Geographies of Urban Crimes in India

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Abstract

City, a space created by human in the process of their advanced social evolution, emerged as center of complex human interactions in the era of modernity. The incidences of crimes in the cities and its geographies are a manifestation of the way social which is organized spatially in the city. The geography of urban crime enables to understand the process of erosion of social cohesion and the emergent social stratifications in the city, but it tries to question the spatial distribution of power between the core and peripheries of the city and the emerging antagonism between the urban and the rural. The paper by drawing evidence from the National Crime Record Bureau of India argues that incidence of crimes is increasing at an alarming rate both in all India level as well as across the cities. Analysis of nature of crimes in the city shows that crimes against women are increasing in the city over time. Therefore, the paper argues that the solution to address the problem does not lies in the policing but in the re-distribution of resources.

Keywords: Urban Crimes, Geographies of Crimes, Social Differentiation, India.

Introduction

"Crime is an individual response to oppression ineffective and easily crushed; crime is attributed to the competitiveness of bourgeois society, which gave rise not only to the crimes committed by impoverished workers, but also to fraud and other deceptive business practices"- Engels.

Since 'the history of human being is the history of class struggle' as stated by Marx, crimes and conflicts are integral part of that history. Therefore, crime is not just something disgraceful or immoral and illegal, but it is also a result of the attempt of class domination by the ruling class and resultant resistance by the subordinate class, as stated by the Marxist literatures. Thus crime as a sociological pathogen is a result of the contradictions within the society and thus which implies the 'social ill being' of a community as a result of deflation in the 'social capital'.

Though crime is a social phenomenon, the field of Geography as a science of space, and social geography in particular has been tried to analyze and explain the spatial dimensions of this phenomenon, by asking where the crimes are occurring and why it is spatially located there. They tried to explain how these social ill beings are manifested over the space. By doing so, the concept of space go beyond the traditional concepts of physical space to the social and cultural space constructed by the dialectical interaction of the culture and nature. Therefore, the geographies of crime is not merely an extension of the 'sociological disorders' of crimes in to space, but it is the social consciousness of the geographers to question why crimes are concentrated in certain parts of the earth surface. And also, to ask is this is a result of the disguised distribution of inputs of the social well-being and to understand the way in which the risks are distributed among the people across the space.

Though "the cities are the man's most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire", as according to Robert Park, the 'right to the city' became a matter of question.

City as the new space created by the human in the process of social evolution is becoming the focus of complex human interactions in this era of modernism. Thus, the urban crimes are not just crimes in the city or in the urban settlement, but it is the manifestation of the way social orders are organised spatially. The geography of urban crime is not only questioning the current pattern of urbanization that eroded the cohesiveness of traditional society and created a paradoxical kind of social stratifications but also, it tries to question the spatial distribution of power between the core and peripheries of the city and the emerging antagonism between the urban and the rural. Therefore, it is better to look at how far the social injustice in the cities unleashed the conflicts and crimes in the urban built-up environment. In this new age of modernity, becoming urban is a matter of prestige and development, the urban life became matter of mystery and complexities. In this world the rapes, murders, robberies etc.. become the order of the cities. Hence there is nothing to wonder that, the crime reports became thrilling episodes for the urban dwellers with a sip of hot tea in the morning hours.

2012/2013 uprisal in Delhi and Kathmandu against rapes and the reports of 'shooting games' in the cities of US are the best example to know how far the urban centres are becoming a centre of crimes and conflicts. The brutal rape and murder even in the day hours defamed Delhi as the capital of the crime. Therefore, this study is very relevant and could help us to understand the problems of crimes with respect to the kind of urbanization India is undergoing today. And also, to know how the nature and rate of crimes varies across different regions and size of the cities and such an understanding will surely help the policy makers and planners to decide the way through which the problem can be addressed rather than resting on a centralised notion of rigorous

implementation of law and order even by curtailing the human rights.

Review of Literature

Crime as an indicator of social disorder or as the social pathology has been subjected to a number of studies by the scholars of different disciplines like sociology, criminology, psychology, geography, economics, history etc. for the last so many years. As stated by Sinha (2000), the crimes were looked from two distinct theoretical perspectives; 1) ecological perspectives based on the functionalist conception of social disorganization (and also structural and sub-cultural theories, and 2) the Marxian/Political economy perspectives. This is a more acceptable way of classification because it is manifest the ideological lineage and the implication of the studies. The ecological perspectives are dabbled in the superficial phenomena rather than looking deeply to understand the process (Sinha, 2000). The Marxist on the other hand is more interested in the deep structures which are manifested superficially. Therefore, they are more interested in the political economy of crime and therefore they are concerned not just with the distribution of crimes and the ecology of it rather than with "why they are criminal?" Because for "the Marxist crime is an ending feature of capitalism: endemic to capitalism (Platt 1981 as stated in Sinha 2000).

