

A Study: Involvement of women in violent crimes

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Key Words :

Women criminals, Convict, Fingerprint slips, Personal Identification Number (PIN), Violent crimes, Murder, Aggression, irritability, incentive, criminality

Abstract :

The focus of the present paper is to analyse the pattern of crime committed by women with special emphasis on violent crimes. Personal and conviction details of 200 subjects, only those convicted by the court of law, have been studied. No suspects or accused have been taken into consideration in present research. Out of the total records studied 19 females were found to be involved in violent crimes, that is 9.5 percent of the total subjects considered for the study. And those convicted of murder (302 IPC) were 11 in number, that is 5.5 percent of total number of cases studied, which is 57.89 percent of total number of females involved in violent crimes. The women involved in Attempt to Murder (307 IPC) cases were found to be 3 in number, that is 1.5 % of total subjects studied; it is 15.78 % of total number of females involved in violent crimes. The number of subjects involved in cases of Culpable Homicide not amounting to Murder (304 IPC) was 16, which is 8.0 % of total no of cases studied; or 84.21 percent of total number of subjects involved in violent crimes. Maximum number of convicts involved in violent crime was found to be from Tamil Nadu, the total was 59. Punjab stood second with 34 convicts, and third position went to Delhi with 24 women offenders. The increasing incidence of violence by women shows that they have the natural capacity to be as violent as men. The findings of the work may assist the Police, NGOs, Government Departments, Women Organizations and all those involved in the development of policies, programmes or strategies for reform and rehabilitation of female criminals.

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Introduction

It is unfortunate but an established fact that the arena -of crime, which more or less, has the monopoly of males, of late is no more a forbidden zone for the female gender. Today we even have all women terrorist out-fits like "Dukhtaran-e-militat" (DeM), which actively participates in disruptive activities in Jammu and Kashmir (India). The Mumbai police are probing involvement of women as prime suspects in 1993 serial blast cases in which left 50 killed and 154 persons wounded (O'Brien, Allen 2003). Strongest evidence of involvement of women in major crime has been the recent compilation of a list of India's seven most wanted female criminals. An Interpol notice too has been issued against them in 44 countries; extradition or deportation proceedings can begin against them if they are arrested in any of these countries. The most horrific terror attack till date implemented by a woman on Indian Territory was the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in Tamil Nadu, the female terrorist named "Dhanu" was a suicide bomber of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Internationally the Black Widows of Chechnya, as well as female suicide attackers in Turkey and Palestine, are well organized (Shrivastava, Siddarth 2003). Of late, the US Army's Private Lynndie R. England is amongst the six most notorious reservists expected to face court martial for the abuse and humiliation of inmates at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq (Goldenberg, Suzanne 2004). There have recently been reported cases in South Africa of women raping men, often at gunpoint, evidently to revenge the

infliction or transmittance of AIDS by men (Hindustan Times, New Delhi).

Social scientist Penelope Hanke, of Auburn University (USA) reviewed an Alabama prison from 1929-1985; she found the 95% of the crimes committed by the women happened after 1970. Professor Ralph Weisheit, found that women were more stereotypically male in their reasons for murdering, he found that murders by women accounted for 42% of total number of criminal cases in the year 1983. Dr. Freda Adler, Professor of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University studied female criminality in depth; she termed the dramatic social change as "liberation hypothesis". Incentive hypothesis can also be applied while studying female criminality. It is now known fact that men are intrinsically more violent, but women can also be as violent if provided with suitable reward or incentive. A study by Blackburn (1974) found that women criminals have higher level of hostility, tension and psychopathic deviance. Frederikson (1976) studied 170 females with three levels of assault acts and found that high assault group scored higher than the other two groups. But we should be carefully understand that there exist conflicting findings regarding extent of aggression in criminals, and studies conducted in the field are certainly not sufficient to make a firm opinion about women offenders.

Rationale of the Study

In India due to social, cultural and traditional reasons women are to a great extent considered as homemakers, and their involvement in violent crime is seen as a matter of astonishment and

dismay. The area of criminality of women is still not a zone of priority concern, probably because of the fact that their number is very small. But to have deeper and greater insight into the problem of female criminality, intensive study in the field is the need of the hour. All the aspects concerning women including their criminality require a thorough review, so that the over all development becomes a reality.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objective of the present study:

- To understand and highlight the crime pattern amongst women criminals, especially their involvement in violent crimes.
- The Police, NGOs, Women Organizations, Government Agencies and all those involved in the process of development of policies, programme or strategies for reform and rehabilitation of female criminals, may utilize the findings of the study as a handy tool.

