INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY
INTRODUCTION

There is hardly any society which is not beset with the problem of crime. It is a grave social problem faced by every society. Crime may be considered as an omission of an act which the law of the land expects the individual to do or commission of an act which it forbids to do. In the legal terms Crime may be defined as 'any form of conduct which is declared to be socially harmful in a state and as such forbidden by law under pain of some punishment' (Bhattacharyya, 1992). In other words crime is an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law committed without defense or justification and sanctioned by the law as violation or misdemeanour.

It is an unpalatable truth that crime is not only a fact of life but a way of life as well, since the bulk of human behaviour described as 'criminal' has been accepted as rationalized by many on grounds of expediency, necessity and compulsion. Hence it is understood that crime is an act forbidden by the law of the land and for which penalty is prescribed. The law of the land varies from place to place.
An act considered criminal in one place may not be the same in another place. It is Barnes and Tecter (1944) who gave a definition for crime in the following words, "crime is a form of antisocial behaviour that has violated public sanction to such an extent as to be forbidden by the statute". So crime is more of a legal term as it is mostly explained in terms of law.

Crime is the major social phenomenon of modern civilized and advanced societies. It is a known fact that the available statistics on crime covers only those arrested and convicted, or the crime known to the police and judiciary and even these figures are not reliable.

It is argued by most of the social scientists that crime is the problem of the youth, since the persons involved in criminal activities mostly belong to the age group of 20 – 30 years. It is observed that there is a rapid rise in the relative frequency of criminal acts through the teen years and a peak is observed at around the age of 20 years.

The topic of women and crime has recently developed into a broad field of research in the field of Social Work, Sociology, Criminology and Law. For centuries, the criminal
behaviour of women has been a neglected area of research. The special problem of the delinquent women were neglected at all times (Smith, 1965), though world-wide statistics on the incidence of crime exhibit a general increase in the rate of female criminality in many countries. It is since the last decade that the social scientists and criminologists have shown an inquisitiveness towards women criminals. Inspite of the strategic position of women in all societies and varying notions regarding their involvement in crime, there are only limited number of empirical research and do not yet have a comprehensive data on this social issue (Shukla and Saxena, 1984; Joseph, 1992; Saxena, 1994).

Though male criminality is still far greater than female criminality (Rani, 1979), the number of criminal offenses committed by females has increased at a much higher rate than the number of crimes committed by males. The rate of crime is steadily increasing day by day in all over the world and India is no exception.

In India it is estimated that the female crime rate has increased by 362.53% for a period from 1971 to 1990; but for male it is only 146.70% (Indian Express, dated 12th November, 1992). Socially the crimes committed by females are
considered to be more serious when compared to the male criminality, because of the pivotal role played by a woman as wife, mother, and caretaker in the family is salient and significant. Hence the female criminality is considered more dysfunctional than male criminality.


One of the early women researchers in India, Raj Kumari Sharma who has done research on women criminality (1963) in Uttar Pradesh. A systematic presentation in book form on 'Female Offenders in India' was done by Ahuja (1969).

In India female criminality is prominent among the young women. It was observed from various studies (Rani, 1982, 1987; Nagla, 1982, 1991; Joseph, 1992; Saxena, 1994) all over the country that the women criminals were in between the age group of 20 to 40 years. They are not mentally and physically matured enough (since their age at marriage is very low) to cope with the role expected of them from their husbands and in-laws. They mostly belong to low social and economic status in the society. Their monthly income is also low.

With regard to the geographical background female crime is reported more from urban areas than rural areas. Illiteracy is reported to be an important factor in female criminality. All these studies show that the criminality of women is on the increase and claims serious consideration. Today women akin to men are taking part in all types of criminal activities involving physical prowess and the use of strong weapons (Rani, 1977). The changing role, shift in occupation and status, the concept of women emancipation, economic independence and political independence open the gate way for women to engage in various activities and hence the exposure to criminal activities is more than in the past.
Nowadays women engage in wide varieties of crimes like Murder, Theft, Adultery, Kidnapping, Blackmailing, Smuggling, Shoplifting, Larceny, Dacoity, Illicit distillation, Drug trafficking and Prostitution. The pattern of crime varies from place to place and time to time. It is noted from the official statistics that women crimes are higher in states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Maharastra, West Bengal Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

Tamil Nadu is the 11th largest state in India and occupies 4 per cent of the country's total area. It ranks fourth in the country in the incidence of crime and is one of the five states which recorded highest number of theft cases during 1981 (Sivamurthy, 1987). All India data on crime indicates that criminality among women was the highest in Tamil Nadu (8,306) followed by other states (Crime in India, 1983 : 70) and hence occupying the first place in women criminals rate.

