

Effectiveness of Riot Prevention through Community Policing in India: The Practices of the Mohalla Committees

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Abstract—During Hindu-Muslim riots, Indian police have historically been unable to effectively deal with illegal detention and indiscriminate shootings against citizens, and participated arson and looting with the rioters. The local police and paramilitary forces have been utilized to their limits in conducting security operations. It is imperative that trust is restored between local residents and the police force. This paper examines the practices of community policing in Hindu-Muslim riot-prone societies in India since the 1990s.

We analyze how India reinvented methods of community policing and the steps it took toward keeping harmony between the religious communities. This study contributes to a growing approach to riot prevention that suggests the importance of citizens' participation in maintaining for the practices of community policing in India to endure.

In the conclusion, we argue that local engagement contributes to riot prevention, the significance of citizens' participation in keeping a multicultural society encompassing religious communities.

Index Terms—Citizens' participation, community policing, multicultural society, riot prevention.

I. INTRODUCTION

Officially, the Muslim population in India is estimated at 138,188,240, the world's third largest, next to Indonesia and Pakistan [1]. Hindu and Muslim riots have been a critical issue in India since the 1947 Partition. Different methodologies for studying of Hindu and Muslim riots in India have developed. Recently, a few studies focusing on riot prevention have emerged, while considerable research has been on the causes behind riots, from for example, historical, anthropological, political, and socio-economic methodologies [2]-[5]. Still, we must study the specific attempts to prevent riots and achieve religious harmony in the area. This study demonstrates how collaborative relations between local police and citizens can be effective in preventing Hindu-Muslim riots with the conceptual framework of community policing. We look at two case studies through field research.

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However, previous studies have not always contributed to controlling or preventing riots. In addition, previous studies have assumed that police officers in India should suppress the public on these occasions [6].

The concept of community policing was formulated in the area of criminology in the United States in the mid-1980s. Trojanawicz and Bucqueroux, who belonged to the National Center of Community Policing, define community policing as the following: It is based on the premise that both the police and the community must work together to identify, prioritize, and solve contemporary problems such as crime, drugs, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and overall neighborhood decay, with the goal of improving the overall quality of life in the area [7]. At present, various countries have introduced the concept and methods of community policing such as Canada, Australia, and Singapore [8], [9].

In India, some states including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh have practiced the methods of community policing, in fact, those few practical cases could fulfill crime and riot prevention since the 1990s. Then, the government, politicians, media and local residents assessed those activities [9].

This study sets out to discern, "what factor determines the success or failure of community policing in India and to examine the essence of community policing". This study examines the workings of the Mohalla Committees in Bhiwandi and Mumbai in Maharashtra as examples of community policing. "Mohalla" means neighborhood in Hindi. The name of the city "Bombay" was changed to Mumbai in 1995. For simplicity, this paper refers to the city as Mumbai regardless of the time period discussed.

Hindu-Muslim riots occurred in Bhiwandi in May 1970 and in May 1984 led by Hindu nationalists. Similar riots occurred in Mumbai from December 1992 to January 1993. Active community policing began in Bhiwandi in 1988 and in Mumbai in 1993. The approaches of these two community policing appear similar but are like two sides of the same coin. We analyze the determinative factor toward maintaining successful practice through those cases in Maharashtra.

Few studies have tried to study committee members' and police officers' roles in the working of Mohalla Committees in Bhiwandi and Mumbai, but those studies have not investigated the actual conditions in the areas of the field research [10], [11].

We discuss how local residents came to cooperate with police in patrolling the area, empowering women, helping the unemployed to attain skills and job, and purging localities of illegal drugs and traffickers since the 1990s.

