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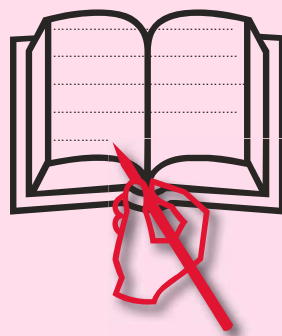
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# Documentary Films and Community Policing – A Long Term Crime Prevention Model

Dr. A. Ravi Shankar, IPS\*

## Keywords

*Jogini, Drugs, Sorcery, Insolvency, Gambling, Maoist, Films, Crime, Visual Media, Prevention, Model, Media, Youth, Community, Information, Audio-visual, Training, Entertainment, Pro-Social, Problem, Criminal Justice, Partners, Suicides, Farmers, Dropouts, Teachers, Health Inspectors, Sanitation, Artists, Suicides, Farmers, Awareness, Long term, Dropouts, Murders, Suspicious.*

## Abstract

*The six sets of hidden crimes namely Jogini, Drugs, Sorcery, Insolvency Petitions, Farmer Suicides, Gambling and left wing extremist offences were identified as contributing to 37% (approx) of the district crime. As these hidden crimes had social angle to them, hence a long term crime prevention model by shooting short documentary films on these six hidden crimes based on local incidents, involving local artistes, coupled with mimicry, magic shows dispelling the sorcery myths and songs was designed and screened in the identified problem villages. Leaving behind the age-old criminal justice approach and adapting the pro-social model of community policing in partnership with Sanitary Health Inspectors, Teachers, Youth, Village head, public representatives and Community Police Officer of the local area, this program was launched to bring awareness through films coupled with entertainment, and was taken to the door steps of the identified villages. Best partners and Best villages were rewarded and recognized after taking feedback and assessing performance on set parameters at the district level functions annually.*

Author Intro.:

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## Introduction

In the past, Nizamabad District of Andhra Pradesh was endemic with sorcery related brutal murders, drug peddling, Maoist crimes, property offences, domestic violence, rampant insolvency and farmers' suicides.

As the region was affected with the malaise of violent crime of every possible nature, the police were resorting to extremely harsh measures, which resulted in further public alienation.

The solution to resolving the problems that ailed this region lay in community policing to address deep-rooted societal ills. By establishing a strong partnership between various influencer groups such as teachers, health and sanitary inspectors, youth, political representatives and the policemen, it was planned to tackle the problems faced in the region. To add teeth to this partnership the power of Visual Media was harnessed to act as a catalyst for change by making socially relevant issue based short films involving local artists. These films were screened in all problem villages for the identified 6 major problems which contributed to 37% of the crime.

It is often taken as an unassailable fact that society has become more violent since the advent of modern media. In this context, if this is true then **media could also be used for the prevention of crime** with the simple logic that crowds can also be impressed by images. Nothing has a greater effect on the imagination of the crowds than the theatrical representations. The visuals directly plug in to the mind without much of rational thought or interpretation. The mass media is a powerful socializing agent. Media has tremendous impact on society through the content of the message. These facts about the **power of media was used for the crime prevention work and arriving at a long term crime prevention model wherein information and entertainment was brought together at the doorsteps of the remote villages and tribal hamlets affected with such peculiar hidden crime problems.**

The **long-term crime prevention model** with sustained application would bring durable outcomes. The plan was to build up resources, set-up a process in motion to institutionalize good practices and

systems. To overcome the common police habit of working in crisis and then lose momentum was born the Project **JOURNEY TOWARDS WISDOM**, a long-term Crime Prevention model.

This model was aimed at bringing out a sustainable sociological (micro-macro) change which was the need of the community, in a region where crime was rampant and barbaric sorcery related practices were prevalent. The police aimed at eradicating inhuman practices by films shows, creating awareness and not merely booking cases, arresting, remand and prosecuting as the actual malaise emanated out of ignorance.

### Problems Identified

Historical gender injustice and atrocities in the name of religion and superstition:

**Village concubinage (jogini):** An evil practice of forced prostitution in the villages which had societal sanction, wherein young lower caste girls, after they attain puberty, are dedicated to the local deity - goddess Yellamma, an act that forfeits their right to ever marry in reality. They are known as Joginis (servants of the god). They are forced into prostitution in the name of religion. This practice had socio-cultural background with strong gender injustice. The Jogini system had resulted in a growing number of illegitimate children. These children were not only deprived of education but the daughters of Joginis were forced to carry on the tradition and become a Jogini.

