

(2019)

Q. How far recidivism has been limited by institution of prison? Explain some modern strategies used in prisons for the reformation of criminals.

Ans.

### Introduction:

'once a criminal, always a criminal' - unknown. This is a very famous saying that indicates that a person who can commit crime once, can do it twice, thrice and as many times he wants. Where this is the case at large, there are certain cases that suggest otherwise. The concept of recidivism defines the people who fall into criminal activities over and over. However, there are a number of factors responsible for it that can be easily checked to ensure that a convict leaves prison as a new man. Certain old and modern techniques are now being implemented to ensure that the person does not commit crimes again.

## • Definition of Recedivism:

Recedivism can be defined as,

— 'The propensity of a convicted individual to reoffend and commit criminal activities after finishing his sentence and being released from prison.' —

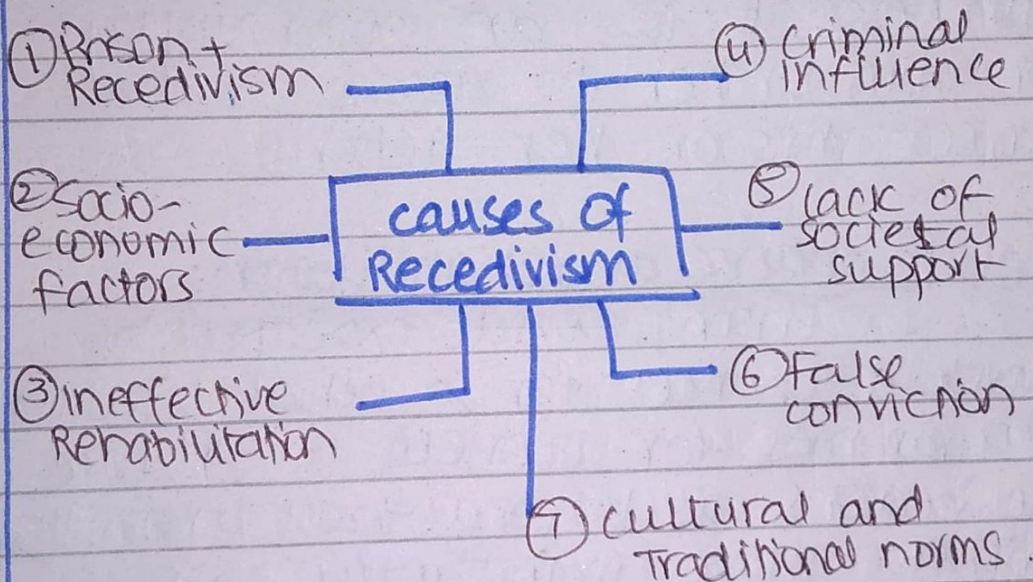
## • Concept of Recedivism:

Recedivism basically indicates the rate at which the criminal will return to commit crimes. These crimes maybe similar to the ones he used to commit previously or maybe new ones.

It is extremely important for the policy makers, law enforcement agencies and rehabilitation programmes to closely study recedivism. In cases where the rates are high, it indicates that the policies adopted by prisons and other relevant agencies are not effective.

## Causes of Recidivism:

The causes of recidivism vary from place to place and time to time. An official study in Pakistan has not been conducted. However, it is clear that the rate at which ex-convicts recommit crimes is exponentially high. Briefly, the causes are as follows:



## Role of Prison in Recidivism:

Since prison is the first home of the criminal after conviction, it has a very crucial role in making or breaking the person for the rest of <sup>his</sup> life. Theoretically, a prison is the place to reform the

criminal, but it can be seen that, practically, no such scene exist.

## (a) Expectations from Prisons:

### (i) Self-Reflection:

It is generally expected that isolation in prison gives the person a chance to reflect on his activities that has led him to such darkness. It is an opportunity for him or her to assess and correct his or her actions.

### (ii) A chance at rehabilitation:

Prisons provide expected to provide a chance for rehabilitation programmes for convicts to deduce the reasons as to why they committed crimes. More importantly, this program reduces the likelihood of them repeating such crimes.

### (iii) A chance for redemption:

When a person goes through the tough time in prison without the presence of his close ones, makes him realize that such activities are not worth the bet. It gives him a chance to redeem

his ways for betterment to secure love and respect from his friends and family.

## (b) Reality of Prisons:

### (i) Lack of effectiveness:

In shocking reality, it is seen that, in fact, prisons lack effectiveness in curbing the criminals from recommitting crimes. In Pakistan, there are a number of reasons why prison does not play an effective role in recidivism. Even though a formal analysis is not present, it is still seen that the rate of ex-convicts committing crimes of the same or different nature is very high.

### (ii) Overcrowding in Prisons:

In Pakistan, the prisons are rather overcrowded. According to a report by Federal Ombudsman, the jails in Pakistan hold around 77,000 prisoners in 114 jails that originally had the capacity to hold a little over 57,000 people. This results in lack of adequate and sufficient resources to improve

living standards of the prisoners.

### (iii) Poor living standards:

The prisons in Pakistan provide rigid environment that mean poor living conditions of prisoners. Apart from lack of cleanliness in general, the cells also have toilet seats that has a lot of health risks. There are many incidents where the prisons become centres of certain epidemics.

### (iv) Ineffective Rehabilitation:

Even though it is part of the policies that every prison needs to have a proper rehab programme, little is seen in practice. Due to insufficient rehabilitation, the matter cannot be probed in depth as to what motivated the criminal to commit crime. This results in people falling into the same activities upon release.

### (v) Crimes within prisons:

It is not unheard of that jails have operating criminal networks that do not let a person escape

from these crimes.

Therefore, it can be seen that as far as the reality goes, prisons are not living upto the mark in checking recidivism. Even though certain changes can ensure that prisons become the most effective and efficient rehab centres, it can be seen that the system has a long way to go to ensure it.

### • Modern strategies used by Prisons:

There are a number of steps that are being taken to ensure that the person who entered the prison and the one who leaves are two completely different individuals.

#### (i) Rehabilitation:

Recently, efforts are being made to ensure that rehabilitation programmes run effectively and smoothly in prisons. It is being monitored that people receive the

proper aid they need to reform themselves. ~~Another~~

### (ii) Use of pharmaceutical Agents:

Recently, drugs and other pharmaceutical agents are also being introduced in the process of rehabilitation. Apart from psychological help, medicinal strategy is also being used to transform the criminals and prevent recidivism.

### (iii) Vocational Training:

In some prisons, people are encouraged to learn means of subsistence to ensure survival once they leave. Vocational training programmes such as carpentry, mechanical work, painting, poetry and literature are present so that prisoners do not follow the path they previously took upon release.



#### (iv) Welfare Programmes:

certain welfare programmes are being introduced that encourage ex-convicts to mend their ways. Not only do they accept such people with open arms but also provide financial and technical support to rebuild their lives.

#### • Conclusion:

It can be concluded that prisons have the capacity to check criminal behaviour - provided it completes its duty properly. People can be prevented from committing crimes with proper help and care. The new reforms introduced have the capacity to help rebuild nation free from crime. Therefore, hope should not be given up. In the famous words of Gandhi - "Do it together, don't do it alone."