

Juvenile Delinquency in Uttarakhand Part I: The Victim of Situational Crime

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ABSTRACT While interviewing the inmates of an observation home, an Uttaranchali poverty stricken, adolescent girl aged 12 was found to be the victim of situational crime. The girl belonged to very poor family. The miserable economic condition of the innocent girl forced her to leave school and work as a maid. After working continuously for six months when her land lady refused to pay her dues she momentarily lost control and blindly hit her which put the girl behind bars.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of juvenile delinquency is spread all over the world. The main causes in different parts of the world are different (Theodore 1966; Ruthshonle 1970; Shafer and Knudten 1970; Ragoli and Hewitt 2006). It has been recorded to vary from under-developed countries to developed countries. However, most of the sociologists regard poverty as one of the dominant causes of crime. Poverty, unemployed father and employed mother have often been held accountable for female delinquency, (Ruthshonle 1970) poverty, cannot cause crime but resentment of poverty can and curiously enough, resentment of poverty is more likely to develop among the relatively deprived of a rich society than among the objectively deprived in poor society (Ragoli and Hewitt 2006).

Many studies have been made of the relation between crime and poverty on economic conditions (Sutherland and Cressy 1955; Theodore 1966). These studies have been directed at two principal questions. Do people of lower economic status commit more crime than people of higher economic status? And do crime rates increase when poverty increases in periods of economic depression (Sellin 1937) Studies of economic

status of criminals have indicated that lower economic classes has much higher crime rates than upper economic classes (Sellin 1937; Franz and Status 1956; Theodore 1966). Sociologists have given different names to different types of crimes (Sellin 1937; Franz and Status 1956). Radhika an innocent girl belonging to a remote village in Uttarakhand state fell victim of situational crime under accidental criminality as has been discussed in this paper.

CASE STUDY

Radhika's (name changed) father Madan Lal (name changed) was a resident of a remote village in Uttarakhand in India. He did not have sufficient land to cater the needs of his family of seven siblings. Keeping in mind the future of his kids and other family responsibilities he decided to move to the nearby town Haldwani the main business centre of the region. There he got work in a farm and a small hut to live in. Later he shifted all his family members to Haldwani. When his family was small he was able to manage at least food and other essential requirements. Later as the family grew he began to face financial problems. To overcome this situation he had to work very hard but slowly his working capacity reduced and he often began to fall ill. His wife managed to take him to the near by hospital where the Doctor advised him for X-Ray check up, nutritious diet and to take rest. It was not at all possible for him to follow either of the Doctor's advice because of his miserable financial

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condition. He had no alternative but to work day and night whether it was scorching sun or chilling cold. Resulting which he fell into the grips of tuberculosis. After some time Madan Lal was serious and his wife admitted him in the hospital and started to work in the farm. It was very hard time for his wife as to how to look after him in the hospital and to work in the farm for the landlord. Without the breadwinner the family was in trouble. She sent her three children to the nearby school. It was not for the schooling of his kids but the school provided free mid-day meals. The free mid-day means was for whole of the day for them. Later keeping in mind the growing responsibilities and family expenditure. Madan Lal's wife withdrew his elder daughter Radhika from school and managed work for her as a maid. A widow working lady hired her for Rs. 600/- pm for domestic work as well as to look after her two kids while she was at work. It was a great relief for the family.

In the first two months Radhika got her wages in time which she immediately sent home. Thereafter, the payment was delayed month by month continuously for six months. She was worried about her father's health who was bed-ridden and also family's miserable financial condition. The other month when she claimed for her wages the land lady rudely replied for her to leave work if she didn't have the patience to wait. It was a limit for Radhika's patience. She momentarily lost control over her temper and blindly hit the lady with the pressure cooker she was cleaning. The lady fell backwards, seriously injured and became unconscious. Radhika ran out of the home but the kids she was looking after complained to the neighbour who called police. Radhika became the victim of situational crime which put her behind bars. It was a big jolt for Madan Lal's family. He felt it impossible to bail her out for the lack of money. Keeping her age in mind she was sent to an observation home.

Radhika was deeply depressed and not willing to talk when interviewed. But when she was assured of confidentiality (for not disclosing her and her family's identity) and all possible help she burst out and revealed the truth. Her juvenile offence (Franz and Status 1956; Sutherland and Cressey 1955; Zigler et al. 1992) very well resembled as characterized by Ruthshonle Cavan in "Offences primarily injurious to others" in his book "*Development and Treatment Control*". wherein he described the first category as

"Adolescent and youth tend to make use of brute physical force or use of weapons readily obtained or which can be made from material at hand, the home-made gun the sharpened cane, the knife ordered through a mail order catalogue". Second category "*The younger the offender the less he plans*" (Ruthshonle 1962). The readily available weapon with Radhika was the pressure cooker she was cleaning but she never had the plan to hit the land lady. Radhika fell into the category of a situational criminality as discussed by Sutherland and Cressey in the book "*Principles of Criminology*" (Sutherland and Cressey 1955). "*The situational criminal momentarily behaves criminally when provoked with an intense cries, is also provoked by external events, even though the actual nature of the reaction again depends upon the state of his ego and unconsciousness. The principal difference, therefore, between the chronic and the accidental criminal seems to be that in the first form the trigger to the criminal behaviour is intra psychic whereas in the latter original stimulus arises in the environment.*" The momentary environment provoked Radhika's anger which changed not only her fate but also her family. The family background of Radhika exactly matched as discussed by Ruthshonle Cavan in "Poverty and Unemployed parents" (Ruthshonle 1967) in his book "*Juvenile Delinquency*" where he has made delinquency accountable because of "Poverty, unemployed father and employed mothers have been held accountable for female delinquency".

CONCLUSIONS

It is very difficult whom to blame for Radhika become a juvenile delinquent. Her father, who could not shoulder his family responsibilities, circumstances, Radhika herself or her mother of crime, poverty.

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