

FACTION PROBLEMS AND THEIR RESOLUTION

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Faction may be defined as a phenomenon of continued and retaliatory violence between two groups or families in a village or a geographical entity. It is interesting to note that faction is between blood relations, cousins and even between father and son.

Earlier this problem was confined to Kurnool, Cuddapah and Anantapur districts of A.P., but of late, faction appears to have raised its ugly head in Guntur and Prakasam districts also.

Faction violence can spread beyond the village or geographical area also and can involve arson, mischief, multiple murders etc. During faction violence sometimes innocent and neutral persons also lose their lives and property. In general, the faction village will be vertically split into two because all the villagers will be forced to join either group.

Initiation:

Faction in general starts due to ego problems between individuals or due to village supremacy. The problem first manifests in the form of hurt cases, rioting, arson etc and grows into retaliatory murders. Each faction leader assesses the loss caused to himself and to his group by the opposite group and initiates retaliatory action to inflict heavier losses to the opposite group. Thus both families and groups fall into an ever-lasting vicious circle of enmity.

Types of Factions:

Family differences, village supremacy, business interests, communal issues, caste conflicts and political differences etc. slowly grow into faction. Except for family differences, the remaining types of faction are always subject to external influences and therefore do not subside easily. In general, the retaliations continue inflicting heavy losses on both sides.

Behaviour of faction leaders:

A faction leader, who indulges in constant warfare with the opposite group, heads each faction group. The factionist is always scared of his life. He constantly watches the opponent for any kind of activities and takes necessary precautions. He even joins groups in politics to ensure his own safety and to maintain his private army. The faction leader also resorts to illicit activities that generate income to maintain his group. He further makes bombs and country made weapons for attacking his rivals. The factionist, since he is scared of his life, always believes in rumours, always anticipates trouble and tends to attack the opponents before they attack him.

Atrocities/Offences Committed by the factionist:

When it comes to an attack or a retaliatory attack, the factionists kill opponents and their followers and any person that has close dealings with the opponents. Instances have been reported wherein the factionists resorted to criminal activities such as illicit mining, deforestation, land grabbing, extortion, illicit bus flying, tax evasion, matka gambling etc. Factionists are

also known to form syndicates while participating in tenders. In the initial stages, the factionist commits these offences for self-defence, but as time passes on and his influence grows, he gets addicted to crime and money spinning activities and ultimately, becomes a threat to the society.

Earlier the factionists used to indulge in the offences directly. But these days, they started hiring assassins to commit offences. The assassins so hired are the most dangerous lot because it is not known who is the real enemy and when and in what manner he would strike.

Police Action:

A study of factionism reveals that there should be a four pronged Police action consisting of: 1. Legal action 2. Preventive intelligence, documentation and community policing 3. Cutting down the illicit financial resources of the factionists and 4. Pursuit of Court cases.

1. Legal action:

The Police action, in faction issues should be very prompt especially with reference to preventive action and arrest of the accused. A quick action on the part of the Police can save several lives and valuable property.

In general, when a complaint is given to a police about a factious crime, there is a tendency to include all the opponents whether they are really involved or not. Therefore, the first duty of the Police is to conduct a preliminary enquiry before including a person as an accused in the FIR. Further, many accused file their alibi petitions before Police. It is the duty of the Police to examine the veracity of the representation and take judicious action or else there is a likelihood of innocents becoming victims of factious crime.

The investigation should be completed as early as possible and the accused should be arrested immediately after the offence. This would prevent the accused from committing further offences. In addition, a thorough watch should be kept on the activities of the opposite group so that they do not indulge in retaliatory offences.

2. Preventive Intelligence, documentation and community policing:

Since factionists and their followers exercise a constant watch on each other, it is very easy to get preventive intelligence in faction areas. The local police must collect such intelligence frequently and take appropriate preventive action.

The documentation in faction offences is also very important. One may open faction history sheets, make general diary entries, originate SB reports and even collect newspaper excerpts in respect of factionists and their activities. Such information will be useful to take preventive action including preventive detention of the factionists.

The local Police must collect information on hired assassins because any kind of adverse activity by these hired assassins can suddenly flare up factious offences in the area concerned. Further it is necessary to take sufficient precautions during prisoners' escorts and during court attendance of the accused. There have been instances of heinous offences on such occasions.

Community Policing: Community policing consists of village visits by the Police officers and men and organizing and activating peace committees in the affected villages. The peace committees' members should be preferably local elders and ladies who can exercise some control over the factionists. Occasionally, the senior Officers must

also visit the villages, call the factionists and warn them suitably. An impression should be created that the Police is interested in the maintenance of peace and harmony in the area, thereby contributing to the development.

The Community Policing can involve diversionary activities among the youth by way of sports and games. The youth from different groups should also be encouraged, if they want to pursue their studies in the nearby town or elsewhere. Private organizations and NGO's who are reputed to render selfless service may also be encouraged in promoting community activities to bring down factionism. Punitive outposts were established earlier in order to punish the villagers for indulging in faction by way of collecting the expenditure incurred on Police bandobust from the villagers concerned. But this practice has now been dispensed with more or less.

3. Cutting down the illicit financial resources of the factionists.

The factionists thrive on illicit financial resources as outlined above. The Police must put down these activities firmly so that the factionists devoid of financial resources are forced to shun factionism. The putting down of such illegal activities of the factionists requires a concerted teamwork on the part of the Police with proper support from the senior Officers in the districts.

4. Pursuit of Court cases:

The faction cases must be constantly pursued in the Courts at all levels and the senior Officers in the district should review the progress of the important court cases frequently.

Conclusion:

Factionism initially starts as a family feud or as inconsequential issue. It is at this stage that the Police must take necessary remedial measures. If not, the evil grows to such unmanageable proportions that it would be difficult to put down the menace effectively. If factionists were not controlled in the initial stages then they would grow into faction leaders who make faction as their occupation. Once they turn into leaders it would again mean a great effort to bring them back into the main stream of social life.