Period of study

The study was conducted during March- May 2004 (three months).

Research methodology

1) Techniques of Data Collection:

Following tools were used for collection and analysis of data:

- Review and analysis of relative literature (books, research papers, newspaper articles and reports etc)

- 10-digit fingerprint slips of female convicts filed in the Record Section of the Central Finger Print Bureau (CFPB) of the National Crime Records Bureau, carrying personal and conviction details on the back side provided a source for collection of raw data. The face of the fingerprint slip also contains a unique Personal Identification Number or PIN. These slips should be considered as most authentic source of details of conviction details, as in India these slips are sent to the CFPB, by the courts, Senior Superintendent of Police's office or State Fingerprint Bureau. (CFPB Manual 2001). All these slips are also stored in computer-based system, and can be accessed to, through the unique PIN. Only record slips were taken into account for the research. Records/Search slips of foreign nationals too were eliminated, as the study concentrates on Indian women offenders.
- 200 subjects were randomly selected and studied. In cases where convictions were more than two, only first and the last conviction details were taken into consideration.

2) Operational Definitions:

Women Criminals: A women who has been found guilty of criminal behavior convicted under Indian Penal Codes and sentenced to imprisonment.

- **Convict:** A person found guilty) of crime and serving sentence for its commission.

- **Violent Crimes:** The following IPC crimes, which are reported to Police Authorities, have been grouped as 'Violent Crimes' for the purpose of crime analysis in the study. They are:

- a) **Violent Crimes Affecting Life:** Murder, Attempt to murder, Culpable Homicide not amounting to Murder, Dowry Deaths, and Kidnapping & Abduction
- b) **Violent Crimes Affecting Property:** Dacoity, Preparation & Assembly for Dacoity and Robbery
- c) **Violent Crimes Affecting Public Safety:** Riots and Arson

Note: Violent Crimes Affecting Women i.e. Rape has not been taken into consideration because in India cases of rapes by women on men are negligible or nil. Moreover the study emphasizes on the crimes by women and not the crimes against women.

Tables: IPC (Indian Penal Code) sections for violent crimes

(Investigators Guide 2001)

Table-1: Violent Crime Affecting Life

S.No.	Major Head of Crime	
1.	Murder	302, 303
2.	Attempt to Murder	301, 307
3.	Culpable to Homicide not amounting to Murder	308
4.	Dowry Death	304B
5.	Kidnapping and Abduction	364, 364A, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369

Table-2: Violent Crime Affecting Public Safety

S.No.	Major Head of Crime	
1.	Arson	435, 436, 438 IPC
2.	Riot	143-158 (Except 157 IPC)

Table-3: Violent Crime Affecting Public Property

S.No.	Major Head of Crime	
1.	Dacoity	395-302 IPC

Results

After the analysis of data, which consisted of 200 records of female convicts, interested finding were recorded. Out of the total records studied 19 females were found to be involved in violent crimes, that is 9.5 percent of the total subjects considered for the study. And those convicted of murder (302 IPC) were 11 in number, that is 5.5 percent of total number of cases studied, which is 57.89 percent of total number of females involved in violent crimes. The women involved in Attempt to Murder (307 IPC) cases were found to be 3 in number, that is 1.5 % of total subjects studied, it is 15.78 % of total number of females involved in violent crimes.

The number of subjects involved in cases of Culpable Homicide not amounting to Murder (304 IPC) was 16, which is 8.0 % of total no of cases studied, or 84.21 percent of total number of subjects involved in violent crimes.

Maximum number of convicts involved in violent crime was found to be

from Tamil Nadu, the total was 59. Punjab stood second with 34 convicts, and third position went to Delhi with 24 women offenders.

Table-4: State wise distribution of women convicts

State	Number of Convicts
Andhra Pradesh	3
Delhi	24
Goa	1
Gujarat	8
Himachal Pradesh	2
Haryana	3
Kerala	1
Madhya Pradesh	23
Maharashtra	8
Orissa	3
Punjab	34
Rajasthan	11
Tamil Nadu	59
Uttar Pradesh	10
West Bengal	1

Percentage distribution of Violent IPC crimes during 1998-2000 (irrespective of gender of the offender):

During 2000, the percentage share of the violent crimes reported in India was 13.5 percent of the total IPC crimes reported. Such percentage share of violent crimes during 1998 and 1999 was 14.3 percent and 13.5 percent respectively. Of the total 2,38,381 crimes reported in the year 2000 from different States and Union Territories, 42.7 percent were violent crimes affecting life (1,01,781 cases). The violent crimes affecting property during the period were 12.3 percent (29, 326 cases); and violent crimes affecting public safety were 38.1 percent (90,848 cases). (Crime in India: 2000).

