

SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CITIZENS IN CITY OF MUMBAI

I. BACKGROUND

The history of Indian society has been ridden with social conflicts, crimes and deviant acts of individuals, groups/communities and even ruling classes. Caste based Hindu society inflicted social injustice, crimes and violence on Scheduled Castes (the "untouchables"), and it happens even today. In fact, the latter were denied even basic civil rights and access to properties. Gender based crimes and violence in the male dominant Hindu society are well-known. Communal conflicts due to the Hindu-Muslim divide is a recurring phenomenon, which has taken ugly and dangerous dimension in the country. Then there are other forms of crime, similar to all societies: crimes against individuals and property, organized crimes of 'underworld', white-collar crimes, criminalization of politics, corruption in government offices, and so on. Recently, in the

era of neo-liberalism, capitalist paradigm of development has leased a new culture of deviance, crime and conflict which gets its manifestation in wide spread white-collar crimes by corporate sector, unethical and illegal business practices, emergence of builder mafia, entry of the underworld (at national and international levels) in business activity, flesh trade, drug-trafficking, cyber-crimes, and so on.

Terrorism, an off-shoot of historical prejudices and conflicts, is taking new dimensions under advanced technology, media and living conditions. The very recent (Nov. 2008) terrorist-attack on city of Mumbai, which led to wide spread loss of human lives and property, manifests such brutal forms of violence with international ramifications. Underworld nexus with such terrorist groups poses grave threat not only to the security and safety of citizens but also to the national fabric. Under the present development regime, the organized criminal gangs and terrorist groups are not only adding to their fortunes but also entering into the booming trade of real estate and illegal arms and ammunitions. Thus, crime, conflict and violence, so far considered peripheral in the country, are turning central to economic, political and social life. Rather, among several future shocks that India is likely to confront (such as environmental crisis; social conflict between vulnerable agrarian communities and the 'shining India'; ethnic conflicts and insurgencies; and population explosion with growing vulnerability of the marginalized people), crime and violence is one such future shock, with serious consequences to safety and security of people across the country.

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II. THE 'RISK CITIES' PRONE TO CRIME AND CONFLICT

As a colonial legacy, a few cities in India became the growth engines. After Independence, no effort was made by policy makers for a balanced approach towards urban development, through dispersal of economic activity and deflation of migrant population. The result is the 'metropolisation of Indian economy'. By 2004, the top eight cities of India (Gr. Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune and Ahmedabad) though sheltered only 6.6% of the country's total population, these eight cities accounted for 36% of the total bank deposits, 51.4% of the total bank credits, and 33.3% of the total equity (FDI) in the country (Sharma & Shaban, 2006). These mega cities have become centres of creation of wealth under global neo-liberalism. Massive transformation of these cities is resulting in vast inequalities (including 'enclaved-urbanism') across various sections of their populations. It is projected that in next 10 to 15 years, Mumbai and Delhi will shelter their populations of about 25 millions each. Several other cities will harbour 10 million + populations. Development induced crime is becoming central to these cities. According to the official data (National Crime Records Bureau, 2006), Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore accounted for 31,070, 53,007 and 26,284 incidences of cognizable crimes. No need to mention here that business related crimes (popularly known as the 'white collar crimes') are hardly reported in such data. Corporate-based crimes, newly emerging cyber crimes and organized hard core crimes are becoming order of the day, affecting security and safety of citizens in mega cities.

III. CITY OF MUMBAI: THE CENTRE OF MONEY AND CRIME CULTURE

Several cities across the world are famous for their rich cultural heritage, modernity and development. Some of them, over the period, also became the prime centres of organized criminal gangs (OCGs), crime mafia or the 'underworld' (the terms used here interchangeably). In India, Mumbai City carries such a reputation of the latter kind. On one hand, it is proudly stated to be the 'financial capital' of India. It shares a major chunk of commercial, industrial business, cargo-handling, IT and other related activities in the country. Its population (over 15 millions) is the largest among all the cities of India. On the other hand, the city is also the crime capital of India, not only in terms of well-organised criminal gangs, but also a training centre in crime for the dare-devils from all across the country. If one adds 'illegal business activities' (white-collar crimes) to the above, its reputation will enhance manifolds. Such a crime culture in the city has evolved over decades, and today it is well-entrenched into the city's economic, political and social culture. To provide any authentic perspective(s) of such a criminality in the city, one requires the support of extensive research and documentation, which is singularly lacking; and it applies to other parts of the country as well. However, numerous reporting by print and visual media on crime cases (and their occasional analysis) are available which need to be documented. A few reports and research papers have also emerged which reflect on high incidence of criminality – more so the organized crime (see, for instance: Charels, 2001; Lele, 1995; Hansen, 2001; Pendse, 2003; Sarkar, 2002; and Weinstein, 2008). A significant, though confidential, report on the 'Growth of Gangsterism in Bombay City' is prepared by M.N. Singh, (cyclostyled, 1994), the former Police Commissioner of