Considering the world women criminal population, women in India are less criminal at least to the official records. As far as women crime is concerned they are under represented considering their proportion in the total population (Srivastatva, 1984). It was observed from 1971 - 1978 over
eight years, that the female crime has increased by 55.90 per cent as against the male crime which increased only by 41.87 per cent. Considering the increase in crime as per thousand persons, female crime has increased by 50 per cent while the increase in male crime recorded only 30.58 per cent (Singh, 1971). Significant percentage of female criminals come under the heads of kidnapping and abduction, robbery, dacoity, fraudulent offences and offences of miscellaneous type.

The crimes by women are committed either in single or in accomplishment with others. In crimes like illicit distillation, gambling, prostitution and dacoity female seek the help of the men folk to accomplish their 'profession' easier. With regard to murder, mostly the victims are persons known to them already or often their own relatives. In most cases, it is observed that women criminals seek the help of kin members as their 'accomplice' in committing crimes. (Rani, 1982, Nagla, 1991).

It may be said that the female crime is the resultant factors of human needs such as, biological, social, economical and psychological needs, human nature such as her adjustment with husband, family and society and the environment which are accountable for developing the criminal tendency among women.
There are various reasons found to be responsible for the women criminality. These are broadly classified into Social, Economical, Psychological and Biological. Lack of education, competition, conflict, social disorganisation and mobility are the factors classified under social causes. The economic causes include desire for more and quick wealth, extravagance, unemployment, poverty, scarce natural resources, industrialization and urbanization.

Under the psychological causes, emotional instability neurosis and psychosis are listed. Under the biological causes insanity, hormonal changes, defective glandular or nervous system and physical disability are attributed. There are specific reasons like selfishness, disobedience, stupidity, impoliteness, quarrelsome nature, arrogance, narrow mindedness, suspicious nature and illegitimate relations are also found contributing to female crime.

A study conducted in India found the following factors as conflicting areas for female criminals. They are husbands having the habit of drinking, gambling, prostitution and drug addiction, lack of interest in family life, forced marriage, illegal contact of the females, jealousy due to the husbands illegal relationship, low income and excessive expenditure, conflict over sex and conflict over property (Prasad, 1982).
Pre-menstrual period is a stressful period for women. It was observed that 61.6 per cent murders were committed by women during this stressful period (Singh and Singh, 1979). During this period the hormonal changes induce women to engage in criminal activities or during this period women are liable to be detected for this criminal conduct. Pre-menstrual period is accompanied with irritability, lethargy, depression and water retention and these symptoms make women to behave impatient, violent and emotional (Patel, 1974). Pre-menstrual tension was present among 50 per cent of the 95 prisoners (Singh and Singh, 1979).

The crime done by women draws much attention and is seriously looked into than the male crime, because of their pivotal role and the central figure in the family. Their participation in criminal activities leads to continuous deterioration. When a crime is committed by a female it has its repercussions on herself, husband, children, family, relatives, neighbours and on the society at large. For the individual fall of status, social disgrace, stigma and stress; for the husband, his familial role and sexual life; for the children, their social and economical development; for the family its role and function; for the relatives and neighbours their interpersonal relationships and for the
society, its very organisation. The stigma of having been in the prison has much more adverse consequences for women than men (Srivastava, 1984).

Prisons are generally set up to safeguard the safety and foster the rehabilitation of the criminals. With a view to fulfill this twin objectives, certain basic pre-requisites like orientation, classification, education, vocational training, work programmes, health, recreation and counselling are furnished to all the prisoners. Apart from the basic amenities welfare services are also provided in the prison and there is a separate Welfare Officer to look after the services. The welfare programmes comprise of

i) Recording the case histories of prisoners on admission
ii) Identifying their socio-economic problems
iii) Corresponding for settling their property, land, matrimonial and familial disputes and
iv) Arranging recreational and educational programmes.