These concerns of the political economy approach can be seen in the work of Sinha (2000). After making a critical analysis of the crimes in India based on the National Crime record Bureau's statistics and his own filed works the author argued that the crimes record of India had substantiated the co-existence of a culture of oppression and a culture of crimes along with the process of victimization. According to him "a culture of protest is the subaltern sector's collective will to live physically and socially (not to survive) while the culture of oppression is not

only about actual practice of violence, but also about a reign of terror". Therefore, the author concluded "that the story of crime and violence in India is a story of ongoing struggle of the oppressed and marginalized people against age-old exploitation and victimization, aimed at liberation from the dual burden of class and caste exploitation".

Swapna Banerjee-Guha (2000) takes an opposite perspective to look at the crimes- 'ecological perspectives. According to her, "the geographical perspective of crime besides providing a quantifying context, over the years has systematically helped evolve a holistic viewpoint on the socio-economic space of criminal behavioral patterns". The author stated that theft is diffused crime in India, because it is evenly distributed across all the states of India at a higher proportion. After analyzing the spatial distribution of the crime, the author concludes that "the economically peripheral states of India such as UP, Bihar, MP and Rajasthan have emerged as places with high rates of crime such as burglary, theft, rape, murder and rioting".

Mukhopadhyay (1999) tries to look at the geographical pattern of the crimes against women in the urban environment of a developed as well as a developing country. The author argued that there is a strong positive correlation between increase in population and increase in the incidence of crimes in India and thus the author state that faster the rate of development and urbanization greater has been crime against women both in developed and developing countries. The total urban crime against women are found to be more in low residential areas as well as in the peripheries of the cities of developing worlds.

Broader objectives of the paper are to understand the vulnerability of urban centers of India for the social pathogens like crimes and to empirically analyze the role played by the process of economic liberalization in changing the nature and rate of crimes in the selected cities of India.

Data Source and Methodology

Cities are selected from different classes (according to the 2011 Census) across different regions of the country: South: Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Kochi; east: Kolkata and Patna; west: Mumbai, Ahmadabad and Jaipur; North and Central India: Delhi, Lucknow, Ludhiana and Bhopal. Data is taken from the annual reports of the National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

In this study only the incidence of crime is considered, and it proportion to the total crimes are calculated for the purpose of comparison. The non-inclusion of crime rate and its trend is a limitation of this study.

Results and Discussions

The Cities and Crimes an Overlook

There are various measures such as crime rate; incidence/actual number of crimes are used to analyze the crime statistics of a region. The crime rate gives us an idea of incidence of crime with respect to the total mid-year population while the incidence shows the actual number of crimes recorded in a region (not actual number occurred). The table below shows that the rate of crime is declining over time both for the country and for the cities, but the actual incidence of crime is showing an increasing trend both for the country and for the cities. The declining crime rate is a function of increasing population not a result of decline in the actual incidence of crimes. Therefore it can be argued that the volume of crime is the better indicator rather than the rate because though the per-person increased crime continues to be negative indicator.

| The Incidence and Rate of Crime 1981-2011				
Year	Crime Rate		Incidence of Crimes	
	All India	Cities	All India	Cities
1981	202.6	498.4	1385757	164273
1991	197.5	453.4	1678375	196878
2001	172.3	277.0	1769308	289775
2011	192.2	295.1	2325575	475369

Source: The National Crime Record Bureau for the concerned time period.

The proportion of Urban Crimes to the Total Crimes in India

The proportion of the urban centers to all India cognizable crime incidents has recorded an increase during the period 1981-2011, from 11.55% in 1981 to 20.44% in 2011. Though during 1981-91, there had been a meager fall in the contribution of Cities to the total recorded incidents of cognizable crimes, but after 1991 there recorded a considerable increase in the proportion of cities to the all India level from 11.73% in 1991 to 20.44% in 2011. The increased rate of urbanization, not only the concentration of the population in the existing cities but also the emergence of new cities (increase in the number of cities from 12 in 1981 to 35 in 2001 and 53 in 2011, during the post globalization era along with the inclusion of more categories of crimes in to the total cognizable crimes, such as cheating, counterfeiting, arson, molestation, dowry death, sexual harassment, cruelty by husband and relatives, importation of girls and causing death by negligence, can be contributed in it. All these newly added crimes except counterfeiting and importation of girls recorded an increase in their proportion in the urban areas to the countries total recorded number of incidents.

