

CHAPTER- 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was raised with one Battalion (BN) in 1939 at Neemuch in Madhya Pradesh as the Crown Representative Police (CRP). The primary task of the force was to help the Princely States to preserve 'Law and Order'.

The independence of the country marked an important watershed in the life of the force when in 1949 it was constituted as one of the Armed Forces of the Union of India and re-christened as CRPF. The force grew in size as the demand for its deployment continued to increase. In the three decades after India's independence, CRPF's anti-dacoity operations in Chambal ravines attracted lot of praise from many quarters.

It was the CRPF which bore the brunt of the first onslaught of the Chinese at the Hot Springs (Ladakh) on October 21, 1959 when a small CRPF patrol was ambushed and overwhelmingly out-numbered by the Chinese. In the ensuing skirmish, as many as 10 CRPF men laid down their lives. Their martyrdom on October 21 is observed throughout the country as the 'Police Commemoration Day'.

A small contingent of the 2nd BN CRPF repulsed the 3500 men strong Pakistani Brigade attack on 9th April, 1965 at Sardar Post in Gujarat in which 34 Pakistani soldiers were killed. In the battle six valiant CRPF men laid down their lives at the call of duty. April 9th every year is observed as the 'Valour

Day' in the Force. In Sri Lanka, two CRPF BNs and one company of Mahila BN were deployed as a part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF).

The brave jawans of the Force proved their mettle by foiling a suicidal attack on Parliament House by militants on December 13, 2001. In exchange of fire between the CRPF and the militants, all the five militants were eliminated. On 5th July, 2005, five armed terrorists tried to storm the Ram Janambhoomi/Babri Masjid Complex at Ayodhya. The CRPF jawans deployed there thwarted the evil designs of the terrorists, eliminating all of them on the spot. The CRPF has played a major role in controlling militancy in Punjab, insurgency in the North Eastern States and is now combating Naxalism in the Left Wing Extremist (LWE) states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Rapid Action Force (RAF), a specialized law and order force within CRPF has done a commendable work in quelling communal tension at Sitamarhi (Bihar) 1992, Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu) 1997-1998, Lucknow 1999 and Gujarat 2002.

The CRPF has also been deployed internationally at Kosovo, Haiti and Liberia. For the first time in the history of UN, a Fully Formed Female Unit (FFPU) of CRPF is posted in Liberia as a part of the UN Peace Keeping Mission.

The Force has played a significant role in relief operations in times of natural disasters like the Super cyclone of Orissa, Tsunami in Andamans and Tamil Nadu, earthquake in Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir and plague in Surat.

Today, it is the largest Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) of the Union of India with 230 BNs and is tasked with internal security (IS) duties in the country. Internal Security duties is a large canvas and includes broad spectrum of duties ranging from handling law and order, elections, communal riots and disaster management on one and to counter insurgency, counter-terrorism and anti-naxal action on the other hand.

The CRPF's growth from one Battalion in 1939 to 230 BNs in 2013 can be attributed to increasing internal security duties and resultant demand by the various states. The mandate of CRPF is to aid the civil authorities in the state and since such aid is requested for in critical times by the states, the response and movement of battalions and companies (Coys) has to be quick and frequent, so much so, that sometimes a coy keeps moving from one place to another specially in election duties and does not come back to its headquarter (HQ) even after 5 to 6 months. This frequent, instant and large scale movement, crisscrossing the length and breadth of the country over thousands of kilometers on tiring and back breaking long road and rail journeys adds a difficult and challenging dimension to CRPF personnel's duties. This peculiarity of CRPF is not shared by any other CAPF i.e. Border Security Force(BSF),Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police(ITBP), Sashtra Seema Bal (SSB) and Assam Rifles (AR) or even by the Army.

Another challenging dimension is CPRF's sustained deployment in the three theatres of conflict, Jammu and Kashmir, North-East and Naxal affected

states especially Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. The deployment in Punjab during the Khalistan movement was another major highlight of CRPF's duties.

Statement of the Problem:

There is large scale and frequent movement of CRPF personnel away from their families and homes for long stretches of time, with cramped living conditions in barracks, without any privacy and stifling disciplinary environment in the battalion. The routinized and monotonous nature of duties, constant fear of losing life and limb in hostile conflict zones, feeling of helplessness to sort out personal, domestic and family affairs adds to their misery. It is accentuated by a barrage of information received from home on the mobile phone. When on leave they are not equipped to solve their personal problems due to time constraint, red-tapism and corruption in civil and police administration. All the above factors combined with the lack of recognition and dignity accorded by society to CRPF as compared to the Army leaves the CRPF personnel fatigued, frustrated and stressed.

The capacity of each individual to handle stress varies with the coping mechanism adopted and internalized by the individual. There are various ways that a person copes with stress. The 'fight' or 'flight' strategy while facing fear and danger can be the starting point to understand stress and ways to cope with the stress. "...the psychophysiological system, which is activated in situations that are perceived by the individuals as threatening, harmful, or demanding and in which the fight-flight and stress responses described by

Cannon(1929) and Selye(1976) play an important role (Kersti,Uvnas-Moberg 2005).

