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SHORT COMMUNICATION

## Assessment of the current status and future directions in Criminology

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### ABSTRACT

The social sciences in the recent past have become quite specialized in terms of the problems and responses covered in their purview. The origin of Criminology as specialized branch of learning was a part of similar process. Early Criminology better known as classical criminology emerged as part of protest against the prejudiced and discriminating legal practices that were prevalent in the contemporary society of the early eighteenth century. The leaders of criminal justice reforms were Baccaria and Bentham who demanded the reforms in the law and procedure. Afterwards Criminology has grown to be an advanced field of learning and practice. Emphasis in Criminology, in the interpretation of crime and criminality, has been changing over a period of time. The schools of thoughts in Criminology have been moving from classical to physiological, environmental to psychological and sociological to interactionist approaches and so on. Criminology has been defined as the study of crime, the causes of crime (etiology), the meaning of crime in terms of law, and community reaction to crime. Not too long ago, criminology separated from its mother discipline, sociology, and although there are some historical continuities, it has since developed habits and methods of thinking about crime and criminal behavior that are uniquely its own. Criminology is hence perceived as a most inclusive concept. Criminology involves the inputs from all basic disciplines in social and behavioural sciences in explaining the problem of and response to crime (Jatar, 1979).

**Keywords:** assessment, current status, future directions, criminology

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The UNESCO Report in 1957 on teaching of Criminology provided required impetus to introduce this subject worldwide. This Report advocated the need of Criminology in reducing crime and develop theoretical understanding about crime not merely as judicial abstraction but as human act, a natural and social fact. The Canadian Committee Report (1956) is also considered a major initiative that endorsed the need to develop a professional understanding and practice in controlling crime. Many international fora, time and again, have been recommending the introduction of Criminology in the teaching framework of universities. Particularly, the International Penitentiary Congress (1890, 1925), International Congress on Penal Law, First International Congress on Criminology have stressed the need for developing Criminology as teaching discipline. Resultantly, Criminology as subject was started in various leading universities of the world. The researches in Criminology in these countries have been greatly utilized for policy purposes. Drastic changes have been planned on the basis of applied researches carried out in these countries.

## **2. INDIAN CONTEXT**

The University of Saugar became the first University in the country to have established the very first full-fledged Department of Criminology and Forensic Science in the year 1959. The University now boasts to have enrolled the highest number of students at any level. The Department of Criminology and Forensic Science has produced the highest number of doctoral students in the country. It comes to nearly one hundred. The founders of this Department had a definite vision for Criminology. The initial idea of setting up this Department came from K F Rustamji, the then IGP of Madhya Pradesh and very well known intellectual on police matters. It was entirely due to the initiative and foresight of Sh. D. P. Mishra, the then Vice Chancellor of the University that the University of Saugar became the pioneer in the teaching of Criminology in this country. The legal luminary of the stature of Sh. G. P. Bhutt (former Chief Justice, MP) took over in the Department as the first Professor and Head of Criminology in the country.

He is credited to have set the tone of beginning of Criminology in the country (Bhutt, 1963). Having assumed the Vice Chancellorship of this University by G P Bhutt, Dr D P Jatar took over as the Head of the Department. Under his dynamic leadership spanning over four decades, the Department reached to its pinnacle. The cult of Criminology has been since nurtured and maintained by a galaxy of criminologists like Late Prof. S. S. Srivastava, Prof. M. Z. Khan and Prof. S. C. Tewari who have been associated with this Department for a long time as Faculty members. Number of Criminologists from this Department have worked and have working in all major criminological foundations in the country and abroad.

Though in a limited form, the teaching of Criminology had started in the late 30's. The teaching of Criminology started in 1940 at the Jail Officers Training School at Lucknow and thereafter many institutes/universities like Christian College, Indore (1950), Madras School of Social Work (1952, 1962) Tata Institute of Social Sciences Bombay (1954), Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur (1956), Institute of Social Sciences, Agra (1957), University of Saugar, Saugar (1959), Kashi Vidya Peeth, (started in 1963 and discontinued now), Madras University, Chennai (1965), Karnataka University, Dharwad, (1970), Mysore University (college level)

and so on have introduced the teaching of Criminology at various levels. Later, University of Lucknow, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi and Bundelkhand University, Jhansi (2002), M S University, Thirunelveli (2003) and the National Institute of Criminology and Forensic science, Delhi in affiliation to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi (2004) have introduced post graduate level teaching in Criminology and Forensic Science. Amity, a private University in New Delhi, is also reported to have started teaching in criminology and Forensic science. The details are, however, not known. Besides these institutions, teaching of Criminology, at a very limited level (in the form of a special paper), was also being conducted in various departments of Law/Psychology/Sociology/Social Work/Anthropology etc. in many universities. Thus scenario remains that only eight Universities/deemed Universities/Institutes of the country have post graduate teaching in Criminology. However, there are only seven Universities/ deemed Universities/Institutes which have independent departments of Criminology. These are Dr. Hari Singh Gour University, Sagar, MP, University of Karnataka, Dharwad, University of Madras, Chennai, and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (deemed University), Bundel Khand University, Jhansi, M S University, Thirunelveli and National Institute of criminology and Forensic science, Delhi. In the remaining Universities the courses are being organized by the departments of sociology, social work and the like. Going little further, the teaching courses at University of Lucknow, Bundel Khand University and Banaras Hindu University are of self-financing in nature. These courses are mostly conducted by the part time faculty or faculty hired from parallel disciplines.