It is also notable that throughout the period, the urban centers recorded the high proportion of counterfeiting to the total country's level compared to other categories of crimes. It shows the changing nature of the urban centers and the emergence of a new urbanism based on forgery and cheating etc. In 2001, urban areas recorded high proportion of sexual harassment to all India level as compared to other years. Though by 2006 it made a decline, but it cannot persist for long and it further increased by 2011 and accounts about 22.95% of the all India Sexual harassments are recorded in the urban areas though it accommodate only 13.31% of the total population of the country. It is an alarming situation indicates how far our cities are becoming inhospitable to the females and it is also because of high tendencies of registering cases in urban areas.
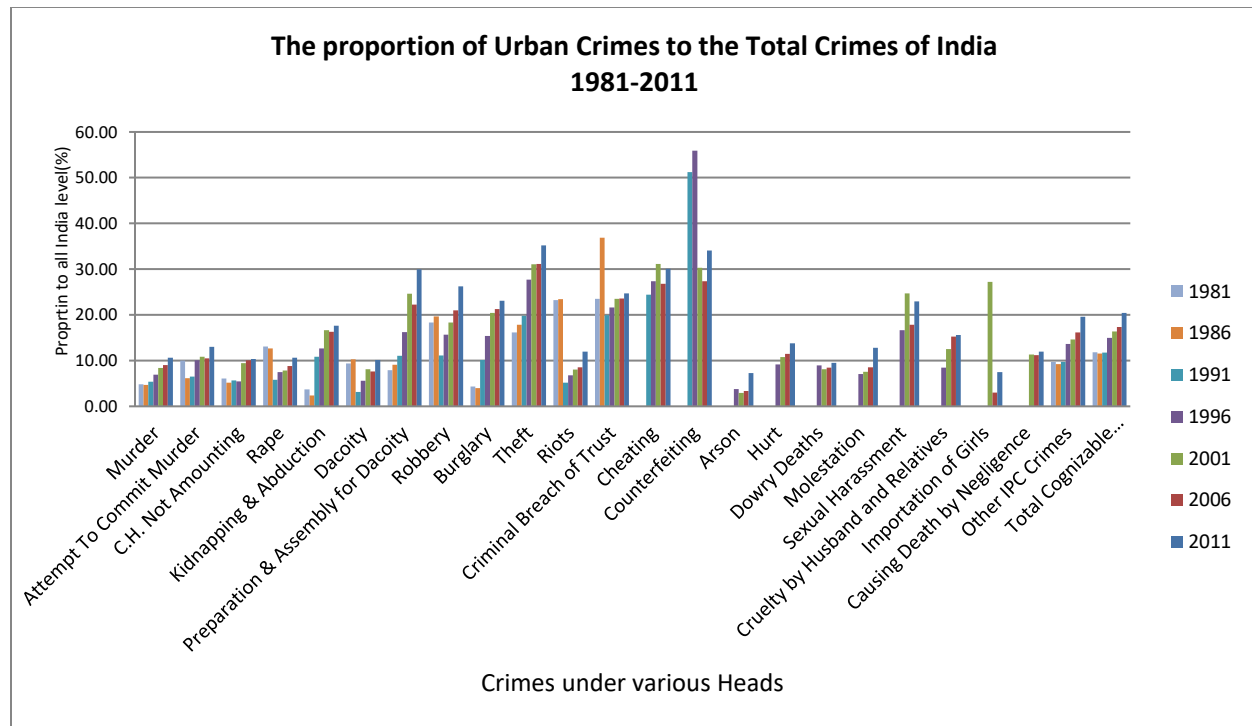
The proportion of Urban Crimes to the Total Crimes of India 1981-2011

Source: The National Crime Record Bureau for the concerned time period.

The Proportion of Crimes under Various Heads to the Total Cognizable Crimes in the Cities

The pattern of urban crimes shows that, the year 1991 is acting as a water divide by showing a remarkable change in the components of the total cognizable crimes in the urban areas. In the years of 1981 and 86, robbery and the crimes under the category of other IPC crimes including various 'petty crimes' were the major constituent of the total recorded/registered cognizable crimes of the cities. While it had been changed after 1991 onwards and now the robbery got replaced by theft but crimes under the category of other IPC crimes remained as the major components of the urban crimes. This increasing proportion of the theft and its increasing importance as a diffused crime in India as stated by Banerjee-Guha (2000), can be a result of the increasing densities in the urban areas as well as the increasing disparities between the rich and poor. However, it is notable that the proportion of theft to the total crimes showing a declining tendency from 1991 to 2011, while the proportion

of other IPC crimes made a progress during this time. This can be a result of the incidence of conversion of the theft to some other petty cases and 'just' missing categories to close the tedious task of further enquiries.

In addition to these major constituents of the cognizable crimes, the crimes such as preparation and assembly for dacoity, burglary, riots and theft was the other constituents of the urban crimes in 1980's. The year 1986 recorded a highest proportion of riots to the total crimes as compared to other years and it showed a tendency of decline over time.

After 1991, the crimes under the categories of hurt, burglary, cheating and cruelty by husband and relatives became the major constituent of the total urban crimes in addition to the theft and other IPC crimes. It is remarkable that during this period the incidence of importation of girls became zero percentage by 2006 and 2011, it rises some question such as is it because of the successfulness of the policing and other measures to eliminate this

menace or is it a result of the faulty recording. Therefore it requires further detailed studies.

