

THE LEGAL VIDYA

Open Access Law Journal

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The Legal Vidya
Volume 2 Issue 1, November 2021, Page Nos. 51 to 63

A LEGAL ANALYSIS OF CRIME SCENE MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Forensic science in criminal investigation and trials is mainly dealt with the materials which are helpful to identify the suspect, time of the incident and the place of occurrence. Forensic Science is defined as “*The application of science to those criminal and civil laws that are enforced by the police agencies in a criminal justice system*”. It is considered to be one of the important characteristic of the criminal justice system. It clearly establish a link between the crime, the suspect, the victim, the weapon used, the time and the place of occurrence. The whole of the subject of the forensics is to prove the perpetrators of the crime and their connection to the crime through a various set of examinations and analyses of the physical evidences found on the scene of the crime. In India, the present scenario of criminal investigations and prosecution of the criminal is dismal as a large percentage of criminals in heinous crimes, after the trial, end up being the acquittals. It is very essential that investigators consider the crime scene analysis as if it is their last chance to retain and retrieve these tangible clues. When the investigators approach the investigation in an unbiased manner, they tend to closely evaluate other case facts or comments by witnesses or suspects. During such an investigation, the direction of the investigation could change many times, and physical clues that were originally considered to be insignificant could turn out to be vital to a satisfactory resolution of the crime¹. It

¹ Crime Scene Investigation: A Guide for Law Enforcement, 58.

is commonly accepted that each crime scene is distinct. It is difficult to prescribe a single, step-by-step protocol for coping with any situation.

The concept of “Crime scene management and forensic analysis” explains how the police conducts themselves at a crime scene, which can directly impact the availability and effectiveness of forensic tests later in the investigation². To avoid tampering and fabrication, all the material collected from a scene by police must be appropriately packaged and numbered. Once forensic investigation begins, it is important to make sure the questions being posed are investigative rather than analytical. Bringing a forensic expert to the crime scene can be helpful in some situations³. In other countries, the techniques of forensic science have a set of highly developed scientific procedures which have the potential to figure out the important aspects and had become the critical part in the criminal justice system⁴.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This paper deals with the aspects pertaining to the Crime Scene Management in Forensic Sciences. It will assist the legislature in understanding the current scenario regarding the preliminary investigations and the need for strengthening the laws relating to forensic sciences in the country. Hence, it will help the policy makers in providing suggestions and reforms in tackling these grave challenges.

This paper also aims at guiding the police personnel in understanding the flaws carried out while securing the crime scene and understanding the repercussions faced because of their negligent actions. This specific piece of the research will also be helpful for lawyers, academicians and students pursuing law, social work and medicine to identify the best practises that need to be done in securing the chain of custody and carefully preserving the evidence. This paper will only deal within the of explaining how the crime scene is managed and its steps, the importance of medical examination through evidence found and the obstacles faced by the investigators while carrying out the investigation.

² Karan Gehlot, *Forensic Crime Scene Investigation 2*.

³ Samir Kumar Bandyopadhyay & Nabanita Basu, *Process of Crime Scene Investigation and Simulated Reconstruction*, 49 (2013).

⁴ B.R SHARMA, *FORENSIC SCIENCE IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION AND TRIALS* (LexisNexis 5d ed., Universal Law Publications).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To get a comprehensive understanding of the topic, certain set of objectives have been framed to analyse each concept in depth. The Research objectives are as follows -

- To articulate the concept of Crime Scene Management in relation with Forensic science while deliberating on the legal aspects in CrPC.
- To analyse the procedure and steps carried out while the investigation is taken place.
- To highlight the importance of preserving the chain of custody and recording the crime scene.
- To formulate an understanding on how the medical examination plays a key role in determining the accused and the victim.
- To determine the challenges faced by the investigators in managing the crime scene and to suggest reforms for a better management.