Mumbai, for city's Crime Branch, which provides most vivid description of its origin and activities (with the names of gang leaders, their hard core members and sharp-shooters), land-sharks "hawala" operators, and so on. The report also provides valuable information on the mafia-turned builders, notorious operators of liquor bars, even a few police officials, businessmen and several builders indulging in illegal crime/business activities. Interestingly, (and understandably), Singh has skillfully avoided the names of big-wigs (the politicians) who are so-well aware and even dependent on the deeds of underworld, the builder mafia, the slum lords (future recruits to politics) and, above all, the corrupt businessmen. The nexus among them is most formidable cause of growing crime in the city.

A cursory look at the number of citizens killed by criminal gangs (or individual criminals) and the incidences of 'police shootouts' with gangsters / criminals are revealing (see the Tables):

No. of Incidents	By Gangs	Shootouts by Criminals		Total	No. of Citizens Injured
		No. of Citizens Killed	By Petty Criminals		
34	13	21		34	5
28	17	11		28	6
24	5	9		24	6
48	22	26		48	2
38	30	8		38	11
93	70	23		93	15
42	24	18		42	28
26	12	14		26	1
6	0	6		6	0
339	203	136		339	74

Table 1: Mumbai Selected Crime Data, 1993 – 2001

Source: Sarkar, Sumita (2002) : Youths in Hardcore Crime in Mumbai: Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2002, Mumbai

Year	Police Shootout with Gangsters/Criminals in a few years				
	No. of Incidents	Notorious Criminals Killed	Notorious Criminals Injured	Policemen Killed	Policemen Injured
1990	27	36	4	2	4
1994	25	30	3	1	6
1995	10	9	3	0	4
1996	45	57	4	0	5
1997	49	72	2	2	12
1998	39	48	3	3	10
1999	65	83	1	0	15
2000	59	73	0	0	4
(2001 upto 01-04-2001)	12	13	0	0	1
Total	331	421	20	5	61

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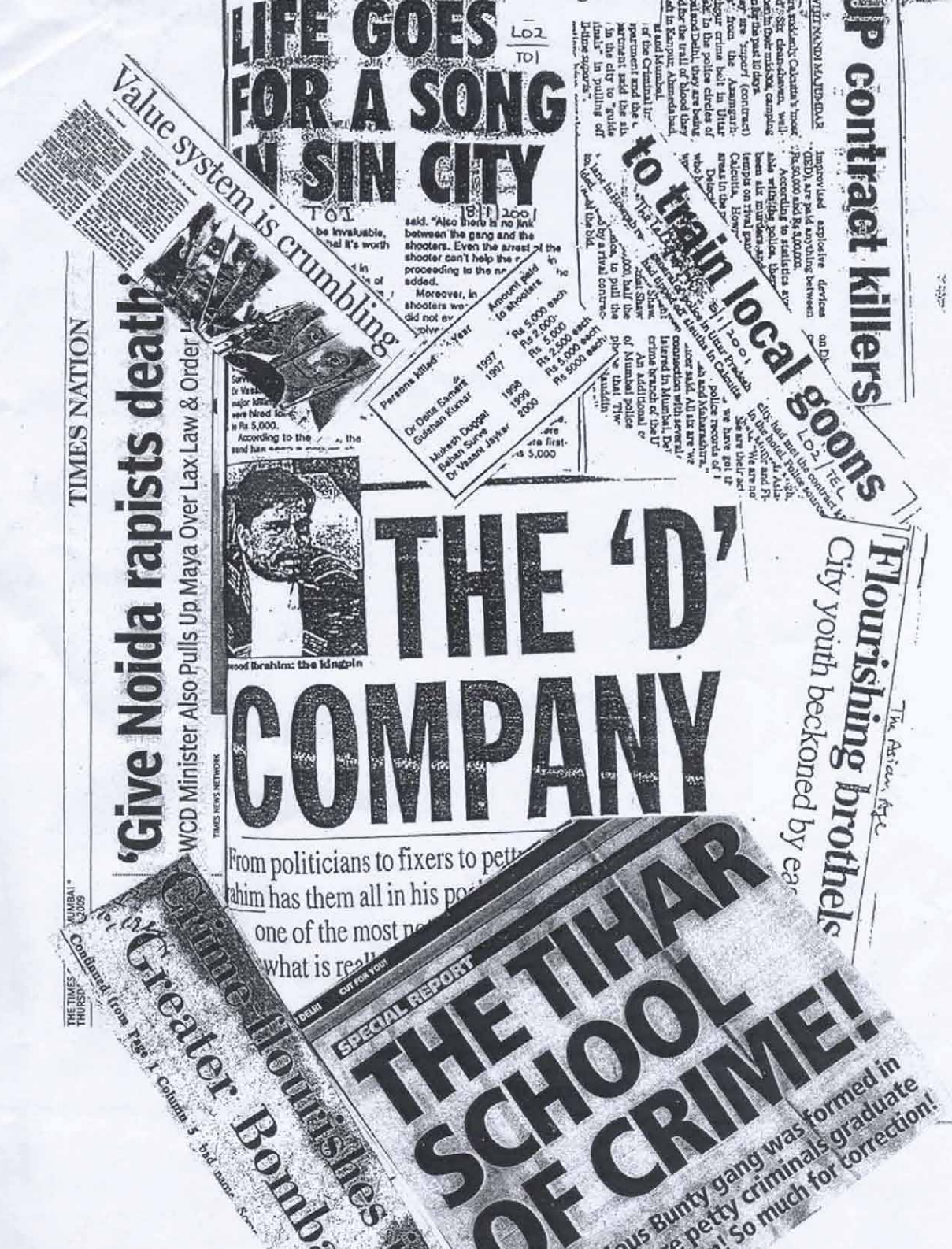
IV. GROWING CONCERN ABOUT SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CITIZENS

