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# **WOLVES IN SILK? UNVEILING THE MINDS OF FEMALE OFFENDERS THROUGH FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY**

AUTHORED BY - MADHURIMA DE<sup>1</sup> & RUPREKHA CHATTERJEE<sup>2</sup>

## **ABSTRACT**

*Women, often underestimated as family leaders, are essential in shaping the core structures of society. Acknowledging the role of women in society accentuate the reality that female criminal actions can generate more significant social upheaval than their male counterparts. This study boldly explores the under examined area of female criminality through the combined perspectives of forensic psychology and legal systems. Historically, female offenders have been sidelined in criminological theory and investigative practices, frequently portrayed as victims, reactive characters, or outliers in oversimplified narratives. It is time to reevaluate this perspective and recognize the complexity and impact of female criminal behaviour. This study confidently challenges existing preconceptions by presenting a robust gender-responsive approach to psychological profiling that fully considers the complex behavioural patterns, sociocultural contexts, and motivations unique to female offenders. It rigorously examines the differences in relational violence, covert aggression, and emotional manipulation among female offenders, employing established forensic methods and comparing various legal systems. Furthermore, it decisively analyzes how these traits impact sentencing decisions, judicial reasoning, and law enforcement strategies across diverse jurisdictions. Enhancing the accuracy and fairness of criminal investigations involving female offenders is vital for creating a more equitable global justice system. This article advocates for psychological aspects of female criminality that flacks a more just approach to crime and punishment.*

**Keywords:** Forensic Psychological Profiling, Gender-Sensitive Criminal Justice, Socio-Cultural Influences, Procedural Fairness

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## 1. INTRODUCTION:

*It's expressing yourself to your loved ones, and friends, But they can't feel your pain because you're in the pen It's calling and hearing "A' Block's on the phone." But you maintain, Because life goes on, It's really messed up when you're doing time, But that's "Prison Life." Out of sight, out of mind.*

*Sue Stauffacher<sup>3</sup>*

The term "women" encompasses individuals who are identified as female, including both cisgender and transgender women, and in reference to this article are involved in criminal activities as perpetrators or as part of criminal networks. To effectively understand the motivations behind female criminal behaviour, it is crucial to examine the intersectional pressures they encounter, such as discrimination against women, which can manifest as differentiation, exclusion, or restrictions based on sex (CEDAW, 1979). Acknowledging gender identity is vital, as it is often neglected in traditional profiling methods. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) encourages state parties to work towards eliminating social and legal barriers that result in inequitable treatment, especially within the criminal justice system. By addressing these challenges, we can foster a more supportive environment for women who find themselves in conflict with the law, helping to mitigate the stigma they face as both criminals and as individuals who challenge conventional gender norms.

Both domestic courts and international human rights organizations have noted a lack of gender sensitivity in investigations, trials, and sentencing (United Nations, 2015). According to Rule 1 of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners, a comprehensive understanding of "woman" within the criminal justice system must also address the rights of individuals who are accused, convicted, or imprisoned. (United Nations, 2010).

### 1.1. A Resounding Call for Urgent Modern Study

Today, forensic psychology offers insights into the complexities of female criminality, especially in light of the growing global movement for gender-responsive justice. Often, the psychological and social factors unique to female offenders are overlooked or minimized in

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<sup>3</sup> <https://suestauffacher.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Poetry-Of-Women-Prisoners.pdf>

traditional legal documents. General Recommendation No. 33 urges states to take action to ensure that judicial processes consider the unique life experiences of women (CEDAW, 1979).

The treatment of female offenders reveals a complex interplay of biases, leading to a trend of over-punishment and a lack of representation in criminological studies, even amidst notable progress in recent years (United Nations, 2015). These issues are often exacerbated by the limited involvement of forensic psychiatric professionals in the legal decision-making process. By integrating forensic psychology, we have the opportunity to foster more equitable approaches to sentencing, rehabilitation programs, and bail decisions. Despite the advancements made in women's legal, political, and social rights, systemic disparities remain a concern. Injustices such as restricted access to legal services, domestic violence, and economic challenges frequently serve as critical factors influencing female criminality. Addressing these issues can pave the way for a more just and understanding legal system.

