

Syncing Security and Sinking Risks with Digital Technology

Digital technology enables us to tap the synergy of networking capabilities in the interest of individual, local, state, national and global security

DR. PRATEEP V. PHILIP IPS

Digital technology is a way and perhaps the best way for concerned and committed citizens across a country as big as India to connect on matters of national as well as local security. Below is a mail from one such concerned and committed citizen from another state, namely, Andhra Pradesh exhorting us on the need to spread the concept and movement called FOP or Friends of Police across the country in the wake of the terrorist strike in Mumbai (26-29/11):

*Dear Sir,
I am really happy to congratulate you for a such good initiative FOP in Tamilnadu.
Please let that good concept spread all over INDIA.
Regards,
NagaSoundappan G*

The voicing of his sentiment and opinion was made possible by digital technology as he posted it on the website: www.friendsofpolice.net Friends of Police incidentally is a formula for sharing police power and responsibility with people at large. It is

based on what I call the power syndrome: when the power haves (read police..) do not share power with the people(the power have nots), they are hated; when they do share power with the people they serve, they are loved. A FOP acts as a bridge between the police(the Power haves) and the people(the Power Have-nots) just as Digital Technology acts as a bridge between the "Knowledge-haves" and the "Knowledge-have nots." It enables the police and the people to network and enter into a problem-solving partnership.

The idea of FOP was born when I was Superintendent of Police of a district(Ramnad in Tamil Nadu) and I asked myself the question, " How do I share the power that I have under the law and the mandate of the Constitution with the people to whom it truly belongs?" The answer came when the idea flashed in my mind," FOP or Friends of Police." Every law abiding citizen is automatically a Friend of Police and he/she can enroll as a FOP in the limits of the police station

where he/she resides. Imagine a hundred billion plus Indians become Friends of Police; it will transform not just the security environment but will transform society and the nation. Friends of Police helps to crystallize the incipient goodwill for the police that exists in society. The idea is simple, universally applicable, holistic and comprehensive at the same time. It can be understood by the average policeman as well as the average citizen. The "penetrability" of an idea should be hundred per cent if it should prove efficacious, sustainable and fruitful. I decided in the year 1993 to launch it as a voluntary mass movement in community policing while I was Superintendent of Police of the then volatile but now rather docile district of Ramnad or Ramnathapuram in Southern Tamil Nadu.

Digital technology would enable citizens and police to connect in real time, to convey information, suggestions,



Imagine a hundred billion plus Indians become Friends of Police; it will transform not just the security environment but will transform society and the nation

complaints, feedback which will prove valuable in improving the quality of policing all over the country. Indeed, after 911 since citizens alone could bring down one of the hijacked aircraft before it hits its target, Citizens' Intelligence Network is considered more effective than even professional police intelligence since citizens and not the police are actually the first responders in most situations. Digital technology is the 'backbone of Citizens' Intelligence Network.

However, powerful an idea is, one needs a technology or a vehicle to carry the idea to all target areas. I started receiving mail like the one above from across the district and state borders to start FOP in other districts and states. This was around the time the Internet came into existence. I found the Internet a powerful medium to convey and disseminate the idea globally. Within a year, the roadmap I scripted for the Friends of Police movement was published on a home page of the Organisation of International Criminal Justice, University of Illinois, Chicago as the first and only international blueprint for community policing on the worldwide web. Indeed, ideas are borderless and the Internet helps one transcend and cross all geographical boundaries much like the Japanese monkeys who learnt to wash sweet potatoes before consuming it for the first time ever and soon monkeys all over the world were doing the same. Soon some police forces and citizen groups in places