While thinking about the citizens and their security, one thing strikes most that human dignity in Indian society is at its lowest ebb. Though, historically, it remained a privilege of the elite class, in present scenario, it has eroded across the classes and communities. Dowry deaths, rapes, intimidation of helpless, extortions, flesh trade, smuggling of arms or drugs, corruption, other forms of crime and day-to-day violence have become part of Indian life. These are added to by numerous deaths caused due to transport accidents, hazardous work conditions, negligence in health treatment (more so of the poor) or consuming adulterated food products. It would not be exaggeration to state that, in India, people die like insects and go unnoticed. Or, rather, those who survive such a hazardous life are the lucky ones.

If this is true all around, it is more true for cities like Mumbai and Delhi where millions of citizens are huddled like animals in their dingy living places, in commuting transport systems (or rather 'flying-coffins') and in their work places. A visit to a slum-settlement (like Dharavi), travelling in a local train, seeing people working at construction sites or hawkers selling banana or vegetables on roads (under the threat from police or concerned municipal staff), and so on, would amply prove it. In such a living environment, civic sense (or responsibility) loses its meaning. As a citizen, one can not dare challenge a pick-pocket, an eve-teaser, a slum lord or a land-shark. This helplessness is mainly a product of one's psyche and day-to-day reality that he or she may not come out safe by challenging the law-breaker, because the law protector — the police — may not come to one's rescue (and safety). Moreover, Mumbaikars, in last couple of years, have confronted serious cases of violence resulting in hundreds of deaths and wide spread losses to property. The serial bomb-blasts in 1992, aftermath the 'Babri Masjid' demolition, led to over 250 deaths, and wide spread communal violence in the city, again leading to wide spread deaths and property losses. The 'serial bomb blasts' in local trains in 2006 resulted in deaths of over 170 persons. Again, the previous year (Nov. 2008), the heinous terrorist attack in key areas led to at least 174 deaths and large scale damage to property. These, along with day-to-day violence (and crime), have eroded the confidence of people in public institutions in safeguarding their lives and property.

Unfortunately, there are hardly any authentic research studies in India which focus on issues like perception

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of people about their safety and security, or structural – causal factors for growing risks to people's lives and properties. In fact, whatever little is researched (or taught in Indian universities) is mainly based on 'governmental criminology' (Carrington & Russell: 2000:4), with focus on juvenile delinquency, correctional administration, prison reforms, policing, etc. The need is strongly felt of extensive research on structural – causal factors which are becoming criminogenic in the society. Mere focus on law and order and punishment to the crime performer is not going to help. This is totally in contrast with the affluent societies where value of life (and property) remains utmost concern of everybody. Not to say that there is no crime in America or Britain, the fact remains that these countries have achieved a status where human dignity is respected, and therefore, protected. There is also a very rich tradition of research focusing on the above issues.

