

Policing and Community Policing System in India for Controlling Crimes

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Abstract – Policing in any country under any system of governance and during any period of time has always been a responsibility of the ruler. The State emerged to ensure security and peace to the individual. In order to realize these objectives, the State created an administrative system of which the police is an important component. The Oxford dictionary defines police as an official organization whose job is to make people obey the law and to prevent and solve crime.¹ With the social, political and economic changes in the society, the duties and functions of the police also changed. There was a time when the police functioned as a coercive force to catch criminals and prosecute them for their misdeeds. It was not assigned the tasks which would bring it closer to the people in a positive manner. Many times the obligations imposed by the law on various State authorities turn to be rights and privileges of the people. In the matters of prevention and investigation of crime the police cannot achieve desired results without the assistance and help of the people. The police cannot be omnipresent and therefore members of the public are expected to function as its ears and eyes. In order to help Police and for the security of People the concept of Community Policing was emerged. The Community policing has far-reaching implications. The expanded outlook on crime control and prevention, the new emphasis on making community members active participants in the process of problem solving, and the patrol officers' pivotal role in community policing require profound changes within the police organization. Reinventing communities is essential if we are to deter crime and create more vital neighborhoods.

Keywords – Police System, Community Relationship, Community Policing, Constitution of India, Police Act 1861, Communication Technologies, Core Components, Trust.

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INTRODUCTION

The foremost objective of the police is to protect the society by preventing crime and prosecuting criminals. The other functions of the Police are such as preservation of the nation's unity and integrity, maintenance of public order and implementation of social laws flow from this main objective. All these functions involve the protection of life, liberty, dignity and property of the people and hence the role of the police emerges in the performance of these functions. The Constitution of India has guaranteed the people certain Fundamental Rights. The earlier enactments like the Government of India Act, 1935 contained almost similar provisions of governance but there were no specific provisions for Fundamental Rights of the people. Apparently, the Fundamental Rights embodied in the Indian Constitution make it a different law, especially from the people's point of view. These rights aim at protecting the individual against unreasonable interference in his life. However, these rights, which are adjudged as basic and fundamental for the overall development of human personality, will remain only on paper if not enforced effectively.

Article 21 of the Constitution provides that no person shall be deprived of his life and personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. It means that every individual has the freedom to lead a peaceful life without any undue interference from anybody. But this Constitutional dictate is not obeyed by many unscrupulous people who endanger the life and liberty of other people by committing crimes of murder, kidnapping, etc. Therefore, the police come in the picture to prevent such acts of crime and prosecute those who succeeded in committing such acts. So, the police have the honour and responsibility to play a crucial role in realization of the major aims and objectives of the Constitution as enshrined in the Preamble by enforcing the Fundamental Rights and creating a safe and peaceful atmosphere for the overall development of the individual.

With the social, political and economic changes in the society, the duties and functions of the police also changed. There was a time when the police functioned as a coercive force to catch criminals and prosecute them for their misdeeds. It was not assigned the tasks which would bring it closer to

the people in a positive manner. The police was used more for repressing people's movements rather than for helping people in distress. But, after independence the situation has changed drastically. The police is no more in alien's hands. It is now controlled by the elected representatives of the people. Its functional jurisdiction has expanded and it has been assigned many new responsibilities. With the changing circumstances, the priorities of the police also keep on changing. In the beginning, its main aim was to prevent and detect crime. As socio-political agitations became a common problem, maintenance of law and order got higher priority. In view of the frequency of communal riots, creating communal harmony and ensuring unity and integrity of the nation have assumed the highest importance. Providing security to VIPs and guarding vital installations are other areas of concentration. Management of vehicular traffic also requires constant attention. The Police are assigned the difficult job of preventing and investigating crimes. They have the responsibility to maintain public order, protect VIPs and play a crucial role in the security of the State. To accomplish these onerous and sensitive tasks, the police are vested with wide legal powers. These include the power to arrest people, search their person and property, call them to police station for investigation and to take other such lawful actions as required for discharging their duties. In order to ensure that the police exercise these powers properly, the law has imposed various restrictions and limitations on the police. Community policing is, in essence, a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems. With the police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active allies in the effort to enhance the safety and quality of neighborhoods. The neighborhood patrol officer, backed by the police organization, helps community members mobilize support and resources to solve problems and enhance their quality of life. Community members voice their concerns, contribute advice, and take action to address these concerns. Creating a constructive partnership will require the energy, creativity, understanding, and patience of all involved. In some communities, it will take time to break down barriers of apathy and mistrust so that meaningful partnerships can be forged. Trust is the value that underlies and links the components of community partnership and problem solving. A foundation of trust will allow police to form close relationships with the community that will produce solid achievements. Without trust between police and citizens, effective policing is impossible. The movement toward community policing has gained momentum in recent years as police and community leaders search for more effective ways to promote public safety and to enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Community policing encompasses a variety of philosophical and practical approaches and is still evolving rapidly. Community policing strategies vary depending on the needs and responses of the communities involved; however, certain basic

