

REHABILITATION OF WOMEN PRISONERS

Crime itself is not a disease though it may due to disease. This is perfectly true in respect of women in conflict with law. Tamil Nadu is one of the few states where women inmates are housed in separate prison exclusively built for women keeping in view their special requirement. The prison establishment is also supervised fully by women prison officials. The total strength of women inmates' population in the country is 14,657 and the average in Tamil Nadu is about 1000 which is about 6% of total prison population in the State.

There are several issues relating to women inmates. They can be categorized as (i) Admission (ii) Classification (iii) Reformation Programme (iv) Vocational Training (v) Health and Hygiene (vi) Psychological emotional issues (vii) Visitors and emergency leave (viii) Rehabilitation on release (ix) Resocialisation and acceptance. Women prisoners on admission are in a mentally disturbed condition. A study has revealed that nearly 60% of inmates suffer from various issues of mental health like psychosis, major depressions and personality disorder.

Women inmates undergo intensive emotional stress due to separation from their families. Study of the age profile of the inmates in Tamil Nadu prisons reveals that of the total 1000 inmates about 200 are in the age group of 20 to 30 years, which is the child bearing age for women. Almost 350 inmates are in the age group of 30 to 40 years where they have young growing children who are deprived of emotional support of the mother.

In a land mark judgment in Upadhyay Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh gender specific issues of women have been dealt in detail and minimum standards have been laid for care of mother and child. In pursuance of this, woman inmates are allowed to keep their children up to six years of age. Pregnant women in prisons have to be given proper Pre natal and Post-natal care. Children born during incarceration shall be registered in local birth Registration office to avoid stigma of child birth in prison.

Women undergo enormous emotional stress due to separation from the family. A survey has revealed that women inmates have a fatalistic attitude towards their imprisonment which they feel that they suffer as they have not obeyed the advice of elders. They blame their husbands or male companions who have forced them to criminal life. They are concerned about their children's future and are on guilt trip that they are not able to take care of their children. They fear that their children may succumb to wayward habits leading to inter generational crime. However in the case of male inmates they blame their parents for the plight.

Incarceration of women leads to the problem of intergenerational crime due to lack of parental control. Most of the inmates are from the poor strata of society and are subject to personality and physical abuse right from their childhood. Once they give birth to children their husbands begin to neglect them and look elsewhere for their sexual needs. This adds to neglect, feeling of loneliness, insecurity and emotional trauma. When they are incarcerated the trauma only gets aggravated.

The social stigma attached to a woman prisoner is much worse compared to male. Visit by families is also few and far

between. They are rarely consulted on important family decisions. Children are mostly neglected or in some instances taken care of by blood relatives who are reluctant to meet them due to societal stigma.

Analysis of crime profile of women prisoners in Tamil Nadu Prisons reveals that of the 172 convicted inmates 127 are involved in murder cases which is mostly crime of passion and not pre meditated. Of the 800 inmates who are under trials, nearly 50% are involved in illicit liquor and drug offences. In the dowry cases women in the age group of 50 and above are concerned. In dowry related cases it is always their son who through his mother instigates demand of dowry and the parents willy nilly get into the vortex of this social malaise.

Rehabilitation and social integration are two other crucial imperatives which should receive focused attention of correctional administration and also the civil society. It has to be ensured that the woman on release is not placed in vulnerable position with high risk of reverting to crime. Substance abuse is not such a significant problem as in western countries or in most of the Asian Countries. Social acceptance and domination by spouse forcing a hapless woman to deviance are two major challenges to Correctional Administration.

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