### **3. THERE ARE FIVE LEVELS OF TEACHING IN CRIMINOLOGY IN INDIA**

- Independent departments of criminology: They are - Department of Criminology and Correctional Administration, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai (1954); Department of Criminology, University of Madras, Chennai (1965) Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, M S University, Thirunelveli (2003). There is another category where the postgraduate courses in Criminology are conducted by other social sciences departments. The Department of Sociology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi and Department of Social Work, University of Lucknow are such departments.
- Joint departments of criminology and Forensic Science: Department of Criminology and Forensic Science, Dr Harising Gour University (formerly University of Saugar), Department of Criminology and Forensic Science, Karnataka University, Dharwad, Institute of Forensic Science and Criminology, Bundel khand University and the National Institute of criminology and Forensic Science, Delhi
- Diploma Courses: Faculty of Law, University of Luknow, Jaipur Law College, University of Rajasthan have these courses. More recently departments of law in Utkal University, Manipur University, Aligarh Muslim University, Panjab University, Chandigarh, Panjabi University, Patiala, University of Jammu, Guru Ghasidas University, Bilaspur, Jai Narayan Vyas University, Jodhpur have introduced diploma courses in Criminology.
- Criminology as special paper: The post graduate departments of sociology, social work, psychology, law and National Law Universities in the country also have the subject of Criminology as a paper in the curriculum.

- Distance education courses: There are correspondence courses in Criminology. The Department of Criminology and Forensic Science, Dr Harising Gour University (formerly University of Saugar) conducts a Post Graduate Diploma in Criminology and Police Administration. The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice Administration, M S University also has a correspondence course in criminology and police science.

#### **4. CRIMINOLOGY IN TRAINING INSTITUTIONS**

There are specific training institutions where criminology forms a part of the training programmes for the functionaries of criminal justice administration. They include: National Institute of Criminology and Forensic Science, New Delhi, National Institute of Social Defence, New Delhi, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, SVP National Police Academy, Hyderabad, State police academies, training colleges and schools, jail training schools and regional correctional institutes also have a fairly wide coverage of criminology.

#### **5. TEACHING, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

Some discernible features in this regard can be summarized as below:

- 1) The extent of criminologists with basic orientation in terms of degree and affiliation in criminology is extremely low. A good amount of researches in criminological issues are conducted by sociologists, psychologists and legal scholars. This position has been both facilitating and impeding for the growth of this subject. On the one hand, the process resulted in making this subject a dynamic discipline with an interdisciplinary orientation and, on the other hand, criminology suffered in creating its own identity as independent and mainstream discipline, as happened in the west. The researches conducted by the scholars of the parallel subjects have invariably failed to connect their research with prevailing criminological theories and concepts. Resultantly, they did not contribute to the theories in the subject. Besides, these scholars hardly have any direct academic commitment to criminology as they have been vacillating conveniently between criminology and their parent discipline.
- 2) Researchers did not have much financial encouragement for research in criminology. Later, UGC and ICSSR have, however, started financing doctoral works/ research projects in this area.
- 3) Until the advent of Indian Society of Criminology in 1970 and Indian Society of Victimology in 1994, there were almost no national fora in this area. Recently (2003), a forum as RC 18 on 'Sociology of Crime and Deviance' has been constituted under the auspices of the Indian Sociological Society.
4. Researchers in criminology had considerable discouragement due to difficult and daunting data collection conditions involving contacting of criminals, prisoners, visiting jails, police and other problem areas and persons.

## **6. TRENDS**

- 1) Teaching of criminology at degree and post degree level is not extensively available as there are only a very few institutions providing teaching, research or practices in criminology. The situation has resulted in many untoward outcomes. For instance, the academic openings and a broad network of academicians in criminology could not grow in India.
- 2) Criminology in India has not been able to foster a clear cut beneficiary base. Linkages between practice and profession in criminology are obscure and unexplored.
- 3) On account of being mainly associated with their parent disciplines, the researchers who made commendable contributions to criminology remained indifferent to the development of criminology in India.
- 4) The basic researches in criminology India leading to the development of theories explaining the major problems of criminality in this country have been almost non-existent. Nor do the criminologists, in most cases, have been able to prescribe policies and programmes oriented research findings.
- 5) Criminology in India also lacked international focus and recognition.
- 6) Combined together, criminology is largely perceived as discipline with restricted avenues and limited vertical mobility in career advancement in India.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

Futuristic Vision Research priorities in academic discipline are relative and time specific. These need to be seen at two levels: one, at the international level to understand the trends and emphasis in research. This is significant from the standpoint of academic growth of the subject in the international context. Second, the discipline ought to address the problems of contemporary nature with possible contribution in policy and planning. Going by this, it would be logical to suggest that the research priorities in criminology must be guided by the gaps in research suggested in the preceding section. Following areas are worth considering as priorities in criminological researches.

- 1) Basic research contributing to indigenous understanding of major forms criminality.
- 2) Evolving data base and information based on non government sources.
- 3) Areas like victims of kidnapping, terrorism, organized crimes involving secondary victimization, restitution, restorative justice, system as victim, political criminology unraveling nexuses, vulnerability of political processes for criminalization, radical criminology, action criminology, pragmatic criminology, social tolerance of deviance, decriminalization, economics of crime and justice, impact of imprisonment, forensic psychology, Environmental criminology including crime profiling, GIS applications and crime mapping, situational crime prevention, alternatives to imprisonment, community sentence, continuum of criminal justice process, fear of crime, victimization survey, risk of victimization are in need of systematic research attention and form priorities in research in criminology in the times ahead.
- 4) Need is also to make the criminological literature produced in India available on the Internet.

- 5) A look at the performance of criminology and concerned institutions abroad (viz., U.S., UK, Australia) can provide the needed insight in developing this subject in India as a vibrant discipline with amazing potential.
- 6) To grow and sustain, teaching and research in criminology need to be made widely available like any other social science subject.

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