

FEMALE CRIMINALITY. By BILMORIA RANI. [Lucknow: Eastern Book Co. 1987. x + 202 pp. Hardcover: Rs. 50.00 ]

IN her preface, the author hopes “this book would reveal the trends in female criminality in general and in Andhra Pradesh, India, in particular.” This hope is fulfilled to a large extent. The book is a welcome contribution to the need to further understand the nature of female criminality. It has the depth of discussion and comprehensiveness of scope, but avoids the heaviness and obsession with minutiae that often accompany such a thesis.

Throughout the study, the author seeks to discover the distinctive causes and features of female criminality and the contributing causes for it. Many such causes appear to be linked to financial difficulties, ill-treatment received when young, bad influence from the circle of people in which the offenders were in and family problems. The author makes a very useful contribution by examining the nature and pattern of female offences in great depth. A wide knowledge of the many social sciences like psychology and sociology is required and the author appears to have delved deeply into all these sciences to bring out her concepts and draw her conclusions. Nevertheless, this should not deter the average layman as the matter is not too complex to understand and appreciate.

The book is divided into seven sections, four of which show the causal links between the socio-economic and personal background of the female offenders and their offences. The first chapter of the book reveals a trend analysis of female criminality and an analytical study of aggregate statistics is used in an attempt to provide answers to several questions concerning the socio-economic, educational and marital background of criminals, and the nature and types of offences. Chapter five of the book analyses the individual cases and situations to show the various causes for the crimes perpetuated and as stated above, these causes are indeed startling. The vivid and detailed description of the individual situations by the author greatly enhances the reality of these individual cases.

Fortified with expansive analytical data and statistics as well as numerous examples, this book shows the rapid increase of female participation in the crime arena. The statistics reveal that in the State of Andhra Pradesh, the women's proportion in committing property offences outdid the proportion of men in 1974 (women 32.7%, men 28.4%), 1976 and in 1977 (men 22.8%, women 26.2%). A sex-wide comparison by the author further shows that women exceeded men in their relative involvement in offences against the person in 1971 (men 5.2%, women 16.1%), 1974, 1976 and 1977 (men 3.6%, women 9.1%).

If any flaw is to be found in the book, it is the lack of variation of examples. Perhaps the author's approach would have been more effective if she had narrowed down the large number of similar examples and given a statistical account instead.

Even though the author's research is confined to the state of Andhra Pradesh, the book can be said to provide an insight into similar causes for the rise of female criminality in other parts of the world.

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