While the extrovert, gregarious and mentally tough individuals are able to successfully cope up with stress and lead normal lives, the introvert, reclusive and sensitive individuals are not able to deal with the stress. Inability to deal with stress leads to further reclusiveness in their behavior pattern and prolonged period of such stress leads to impatience, irritability, anxiety, depression and various kinds of psychological and physiological ailments.

The suicide ideation or the thought of committing suicide is preceded mostly by such extreme prolonged stress leading to mental illnesses. Thus, there seems to be a relation between severe stress and suicide according to Gradus (2009). Of course this is not to say that there are no other causes of suicide other than mental illness.

As per the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) publication "Crime in India: 2012" the average rate of suicide (number of suicides per one lakh of population) in India is 10.8 (average of 10 years from 2003 to 2012). The average rate of suicide in CRPF for the eleven year period (2003-2013) is 13.4. The rate of suicide in CRPF is clearly higher than the national average rate of suicidethough it is lower when compared to a sister organization, Border Security Force (BSF) where the suicide rate averaged 15.6 for a four year period, 2003-2006 according to (Chhabra 2011). World over the studies have referred to the national average rate of suicide when comparing it with

the rate of suicide for Police according to Friedman(1968), Marshall and Fiedler (1986) and (Violanti 1996).

Purpose or Objectives:

The Purpose or objectives of the study are:

- (i) To examine and analyze the trends and challenges of suicides in CRPF.
- (ii) To study and analyze causes of suicides in CRPF.
- (iii) To suggest Policies, programmes, interventions etc. to prevent suicides in CRPF.

Since the eleven year average rate of suicides in CRPF is more than the corresponding period national average rate of suicides in general population, it has become a cause of concern and hence a matter of research.

The objective of this dissertation is to understand the causes, trends and challenges of suicides in CRPF. What are the trends as per age, domicile, place of deployment etc. when suicide is committed? Are the causes of suicide attributable to mental, psychological, pathological profile of the suicide victim? Or is it a complex interplay of the psychological profile, work environment and domestic environment of the suicide victim? What are the challenges that CRPF faces in dealing with suicide cases?

The general perception of the public and highlighted by the media is that personnel in army and CAPFs commit suicide due to denial of leave. Is this perception of public right about the CRPF suicide victims?

The trauma experienced by the family of suicide victims is immense and immeasurable. The void and vacuum that is created by the suicide victim is extremely distressing for the family members and they keep groping for answers to the question as to why their loved one committed suicide? For the organization i.e CRPF, it becomes a matter of grave concern. Are there inherent flaws in recruiting the right persons in the Force? Are the structures, policies and processes flawed?

An analysis and study of the above problems would throw up some ideas to design strategies, structures, policies, programmes and interventions to prevent the incidence of suicides in CRPF. Some of the interventions could be also relevant and effective in other CAPFs and state police organizations.

Rationale or Justification:

Suicide creates suicide ideation in similarly placed individuals. Suicide by a relative, a near and dear one or a colleague creates doubts and questions in the minds of victim's near ones about the organizational culture, policies, practices etc. and casts doubts on the managers of the organization. In the case of CRPF the general public is perplexed as to why trained, disciplined members of CRPF commit suicide? The public expects CRPF personnel to be physically and mentally tough to handle various internal security duties. With high rate of incidence of suicides in CRPF, the foundation of faith and trust in such Forces become shaky and weak.

A research of this nature may help the government and CRPF to understand the criticality of the problem of suicides, not only in CRPF but also in other

CAPFs. Appropriate strategies can then be designed to deal effectively with this problem. Such strategies to prevent and reduce suicides in CRPF and other CAPF will provide relief not only to potential victims and their family members but would also help in maintaining faith and confidence of the general public and state governments in whose aid the CRPF is deployed.

Therefore the rationale or justification of the above research is inherent in the increasing acceptance of the concept of recognition of dignity and sanctity of the welfare and life of a jawan and his family. The foot soldier or the jawan is the bulwark of any army or CAPF like CRPF. Valuing his life is vital for the health of CRPF and maintaining high motivational levels amongst its personnel.

Research Questions:

- (i) What are the trends and challenges of suicides in CRPF?
- (ii) What are the causes that have led CRPF personnel to commit Suicide?
- (iii) What steps can be taken to reduce suicides in CRPF?

Scope and Limitations of the Study:

Since there were time and resource constraints the researcher has limited the scope of the research to only CRPF. A comparative study of army and other CAPF would have widened the scope and understanding of the problem but it was not possible to do so due to lack of time. Interaction with only 15 CRPF officers could be done to elicit information about their perception of the causes of suicide in CRPF due to paucity of time and monetary resource constraints.

It would have been very insightful to interact with the family members and friends of the suicide victims given their intimate knowledge of the personality of the CRPF suicide victims but the researcher could interact with only seven family members given the time and monetary resource constraints.