THE CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION PROTOCOL

The scene of occurrence is exactly the place where the crime has been committed or any other sites which are connected to the crime or a place where the evidence is gathered. It can be understood that it is a place where the evidences pertaining to the crime committed are found or exchanged. The crime is the place where the offender and victim meet⁵. Here there are a high number of chances that they tend to leave a clue behind regarding their identity or anything beneficiary for the investigation such as the marks of tools, apparels, fingerprints, blood samples, saliva samples and so on. Such evidences which are left behind by the persons involved in the crime scene constitute a major role in the investigation such as to establish the *corpus delicti* and to find out the relation between the suspect, victim and the crime scene⁶. It is also important to indicate the *modus operandi* and to reconstruct the scene to understand the specific nature of the crime. It is observed that in many cases the accused creates a fake scene in order to misguide the investigation. Such an incident

⁵ Joseph Peterson et al., *The Role and Impact of Forensic Evidence in the Criminal Justice Process* 151.

⁶ Crime Scene Investigation: A Guide for Law Enforcement, 58.

has taken place in the case of *State of Punjab vs Bihari Lal Pahu Lal*⁷, though it was a gruesome attack, there was no blood present at the alleged scene.

The scene of occurrence is considered to be extremely significant in any crime scene as it provides a smooth path for the investigation to be held thereof. One of the main concerns in this is that the scene of occurrence goes through a rapid changes and the scene cannot be preserved for a long time⁸. Most of the evidences get lost at the scene itself and the evidences get tampered, destroyed or contaminated in the meantime. Henceforth, the crime scene needs a very reflexive response by the investigating officers. In a few cases the investigator may not be able to reach the site immediately, so the police must therefore preserve the scene for the evidences⁹. In a few cases the doctors evidence seems to be impossible to corroborate to the actual happenings in the case recorded by the investigation officer¹⁰. In a few crime scenes, it is obvious that the manipulation of scenes takes place which result in rethinking regarding the actual facts that happened in the scene. Also, While determining the nature of crime on the scene of offence, police dog identification evidence¹¹ is considered “being of extremely high calibre”

The inspection of the crime scene and the procedure to collect the evidence cannot be done disorderly or in a chaotic manner. It has to be done in a proper regiment with good amount of care and caution. The 7's of crime scene have been adopted by many investigators in order to rightly conduct this examination. The seven steps to be followed are –

1. **Secure the scene-** It is the duty of the first responder to prohibit all unauthorized individuals from accessing the crime scene in order to prevent evidence transmission, destruction, contamination, or tampering. The police should be summoned right away, and the location should be guarded with crime scene tapes before the investigating officer has completed the investigation. The wellbeing of the victim, recording the evidence and the documentation are the top priorities.
2. **Separate the witness** – it is important that these witnesses are separated from each other as this will prevent them from discussing on the matter and coming up with a tale in order to protect themselves from entering into the legal hassle. After separating them the investigating office must enquire

⁷ AIR 1953 P H 218

⁸Crime-Scene-Investigation.pdf, , <https://www.nist.gov/system/files/documents/forensics/Crime-Scene-Investigation.pdf> (last visited May 5, 2021).

⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime & Laboratory and Scientific Section, Crime scene and physical evidence awareness for non-forensic personnel. (2009),

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=288160> (last visited May 5, 2021).

¹⁰ State of M.P vs Babu Lal Ram Ratan (1958 CriLJ 190)

¹¹ Babu Mughal Sheik vs State of Maharashtra, 1993 Cr LJ 2808 (SC)

regarding the place of the crime, identity of the accused and the victim, observations made by him/her in the offence and whether they could identify the suspect.