The increasing trend of crimes under the category of the cruelty by husband and relatives during the year 1996-2011, may be a result of the successful implementation of the laws preventing domestic violence as well as the rising awareness in the cities through the activities of various feminist organizations. It is highly notable that during this period there is a decline in the crimes under the category of sexual harassments and rapes at the same time there is an increase of the molestation, it can be a result of the background activities like conversion of highly punishable crimes such as sexual harassments and rapes to less punishable crimes like molestation as well as the incidence of lack of proper registration of these crimes. Though

such a conclusion requires better evidence and further studies to establish but the recent incidence in Delhi, where a police officer tried to pay money to a parent who went to file a complaint to report the 'cruel and shocking' sexual harassment and rapes undergone by their five year old girl child and subsequent protest, underline the validity of such arguments.

The increase in the proportion of cheating during the post globalized Indian cities is a representation of the emergence of new urban culture based on cheating and forgery and declining human values and faith. The crimes like kidnapping and abduction also made a progress in their occurrence, though their share is negligible.
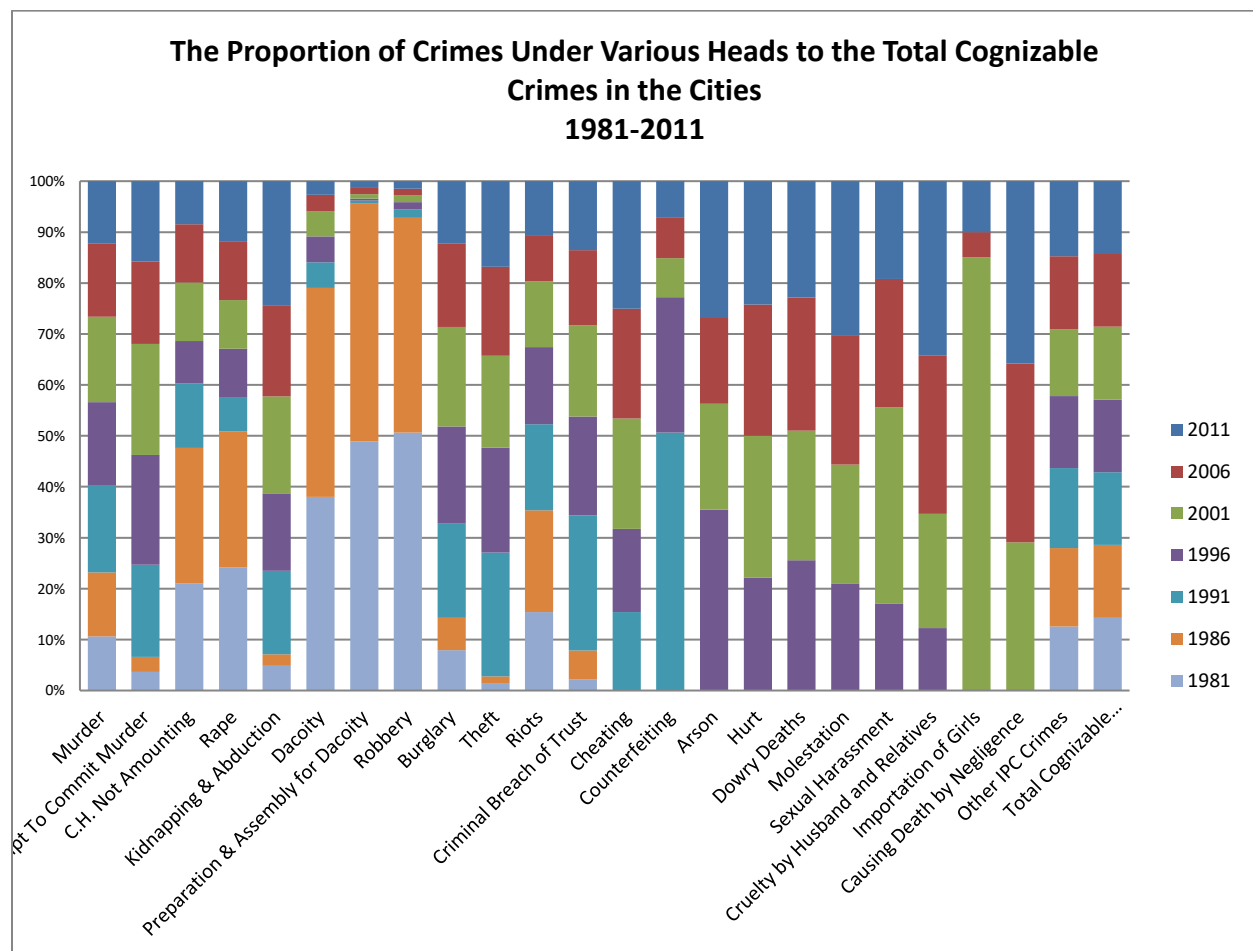
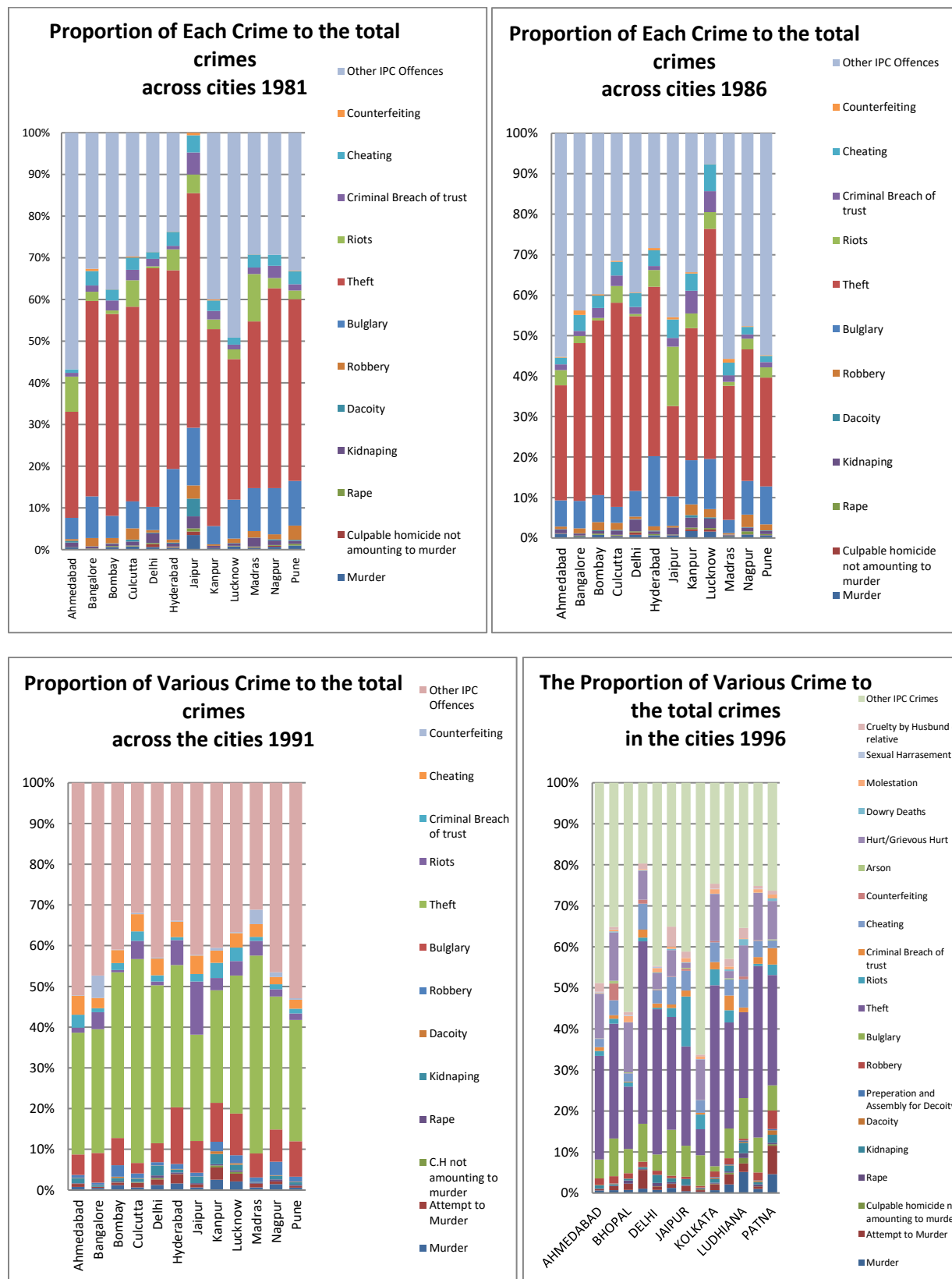Source: The National Crime Record Bureau for the concerned time period.

