Problem and Prospect of Community Policing in India: A Critical Analysis.

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ABSTRACT

This Paper is an effort to determine how community policing has been working in India to prevent the crime and disorder in the society and examine the resources and valuable information which is being shared to solving the problems. Participation of people in the policing approves the existence and the action of police. It also makes an effort in analyzing the various aspects of police functioning related to community policing and how community policing foster the cultural diversity and democratic behavior of the Indian society.

Concept of community policing improves good relation and mutual understanding between the police and the community. It also enhances the co-operation among police, educational institutes, religious bodies, labor unions, mass media, social work agency and various community organizations. The experience of the community organizations strengthens the functioning and efficiency of police department. Good public relations of police provide some beneficial service to the community. This paper makes an insight into the community participation and stresses on inter-professional approach to solving the problems of the society. This paper also analyzes the level of transparency in police department and accountability toward society after implementation of Community Policing and how police take their own responsibility and come forward with smartness. It also check well being of the implementation process of various Community Policing scheme launched by the police department and how Community Policing achieve the goal of good governance with Accountability, Consent, Participation, Transformation, Reasonability, Efficiency, effectiveness and Rule of Law.

This Paper explains the problems related with Community Policing in India after independent. The paper tries to analyze why the Community policing is unable to reach its basic objective of prevention of crime and maintain the law and order at ground level. The paper explores the neutral behavior of the police toward Community Policing. It also explores the major Loopholes in the various Schemes.

In nutshell, Present paper critically analyzes the merits and demerits of Community Policing and Rationality of the various scheme of Community Policing in India.

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Introduction

Community Policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. Community policing is considered a popular contemporary policing approach in response to the decline in public confidence in the police and growing evidence that police forces cannot fight crime by themselves. Community policing incorporates a philosophy that determines the manner in which police agencies engage the public and that broadens the police mission from a narrow focus on crime and law enforcement to a mandate encouraging the exploration of creative solutions for a host of community concerns. It seeks to develop a new relationship with the law abiding people of the community. People accept their share of responsibility for solving local problems related to crime, disorder and security.

Indian Constitution allows the people to participate constantly in the administration process and protects their existence. Community policing concept is an important aspect of smart policing, in which working style of police function is in the democratic manner "of the people, for the people, by the people". People take constant participant in the day to day police working and also assist the police organization. It is a proactive policing for the prevention of crime rather than to investigate the crime. Community-oriented policing increases partnership between the community and the police department with collaborative efforts.

Community policing includes identification and resolution of community concerns, improved local physical and social environment, reduced fear of crime, improved police-community relationship, positive attitudes towards the police, a community perception of police, satisfaction of police offers, decreased potential for police-citizen conflict, a reduction in crime rates and a better flow of information between the police and community. People participation in the police working increase transparency and also foster faith and confidence in the system. This concept is based on awareness; educate the people about legal aspect of various laws of the land and help to reduce the petty offences. The scheme will assist the weaker section of the society to ease access with police to redress their grievances. Police department face shortage of resources on various occasion, which can be solved with this phenomenon. Access to the people will help the police to overhaul its tarnished image. Partnership with community supports crime preventing activities and more effective policing that stress integration analysis evidence based practices, and emerging as technology tool into ongoing police operation and also encourages a focus on outcomes, including occurring safer communities in more cost effective ways.

The aim of the paper is

- To increase positive attitudes towards police
- To improve police-people relationship
- To improve community perception of police 'legitimacy'

Concept of Community Policing

The concept of 'people participation in smart policing', which found expression in Robert Peel's often quoted words 'the police are the public, and the public are the police', has been accepted all over the world. This concept, also known as community policing, propounds that the police and the private citizens should join together in a creative way to prevent and detect crime maintain order in the society. In other words the concept of community policing calls upon the citizens to be not merely law abiding citizen, but also law enforcing citizens. Under the scheme of community policing, member of the public voluntarily come forward and share certain responsibilities of the police such as keeping watch over the neighborhoods, patrolling the area, guarding the streets and helping the people in distress. This saves the time and energy of the police as they do not require discharging such functions, which the community takes over. The police can divert the saved time and energy toward more important function and vital area of policing to improve their overall efficiency and effectiveness.

Community policing is nothing but normal policing in consultation, cooperation and partnership with the community at large. The essence of community policing is to minimize gap between police and citizens. Community policing provides decentralized, personalized policing services to the community. It is not a scheme to be applied and discarded, but a new strategy which is dynamic, flexible and changes according to the needs of the community. The ability of the police to perform duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions. The police must secure the willing and voluntary cooperation of the public in observation of the law. We can say that we have policing for each other.