principles and considerations are common to all community policing efforts. There are compelling reasons why law enforcement leaders believe the time has come to alter the policies and practices of their organizations. These reasons are rooted in the history of policing and police research during the last quarter of a century, in the changing nature of communities, and in the shifting characteristics of crime and violence that affect these communities. Policing strategies that worked in the past are not always effective today. The desired goal, an enhanced sense of safety, security, and well-being, has not been achieved. Practitioners agree that there is a pressing need for innovation to curb the crises in many communities. Both the level and nature of crime in this country and the changing character of American communities are causing police to seek more effective methods. Many urban communities are experiencing serious problems with illegal drugs, gang violence, murders, muggings, and burglaries. Suburban and rural communities have not escaped unscathed. They are also noting increases in crime and disorder. In addition, the social fabric of our country has changed radically. The family unit is not as stable as it once was. Single working parents find it extremely difficult to spend enough time with their children, and churches and schools have been unable to fill this void. Immigrants, ethnic groups, and minorities, while adding to the diverse nature of American communities, often have different interests and pursue disparate goals. Governments at all levels are having increased difficulty balancing budgets, which frequently forces police departments to allocate dwindling resources to growing problems. In this rapidly changing environment, where police cope with an epidemic drug problem, gang activity, and increased levels of violence, the concept of community policing is taking hold. Police leaders using this commonsense approach to the problems of crime and disorder, an approach that may very well enhance and maximize performance and resources, have struck a responsive chord in both national and local governments and in communities across the Nation. Government and community leaders are beginning to recognize that they also must accept responsibility for keeping their neighborhoods safe. Communities must take a unified stand against crime, violence, and disregard for the law, and must make a commitment to increasing crime-prevention and intervention activities. Police agencies must help build stronger, more self-sufficient communities—communities in which crime and disorder will not thrive. Community policing as a concept has its roots in ancient Indian history. This chapter takes a review of the concept as it was visualized in the past and how it has changed over a period of time. Thus community policing in the Indian scenario as well as internationally, involves cultural change as in most of the countries semi-military and highly hierarchical model of policing has been prevalent. It involves intensive training and sensitization of policemen to accept the equal role of citizens.

Police as a service provider and directly accountable to citizens is an alien concept and needs cultural change at the organizational level and attitudinal change at the personal level for policemen. It also means training the citizens for meaningful participation and change in their thinking as most of the time community 'looks up' to law enforcement instead of engaging itself in the process of decision making as partners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

India has been prominently a feudal society with some tradition of associating citizens in governance during the ancient times. Creation of a police organization and specific powers of law enforcement, with preventive, investigative and prosecuting duties can be traced back to "Kautilya". Subsequently during the time of "Mughals", police was given secondary importance, with military and collection of revenue being the focused areas. Citizens shut themselves in their community life where they became self-sufficient and the orders of the rulers were obeyed without resistance as they dealt mainly with the collection of revenue and not with good governance as such. This wedge between the rulers and the ruled continued during the time of the "Mughals" and the British. Latter in due course replaced the semi military model of policing with civil police system. Castes being self-sufficient, each with a specific task, meeting the overall needs of the agrarian society; citizens were however not involved in the affairs of governance either during the Mughal or British periods. Being peaceful by nature, policing was in any case not a major issue in the agriculture dominated Indian society. Whatever the needs, were met at local levels through various forums such as "Panchayats". It was only during the spate of violent crime like dacoities/robberies (by "Thugs") which increased during the British rule that a need for creation of formal police force in India was felt. Initially the policing was carried out in a rudimentary and later in a more developed form. Some important landmarks in the journey of introduction of a formal police system in India are as below:

Introduction of a police system in Sindh 1843, It was similar to royal Irish Constabulary. Three Collectorates of Sindh viz. Hyderabad, Karachi and Shikarpur were each placed under a British military officer with a European sub-collector under them. These officers performed both revenue and police functions and tried minor criminal cases. At the district level police was under the command of a European lieutenant directly responsible to the Provincial Police Chief (a British army officer) and through him to the Chief Commissioner. Serious offences were tried by a military commission. Extension of the above in Bombay was undertaken by Governor Clerk in 1848. He proposed the office of Commissioner of Police for Mumbai and Superintendents of Police in-charge of police at the district level, working under the district magistrate.

He also revived rural policing and most of his suggestions were introduced between 1852 and 1855. Police Commission of 1860 that recommended a homogenous police system with far reaching effects. It abolished the military police, recommended civil constabulary with district based police system. Inspector General was to be the overall in-charge of the province with district superintendents who were to work under the general control and supervision of the district magistrates. Posts of Inspectors, Head constable, Sergeants and Constables were created. Retention of village police was another important feature. Indian Penal Code 1860 was introduced with precise definition of each crime, leading to an efficient criminal justice system in the country.

Police Act 1861 was based on the recommendations of Police Commission 1860. Inspector general of police was made responsible for the working, discipline and efficient running of police in the state. The para-military structure gave way to district police units with uniformity all over the country. Posts of Head constable, Sergeants and Constables were established. Police lines for staff and funds for their uniforms too were introduced. The organization and system proved to be effective in controlling violent crime like robberies and dacoities. Indian Evidence Act 1872 introduced the law of evidence for appreciating the investigation carried out by police and presenting the same in the courts. It continues to operate even today with minor changes in Second Police Commission of 1902. It created Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the posts of Range Deputy Inspector General's (DIGs) by dividing the province into ranges. The Commission further created Railway Police, the cadre of Sub Inspectors and Armed Police at each district head quarter. The system continued till Independence. Islington 1912 and Lee Commissions 1924 were announced. Their recommendations led to substantial recruitment of Indians in the police force. Independence of India in 1947 and proclamation of the constitution 1950 are major landmarks in the journey of Indian police. Protection of Fundamental Rights became the most important duty of Indian police. This shift from foreign rulers to democracy changed the atmosphere completely. Law enforcement considered to be a tool for suppressing the local populace became accountable to public. This change in police role has taken considerable time to consolidate and citizens continue to fear the police despite its efforts to portray itself as a "service" and not "force". The appointment of the Kerala Police Re- Organization Committee in 1949 was followed by a succession of Police Commissions appointed by different State Governments, mainly during sixties and seventies. Local Acts, compilation of State Police Manuals also continued, law enforcement being the state subject. Criminal Procedure Code 1973 was another major attempt to streamline the

investigative and court trial procedures. It brought uniformity and clearly laid down the restriction on state vis-a vis rights of citizens.

The National Police Commission 1977, the first after Independence headed by Sh. DharamVira, produced eight reports and recommended overhauling of police functioning. The Commission aimed at professionalizing police department and suggested measures that would reduce political interference, bring transparency and accountability to police working. However certain key recommendations have not been implemented. Various national and state level committees have followed without substantial changes in the police system. For a long time the police were used as an effective tool to strengthen the hands of the rulers and to quell various rebellions. It was only after independence that serious thought was given to police as a service and not a tool to exploit the citizens, though even today the service element is many times conspicuously absent. The result has been catastrophic for the system.

Despite putting in unusually long hours of work for any government department, citizens "satisfaction with police is way below the expected levels. This has caused a serious "you "versus "us "divide, unhealthy for any social system. There have been some attempts to salvage the situation, a few meaningful, others superficial. Political leadership after independence has mainly used police for its own ends and not made systematic efforts to strengthen the institution of law enforcement; it has been shortsighted, unable to get out of the temptation to use police for its immediate ends at tremendous long term cost to the society. Police leadership to be equally held accountable for the current has low image of police in India however carried out some experiments to bring professional content and service element in law enforcement. It has not introduced any far reaching reforms that are needed but has tinkered with the system and tried to introduce citizens" participation. One such experiment has been community policing projects introduced by different officers; sometimes backed by the state at other times purely local police leadership initiatives. Some of them received popular support and media attention causing rippling effect. While many community policing projects are pure public relation exercises a few have been genuine attempts to involve citizens in policing "themselves". The police department in India has of late been facing serious resource crunch in manpower and equipment. It has perforce been made to seek community collaboration in attending to its increasingly vast duties. Citizens" participation in law enforcement is thus observed across the country especially as the issues of internal security have caused serious strain on the existing over stretched and rickety machinery of law enforcement. Uttarakhand website elaborating on Community policing describes it as "A collaborative effort between Police and Community to identify problems