Regional Variation of Crimes Across cities

Southern Region: In Chennai theft was the major constituent of the total crime in 1981, 1991, 96 and 2001. In 1981 the city recorded high percentage incidence of riots as compared to other cities. Up to 1991, theft, other IPC crimes, Burglary, riots were the major contributors to the total crimes in the cities. But after 1991, the theft started declining its significance to the other IPC crimes and crimes such as hurt, causing death by negligence and cheating are also started to increase their proportion to the total crimes in the cities. Other cities of the southern parts of the country such as Bangalore and Hyderabad also showed somewhat similar trend and recorded a decline in the proportion of theft to the total crimes, but by 2011 it made an increase and occupy at the top. But Kochi on the other hand shows a totally different trend, where theft was never a major component of the total cognizable crimes and by 2011 the crimes under the category of other IPC crimes became the sole constituent of the total crimes (93.78%).

Western Region: In Mumbai (Bombay) theft has been the major constituent of the total crimes throughout the time from 1981-2011. Prior to 1991, crimes under the categories of theft, other IPC crimes, burglary, cheating and criminal breaching were the significant contributors to the total cognizable crimes in the city. But after 1991, though theft continued to be the major crimes in the city, the new categories such as hurt, causing death by negligence also became prominent. While in the case of other cities of the west such as Ahmedabad and Jaipur shows a distinct trend, where other IPC crimes are the major components of the total crimes than the theft. Both this cities also recorded an increasing proportion of crime under the category of cruelty by the husband and relatives. It is very important to note that Jaipur recorded high incidents of riots in 1986 and it continued to be high up to 2001 and after wards it declined drastically.