3. **Scan the scene** – the scene of offence has to be keenly observed by the investigators in order to determine the investigation procedure required to be followed in the further course of action. Scanning is not only essential to take place in the site of offence but the surroundings around the scene also leave major clues for the officers. It is important for the investigator to have a “*bird’s eye view*” of the scene¹².
4. **Seeing the evidence** – in this step, each and every object in the scene acts as a crucial piece of evidence. So it is important for the investigator to observe the photos of the scene, both wide angles and closeups. Measuring tapes, triangulations and photographs are used to keenly understand the place, angle and distance of the object to the bodies¹³.
5. **Sketching the scene** - A rough drawing must be made to understand what is going on in the situation, followed by a proper sketch. The sketch may have artifacts estimated from two immovable coordinates, as well as labels for paths and distance¹⁴. Include doors, windows, and chairs, among other things. Trees, automobiles, hedges, and other outdoor elements should be included, and the north direction should be indicated.
6. **Searching for evidence** - The search for physical evidence must be thorough and systematic in nature. The search of the crime processes depending on the locale and the size of the scene. There are several methods for collecting the physical evidence on the scene such as the spiral search method, grid search method, zonal search method and the parallel search method¹⁵.
7. **Securing and collecting evidence**- The evidence gathered on the location must be wrapped, numbered, and sealed properly. Biological evidence is kept in breathable jars, liquids are kept in an airtight jars, and small samples are kept in paper bindles. In the case of *Abdul Salam vs State of Jammu & Kashmir*¹⁶, the words of Justice Racchpal Singh were observed “in such cases it is very essential that the police immediately in the presence of witness takes possession of all articles containing biological evidence, should be sealed and preserved to be sent to the lab immediately”. The delay in dispatch causes a fatal damage to the case.

¹² Kelli Anderson, *The Seven S's of Crime-Scene Investigation* 10.

¹³The Seven Steps of Crime-Scene Investigation, , prezi.com , <https://prezi.com/udtf9kmhntat/the-seven-steps-of-crime-scene-investigation/> (last visited May 5, 2021).

¹⁴ Supra note 18

¹⁵ 7 Steps of a Crime Scene Investigation | CU Online, , <https://online.campbellsville.edu/infographics/7-steps-of-a-crime-scene-investigation/> (last visited May 5, 2021).

¹⁶ AIR 1981 J K 21

IMPORTANCE OF CHAIN OF CUSTODY & RECORDING OF THE SCENE

It is extremely important to preserve the evidence since its initial stage, where the chain of custody begins till the moment it is upheld in the court of law as evidence in the trial. It is seen that evidence comes in various types and shapes, which has to be handled based on its nature and objective of the allegation. The chain of custody acts as a crucial aspect in the trial as it is used to guarantee the continuity, reliability and integrity of the evidence collected in the crime scene, which acts as the most critical aspect since any breach in this process will result in a fatal damage to the trial.¹⁷ The meaning of the term chain of custody is understood as the written account of the persons who have come in contact with the evidence from the initial collection to the final production.

When in the eyes of the law it refers to the sequence in which a piece of evidence which must be processed during the course of an investigation. When in an investigation, it is a structured written record that tracks who acquired, processed, examined, and or supervised fragments of this crucial evidence¹⁸. To ensure that the law's provisions and specifications are met, this chain must be an undisturbed track with no inconsistencies or anomalies.

The main objective of this is to ensure that the evidence collected at the scene of offence must be maintained with utmost caution in its original state instead of it being tampered and tainted by the officials for their own benefit or to plant deceptive material to falsely inflict someone else other than the accused.¹⁹ In case of *Raghunandan v State of UP*²⁰, the court opined that “*a failure of the police to send the blood for examination in a serious case is depreciated and moreover the scene of occurrence is disputed*”

This evidence must be properly handled and supervised in a manner where there is no space for inconsistency and discrepancies. Evidence is considered to be the most remarkable information in the process of investigation and trial. Anything performed for the inspection and interpretation of the evidence must be licensed and documented, so this process of recording is critical. All who come in contact with the condition

¹⁷ The importance of Chain of Custody and Preservation of Evidence, , Finding Millions \$\$ (2011), <https://findingmillions.wordpress.com/2011/02/22/the-importance-of-chain-of-custody-and-preservation-of-evidence/> (last visited May 5, 2021).

¹⁸ The Importance of Chain of Custody for Legal Proceedings, , Superior Bag (2017), <https://superiorbag.com/evidence-bags/importance-chain-custody-legal-proceedings/> (last visited May 5, 2021).