V. KEY FACTORS FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY

Though there are several factors affecting safety and security of citizens in complex human settlements, like mega cities of Mumbai and Delhi, the key factors could be identified as socio-economic conditions, role of law and order maintaining organizations, citizens' own efforts, and modern electronic/technical means and appliances. These are elaborated here.

(A) SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In the foregoing discussion it has been emphasized that the evolution of City of Mumbai essentially was geared up to create wealth by hook or by crook. This led to creation of

opportunistic culture, with growing criminality in various areas. The business ethics usually by passed the legal boundaries, resulting in evolution of underworld on one hand, and the unholy nexus among businessmen, politicians and their volunteers/brokers, on the other. This was given fillip by swelling population, resulting in the weakening of law and order and making the system vulnerable to the money and muscle power. In the nineties (of previous century), when the growing clout of underworld threatened the very fabric of city life, the police was given free hand by government to kill the criminal dons and their sharp-shooters in police 'encounters'.

Presently, under the 'shining India', Mumbai presents an island of high prosperity and the sea of vast poverty. The growing inequalities and deprivation have pushed a section of the neo-rich and pleasure seeking youths to cross legal boundaries and take to various forms of deviance and crime. The unlawful acts of the 'privileged' are equally taking unmanageable dimensions. Such a situation justifies the observations of proponents of critical school of criminology that 'the criminality is essentially a by-product of the kind of socio-economic conditions which prevail in a society' (Lea, John, 2002).

Given the hap hazard growth of urban areas, without any effective policy for dispersal of economy and therefore large population from a few mega cities, the 'development induced crime' is likely to take serious proportions in these cities, or, rather, they already confront such a situation. The links of criminal gangs of Mumbai or Delhi with

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crime-prone zones like eastern Uttar Pradesh and parts of Bihar provide ample ammunition (both the man-power and the weaponry) for turning crime into an organized business. In fact, in Mumbai, several underworld gangs are 'respectively' addressed as the 'company' – the Dawood Company, Chhota Rajan Company, and so on. The present paradigm of development is creating 'risk societies' (Ulrich Beck, 1992) where the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate, legal and illegal or criminal and non-criminal is getting blurred. Such a situation is bound to expose people to various kinds of risks, including their safety and security.

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(B) THE LAW AND ORDER MAINTAINING ORGANISATIONS

In traditional communities, their members were controlled and regulated by prevailing norms and collective code of conduct. Small communities had advantage of knowing their members' day-to-day behaviour and therefore responsible to scrutiny of their acts. In changing world, such informal means of control of one's behaviour are not practical, and therefore, the need of formal institutional mechanisms to fill the vacuum.

Today, in Mumbai, over 40,000 police personnel are deployed in some 90 police stations for maintaining the law and order. However, this large number of policemen is elusive as a good part of it is deployed for protecting the VIPs and WVIPs, or dealing with large gatherings (festive occasions, protests, rallies, etc.). Ironically, the Mumbai-police carries a dubious distinction. It is one of the most efficient police force in the country and also one of the most corrupt-ones. If it decides – and that happens many

times – it can apprehend a culprit within 24 hours, or solve a criminal case in a short time. This is mainly due to its wide contacts and hobnobbing with criminal elements. Hundreds crores of rupees, as illegal money, are collected by Mumbai police from illegal criminal dens (like 'matka' playing, brothels, illegal businesses, slum lords, liquor and dance bars, and so on). This also includes collection of 'hafta' (weekly bribe) from thousands of hawkers, pick-pockets, criminal dons, transport offenders, and so on. Police officers are reported of getting awards for work appreciation and also suspension and dismissal due to their nexus with the underworld or the (business) scam-masters. The above situation is seen in the context that there is growing criminalization of politics and it is a day light fact that about one-third of the Members of Parliament, in last five years, had criminal records.

Under such a situation, the role of police in Mumbai is seen more as 'punishing' or chasing the culprit than prevention of crime and maintaining safety and security of people. The role of judiciary is also tarnished due to working under such odds and against a corrupt system – with multi-actors from policeman to politicians to clever and influential criminals or greedy and law-violating businessmen. M.N. Singh (op.cit.) reports about several lawyers of civil courts who are on pay-rolls of criminal gangs, with their main task of getting gang members released on bail or nullifying their trials in the courts. Obviously, they have seasoned 'eye-witnesses' who help them in the process. The emerging of builder mafia has further worsened the situation. This neo-rich and law defying actor on the scene has corrupted the political and bureaucratic system to the core. Whether

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it is a slum settlement or a spacious old property (land/house), both are exposed to the greed of this uncontrolled 'developer'. Citizens are really under threat from this real estate vulture that is pervading all mega cities in the country. Given such a difficult and complex task on the part of law and order agencies, it is not very surprising that they can not achieve peace and security for law-abiding citizens, and instead fall prey to pressures from political and money powers.