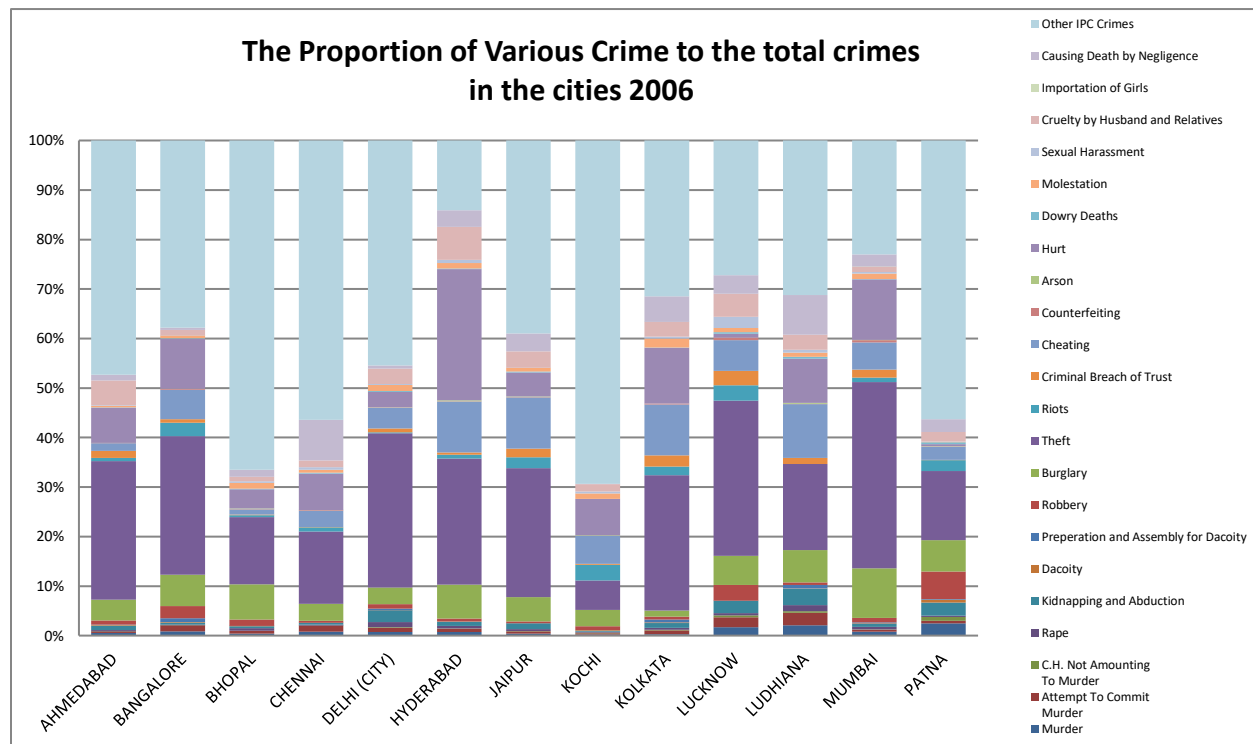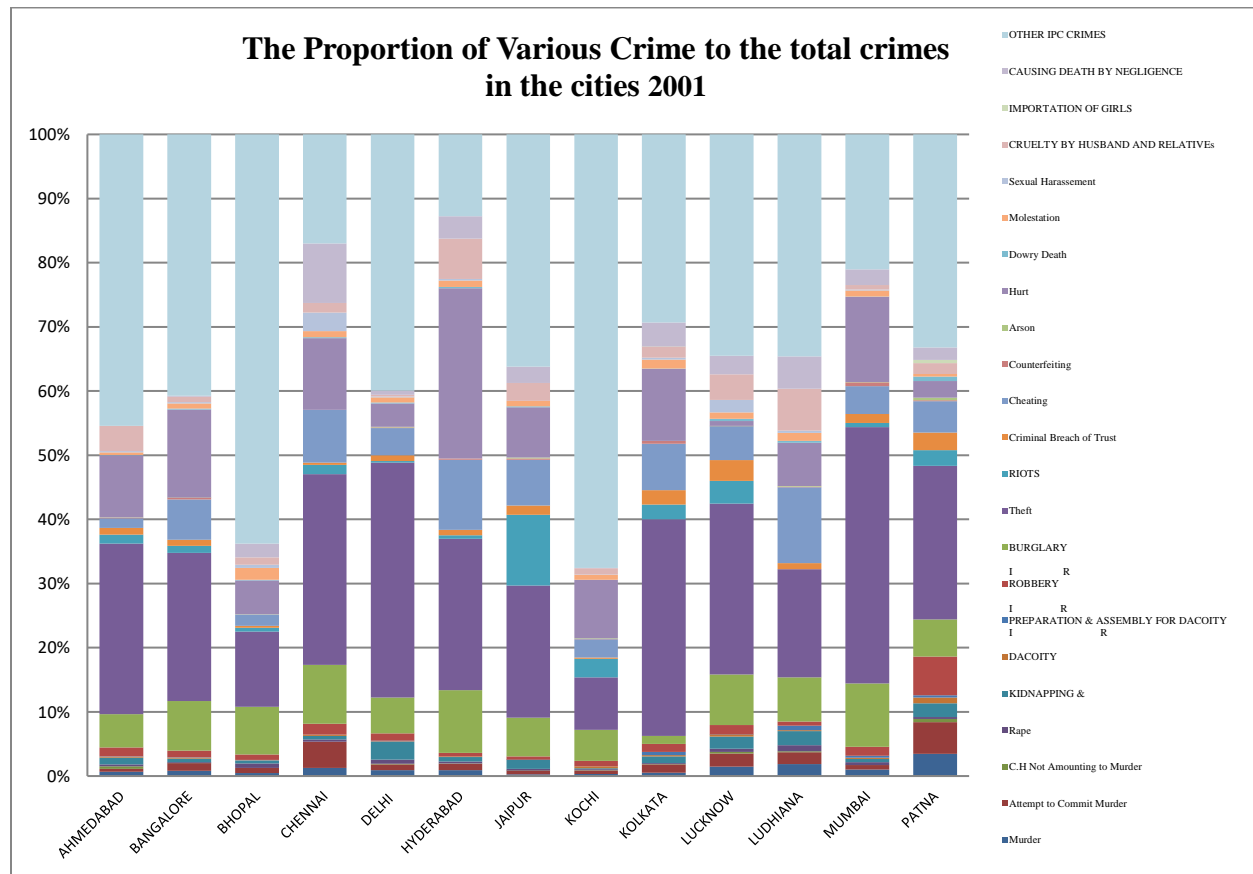
Northern Region: Theft is the major urban crime in Delhi though its proportion declined from 57.21% of the total crimes in 1981 to 44.68% in 2011 (it was 31.17% in 2006). During the pre-liberalization period, theft, other IPC crimes, burglary, kidnapping and abduction and cheating were the major crimes recorded in Delhi. But by the 2001 onwards new crimes such as cruelty by husband and relatives, causing death by negligence etc. also became the part of urban crimes recorded. The crime under the category of cruelty by husband and relatives showing an increasing trend from 3.11% in 2006 to 3.17% in 2011. In the case of other north Indian cities such as Bhopal, Lucknow and Ludhiana, other IPC crimes are the major urban crime not the theft as the case of Delhi. Of these three cities proportion of theft to the total recorded crimes is higher in Lucknow as compared to other cities. The proportion of crimes under the category of cruelty by husband and relatives and cheating to the total crimes has been increased during the post liberal period. In Lucknow the share of riots is still significant.
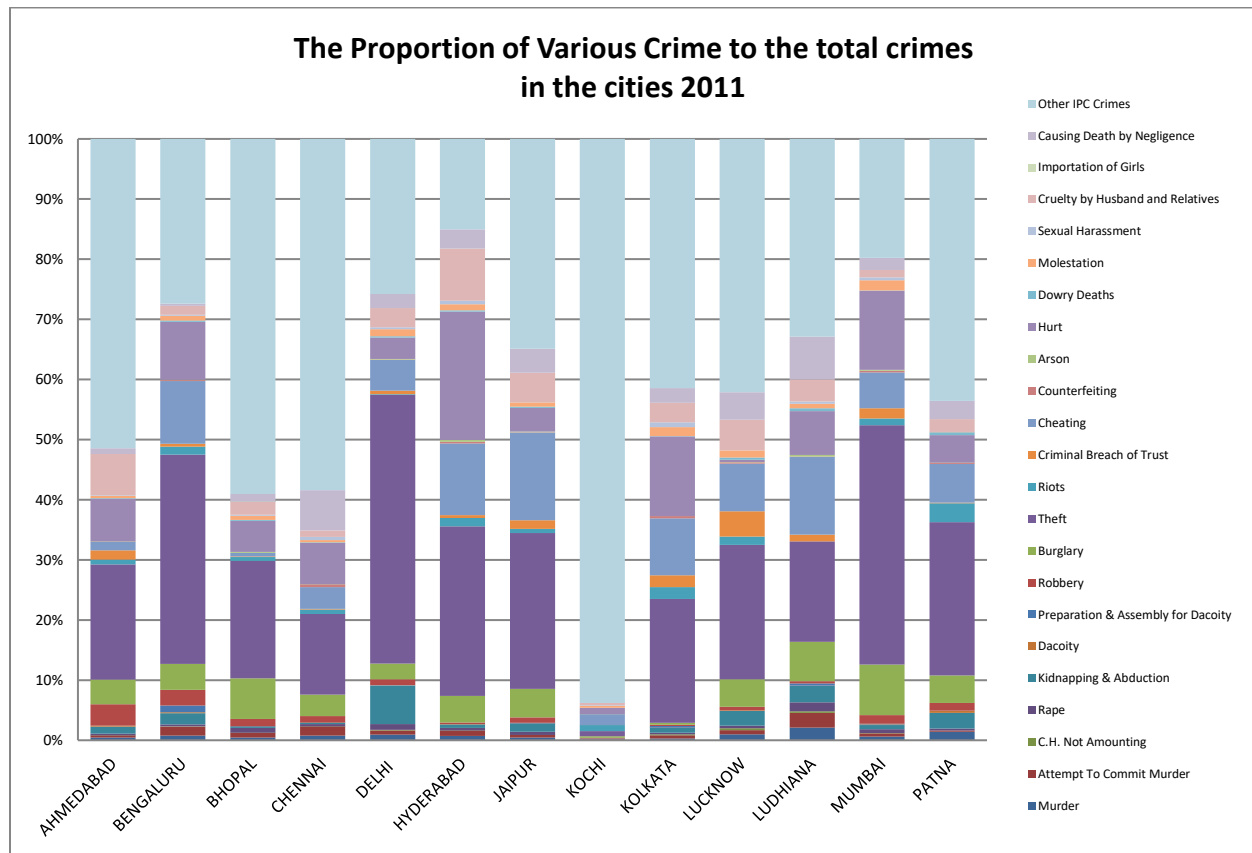
Eastern: Theft was the major crime in the city of Kolkata up to 2006 and shoed a declining trend over years and by 2006 it got replaced by other IPC crimes. In 1986 Kolkata recorded high proportion of theft as compared to the total cognizable urban crimes and it ranked second after Lucknow. The incidence of riots was also higher. Similar to other cities in the case of Kolkata too, the post-liberalized period characterized by a change in the pattern and composition of crime and during this period cheating, causing death by negligence etc. became significant. In Patna other IC crimes was the major crimes followed by theft, robbery, burglary, cheating, murder etc. were the major crime. It is notable that in Patna, the proportion of riots increased from 2.46% in 2001 to 3.14% in 2011.