II. METHOD

This study presents the results of more than four years of research on community policing in the Maharashtra state from March 2010 to March 2013. I attended some meetings and events organized by the Mohalla Committees to interview local police and citizens and observe how local issues were settled and, what kind of problems arose. The interviews were conducted on the following ten items from a questionnaire with 47 participants: (a) What is your view of the Mohalla Committees? (b) What role do you play in the Mohalla Committees? (c) Why do you attend the Mohalla Committees? (d) When and how did you come to know about the Mohalla Committees? (e) How can the committee members prevent Hindu-Muslim riots? (f) Do you think the relationships between Hindus and Muslims have gotten better? (g) What has been the most important goal for the Mohalla Committees? (h) Do you have any future plans or suggestions for the Mohalla Committees? (i) Do you expect any future Hindu-Muslim riots in Mumbai? (j) What are the major difficulties in the activities of the Mohalla Committees? Participants were introduced by one participant to another without any intentional religious prejudice; 22 Hindus, 17 Muslims, and 8 Christians. The quantitative data gave us significant insights into how the relationships between local police officers and citizens have been effective in creating and developing the practices of community policing. This paper begins with previous studies and lays out a conceptual framework. The second chapter summarizes past Hindu-Muslim riots and police behavior in India. The third chapter analyzes how the Mohalla Committees have prevented Hindu-Muslim riots in Bhiwandi and Mumbai. The final chapter discusses the outcome and future of community policing to prevent Hindu-Muslim riots. Consequently, we argue that citizens' participation is critical for the success of community policing in keeping harmony between different religious communities. This paper empirically explores which determining factors have been influential in the success or failure of community policing between local police and residents in preventing riot activities.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A. Hindu-Muslim Riots in India

During British rule, the number of Hindu-Muslim riots increased notably. During the struggle for independence, the occurrence of riots came to a climax on the borders of what would become India and Pakistan. After independence, riots erupted consistently throughout the country from the 1960s onward.

First, we consider the concept of Hindu and Muslim riots in India. Tambiah argues that the term "riot" from an anthropological approach, refers to collectivities of people, or crowds, engaging in violent acts such as arson, destruction of property, or physical injury to human beings, including extreme acts of homicide and rape, directed against a distinct enemy, whether it is social groups or the state or political administration [3]. Hindu-Muslim riots also refer to "communal violence" in official documents and previous

studies. The Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India defines communal violence in the following manner:

"Communal Violence would refer to planned and organized acts of violence by members of one community against members of another community with the intent of creating or expressing ill-will or hatred and leading to loss of life or injuries to people" [12].

According to these definitions, we demonstrate that Hindu-Muslim riots are not spontaneous or suddenly caused by community differences, but are created intentionally by organizations that desire to cause harm to certain communities. This study considers the riots of Hindus and Muslims as encompassing violent confrontations, such as arguments, scuffles, looting, arson, and murder. Thus, this paper defines the concept of Hindu-Muslim riot prevention as avoidance of scuffles, looting, arson, and murder and of factors that cause riots indirectly by local police, paramilitary, and local citizens.

Second, we describe the circumstances of Hindu and Muslim riots since Partition.

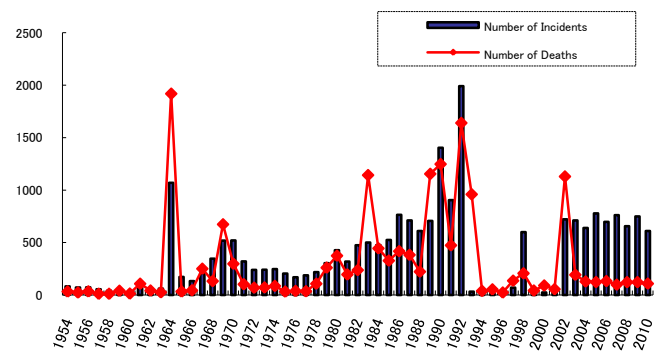


Fig. 1. Hindu-Muslim Riots in India (1954–2010) (Source: [4], [13], [14], edited).

Fig. 1 illustrates the Hindu-Muslim riot in India from 1954 to 2010. The number of incidents and deaths has increased steadily with peaks in 1965 during the second Indo-Pakistani War, in 1992 in a series of riots after the demolition of Babri Mosque, and in 2002 during the Gujarat riot. The total number of incidents is 22,704 and the number of deaths is 16,552.

This paper advocates a particular approach to riot prevention. Varshney suggests that civic engagement (e.g., in business, vocational and cultural associations) between different religious communities could contribute to peace in less riot-prone cities [11]. Additionally, Brass shows the "institutionalized riot system", which consists of the preparation, rehearsal, activation, enactment, explanation, and interpretation of riots by verifying the cases in the Uttar Pradesh state. Brass points out the role of local Hindu activists and specialists who have the desire to gain political power in the area through this system [15]. Both studies offer meaningful and stimulating arguments for riot prevention.