Legal and policy frameworks encompass significant instruments that aim to safeguard rights and foster equality. The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), particularly Article 14, underscores the importance of non-discrimination in the enjoyment of Convention rights. In India, the National Commission for Women Act of 1990 establishes a legal basis for addressing grievances and advocating for the rights of women. Furthermore, Sustainable Development Goal 5 seeks to promote gender equality and empower all women and girls, as highlighted by the United Nations in 2015. It is essential that any legal response to crime thoughtfully considers the intersectionality of social identity, gender, and class. Women who encounter legal challenges often face barriers such as insufficient legal representation or may find themselves in situations that lead to criminal behaviour. To reinforce commitments to non-discrimination within the framework of international law, adopting a forensic psychological perspective can be invaluable in recognizing these vulnerabilities and advocating for equitable outcomes (APA, 2013; BPS, 2020).

## **2. Mapping Female Criminality: Patterns and Trends in India**

The issue of female criminality is gaining significant attention and concern in India. While criminological research has historically focused on male offenders, female criminals have often been overlooked or stereotyped. This chapter confidently examines crimes, committed by Indian women, presenting compelling data and patterns that reveal the specific types of offenses they engage in. Moreover, it underscores how societal, economic, and psychological

factors play a crucial role in shaping these patterns of criminal behaviour. Indian women, much like their global counterparts, actively engage in a diverse array of illicit activities. However, because of distinct factors such as family dynamics, societal expectations, and socioeconomic pressures, the nature of these offenses often differs from those perpetrated by men. Although women commit fewer violent crimes than men, they are more frequently involved in offenses related to domestic issues, financial struggles, and mental health challenges. Below, we outline the primary types of crimes committed by Indian women.

### **a. Violent Crimes**

While it is true that men are more frequently involved in violent crimes such as murder, assault, and domestic abuse, it is important to recognize that women also contribute to these issues, particularly in cases related to intimate partner violence or family dynamics. Many women who engage in violent acts do so as a result of ongoing interpersonal violence or abuse, highlighting the need for greater awareness and support. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (2020), there were 10,001 murder cases involving female offenders, with many linked to situations of self-defence or violence against intimate partners. This brings to light important legal considerations, such as those outlined in Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which addresses murder. Under Section 300 of the IPC, women who kill their abusers may present defences such as "provocation" or "self-defence." These insights emphasize the importance of addressing the root causes of violence and providing better support systems for victims, fostering an environment that promotes safety and justice for all individuals. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences in 2020, highlights a troubling reality: nearly 30% of married women aged 15 to 49 have suffered physical abuse at the hands of their spouses. It is crucial to understand that many women who engage in violent behavior are themselves victims of chronic domestic abuse. Their actions often stem from deep-seated despair and a desperate need for retribution, underscoring the urgent need for awareness and intervention in these cycles of violence.

### **b. Property related Crimes**

In India, property crimes, particularly shoplifting and theft, rank among the most common offenses committed by women. These crimes are often driven by financial difficulties, social pressures, or personal motivations such as retaliation or the need to support family members. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau in 2020, property-related offenses account for a significant percentage of the total arrests of women for criminal activities in India.

Specifically, women constituted 19.4% of all arrests in that year for theft, which includes both serious property crimes and petty theft. Most female offenders in this category come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and are frequently motivated by financial constraints or the desire to provide for their families. Additionally, women also engage in white-collar crimes such as fraud and embezzlement. As reported by the Ministry of Finance in 2019, women account for 10% of individuals arrested for financial crimes, including embezzlement and fraud. These offenses often take place within professional environments, highlighting a serious issue where trust is breached as women engage in the theft of funds from the very organizations that employ them.