Women prisoners, as Dhar (1983) opined are no doubt worried about their family, particularly children, yet the foremost thought which exits in their minds at all times is what the future has in store for them. Women prisoners find it difficult to set back into the folds of the family members
after release. Most of them therefore remain perturbed about the dark future clouds and really do not know on whom to bank upon. The prison adjustment of women criminals reflects in abundance the symptom of hopelessness, uncertainty and anxiety, almost all of them think that their fate is sealed (Srivastava, 1984).

Rehabilitation process starts from the prison and ends when a criminal is settled again in the society after release. Rehabilitation is the process in which the criminal must experience, as if attained, more socially acceptable life on return to society. The various programmes like social case work, community link services, educational programmes, vocational training, recreational services and after care services are adopted to rehabilitate women criminals. Among the rehabilitation programmes follow up or after release programmes should be given due emphasis for the successful rehabilitation; since the very motto of rehabilitation programme lies in making such women socially acceptable.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The present study has a significant role to play in controlling the criminal behaviour among women and to find out ways and means to rehabilitate those who have already
entered into the criminal system. At this juncture an evaluation of the functioning of women prisons is also important.

The criminality of women has long been a neglected field of research due to the fact that their number is very small. There is a definite need for more indepth and intensive study on female criminality to acquire greater insight into the problem. For the past two decades the topic of women and crime has begun to draw much attention because of the recent interest in women and their development.

It is also a fact that the concentration of women offenders was highest in the State of Tamil Nadu (Crime in India, 1983 : 70). Female crime rate is growing at a steady pace in Tamil Nadu (Compendium of Crime and Police Statistics of Tamil Nadu, 1988). The Indian look at the women criminals has not yet adequately dealt with and has much to be done in the treatment and rehabilitation. The lack of purposeful and perspective analysis of issues concerning women, crime and the criminal justice system hinders our way in understanding, treating and rehabilitating the women criminals. The fact of our low key interest in the subject may be attributed to the pervasiveness of the belief that the problem of the women
criminality has not yet assumed any alarming dimension warranting focused attention, action or research (Srivastava, 1984). Hardly very few empirical studies are available on Social Work perspectives.

From Social Work perspective, understanding of female offender is vital for designing of policies and programmes related to them. Added to this, the thought and knowledge towards women criminals were also meagre. Hence an attempt is made to conduct an elaborate empirical study on Social Work perspectives on women criminals with special emphasis to family of orientation, family of procreation, details about husband, measuring of consequences on individual, children, family and society at large, prison facilities available, future plan after release and suggestion for rehabilitation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the present study.

1. To understand the socio economic background of female criminals

2. To know the particulars regarding family of orientation.
3. To trace the details of family of procreation

4. To know the cause, nature and pattern of crime among women

5. To measure the consequences of female criminality on individual, children, family and society at large

6. To assess the facilities provided in prison and the impact on prison life

7. To study the future plan of the respondents and perceived acceptance of family and society and to suggest suitable preventive and rehabilitative programmes.

METHODOLOGY

The study on 'Women Criminals in Tamil Nadu' is of explorative in nature. It explores the socio-economic conditions, nature and pattern of crime, causes and consequences on individual, children, family and society, particulars of family of orientation and procreation, details of husband, facilities available in prison and their future plans after release.
There are two prisons exclusively meant for women and managed by women in Tamil Nadu. One is situated in Vellore in North Arcot Ambedkar District and the other in Madurai, Madurai District. The Special prison for women in Vellore was started on 15th April 1930. Since then it was administered by the Superintendent, Central Prisons, Vellore (meant for males) up to 1965. After that a separate lady Superintendent has been appointed. The authorised accommodation of this prison is 412. The convicted prisoners from various districts like Madras, Chengelpattu, North Arcot Ambedkar, Tiruvannamalai Sambuvarayar, Dharmapurai, Salem, Erode Periyar, Coimbatore, and The Nilgiris are housed here.