However, these studies do not clarify how local actors could collaborate to prevent riots or how their efforts could be effective. Therefore, this study develops an approach to riot prevention to answer the question of "how local attempts

could control and prevent riots in an area” through an empirical study of community policing programs.

B. The Concept of Community Policing

The concept and methods of community policing have evolved a collection of related ideas, based on crime prevention and problem-solving. In the United States, the National Center for Community Policing was founded at the Michigan State University in 1983, and over the past few decades, a considerable number of studies have been conducted on the concept, and practices of community policing. Skolnick and Bayley claim that 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 publics, raises police morale, and makes the police more accountable [16].

In the United States, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act was enacted in 1994; this act authorized \$8.8 billion from the U.S. Department of Justice over 6 years to create the Office of Community Oriented Policing Service (COPS). By July 2009, the COPS office had funded approximately 117,000 additional officers for more than 13,000 of the nation’s law enforcement agencies [8]. In short, the practices of community policing in the United States have evolved through governmental support for the finance and workforce of the police.

C. Characteristics of Community Policing in India

Local police are extremely important actors for security and safety, although they have been impeded by historical and political obstacles. We describe two structural problems in their system: the existing laws and Hindu domination in the composition of police personnel.

After the Indian Mutiny of 1857–1858, the government of British India established police machinery to strengthen their colonial rule and enacted the Police Act of 1861 to formalize the police machinery as a ruler-supporting paramilitary force [17]. In fact, the Police Act of 1861 has remained a law despite its incongruence with the developed, democratic policies of independent India. Even now, most police officers are conscious of their position as ruler-supporters in suppressing citizens with force. Although the National Police Commission has recommended since 1979 that police should serve impartial and service-oriented functions as a revision to the law, the Police Act of 1861 has remained in effect for 150 years, so it would take much time and effort to reform it [18].

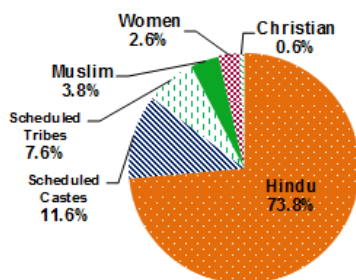


Fig. 2. The Religious Composition of the Maharashtra State Police (2002) (Source: [19], edited).

The religious composition of local police forces is also problematic. Employment opportunities in the public sector

for “Scheduled Castes” and “Scheduled Tribes” have been reserved for minorities under the provisions of the constitution. Fig. 2 shows the religious composition of Maharashtra state in 2002.

As Fig. 2 illustrates, Hindu personnel (110,536) are predominant within the Maharashtra state police force. Muslim personnel (5,758) are underrepresented compared to the 11% of the general population identified as Muslim (10,136,567) in the 2001 Maharashtra state census. We can point out similar problems in most states in India as well as Maharashtra.

So, Rai, Additional Director General of the Police in the Uttar Pradesh state, conducted interviews with riot victims, 200 Hindus and 200 Muslims, and presents the neutral of Indian police. The term of “neutral” means impartiality or evenhandedness in enforcement of law in this context. Table I shows perception of police neutrality between Hindus and Muslims.

TABLE I: HOW DO YOU FIND POLICE DURING HINDU-MUSLIM RIOTS?

	Hindu	Muslim	Frequency
Friend	143 (71.5%)	3 (1.5%)	146 (36.5%)
Enemy	13 (6.5%)	194 (97%)	207 (51.7%)
Neutral	44 (22%)	3 (1.5%)	47 (11.7%)

(Source: [20], edited)

For 97% of Muslim victims, the police during Hindu-Muslim riots are more like an enemy than friend. On the contrary, 71.5% Hindu perception for police is friend in riot situation. And the appreciation of police behavior is neutral for Muslims is just 1.5% against 22% Hindu’s. Namely, we ascertain biased Indian Police has acted hostilely for Muslim and friendly for Hindu during riot situation on victims’ perception.

Therefore, Hindu dominated police have acted violently in prejudiced illegal detention and indiscriminate shootings. Local police have been isolated from the area because local residents have felt increasing dread and mistrust toward local police. We argue the necessity for a change in awareness of serving the local community and consider community policing as an effective path.