¹⁹ Bórquez P. [Importance of chain of custody of evidences]. *Rev Med Chil.* 2011 Jun;139(6):820-1. [[PubMed](#)]

²⁰ AIR 1974 SC 463

sample bears responsibility for it²¹. The documentation must include each and every aspect from collection of the evidence, handling it, storing it, handing over to the officials to the production of it in the court and should be comprehensive and extensive. It prohibits police authorities and other enforcement agencies from destroying or fabricating information as it will ultimately be tracked, and they will be held accountable²².

In the case of *State of Rajasthan vs Mothiya*, the significance of chain of custody was reiterated and explained how the reluctance of the authorities has made the case unrefuted.

Apart from documenting a crime scene, it is also essential to video tape the entire site as it can give you a viewpoint on the scene of the crime style that photos and drawings cannot always give you²³. But the next step of recording is taking still photographs of the scene which is necessary for the comparison of the site in different angles. It should be taken in wide angles and must also include the surroundings, so as to not miss out on the vital information²⁴. The last step of the crime scene, the most significant one, is the sketching of the scene. This is used as a vital source for understanding the scene as it clearly depicts the spatial relationship of the scene which has a paramount significance in determining the accused and the offence²⁵.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION

With the introduction of new approaches in the judicial system, medical examinations have become a crucial component of the prosecution if the circumstances warrant it. The relevant officials engaged in the procedure are required to uphold the Rule of law. In either situation, the victim's right to privacy is guaranteed. The medical evaluation is performed in order to determine the actual evidence of the event that occurred with the victim and the nature in which the accused committed the crime. It gives law enforcement a vital piece of information that aids them in speeding up the inquiry. With the aid of the medical evaluation, the factual results are verified. It has increased the level of inquiry in nations where the health professional engaged in

²¹Crime Scene Investigation: Common Terms, , <http://www.forensicsciencesimplified.org/csi/glossary.html> (last visited May 5, 2021).

²²Examination and Documentation of the Crime Scene, , <https://www.crime-scene-investigator.net/evidenc2.html> (last visited May 5, 2021).

²³ The Practical Methodology of Forensic Photography, , Routledge & CRC Press , <https://www.routledge.com/The-Practical-Methodology-of-Forensic-Photography/Redsicker/p/book/9780849320040> (last visited May 5, 2021).

²⁴ 152997NCJRS.pdf, , <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/152997NCJRS.pdf> (last visited May 5, 2021).

²⁵ Collection and Preservation of Blood Evidence from Crime Scenes, , <https://www.crime-scene-investigator.net/blood.html> (last visited May 5, 2021).

the procedure has adequate expertise. It leads to corroborating evidence, which leads to the trials being resolved quickly²⁶. In the case of *Ramesh Chandra Agarwal vs Regency Hospital Ltd*²⁷, the SC had given detailed guidelines on expert evidence and deliberated on their roles and responsibilities in the trial and concluded that their role is of an advisory character.

As we have understood in the previous aspect about the importance of the chain of custody and the recording of evidence, medical examination also plays a vital role in determining the crime and the perpetrator. It serves as a platform between the clues found on the crime scene and the biological association to that of the suspect. Even a medical review done on the victim will expose crucial details regarding the crime and the suspect. The law has also made the medical examination a mandatory requirement to the victim²⁸ and after the amendment it also mandated the medical examination of the accused²⁹. The medical test should be performed as soon as possible since any lag could result in the non-appearance of minor injuries that are crucial in deciding the severity of the offense³⁰. In case there is any time lapse between the opinion of the doctor and the knowledge of the prosecution, it is not possible to solely dismiss the opinion of the officer in such cases³¹ Especially in cases of rape when the medical test proves that there has been seminal stains and other injuries on the accused and the victim, which determine the offence of rape then such an inference can be corroborative in nature and can establish the deposition of the victim³².