**Sorcery:** Women were branded as witches and mercilessly subjected to cruelty. A woman refusing advances, bearing only girl children, reluctance to sell land was branded a witch and has her teeth broken, heads shaven, killed or paraded round the villages. Practice of sorcery had manifested in the form of riots, burning the family members alive, setting the houses on fire, brutal murders, cheating and abusing women for immoral gains. Epidemics, infertility, poor crop yield were blindly attributed to sorcery practice by men/ women.

district population was dependent on agriculture. The farmers were being cheated by commission agents who would not pay the

amounts due to the farmers and file insolvency petition before the court and disappear after hiding all their assets. Gullible & innocent farmers were cheated by unscrupulous traders who sold them spurious seeds, spurious fertilizers and pesticides resulting in crop failure. Inability to pay back the loans led them to commit suicides or turn to crime.

**Left wing extremism:** Lack of avenues to earn a decent living, coupled with extreme poverty led disgruntled youth (school & college dropouts) being recruited by propagandists of Maoist movement in Nizamabad. Their violence led to large scale loss of human lives, public and private property and decline in investments.

**Gambling & Domestic violence:** Poverty and illiteracy forced them to make easy and fast money, as the poor took to gambling like single digit lottery tickets, Matka, etc. This led to broken homes and suicides, crimes, illicit relations murders, debts, etc.

**Drugs:** The menace was highly prevalent in the district. As one of the largest areas of cannabis sativa (ganja) cultivation, smuggling of ganja, was taking place apart from the road accidents because of ganja smoking and driving. The students were also getting affected by this menace. Crime, murders, addiction and school drop outs were the natural fallouts of this evil.

The above **six heads of crime** contributed to 37% of the total crime reported in Nizamabad District. The present system had ignored the role of media, press, youth, family and community in crime prevention. On analysis, it was found, statistically as per district crime records, 100% of crimes were being committed by less than 10% of the population. While trying to analyze why the remaining 90% did not support and contribute to crime in the society, it was realized that it was predominantly awareness and **knowledge of the consequences** of a criminal act which deterred a person from committing a crime. Hence to combat these categories of the crime prevalent in Nizamabad, police tried to facilitate **pro-social behavior** by bringing about awareness and make them law abiding to prevent crime on a long term basis with the help of this participatory and partnership model.

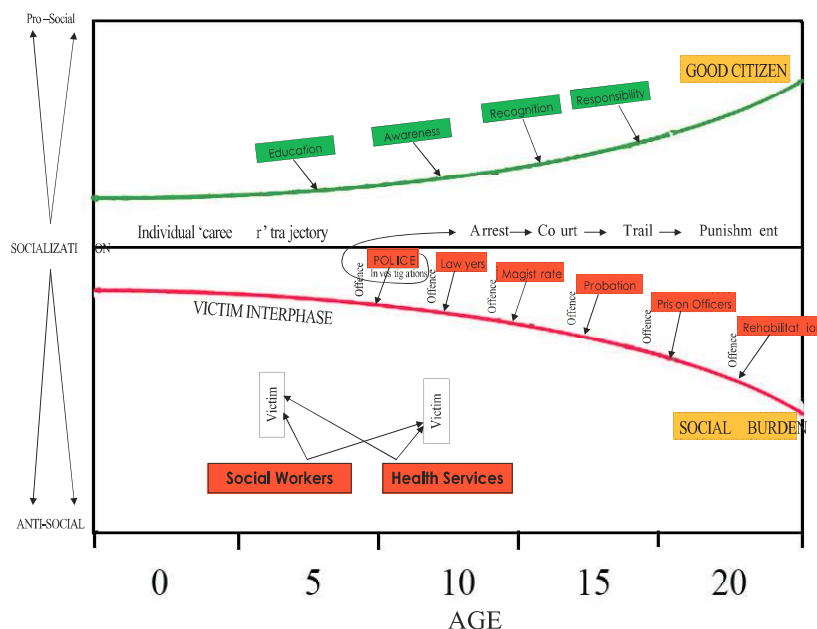
## Project Goals

The Goals of this project were to improve community awareness of the etiopathogenesis of some locally prevalent crimes using the **long term crime prevention model of education- A Journey Towards Wisdom**, a model with dynamic interaction with press, media, police, public representatives and public participation to build a safe and strong society.