Some local police officers have committed a breach of confidence and encouraged reform to their law enforcement process, in particular, in riot-prone cities.

We can characterize the practices of community policing in India into four aspects: biased police, estranged relations between police and residents, volunteer community policing, and reform process of their law enforcement system. Some programs have been launched by police departments in particular states to foster better relationships between local police and citizens. These include Neighborhood Watch Scheme (Delhi), Mohalla Committees and Mohalla Committee Movement Trust (Maharashtra), the Friends of Police Movement (Tamil Nadu), and Nagar Raksha Samiti Program (Madhya Pradesh) [9], [21], [22].

On the other side, Local Indian police and citizens have accomplished much through volunteer activities under the supervision of senior officers without establishing any legal framework or governmental financial policy, which has limitations in a few areas. Therefore, it has been difficult to

maintain their will to involve the community in policing, and it has taken much time to redress citizens' distrust of police. That is, we argue that the practices in India have been valuable in supporting volunteer work between law enforcement officers and local residents. Some practices of community policing in India have been gradually assessed by state government, media, and politicians since the mid-1990s.

Now, we find the recent tendency to formulate legal systems to institute the function of community policing. The Ministry of Home Affairs stipulates the activities of community policing in a bill called the Model Police Act 2006, and suggests the policy of riot prevention in the Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence (Access to Justice and Reparations) Bill, 2011.

Additionally, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh advocated methods of community policing to counter growing urban crime rates [23]. The Government of India and state governments are assuming the significance of community policing step by step.

IV. RESULT

A. The Rise and Decline of the Mohalla Committees in Bhiwandi

The famous power looms of Bhiwandi have been the main industry since 1950. The majority of the population 65% is Muslim. Economic and commercial mutual cooperation produced harmony between the Hindu and Muslim communities [24]. However, Hindu-Muslim riots occurred in the Muslim area in May 1970 and May 1984, agitated by Hindu nationalists. As a result, 187 were killed in 1970 and 1984. Citizens distrusted local police after these two riots.

When Deputy Commissioner of Police Suresh Khopade arrived in Bhiwandi, he felt that local police should regain the confidence and understanding of the citizens to create a proactive machinery among them. He set up 70 Mohalla Committees to organize meetings to discuss local issues between police and residents in 1990. There were 25 Hindus and 25 Muslims, selected by Khopade in each Mohalla Committee, chosen regardless of their occupation or sex [25]. We consider whether local members equally representing each community could lead an organization of the citizens and promote the significance of multicultural society.

Main five aims of the Mohalla Committees as: (a) to watch and gather information about the specific individuals who intend to incite mobs through hate speech, slogans, and rumors against the different religious communities; (b) to intervene and solve the daily happenings, such as landholding, domestic violence, and the dowry problem; (c) to construct a surveillance and patrol system between the police and the public; (d) to promote local communication by organizing religious processions and meetings between local police officers and residents; (e) to redress citizens' distrust of police and restore impartial police professional service [26]. Khopade tried to restore residents' trust in police officers and a sense of security in preventing riots.

On 6 December 1992, a mob of over 150,000 Hindus demolished the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh,

with the help of pickaxes, hammers, shovels and iron rods, flattening the entire structure in just 5 hours and 45 minutes. They claimed the construction of Ram Temple at the site [27].

The impact of the demolition of the mosque affected the whole country by the coverage in a moment, and Hindu-Muslim riots occurred in 13 states including Maharashtra. While Hindu-Muslim riots occurred in Mumbai, there were no riots in Bhiwandi. Khopade's, successor as Deputy Commissioner of Police, Gulabrao Pol, initiated quick action to prevent riots, for example patrolling with local citizens and youths angered by the demolition of the mosque not to act violently. As a result, no riots occurred in Bhiwandi. The Mohalla Committees became famous for the "Bhiwandi Experiment" [28].

However, the local meetings had become irregular, and the local efforts had lacked the enthusiasm to prevent riots between the members, police officers, and residents since the late 1990s [29].

Finally, a violent clash between Muslim residents and local police happened on July 2006, and two citizens and two police personnel killed. This incident exposed the mere shell that Mohalla Committees in Bhiwandi had become [30].