Methodology:

The total number of suicides in CRPF for the eleven year period from 2003 to 2013 is 372. On analysis of this data it is found that 23% of these suicides have occurred in battalions deployed in Jammu and Kashmir zone (JKZ), 21% in Central zone (CZ) which comprises of the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal, 21% in North-East zone (NEZ) consisting of the 7 North-East states, 16% in South zone (SZ) consisting of the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala and 19% in other areas (static offices and peace stations situated in areas not covered by above four zones).

Survey research techniques were adopted for the study. A questionnaire was prepared by the researcher after literature survey and consulting some officers and personnel of CRPF. It has been prepared in both Hindi and English. The questionnaire consists of (i) list of causes and reasons of suicide perceived by the respondents i.e. the CRPF personnel(ii) open ended question for issues not covered in the structured part of the questionnaire.

Total 1000 questionnaires were sent to sector Inspectors General (IsG) of CRPF posted in Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Delhi to be administered to CRPF personnel

through a modified stratified cum convenience non-probability method of sampling. The respective IG were requested to administer and send back the number of filled questionnaire at least equal to the number specified by the researcher in proportion to suicide that had occurred in their areas in the period 2003-2013. Each area IG was also requested to administer the questionnaire, from its allotted number of questionnaires, 2% to gazetted officers (GOs), 6% to subordinate officers (SOs) and 92% to other ranks (ORs) i.e. in proportion to the respective numbers of each rank in CRPF. Finally total 553 filled questionnaires were received from JKZ-92, NEZ-77, SZ-124, CZ-156 and other areas- 104. Out of these 553 questionnaires 18 (3.2%) were filled by GOs, 71(12.8%) by SOs and 464(84%) by ORs.

Therefore the methodology consisted of the following:

- (i) Survey Research techniques were adopted for the study. Primary data was collected through questionnaires to CRPF personnel to gauge their perception of causes of suicide in CRPF.
- (ii) Secondary data collected from CRPF HQs, Sector HQs and Bn. HQs to which the suicide victim belonged and the analysis of the data.
- (iii) Collected and analyzed Court of Inquiry (COI) reports.(An inquiry is conducted by CRPF after each suicide).The COI reports were also used to identify the seven families with whom the researcher interacted and which have formed part of the case studies.
- (iv) Personal interaction with officers and personnel in CRPF to find out their analysis and perception of dimensions and causes of suicides in CRPF.

The data generated through the questionnaire was nominal, ordinal, and descriptive. The data obtained from COIs and personal interaction with the family members of some of the suicide victims was exploratory and descriptive. Statistical tools in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 have been used. The analysis of statistical data through the SPSS along with the study of qualitative data through the open ended question, interview/interaction in person and on phone, case studies through court of inquiry (COI) report have been used for drawing inferences and answers to the research questions.

Significance of the Study:

The reasons and causes of suicides are most of the time mired in mystery. Incidence of suicides sometimes becomes a great cause of controversy and blame-game. In the Indian context it becomes a matter of stigma for the family of the suicide victim. Unless a suicide note is left behind by the suicide victim, there is no closure for the family which agonizingly gropes for an answer.

For an organization like CRPF it means loss of productive and trained manpower with multiplier negative effects like decreased morale of the personnel in CRPF, loss of face and credibility of the force in the eyes of the government, public and families of the CRPF personnel.

The significance of this study therefore, is in trying to demystify the reasons and causes of suicides. The study will enable the researcher to gauge the perception of the CRPF personnel regarding their understanding of suicides

and its causes in CRPF. It will enable the researcher to recommend steps to reduce suicides in CRPF and other CAPFs.

The significance of this study can be emphasized if we recognize that there is nothing more precious than life and that the value and sanctity of life should have our prime attention. If this study is able to lead to some interventions that can prevent even a few suicides it would significantly achieve its purpose.

The incidence of suicides in CRPF leads to low morale and motivation in the force. Invaluable productive human resources are lost by CRPF, government and the society. The loss of trained personnel has many policy implications. This study is being undertaken to seek answers to the complex and challenging problem of suicides to help formulate the right interventions and policies to prevent and reduce suicides in CRPF.

A thorough literature survey and review, which follows in chapter 2, will help the researcher and the reader to appreciate the thoughts and academic debates with regard to suicide and its various aspects.

Chapter 3 will help in an in depth understanding of the phenomenon of suicide and its complex dimensions brought out by various scholars in their academic writings.

Chapter 4 will attempt to briefly cover the trends and snapshots of suicides in the general population of India. It will, thereafter, study the various aspects of suicides in the CRPF, analyze the contents of, court of inquiries(COIs), interactions with family members of the suicide victims and discussions with the officers of CRPF.

Chapter 5 will focus on the analysis of the primary data obtained through the questionnaires using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). It will, then, highlight the findings of this study.

Chapter 6 will finally conclude with the salient features of the study and recommend strategies and policies which can help in prevention and reduction of suicides in the CRPF.