regarding problems of women. It is also equally essential that people should have confidence in police and their capacity especially women police which will further boost their morale. People should co-operate with police in prevention and detection of crime. People should

also respect men and women police equally. At the same time public should become conscious of their responsibilities towards society. Then only police force can fight crime and lawlessness in society effectively.

REFERENCES

- 1) T. N. Dhar, Governance, Policing and Human Rights, (S. P. Verma (Ed.), The Indian Journal of Public Administration, (Quarterly Journal of the Indian Institute of Public Administration), April – June 2000, Vol. XLVI No. 2) P. 199.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) Y. S. Jafa, Challenges for Police in the 21st Century, (S. P. Verma (Ed.), The Indian Journal of Public Administration, (Quarterly Journal of Indian Institute of Public Administration), January – March 2001 Vol. XLVII No. 1), P. 96
- 4) Information provided by Police Head Quarters Kolhapur dated 20/1/2003.
- 5) Discussions with police officers and women police at field work dated 22/1/2003.
- 6) Website – kolhapurpolice.com
- 7) Discussion with members of Mahila Suraksha Samiti during field work dated 7/2/2003.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Ibid.
- 10) Ibid.

- 13) An experience observed at field work in Juna Rajwada Police Station dated 22/1/2003.
- 14) Information provided by Police Stations in city dated 18/12/2002.
- 15) An experience shared by a women police in Rajarampuri Police Station during field work dated 20/5/2002.
- 16) Discussions with women police in city during field work dated 30/12/2002.
- 17) Information provided by a victim women in the jurisdiction of Rajarampuri Police Station dated 29/10/2002.
- 18) An experience observed at field work in the jurisdiction of Rajarampuri Police Station dated 6/3/2003.
- 19) Structured interviews with people of different age group during field work in the jurisdiction of four city police stations dated 27/11/2002.
- 20) Ibid.
- 21) Ibid.
- 22) Ibid.
- 23) Ibid.