B. The Evolution of the Mohalla Committees Movement Trust in Mumbai

The casualties of the Hindu-Muslim riots were unprecedented, totaling 900 lives (575 Muslims, 275 Hindus, 45 unknown and other). The riots occurred for two weeks from December 1992 to January 1993 as a result of the demolition of Babri Mosque. The causes of deaths were police gunfire (356), stabbing (347), arson (91), mob action (80), private gunfire (22), and other causes (4) [31]. It is noteworthy that about 40% of deaths were caused by police gunfire. Local police were unable to enforce law and order in Mumbai. Later, the New York Times revealed that senior officers at the police headquarters repeatedly ordered constables in the field to allow Muslim homes to burn and to prevent aid from Muslim victims [32].

We find the limitations of reactive law enforcement in the conspiracy of Hindu nationalists to attack Muslim residents during the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1992–1993. Furthermore, serial bomb blasts resulted in the deaths of between 257 and 713 people at ten sites in Mumbai on 12 March 1993. The key figure in the serial bomb blasts case was a Muslim, Tiger Memon. And two of his accomplices had suffered a bullet injury during the riots of 1992–1993, so the police felt they had motives for vengeance. The bomb blasts case accelerated hate and suspicion between Hindu and Muslim residents [31].

There was suspicion, division, and mistrust between Hindus, Muslims and local police. Therefore, local police urgently had to tackle task of developing proactive law enforcement activities with the collaboration of local residents to resolve the situation.

A Muslim sheriff, Fakruddin Khorakiwala ordered to an investigation of why Hindu and Muslim riots did not occur in Bhiwandi while Mumbai burned on February 1993. The inquiry of Khorakiwala's commission demonstrated that the Deputy Commissioner of Police in Bhiwandi had initiated

riot prevention through the practice of community policing in close cooperation with the citizens in spite of the lack of resources of the police [33].

Then, Chief Minister Sharad Pawar in Maharashtra authorized Khorakiwala's suggestion immediately. Additionally, three prominent people, former Police Commissioner of Mumbai Julio Ribeiro, social worker Sushobha Barve, and then Police Commissioner of Mumbai Satish Sahney launched the Mohalla Committees Movement Trust (MCMT) in Mumbai together after meeting with Muslim residents.

The main purpose of the MCMT in Mumbai is to construct closer relationships and to support multicultural society through local police officers in different communities [34]. The initial founders have different backgrounds as a Muslim, a Christian, and a Hindu. In brief, their composition embodied the message of the MCMT in Mumbai, which emphasized the significance of harmony between the different religions. Thus, local residents can naturally accept the message and practice of the MCMT in Mumbai.

Gradually, local Hindu, Muslim, and Christian citizens have come to participate in the workings of the MCMT, transferring their initiatives from police to local members.

The activities of the MCMT were authorized under the Bombay Public Trust Act 1950 by the government of Maharashtra on October 1996 under the leadership of Ribeiro [35].

Waqar Khan, a local Muslim member in the Dharavi area, developed the common slogan and symbol of the MCMT, "Ham Sab Ek Hain" (We are all one) [36].

The MCMT cooperated with 34 police offices to accomplish functioning community policing in Mumbai in 2010 [37].

The main event of the MCMT is the Peace Cricket Match. Cricket is a popular and national sport in South Asian countries. The international cricket match would make use of the conference between the leaders of India and Pakistan as "cricket diplomacy". It is an effective instrument to create harmony through cricket matches. They placed regulations on team formation that, at least, two religious minorities should play on the team, for example, a Muslim or a Christian, and the captain should be a police officer. The Hindu and Muslim players can play together as one team in the Peace Cricket Match. While they are attending the cricket match, they have opportunities to communicate with each other. I interviewed some players who said they had befriended players from other religious communities [38].

The April 1995 was campaign opposing the film *Bombay* on the theme of the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1992–93. The members of the MCMT persuaded the film detractors not to attack particular communities, and the situation kept calm while the film played.

The MCMT held eight local meetings concerning a residents' dispute in the Imamwada area in July 1995. They established the causes of the confrontation as unemployment problems and a water shortage. The MCMT opened a vocational training for aspiring electricians and plumbers, and provided volleyball courts and ping-pong tables for the youth to dissipate stress. Furthermore, the local community achieved a consensus to hold regular meetings among their

leaders on how to secure clean water [39].