Proportion of Each Crime to the total crimes across cities 1981

Proportion of Each Crime to the total crimes across cities 1986

Proportion of Various Crime to the total crimes across the cities 1991

The Proportion of Various Crime to the total crimes in the cities 1996

Source: The National Crime Record Bureau for the concerned time period.

The Proportion of Various Crime to the total crimes in the cities 2001

The Proportion of Various Crime to the total crimes in the cities 2006

The Proportion of Various Crime to the total crimes in the cities 2011

Source: The National Crime Record Bureau for the concerned time period.

Conclusion

Crime as a social pathogen act as an indicator of social ill-being. Therefore, the geography of crime is not just the natural distribution of crimes and relating the topography with the pattern and distribution of crimes, but it is the attempt to understand the underlying process of crimes. Because crime is not just an action can be punished, but it is an inherent constituent of the capitalist system which unleashes a culture of oppression and making the emergence of a counterculture of protest. Thus, crime is a result of the unequal distribution of power and resources among the different castes and classes.

The empirical evidence shows that the crime of theft is a major crime in the larger cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai and it may be result of the high densities of population and the large-scale disparity in income across various segments of city's population. Though their proportion is showing a declining trend over time but still it constitutes the major proportion of urban crimes. The increase in the proportion of cheating during the post globalized Indian cities is a representation of the emergence of new urban culture based on cheating and forgery and declining human values and faith. And this process of Cheating and counterfeiting is relatively higher in the most advanced cities of the country such as Bangalore and Hyderabad, it shows the emergence of a new urbanism in these areas. The recording of crimes under the heads of cruelty by husband and relatives showed an increasing trend indicating the increasing awareness among the females and their courage

to resist such crimes, but it also showing an alarming situation that how far the urban centers are inhospitable to the women.

The increasing incidence of crimes at all India level as well as at the cities of India shows an alarming situation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to solve this issue, but it is also notable that the solution is not rest on the strict policing, because that itself results in more crimes. Therefore, what we needed is a better re-distribution of resources and power irrespective of any social differentiation based on caste and class.

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