Perspectives of Community Policing

Active Public Participation in Policing: When confidence is established through such personal contacts between police and various sections of the public at the grass root level, information/intelligence is bound to emanate from the public regarding the activities of criminal and anti-social elements. This will be of invaluable help to the police in the prevention of crime as well as in the maintenance of public order. Community policing encourages active public participation between the police and the communities.

Earning goodwill of the people: Community policing establishes cordial relationship and faith in the society toward police. Therefore, It is required that the police treat the public approaching with consideration, courtesy, sympathetically receive and patiently hear their problem. This practice helps the police to earn the goodwill of the people and also develop the accountability and responsibility in the police department.

Burden Relieving: Decentralization of police functioning in the form of community policing reduces the burden of police personals. When the police allow peoples to perform such tasks, it will provide enough time to police to spend more time on other police functioning.

Dealing with Emergencies: Community policing make available immediate action during man-made and natural disasters.

Decentralization and Decision-Making: Participation of communities in policing make decisions more quickly than one with a centralized structure with the acceptance of all stakeholders. Involvements of community in decision making process act as approval of the public in police functioning. Community policing calls for decentralization in both command structure and decision making. Decentralized decision making allows frontline officers to take responsibility for their role in community policing. When an officer is able to create solutions to problems and take risks, he or she ultimately feels accountable for those solutions and assumes a greater responsibility for the well-being of the community.

Expansion of Services: Community policing make easy accessibility with in society to approach the weaker sections. Service oriented organizational goals encourage a culture that supports community policing. Training and orientation promotes community policing.

Use of Community Resources: Increasing contact between police and community organizations in the neighborhoods provides a platform to share experiences and resources to sort out a judicious solution of any problem. Mobilization and empowerment of communities helps to identify the concerns of local public. Providing sufficient authority to coordinate various resources to resolve a problem and allowing officers the autonomy to establish relationships with the community will help define problems and develop possible solutions.

Crime Prevention with Community policing: Community crime prevention programs or strategies target changes in the community infrastructure, culture, or the physical environment in order to reduce crime. The diversity of approaches includes neighborhood watch, community policing, urban or physical design, and comprehensive or multi-disciplinary

efforts. These strategies may seek to engage residents, community and faith-based organizations, and local government agencies in addressing the factors that contribute to the community's Organizes neighborhood watch programs. It encourages community crime prevention activities.

Increased police-citizen accessibility: community cohesion, including perceptions of community order and citizen's willingness to "retake the streets" and involves an interactive process that forms the essence of community policing. Police executives provide leadership in support of community policing practices.

Exchange of Information: The media represent a powerful mechanism to communicate with the community. They can assist with publicizing community concerns and available solutions, such as services from government or community agencies or new laws or codes that will be enforced. In addition, the media can have a significant impact on public perceptions of the police, crime problems, and fear of crime. Community policing establish a flow of information between the police and community.

Problem- Oriented and Problem Solving Approach: Community policing is a renewed emphasis on community authorization for many police tasks. Crime control remains an important function, but equal emphasis is given to problem solving approach. Community policing enhances public security and lowers crime rates, reduces the fear of crime and makes the public feel less helpless, reconnects the police with alienated public, raises police morale, and makes the police more accountable in the preventive approach.

Community Partnerships: Collaborative partnerships between the law enforcement agency and the individuals and organizations serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police. Community policing, recognizing that police rarely can solve public safety problems alone, encourages interactive partnerships with relevant stakeholders. Other Government Agencies & Law enforcement organizations can partner with a number of other government agencies to identify community concerns and offer alternative solutions. Examples of agencies include legislative bodies, prosecutors, probation and parole, public works departments, neighboring law enforcement agencies, health and human services, child support services, ordinance enforcement, and schools. Community Members/Groups Individuals who live, work, or otherwise have an interest in the community—volunteers, activists, formal and informal community leaders, residents, visitors and tourists, and commuters—are a valuable resource for identifying community concerns. These factions of the community can be engaged in achieving specific goals at town hall meetings, neighborhood association

meetings, decentralized offices/storefronts in the community, and team beat assignments.

Organizational Transformation: The community policing philosophy focuses on the way that departments are organized and managed and how the infrastructure can be changed to support the philosophical shift behind community policing. It encourages the application of modern management practices to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Community policing emphasizes changes in organizational structures to institutionalize its adoption and infuse it throughout the entire department, including the way it is managed and organized, its personnel, and its technology.

Leadership: Leaders serve as role models for taking risks and building collaborative relationships to implement community policing, and they use their position to influence and educate others about it. Community policing is going to be effective, police unions and similar forms of organized labor must be a part of the process and function as partners in the adoption of the community policing philosophy. Including labor groups in agency changes can ensure support for the changes that are imperative to community policing implementation.