The importance of medical evidence is of paramount importance and no court can overpower it. The SC depreciated the trial court and stated that “opinion is not only unwarranted but also indicative of lack of appreciation of the evidential value to be attached to expert medical evidence”³³. Though the medical examination plays such a crucial role, it is also important to understand that the opinion of the expert is not conclusive in nature³⁴. It is only used to corroborate the evidence stated by the parties³⁵ and it is not completely binding in the court of law³⁶ as “*the Opinion of an expert cannot be the substantive evidence as it is an opinion of the third person*”³⁷ Another hassle which these crimes suffer is that most medical experts do not wish to

²⁶ Procedure for Victim’s Medical Examination under CrPC - iPleaders, , <https://blog.ipleaders.in/procedure-victims-medical-examination-crpc/> (last visited May 5, 2021).

²⁷ AIR 2010 SC 806

²⁸ Section 53 of The Code of Criminal Procedure.

²⁹ Section 53A of The Code of Criminal Procedure.

³⁰ Shivangi Vyas & Mr Shubham Kejriwal, *CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELEVANCY OF THE MEDICAL AND FORENSIC EVIDENCES IN THE RAPE CASES* 18 (2016).

³¹ Pratap Mishra v. State of Orissa, AIR 1977 SC 1307

³² Shyarna v. State of Rajasthan, 1977 Raj LW 146.

³³ Gulam Nurmamad Theim vs State Of Gujarat (2002) 3 GLR 794

³⁴ Chandreshwar Singh v. Ram Chandra Singh, AIR 1973 Pat. 215.

³⁵ Khyall v. State, 1980 ALJ 230.

³⁶ Las Society of India v. Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore Ltd. AIR 1994 Ker.

³⁷ State of Himachal Pradesh v. Jai Lal, AIR 1999 SC 3318.

take my medico legal cases as it takes a lot of time to work on the issues and also the inconsistent court procedures³⁸.

LEGAL ASPECT OF CRIME SCENE MANAGEMENT

We have seen the significance of managing the crime scene and the forensic investigation aspect of it. But in the current Indian legal scenario, it is seen that the legal provisions are not up to the mark to support this concept. The CrPC does not clearly define regarding this management and moreover it creates a state of confusion to the authorities as they carelessly conduct themselves in the scene of offence, which results in the tampering of the evidence and the final decision of the case. But there is no proviso given in the Indian Legal provisions which act as crucial piece of information while carrying out the investigation process.

According to the CrPC under section 2(h) of the Code, “*investigation includes all the proceedings under this Code for the collection of evidence conducted by a police officer or by any person (other than a magistrate) who is authorized by a Magistrate in this behalf*”.

Article 20(3) is based on the legal presumption that the victim is innocent unless proven guilty. The constitutional right provided by Article 20 (3) acts as a shield against witness statement compulsion in the case of people convicted of crimes who are forced to testify against oneself³⁹. The Indian Evidence Act, Section 73, empowers the court to order any individual, even a suspect, to enable his fingerprints to be collected at the crime scene because they are crucial in deciding the nature of the crime.⁴⁰ In 2005, the CrPC was revised to make it easier to collect a variety of medical data from suspects while they are arrested. Even in the case of *Krishan v. State of Haryana*⁴¹, The Trial Court sentenced the accused under Sections 376 and 506 of the IPC after looking at the facts and facts of the case and, in specific, drawing on the FSL analysis. However, due to the lack of appropriate technology, judgments had to depend primarily on non-scientific evidence until lately.

³⁸ Shivangi Vyas & Mr Shubham Kejriwal, *CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELEVANCY OF THE MEDICAL AND FORENSIC EVIDENCES IN THE RAPE CASES* 18 (2016).

³⁹ Justice U.C. Shrivastava, *Immunity from Self-Incrimination under Art. 20(3) of the Constitution of India*, JJTRI, U.P., <http://ijtr.nic.in/articles/art19.pdf> (last visited on 8.2.2016).

⁴⁰ Gaurav Aggarwal, *Smart Study Series Forensic Medicine & Toxicology* 73 (ELSEVIER A division of Reed Elsevier India Private Limited, Gurgaon Haryana), 2009).