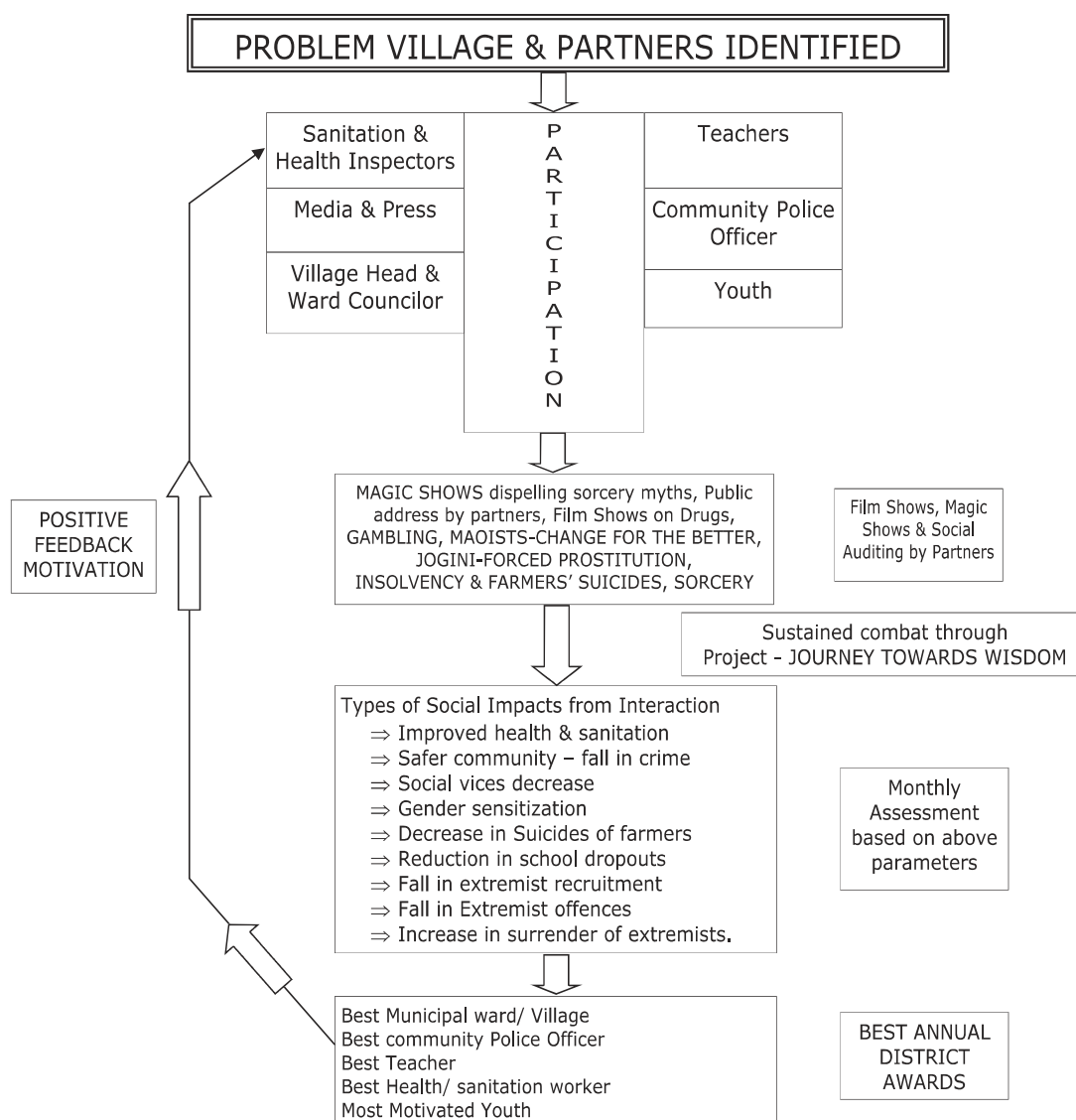
## Community Input

In Nizamabad District, in the past, the **Criminal Justice Approach** was used and extremists and bad elements were pursued with too much enthusiasm by the Law Enforcement Agency. So, the law abiding citizen had almost ended up changing his **fear of crime for fear of police**, which was not a very desirable trade-off. Police had rubbed raw the sores of community discontent. This Criminal Justice Approach led to more of incarceration and community alienation from the police in a Maoist infested district.