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Table-5: Violent Crimes Reported during 1998-2000 (irrespective of gender)

S.No.	Crime Type	Total % in 1998	Total % in 1999	Total % in 2000
1	Affecting Life	14.3	13.5	13.5
2	Affecting Prop.	40.5	42.3	42.7
3.	Affecting Public Safety	40.6	38.7	38.1

Table-6: Total Number of convicts involved in violent crimes (out of 200 subject studied)

PIN of the Convict	IPC Section
113125	147
113125	302
113142	147
113142	302
113149	147
113149	149
113391	364
113397	307
113398	302
113399	302
113482	302
113587	147
113587	148
113645	364
113645	366
113654	302
113658	307
113659	307
113662	302
113667	302
113782	302
228756	302
261281	302
308983	147

19 (nineteen) subjects were found to have been involved in violent crimes.

Discussion:

The result of the study revealed a lot of interesting findings about women criminality in India. As the study emphasized on involvement of Indian women only in violent IPC crimes, it was astonishing to note that they were treading almost shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts in their pursuit for excellence in the world of crime. The total percentage of women involved in violent crimes was 9.5 percent; it was compared with contemporary statistics on violent IPC crimes in the year 2000, which was 13.5 percent. Findings proved that it is just 4.0 percent less than the total percentage of violent IPC crimes reported in that very year. The total average percentage of reported IPC crimes of three consecutive years (i.e. 1998, 1999, and 2000) was 13.76, which is merely 4.26 percent more than the percentage of violent crimes committed by women offenders in this study. Certainly the outcome of the study is thought provoking and deserves special attention of all those who think in terms of overall development of Indian women.

How do we justify the involvement of this high percentage of women in the violent crimes? Somasundram & Polnaya (1980) and Somasundram & Ponnuduarai (1980) in their twin studies found females delinquents to be significantly more aggressive. But we must clearly understand that there exists conflicting finding regarding the extent of aggression in criminals, and the studies conducted in the field are almost insufficient to make a firm opinion about female offenders. Criminals as compared to non-criminals are generally

characterized as impulsive, emotionally less controlled, hypersensitive, dominant, assertive, maladjusted, asocial, less value oriented and have higher degree of dissonance (Chatterjee, Mukherjee & Chakaraborty, 1980; Kundu and Bhaumik, 1982; Rajmohan & Agarwal, 1981; Rao and Sen, 1979; Sharma, Gunthey & Singh, 1982; Singh, Singh and Srinivasan, 1982; Singh et al., 1985; Somasundram & Ponnudurai, 1980). It has already been observed and proved in a number of studies in the past that maladjustment can lead to criminal behaviour. Higher level of aggression, as it has been revealed (Myers, 1983), increases impulsivity and emotional outbursts.

In a very recent study on achievement motivation and aggression (Singh, Pandey, and Singh, 2003), both male and female criminals obtained highest score on irritability (female person criminals=71.0%, person male criminals=74.55 % respectively). Higher level of irritability generally implies lack of emotional control. Further, there are studies to indicate that these are the preconditions for the development of serious or violent crime (Sharma, Gunthey & Singh, 1982; Singh 1980, 1981; Somasundram & Polnaya, 1980; Somasundram & Ponnudurai, 1980).

In the past too experts have concluded that the increasing incidence of violence by women shows that they have the natural capacity to be as violent as men. Dr. Freda Adler, Professor of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University, who studied female criminality in depth, has termed this dramatic social change as "Liberation Hypothesis". In this reference the 'Incentive Theory' also

holds good, and has proven scientifically that women can be equally violent and aggressive, if provided with incentive.

Professor Ralph Weisheit, Illinois State University, had found in his study that women criminals were more stereotypically male in their reasons for murdering. He found that murders by women accounted for 42 percent of the total number of cases studied in 1983.

The findings of the study may prove to be an eye opener, as they present precise picture of contemporary issue of women criminality, more emphatically matter of violent crimes by Indian women. Certainly there are limitations to this study; I have not been able to collect information on the circumstances under which our women took law in their own hands, whether it was to avoid crime against themselves or due to 'incentives' associated with the commission of crime. Moreover study is based on random analysis involving limited number of subjects, the findings should be treated with caution.

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