⁴¹ 2015 (5) SCJ 239

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Those in possession of the facts must regard preserving the chain of custody a legal and ethical obligation. It is critical to raise consciousness among those involved in such proceedings about the value of upholding the chain of custody of evidence and the standard protocols for doing so. It is important to note, though, that it is the most important process that actually determines the admissibility of facts in a court of law. Medical and forensic evidence is widely acknowledged as playing a critical part in assisting courts of law in reaching rational conclusions. As a result, expert medical practitioners should be welcomed to engage in medicolegal practice, whilst the courtroom environment should be welcoming to medical witnesses also.

Even though forensic science has been much widely adapted in various parts of the world, it still remains as a concept where many problems are encountered. It is very essential that the investigative bodies must ensure that their workforce is well equipped with the necessary material and should also have knowledge regarding the management of the crime scene⁴².

There is a scope for contamination or disruption of the evidence when there are a greater number of personnel present in the scene than the ones actually required. The scene has to be very safely protected until the investigating officers arrive. We have seen many numbers of cases where the prosecution has failed as the scene has been contaminated by unnecessary people interfering with the site. It is also extremely crucial that the person who initially saw the crime or the police authority who entered the sight first, should be in a position to specify each and every detail regarding the scene as every minute detail will hold a very credible value in determining the scene. The crime scene will only be handed over once to the forensic team once and proper photography, documentation and recording of the evidence must be done with utmost care and caution as this might be the only chance for the evidence to stand admissible in the court of law⁴³.

The way errors are often treated at a scene of a crime is a challenge, and it can lead to major issues like "cover-ups and conspiracy theories"⁴⁴. In a crime scene, discrepancies are unavoidable. The least we may do is use adequate awareness and preparation to reduce the number of problems found at crime scenes. Each person should conduct an internal review of each processed crime scene.

⁴² Administrative Policies Dealing with Crime Scene Operations, , <https://www.experts.com/articles/administrative-policies-dealing-with-crime-scene-operations-by-george-schiro-ms-fabc> (last visited May 5, 2021).

⁴³ Shoeprint Evidence Trampled Underfoot, , <https://www.forensicscienceresources.com/Shoes.htm> (last visited May 5, 2021).

⁴⁴New Crime Scenes - Same Old Problems, , <https://www.experts.com/articles/crime-scenes-same-problems-by-george-schiro> (last visited May 5, 2021).

It is easy to see the importance of “Locard's theory of exchange”, which states that *"Whenever two entities come in contact, mutual exchange of traces occurs," since there is something left behind, regardless of its minutiae and it is up to the criminality to find it*⁴⁵.

The victim is unable to testify as to what occurred, but the traces left behind by the suspect provides a complete picture of the scene of crime. As a crime scene investigation is valuable because excavation begins at the scene during the preliminary stages of the trial, the inquiry, and the adjudicatory period⁴⁶. *"The use of this knowledge can be a powerful tool in the hands of an experienced investigator"*.⁴⁷

In the present scenario the forensic evidence plays an important role in cracking various brutal and gruesome criminal cases. It is now considered as a trusted component by the courts as this is more authentic than the ocular evidence. As per Blackstone's ratio states *"It is better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer"*, the scientific evidence provides for such a formulation. It ensures that the proper justice is served to both the parties in the trial. In the recent times the usage of forensic evidence in the court of law has tremendously increased, especially, in the case of murders and rapes as it provides for a strong and an unbiased argument in the court of law.

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⁴⁵ Mukesh Sharma, Khajja Bs & Mayur Sharma, *Study of Suspected Burning Case: A Homicide or A Suicide*, 02 J Forensic Res (2011), <https://www.omicsonline.org/2157-7145/2157-7145-2-134.digital/2157-7145-2-134.html> (last visited May 5, 2021).

⁴⁶ Role of Forensic Science in Crime Scene Investigation Upasana Borah August 11, 2020 Austin Journal of Forensic science and criminology

⁴⁷ BS Nabar. Forensic science VIN crime scene investigation. 3rd edition

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