### The Criminal justice Approach



Instead of the above mentioned traditional reactive criminal justice approach to crime control, this model was based on public education and awareness which was a pro-social model, proactively aimed at discouraging crime.



## Pro-Social Model

Instead of war on crime, a sympathetically designed model of crime prevention which laid emphasis on **social strategies to prevent crime using film shows, mimicry, magic shows** to dispel sorcery practices, talk show by psychiatrists etc. **was put in to action.**

## Action Plan

The crime patterns were studied with respect to the six identified major crimes

**Phase 1:** Study the crime incidence map of the district with respect to the 6 identified crimes and pick up the problem villages where there is high incidence of these six hidden crimes.

**Phase 2:** Identify and select local artistes for preparing the issue based films on these six identified hidden crimes. Prepare the script based on real life local incidents and shoot the film with an ordinary VHS camera. Procure the audiovisual aids for screening the films and get the police dance-drama troop ready in all aspects.

**Phase 3:** Village-wise identification and training of the partners comprising of Health & Sanitary Inspectors, Youth, School Teachers, Village Head/Municipal Ward Councilor to liaise with the Community Police Officer and Police Public Relations Officer.

**Phase 4:** Organize the village level film shows, screening the relevant films, combining education and entertainment with Mimicry, Songs, Magic Shows to dispel the blind faiths, sorcery etc., thus providing a forum for fusion of thoughts from police, public, press and politicians to make the village safe and prevent crimes.

**Phase 5:** Monitoring the following parameters on every village visit  
Number of school drop-outs report from the local teacher.

Clean and green report & health report from the Sanitary Health



**Mathu Padarithalu**

presented by:  
DR. A. RAVI SHANKAR I.P.S.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE, NIZAMABAD

Drugs



**Banamathi**

presented by:  
DR. A. RAVI SHANKAR  
S.P., NIZAMABAD

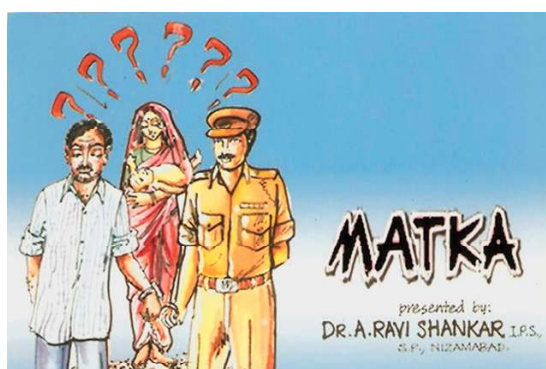
Sorcery

Inspector.

Complaints received in Police Stations from the village.

Crime reported under the identified six heads.

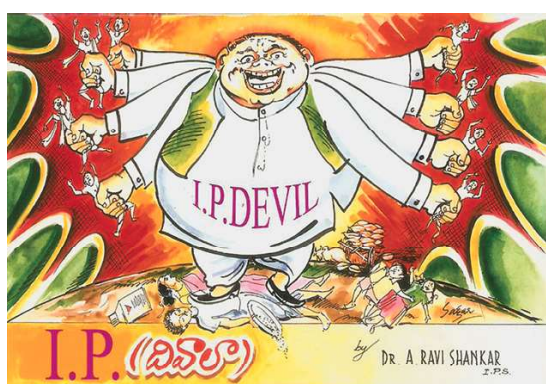
**Phase 6:** Launched a regular Rewards and Recognition program, wherein the contribution made by change agents was lauded and recognized at a district level function.