In the Imamwada area, the MCMT also established the Imamwada Mohalla Committee Computer Training Center (PC Cell) in 1997 to empower local Muslim and Hindu women to find employment [40].

Regarding the empowerment of women, the MCMT has run a Women's Grievances Redressal Cell at the seven police stations with Hindu, Muslim, Christian female counselors since 1997. The most common topic is domestic violence and family problems, and there is no consulting charge. In case of emergency, police officers come and calm the situation at each cell [41].

Recently, the Mahim area has become a hotbed of crime and disorder by illegal drug traffickers, addicts, beggars, and prostitutes. Burhan Parkar, a Muslim facilitator of the MCMT, invited Joint Police Commissioner Sadanand Date to discuss decline in public security at their local meeting on November 2012. Parkar and local citizens launched a local clean plan to get rid of illegal drug traffickers and addicts, and to dispose of garbage [42]. The MCMT has its own influence and presence to remove criminals focusing on riot prevention in the Mahim area.

After the massive riots of 2002, which left 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus dead in Gujarat state, the MCMT and local police came to grips with riot prevention, acknowledging that Hindu nationalists was trying to trigger Hindu mob agitation in Mumbai. Immediately, the Mahim police station held a meeting with the MCMT urging citizens not to react, and Dongri police station opened the amity cultural program with the MCMT. Additionally, local police and the MCMT held a rally around the area to promote peace, and the atmosphere in Mumbai remained calm [43].

After the Gujarat riots in 2002, Waqar Khan and Baul Korde made a motion picture titled *Ham Sab Ek Hain: Ekta Sandesh* (We are All One: The Message for Unity) concerning the Gujarat Earthquake on January 26, 2001, which documented how all people were rescued, irrespective of their religious differences. The MCMT often screens this film to promote harmony [36]. Korde and Khan promoted the importance of religious harmony and multicultural society for local residents through the film. We describe how their attempts could be effective to convey a message of harmony regardless of age, sex or religion for every generation.

Thakkar demonstrates that the experience of the MCMT in Mumbai highlights that common problems call for common action, and the ability of community to cope with critical situations has to be constantly discovered and rediscovered [10].

Sharma argues that the work of the MCMT has only been successful in areas where police officers have taken personal interests and have ensured that the right kind of people are inducted into committees [39]. According to Sharma's view, we find the difficulties depend on individual police officers' discretion in sustaining the practices of community policing.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examines how collaborative relations between local police and citizens can be effective in preventing

Hindu-Muslim riots within the conceptual framework of community policing.

We consider the results of the practices of the Mohalla Committees in Bhiwandi as a failed case and the Mohalla Committees Movement Trust in Mumbai as a successful case. These two practices differed in their involvement of citizens, with the case in Bhiwandi failing, and the case in Mumbai succeeding.

Once, the Mohalla Committees became famous as the "Bhiwandi Experiment" after no Hindu-Muslim riots occurred during the demolition of Babri Mosque. However, the local meetings became irregular, and the local efforts were too weak to prevent riots between members, police officers, and residents after the late 1990s. On July 2006, two citizens and two police personnel were killed during a violent clash between Muslim residents and local police. The incident exposed the Mohalla Committees in Bhiwandi as having collapsed.

In summary, we find the following three features of community policing by the MCMT in Mumbai: (1) A Muslim sheriff suggested the foundation of the MCMT to chief minister immediately after the riot in 1993; (2) The practices have been organized by volunteers from different religious communities and local police and have focused on enhancing the quality of life in the neighborhood by supporting job-hunting, empowering women, and holding sports and recreational events; (3) The main aims are to maintain communication between police personnel and local residents, and to promote a multicultural society. The active workings of the MCMT have endured and developed without the outbreak of any riots since 1993.

We show that attempts by the local police and citizens to prevent Hindu-Muslim rioting were effective, while riots occurred in neighboring areas.

These practices suggest us the possibilities for expanding the approach and methods of community policing to all of India. The most important factor in community policing is citizens' participation in order to secure the cooperative relationship between police and citizens in solving community problems. It is necessary to keep in mind that citizens' participation must be maintained for the practices of community policing in India to endure.

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