Indian Perspective of Community Policing

The police, as an organized institution in this country, came into being with the Police Act of 1861. The Act was carefully drafted to make it an effective instrument to curb the voices of protest against the oppressive foreign rule. At the time of independence in 1947, no restructuring or reorganization of the department could be affected, although it offered a historic opportunity to do so. Many of the problems of the present-day Indian Police, such as poor relations with the public and an indifference to their interests, along with an unquestioning loyalty to the ruling establishment have their roots in the organization's colonial past. In the absence of an institutional and legal framework, many brilliant initiatives for community policing have failed to stand the test of time.

A tree-tier structure of community policing with the Beat at the lowest level and ending with the Community Liaison Group at the top and in the middle rung is known as the 'Police Mitra", friends of the police. Beat Policing is the time tested traditional proactive policing that has been prevalent in many parts of the country. A police officer remains in charge of an area, called a Beat and acquaints himself with the local population. In each beat, 10-15 "police mitras" from among the local population are to be selected on the basis of their willingness. Each "police mitra" should be a public spirited person with an attitude of serving the community at the time of his/her leisure.

The Model Police Act 2006 that was produced by the Committee sets out the core philosophies of community policing have been incorporated into the mission statement of the proposed Police Act from being an enforcing authority to a service-oriented, people friendly and responsive approach, with an ingrained respect for human rights. The legislation of the new police Act, however, remains the prerogative of the states in the federal structure of the Constitution of India. Even many state Governments remain opposed to implementing the reform measures ordered by the Court's directions as they see it as curtailing their powers to control the police.

Criticism of Community Policing

The notion of community policing has been welcomed, is itself a danger any proposal should be subjected to careful scrutiny. If the police then revert to law enforcement to get the job done, the community might feel that community policing is being abandoned. Community policing-was nothing more than a throwback to the "bobby on the beat" because it was less impersonal than the officer "flashing past" in a police car. Community policing was a "romantic delusion" because it was not based on "the world we have lost" as some supporters are claiming. There was never a time when the police officer was everyone's friend, and there will never be such a time in the future. If the police get involved in community development, it would pose "serious questions of political accountability. Police neutrality will uncover simple remedies or solutions for "disadvantage and inequality" are either a "naive delusion" or "implies an expansion of the political powers of the police which carries dangerous implications. Without better internal guidance, the initiative is like a dangerous weapon launched in a general direction but capable of going astray. Community policing is an ill-defined and internally contradictory vision that would sacrifice legality, liberty, and efficiency for democracy and order.

Community policing does not enhance the rule of law and, in some versions, may well subvert it. As long as crime is on the increase, it seems that law abiding citizens will have enough reasons to justify the need for the police in their countries and communities.

The police forces do not really want to make change in their behavior and are merely using community policing to gain legitimacy. Community policing practices will not reduce the tension between the police and the public, but at best they will make police actions more acceptable to the public, even if due process is violated. If community policing was something more-than just rhetoric, the police would not implement it. Community policing fails to address the problems of practical and constitutional limits to police actions and that the concept is seductive to the public only because it is vague.

It is probably fair to say that community policing is more rhetoric than reality to cover arbitrary power. Reinventing the police is all but impossible; the police rank-and-file energetically defend their prerogatives. Reinventing the community is almost as difficult; the most that can be done is to redefine it in symbolic terms. Community policing programs give very little real power to the community. The programmes have seldom served as a handle for real reform of brutal police departments and are in most cases cosmetic at best. Community policing is no different from other police strategies aimed at shaping and manipulating public opinion." Since the police control all information about crime and disorder, they use rhetoric in "political dramas" to manage impression of their power and efficacy. It seems that society will only too readily divest itself of responsibility for its own shortcomings by just as readily blaming the most obvious, tangible manifestation of authority, the police. Police efficiency and legal and community accountability should not be seen as contradictory terms, but rather as inextricably interdependent. Community policing is rationalized on the basis of high cost. Many states and, in many instances, individual police leaders have embarked upon pro-active community oriented policing initiatives, making the police forces sensitive to the needs—of the community. Unfortunately, these laudable individual initiatives, as is evident in several instances, suffer from the successor-predecessor syndrome. There has been lack of uniformity in the application of the initiatives.

Conclusion

Community policing is based on the democratic principle that anyone who exercises authority on behalf of the community (like the police) is accountable to the community for the exercise of that authority. Community policing is not an overnight miracle cure or quick 'fix, even if it may make dramatic and immediate improvements. The attitudes to community policing would have to change it will have to come from both within and outside the police force that will not be an easy task. In spite of the efforts made by some state police forces to involve community members or citizens in policing, the community involvement in policing in India is at a very low level. There is a tendency amongst a section of the community to consider police functions mainly for the public servants and they are exclusively paid for this job.

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