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(C) THE ROLE OF CITIZENS AND COMMUNITY

Given all these complexities, the role of citizens and their communities becomes utmost relevant in securing peace and safety for themselves. Though the traditional role of communities in regulating behaviour of their members should be most effective, it is no more relevant in mega cities where life has become highly anonymous. People are divided into interest groups, contesting for their life situations in a highly competitive and opportunistic society. There are thousands of migrants to the city who are more a floating population and whose whereabouts are hardly known. Then, people carry all kind of prejudices and sentiments against various ethnic groups.

In such a flux, the role of community based organizations (CBOs) and 'Mohalla Committees' becomes of paramount importance. In fact, the Mumbai police, after the communal violence in the early nineties, organized several such 'Mohalla Committees' for keeping a watch on communal elements and re-storing peace in their areas. Such an effort has brought positive results and it needs to be strengthened. For this, the police have to present itself as a responsible, impartial and effective organization.

Government has to realize the importance of community in achieving safety and security of citizens. Of course, it has to go along with controlling the criminogenic factors in the society.

There are thousands of 'housing societies' in multi-storeyed buildings in the city. They employ private security guards who are mostly supplied by 'private hiring agencies'. There is not much check on the process of recruiting right kind of persons as security guards. Government has tried to put some check and balance on their role but not in a systematic way. Many times, these security guards themselves perform crimes or leak out information about families to un-lawful elements. Many citizens keep on hiring and firing house servants and security guards and, in the process, become vulnerable to their security.

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The recent 'runaway growth' in mega cities, un-leashed by the forces of 'shining India' has resulted in enclave urbanism which has polarized citizens into those living in well-guarded and high class apartments/houses vis-à-vis a majority of those who live in de-humanised conditions in degraded houses and hutments. Thus, safety and security though always a class based phenomenon, is taking new dimensions in so-called world-class cities in the country. The process is bound to create further inequalities and perceived deprivations, with their consequence to urban conflicts.

(D) MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Combating or Enhancing Crime and Violence: Gone are the days when a mere image of the 'man in Khakhi' (the policeman), with a stick in hand, used to bring shivers to

the criminals. Today's criminal (whether the white collar or the hardcore professional) is well-equipped with modern means and appliances (weaponry) and electronic gadgets, and can inflict severe blow to its targets. The recent terror attacks in Mumbai, is a case in point. It is a well-known fact that the underworld of Mumbai is well-equipped with resources, including the modern weaponry, luxury-vehicles, and electronic devices (including the computers). It is reported (Sarkar, 2002, op.cit.) that several crime mafia in the city collect information about illegal business deals and builders' projects through hiring young hands who work on computers. Cyber crime is another emerging field into the process.

Though, recently, there have been efforts in modernizing the police force by equipping them with high-tech devices (including the weaponry) to deal with this new breed of 'smart' criminal or killer, a majority of policemen still follow traditional methods to deal with the crime world. This is totally in contrast with western developed societies where bio-metric tests, equipments like CCTV cameras and such other electronic gadgets have become effective means to combat crime (including terrorism). These devices do not cost so much as compared to the losses to human lives and property in crime-prone cities.

VI. CONCLUSION

It is emphasized, in the present paper, that among the several future shocks that Indian society is going to confront: in the form of staggering population growth; widening inequalities and marginalization of the unprivileged; environmental crisis; issue of minimum food security and hunger, there is emerging another shock for Indians. This

is the growing crime and violence in the society. This may be caused mainly due to individual (or organized) crimes, supported by other forms like insurgencies, terrorism and communal violence. There is a fast decay of human values and dignity in Indian society. Development induced crime is going to be a main challenge, under the present paradigm of economic growth. The unholy nexus between the political power, the money power and the muscle power has unleashed forces of criminality where the law-abiding citizen find themselves alienated and unsecured.

Given such a bleak scenario, it becomes of utmost importance to think (and work) about 'safety and security' of citizens. This is more applicable to a few growth-oriented mega cities and other crime-prone regions in the country where people are vulnerable to various threats to their lives and properties. It is argued that, presently, socio-economic processes are highly criminogenic. These leave limited scope for the law and order maintaining agencies and the citizens to achieve peace and security in the society. The need is of a sustainable development where economic opportunities and dignified life do not remain the sole privilege of a few citizens at the cost of millions deprived ones. Otherwise, the dictum prevails: 'you are lucky if not a victim of wide spread criminality in the society – you go harmed and unnoticed if you fall victim to it'.

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