of crime, disorder and involves all elements of the community in the search for solutions to these problems. This concept brings the police and community into a closer working relationship and calls for greater responsibility on citizens." While emphasizing the collaborative approach of community policing, the above definition makes a point about greater responsibility of the citizens. It is an often observed phenomenon all over the world that citizens are quick to criticize law enforcement agencies without accepting any responsibility on their part. Through community policing role of citizens gets highlighted leading to their active involvement in policing related issues instead of passive criticism by them. Andhra Pradesh police website describes Community Policing as the philosophy that "provides an organizational strategy that motivates police officers to solve community problems in new and innovative ways. It envisages that the police must closely work with the people in the community by allowing average citizens a say in the police process, in exchange for their support and participation." The above definition highlights community policing as an organizational strategy, thus it is not a philosophical, theoretical proposition but an effective tool. Another attribute mentioned above is innovation that is the natural byproduct of community policing as each field officer with help of citizens finds innovative and specific issue related solutions. There is no imposition from the top. Wikipedia describes Community policing or neighborhood policing as "a policing strategy and philosophy based on the notion that community interaction and support can help control crime, with community members helping to identify suspects, and bring problems to the attention of police." However this is a very limited definition in its scope as citizens are expected to only "interact and support" police. The term as envisaged in the current study has a wider role for the citizens who not only identify their problems and issues but also solve them and police are the facilitators.

John Riley in his study "Community Policing: Perspectives from the Field" describes Community policing as "...a philosophy of policing that requires police officers to act with increased levels of autonomy and professional discretion to solve problems and to develop partnerships with the community."

It is true that community policing also involves delegation to the field level officers who take on the spot decisions thus decentralizing policing. It also encourages officers to respond fast and in a transparent manner as they are held accountable by the local community. Therefore logically delegation, decentralization, quick response, transparency and participation become essential ingredients of community policing. And all these are hallmarks of good policing.

Community Policing as defined by the U.S. Department of Justice, is "a philosophy that

promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and police-community partnerships. Community policing focuses on crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services that include aspects of traditional law enforcement as well as prevention, problem-solving, community engagement, and partnerships. The community policing model balances reactive response to calls for service with proactive problem-solving centered on the causes of crime and disorder. Community policing requires police and citizens to join together as partners in the course of both identifying and effectively addressing these issues.”

The above definition reinforces traditional law enforcement model but adds the problem solving attribute of community policing. History of US law enforcement shows that the old method of a cop taking rounds in his beat with friendly relations with citizens was replaced by a cop in the car, distant from the community but available in case of emergencies. The traditional bond with the community was replaced with modern gadgets that ensured speed in response but severed the bond between the citizens and the police man. Over a period of time US model of policing became reactive than proactive. Community policing is not only a proactive model but emphasizes citizens’ participation in problem solving of crime/disorder related issues. It thus means identifying the causes of such crime/disorder by the community and the cop together. In this way community policing is long term strategy that goes in to the cause instead of merely reacting to the symptoms. Web site of common wealth human rights Initiative Chhattisgarh Project describes Community policing as “developing successful strategies and problem solving techniques to effectively combat crime. Community policing is both an organizational philosophy as well as an operating strategy both to control crime and bridge the growing psychological divide between the communities on the one hand and police on the other.” That community policing is a bridge between police and common man is very true as far as India is concerned. Having been used by the British to curb citizens during pre-independence days, citizens in India still look upon police as a tool of state harassment rather than a friend. Therefore in the Indian scenario, community policing can become a very important tool to win over the support and confidence of citizens.

Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State UK talks of community policing as “not policing done to people; it is policing done with people and with their active co-operation. This is about driving organizational and cultural change in the service. The public is entitled to feel that as users of the service their views are important, they are listened to and their feedback is acted on to improve the service and drive the change.” The trend therefore is on recognizing the

citizen’s right to demand participative policing and to look upon police as a service provider; the cultural change envisaged in this process is painful for law enforcing agencies in various countries including India. However in tune with the egalitarian thoughts of the modern world, police all over are involved in the process of change that emphasizes community participation. Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) while recommending a model for community policing during 2003, has referred to it as “normal policing of a society in consultation, cooperation and partnership with the community at large”. Objectives of community policing as per the Bureau are “To minimize the gap between policemen and citizens to such an extent that the policemen become an integrated part of the community they serve and they earn the acceptance and trust of the community, leading to spontaneous co-operation from people in crime prevention and security in local area and resulting in a lasting partnership between the police and the community”. As for the mission of community policing the Bureau recommends “To prevent and detect crime, maintain order and ensure safety and security of the community in partnership with the people and to provide the community efficient, transparent and responsive law-enforcement machinery which perpetuates the rule of law”.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY POLICING

Following are some special features of Community Policing

- Decentralization of decision making as community policing empowers field level officer to identify the problem with the help of local citizens, devise and execute a strategy to solve the same. He thus takes on the spot decision without waiting for instruction from the top. Tackling of issues at local level leads to speed and efficiency. Field officers welcome the decentralized system that empowers them and the local residents.
- Citizens’ participation is the most valuable content in community policing. In-fact they decide the issues they want to take on, priorities them and the police officer is either a catalyst or facilitator. It is pertinent that community policing is an inclusive concept and involves citizens from all strata and walks of life in dialogue and problem solving. It is a broad concept and gives space to the weaker sections of the society including women, youth, and senior citizens. Community policing projects that are not inclusive in their approach remain limited in their output.

- Problem solving is at the heart of this approach. Police and citizens meet not for simple interaction but with the specific purpose to delineate the problematic issues and resolve the same. Initially most community policing initiatives are rambling exercises till a clear pattern of problem solving emerges. Forums which fail to have this approach slowly fade away. Thus problem solving is essential to community policing.
- Consultation is the process adopted for community policing; a police officer is not expected to decide the issues unilaterally, nor is it expected to be so on the part of citizens. The earlier semi military models of law enforcement had no place for consultation with citizens that is the basic ingredient of modern day policing.
- Transparency is an essential characteristic for the success of any community policing project or citizens tend to lose faith if. Identification of local threats and the process to tackle them are to be debated and discussed in open forums before embarking on a particular strategy. Consultative process by definition is expected to be transparent.

The concept of "Community Policing" means, citizens taking lead in identifying the issues of crime / order in their area with police playing the role of facilitators for enabling the citizens to attend to those issues. Besides being a philosophy it is an effective tool and is being tried by police all over the world. Fortunately for Indian police, it started these initiatives in sync with rest of the world and many of projects have successfully brought the citizens and police together. Law enforcement being the state subject, there has not been any one initiative from the top i.e. the Central Government level but many at the local police station, district and state level ones. The downside of this bottom up approach is lack of adequate documentation at field level. The benefit however is that the concept and the strategy are taking roots at the ground level and not being imposed from the top or outside. This trial and error at the field may in the end lead to a sound and well-rounded tool where the stakeholders have owned the end product before its formal launch. There are many definitions of community policing.

CONCLUSION

The Police and Community Policing System in India are effectively working but both can work in healthy environment only with cooperation. Now a day it is a dire need to make certain changes in the present system of administration of justice which is very complicated and it has become very difficult for a common man to reap out of it. The police must

encourage a spirit of cooperation that balances the collective interests of all citizens with the personal rights of individuals. Establishing and maintaining mutual trust is the central goal of the first core component of community policing & community partnership. Building trust will not happen overnight; it will require ongoing effort. To build this trust for an effective community partnership police must treat people with respect and sensitivity. The use of unnecessary force and arrogance, aloofness, or rudeness at any level of the agency will dampen the willingness of community members to ally themselves with the police. Establishing trust and obtaining cooperation are often easier in middle-class and affluent communities than in poorer communities, where mistrust of police may have a long history. Trust & communication travels a circular path each reinforcing other.

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