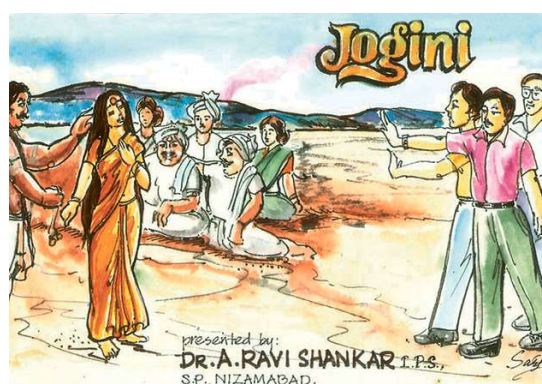
Gambling



Journey Towards Wisdom



Farmer's Suicides



Village Concubinage

## Results

The ambitious yet challenging primary goals of making a positive **impact of reducing these 6 identified hidden crimes by 50% over a period of five years, had been taken up were achieved and exceeded.**

The number **of farmers committing suicide** showed a declining trend. Many brokers and cheaters who were manufacturing

spurious seeds and fertilizers were arrested. Safe forward linkages and marketing facilities were established for the farmers to get maximum profits for their agricultural produce. Villagers learnt through the film about their exploitation and the ways they were cheated by the middlemen.

The **Village concubinage (JOGINI)** system was eradicated by vigorous campaigns with nil cases reported for successive years. 900 acres of land was distributed to former Joginis to rehabilitate them. The marriage of 28 Joginis were arranged thereby ensuring their integration into society.

When the project commenced, Nizamabad District had the highest number of **school and college drop outs** i.e. >50%. The **gross enrollment ratio** being 80.16% and the **drop out rate** was 53.44%. The reason being attraction towards the local **beedi rolling** cottage industry wherein cheap labor by the child contributes to the family's income and secondly **the trap in to the Maoist** fold. After this Project, the school drop-outs came down drastically because of the weekly monitoring and feedback program from the school teachers and the Community Police Officer. Because of the strict monitoring, the number of students joining the Maoist movement also dropped.

The number of women **Joginis** attending the welfare clinics declined from 32 to 13 as they became aware of the consequences of the unsafe sexual practices and consequences of the sexually transmitted diseases.

Though best efforts were made to combat Sorcery, Drugs, Farmers' Suicides, Gambling & Domestic Violence, initial gains were noticed but due to deep rooted social mores, much remains to be done.

| Year                         | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Sorcery                      | 32   | 15   | 20   | 29   | 39   |
| Drugs                        | 37   | 29   | 39   | 24   | 55   |
| Farmers Suicides             | 8    | 26   | 9    | 69   | 16   |
| Gambling & Domestic Violence | 1101 | 1567 | 1020 | 936  | 1597 |

## Institutionalization

The project was sustained because of the public participation, entertainment value, media attention and participation, political leaders got photo opportunities, community policemen got publicity, good work got recognized, no police predecessor-successor syndrome, opportunity for grievance redressal at the doorstep, politicians evinced a lot of interest in the project as they vied for their ward or village to be awarded the best. Thus, this project was a dynamic interaction with press, media, police, politicians, and public participating to build a safe & strong society.

This preventive intervention could facilitate the pro-social development of young people effectively, appropriately and consistently at the district level. Shows were organized covering every village, **jails, borstal schools, colleges, bus stations, railway stations, cinema halls** in the urban areas.

These documentaries were telecast **through Doordarshan Broadcasting Corporation of India** on a sustained basis. This was also telecast in **railway stations, bus stations** and local cable networks to bring out awareness.

The **Andhra Pradesh Police Academy** collected these films and screened them for the police recruits as part of the teaching curriculum of community policing.

Of the six identified issue based films produced as part of the Project- Journey Towards Wisdom, the film BANAAMATHI- to curb the menace of SORCERY related-crimes won the Govt. of A.P State **Golden Nandi Award** for the Most Socially Relevant Documentary for the year 2001-02.

All **the six video films** were distributed to all the 26 districts in the state of Andhra Pradesh for carrying out extensive campaign as a long term community policing model by the **Department of Information and Public Relations** of the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

The film on **Insolvency and Farmers' Suicides** was screened at all the agriculture market-yards for preventing suicides by farmers

and educating the farmers on marketing genuine seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. The efforts on legal literacy for Jogini Women were appreciated by **the Chairman, Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission.**

**Hence, with this model of community policing, the effort to redefine the concept of law enforcement to improve the quality of life and prevent crime in Nizamabad district has yielded results.**

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