CRIMINALITY AMONGST WOMEN: A SOCIO-LEGAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PUNJAB STATE

Abstract submitted

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ABSTRACT

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Crime and criminal both have become the focus of attention in the present society. Crime is increasing at rapid rate. In India, crime has been considered a male behaviour. But today the former notion is proved wrong. Women, like men, suffer from tensions, frustration, jealousy, enmity and hatred, which motivate them to criminality. They indulge in all sorts of crimes. The changing social norms and values as well as the impact of other cultural patterns culminating in the complexity of life are largely responsible for this change.

Today, the position of women has changed more drastically than in any previous period of civilization. The concept of women’s emancipation has opened the doors to free life for women, but at the same time this attainment brought its own evils. Criminality amongst women is indeed a more serious when compared with male criminality since the role played by a woman as mother, wife, caretaker and more to say a central figure in the family. Her role is very crucial and significant and hence women criminality is considered to be more dysfunctional.

The topic of women and crime has recently developed into broad field of research in the field of social work, sociology, criminology and law. For centuries, criminal behavior of women has been a neglected area of research. The history of mankind reveals that the woman has been the foundation stone of the family in particular and society in general. Since the dawn of civilization, women have been seen as preservers of social norms, traditions, customs, morality and family cohesiveness. Woman has been given a position of pride in every religion. My immediate concern is why the woman, who is considered to be foundation stone of family and every spiritual faith, without whose blessings the work of infusing new life into humanity cannot be accomplished, has gone astray, making her mark on the crime scene and this is what has encouraged me to research on the topic women’s involvement in criminality in social, cultural, economic and political milieu of India.

Woman criminals involving in crime like dacoity, robbery, theft, kidnapping, abduction, pick-pocketing, chain or watch snatching, cheating, counterfeiting and drug trafficking are nowadays operating with crime syndicates in bigger cities. Women who have
such kind of criminal behavior also has tendency to misuse the laws which are made for their protection.

The criminality amongst women is steadily increasing day by day all over the world India being no exception. Our mental picture of the criminal is that of a male violator of the law, and criminological research seems to have been largely under the spell of this cultural stereotype. The lack of scientific attention to the problems presented by women offenders is probably due to the ever recurrent observation that considerably smaller numbers of women come into contact with the law-enforcing agencies than do men. Women, however, represent about half of our population and live under conditions which may often protect them against the detection or prosecution of crime. These conditions suggest that female criminality deserves more research interest than it has received, no matter how small its numerical importance may appear on the basis of criminal statistics taken at their face value.

The present Research has focused on experiences of women in the whole justice system. Gender though a fundamental, is largely an ignored issue in the field of criminal justice system. The main reason for this neglect is a small number of women criminals in comparison to the number of men. Further women offenders are different to men, having different pathways to crime, different life circumstances and different rehabilitative and rehabilitative needs of women, they are no more victims of crime but themselves become law violators.

The study was conducted in State of Punjab by making a survey. For that purpose a questionnaire has been prepared. And it has been filled by legal fraternity, judicial officers and General public. Through which view has been taken from all the concerned persons regarding increasing trend of women criminality, its causes, and impact and victims etc. other different aspects relating to women criminality has also been taken. How the legal protection given to the women by law has been misused by them and what judicial officers have special views on this legal terrorism.

Researcher has also visited four jails in Punjab where I got to know that 711 women inmates are there in jails including convicted and under-trial. Findings indicate that most of the inmates are married and majority of them were in Amritsar Central Jail. These women were either widow, divorced or separated. Both married and widows, divorced or separated women had children. Maximum number of inmates had more than three children. Children
were of both the sexes and ranged in the different age groups. 15 children of less than 6 years of age were accompanying their mothers and grandmothers in the prison. There were 41 children who were on their own. They did not get any help from their relatives or friends. These children were staying alone either because their mothers had been imprisoned for the homicide of their father or both the parents were imprisoned for homicide on account of land disputes. In many cases the younger sibling was taking care of the elder one’s. Lack of economic resources forced many of these children to follow the path of crime.