Recreational facilities and cultural programmes are organised to enlighten the prisoners. It has a hospital with a strength of 20 beds and one civil Assistant Surgeon has been appointed to look after the health needs of the inmates. Adult education, creche, children education are the other extended facilities to the inmates and their children who are living along with the prisoners. A separate unit to manufacture cotton tapes and twisted thread which fetch
earning to the inmates. The prison personnel includes a Lady Superintendent, a Lady Welfare Officer, a Lady Matron, a Lady Civil Assistant Surgeon and other clerical and security staffs.

The women prison in Madurai was bifurcated from Vellore Women Prison on 1st July 1987. It has the capacity to accommodate 200 prisoners. The convicted prisoners from various Districts like Trichy, Dindigul Anna, Madurai, Kamarajar (Virudunagar), Ramnad, Sivagangai, Trinelveli and Kanyakumari are housed in this prison. It has no hospital facility of its own. A separate Medical Officer has been appointed to look after the health needs of the prisoners.

There is no vocational training or work in the prison available at present. One Lady Dy. Superintendent, a Lady Matron, a Lady Medical Officer and other necessary clerical staff and security staff have been appointed to administer the prison.

Inmates in both these prison constitute the 'Universe'. From the statistical data obtained from the Prison Department, Tamil Nadu, it is observed that both convicted and undertrial prisoners are housed in these prisons.
The 'Convicts' are those who are awarded imprisonment by the court of law for their criminal conduct and undergoing imprisonment during the time of study in the women prisons. The 'Undertrial prisoners' are those who are housed in such prisons and for them the trial is pending before the court of law.

SAMPLING FRAME

There is a fluctuation in the number of prisoners housed in these prisons. Before selecting samples average number of inmates per day was calculated taking into account the records of 30 days. For the purpose of calculation records from Vellore and Madurai prisons were separately treated. In each place convicts and the undertrial prisoners formed sub-units. From the data it is observed that the average number of convicts in Vellore is 39 and it ranged from 35 to 43; and in Madurai the average is 58 and it ranged from 51 to 68. Hence all the convicted prisoners housed in the prisons during the study period were selected for detailed study. Thus a sample of 94 Convicted criminals was obtained.

In the case of Undertrial prisoners the average worked out to 42 and 20 for Vellore and Madurai prisons respectively.
The actual ranged from 20 to 47 in Vellore and from 17 to 39 in Madurai prison. In keeping with the time and resource constraint it was decided to select 50 per cent of the Undertrial prisoners from the average.

In Vellore prison, in one particular day the Undertrial prisoner's record was obtained from the prison and listed. Then all the odd numbers were picked up and the interview was conducted. Since it was possible to interview only two or three respondents a day some of those who were listed as samples left the prison and the new pool of undertrial prisoners came in. Then the new undertrial prisoners were listed and the odd numbers were picked up. By this way 21 undertrial prisoners were interviewed in Vellore prison.

The same procedure was followed in Madurai prison to select Undertrial prisoners. The list was prepared and all the even numbers were picked up. There were 10 respondents and all of them were interviewed. Thus the sample contained 94 convicted criminals (38 + 56) and 31 Undertrial prisoners (21 + 10). They were interviewed in detail.
Table Number 1.1

REPRESENTATION OF SAMPLE IN BOTH WOMEN PRISONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Inmates</th>
<th>Vellore Prison</th>
<th>Madurai Prison</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convicts</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertrials</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

A structured Interview Schedule was constructed to collect data from women criminals. It consists of Personal profile, Particulars of family of orientation, Particulars of family of procreation, School history, Parental treatment, Residential description, Childhood criminal behaviour, Details of husband, Employment details of the respondent, Enquiry for murderers, Enquiry for non-murderers, Particulars of juvenile and adult crime record, Causes, Consequences on individual, children, family and society with a five point scale, Prison life, Satisfaction level of prison facilities available with a five point scale, Suggestions by the respondents to improve prison life and Future plan after release.
PERIOD OF STUDY

The study was conducted during September 1992 to March 1993 in Vellore and Madurai women prisons in Tamil Nadu. Data were personally collected by the researcher using interview schedule. It took 4 to 5 hours to complete one schedule. The data were collected during the months of September 1992 to March 1993. Personal observation, discussion with the prison personnel and police officials and criminal records in the prison also form the part of data collection.

TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION

The following two techniques were used for data collection. They are Personal observation and Interview. Through observation method various informations were collected while being present in the prison. Number of visits paid to the prison enabled the researcher to understand the prison and its function. During the course of the interview close observation was possible to gather informations regarding behaviour of the inmates, their interpersonal relationships with the staff and other inmates, etc. During the administration of the interview schedule the researcher opted more for an informal interview rather than a formal interview. It was more or less like a discussion.
rather than questioning them. This technique was very much helpful to establish a rapport with them which enhanced the purpose much easier. The respondents were very well participated in the discussion and revealed informations freely without any hesitation though the researcher was a male.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Women criminals

A woman who has been found guilty of criminal behaviour convicted under Indian Penal Code and sentenced to imprisonment. The undertrial prisoners were also considered as prisoners for the purpose of the study.

Crime involving Murder and Non murder

Under the murder type crimes like murder, dowry murder, attempted murder, attempted suicide are classified. The non-murder type consists of crimes like theft, kidnapping, smuggling, quarrelling, crimes relating to drug, illicit distillation and prostitution.

Crime relating to Victim and No victim

Under the crime involving victim, crimes like murder, activities like attempt to murder, hurt, kidnapping and quarrelling are included. Crimes like theft, smuggling, drug
trafficking, illicit distillation and prostitution are listed under crimes not involving victim type.

Crimes relating to Person, Property and Morality

Under the crime against person crimes relating to murder, kidnapping and quarreling are included. The crime against property & other crimes includes theft, smuggling gold, smuggling sandal wood, illicit distillation, drug related crimes and borrowing stolen property (henceforth called as crime against property). Under the crime against morality, prostitution is included.

Long term prisoners and Short term prisoners

Long term prisoners are those who are punished for a period of 10 years or more and the short term prisoners are those whose terms of imprisonment is less than 10 years. The undertrials are considered as prisoners for the purpose of the study.

Convicts and Undertrials

Convicts are those who are legally identified as criminals and undergoing punishment during the study period in the women prisons of Tamil Nadu. The undertrials are those who are housed in such prisons and for them the trial is pending before the court of law.
CHAPTERIZATION

The present study has been chapterised into nine.

The first chapter deals with Introduction and Methodology. In the Introductory part, the scope and importance of the study and objectives of the study are dealt with. The Methodology consists of research design, universe and sampling frame, tools of data collection, techniques of data collection, period of study and description about Vellore and Madurai women prison where the samples were taken.

In the second chapter the review of literature pertaining to women criminals are discussed and due emphasis is given to nature and pattern of crime, causes and consequences, trends in crime rate, prison life, welfare services provided, rehabilitation programmes and various studies conducted in India and abroad are presented with statistical data.

Personal profile of the women criminals such as age, education, marital status occupation, income, caste, religion and domicile are analysed in details and compared with nature of crime committed for further understanding in the third chapter.
The fourth chapter deals with the details of family of orientation comprising of the family background, the household income, educational level of the family, parental treatment and residential description.

Fifth chapter explores the details regarding family of procreation such as household income, educational level of the family, size of the family, marriage particulars of the respondents and husbands, and illtreatment, if any, faced by the respondent.

Childhood criminal behaviour, nature and pattern of crime, causes, details regarding murderer and non murderer, age at crime done, distribution of the study sample in various districts of Tamil Nadu and arrest particulars are analysed in the sixth chapter.

In the seventh chapter the consequences felt and/or experienced by the respondents due to the criminal act on individual, family, children and society were measured and analysed.

Chapter eight deals with the prison life in general, welfare facilities provided in the prison and respondents satisfaction level towards it, impact of prison life and
rehabilitation programmes, future plan and the perceived problems they would face after release.

The summary, conclusion and suggestions made are presented in the ninth chapter.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study attempts to find out the soci-economic background of the females who have been imprisoned in Tamil Nadu women prisons during the course of the study. Both convicts and undertrials were considered as respondents in the present study. This is purely a socio-eco-cultural approach to understand the problem of female crime in social work perspective.

At geographical level the study is confined to Tamil Nadu state. In the present study no attempt has been made to test any hypothesis or validity of any criminological theories.