### **c. Drug-Related Crimes**

The rising involvement of women in drug-related crimes is a striking indication of profound socioeconomic shifts, including increasing exposure to drug trafficking networks and the pervasive impact of domestic substance misuse. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in 2020, women constituted approximately 8% of those apprehended for drug-related offenses. These offenses encompass drug trafficking, addiction, and illegal possession. Many women resort to substance use as a means of coping with overwhelming stress or trauma, particularly stemming from domestic violence. Others find themselves trapped in the cycle of drug trafficking, often coerced by male family members or partners. Alarming, this issue is not confined to urban areas; concerns about rising drug use among rural women are becoming increasingly urgent. These trends are to be addressed with compassion and a commitment to supporting vulnerable communities. Women may resort to substance misuse as a coping mechanism for socioeconomic stress, often due to a lack of access to mental health treatments and support networks. This behaviour can be a way to numb the pain stemming from poverty or violence.

### **d. Crimes Committed for Survival or Economic Necessity**

Financial hardship drives a significant number of Indian women to engage in illegal activities. In a patriarchal society where many women find themselves dependent on men, the pressure to survive or support their families often leads them down a path of crime. To meet their essential financial needs, many female offenders resort to shoplifting, petty theft, and, in some cases, prostitution. Alarming, statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in 2020 reveal that 15-20% of female offenders are involved in prostitution and related crimes. Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are particularly vulnerable, as the lack of financial

independence combined with social stigma can push them toward criminal activities. Many women, especially mothers, feel the urgent need to safeguard their families from financial disaster or to enhance their children's quality of life, leading them to commit acts such as theft or fraud. This reality highlights the critical need for systemic changes that empower women and provide them with alternative avenues for a stable and dignified life. Female offenders are often seen citing pressures such as single motherhood or poverty as reasons for criminal behaviour.

### **e. Crimes Linked to Mental Health and Domestic Circumstances**

There is an increasingly urgent need to acknowledge the profound impact of mental health disorders on female criminality. Many women who engage in violent or other criminal behaviours often grapple with untreated mental health issues, which the criminal justice system frequently fails to recognize. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) (2020) reveals that approximately 10% of female offenders were struggling with mental health problems at the time of their offenses. It is crucial to understand that many of these women have suffered years of abuse, leading to devastating consequences such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and a range of other mental health challenges. Furthermore, female offenders often engage in relational hostility and emotional manipulation, committing serious crimes that include financial exploitation of family members and intimate partners, emotional abuse, and interpersonal violence. Unfortunately, the insidious nature of these offenses often results in them being underreported, highlighting the need for greater awareness and intervention in the realm of female criminality and mental health.

### **2.1 Statistical Insights on Female Criminality in India**

To further understand the prevalence and types of crimes committed by women in India, it is essential to analyze recent data.

- According to the NCRB's Crime in India Report (2020), women constituted 4.2% of all arrests in India. While this figure seems low compared to the arrest rates of men, the percentage of women involved in property-related offenses and violent crimes is significant.
- Of the total female arrests, 19.4% were for theft and property crimes, followed by 9.6% for violent crimes, including domestic violence and murder (National Crime Records Bureau, 2020).

- Drug-related offenses saw an increase, with 8% of drug-related arrests involving women. Women's involvement in narcotic offenses has been particularly prevalent in urban centers and areas with high rates of drug trafficking (National Crime Records Bureau, 2020).

These statistics highlight the gendered nature of crime in India, where women are often involved in crimes stemming from their socio-economic conditions, domestic circumstances, and psychological trauma. The rise in female criminality in India, particularly in property and violent crime categories, calls for a comprehensive understanding of the underlying social, economic, and psychological factors. The legal system must adopt gender-responsive policies that recognize the unique motivations and challenges women face when involved in crime. Despite women's increasing involvement in criminal activities, current law enforcement and judicial frameworks remain largely male-centered. There is a need for more nuanced approaches to female criminal behaviour, including the incorporation of forensic psychological assessments in criminal cases involving women. Moreover, legal reforms that address the root causes of female criminality such as poverty, domestic violence, and mental health will help ensure more equitable and just treatment for female offenders in the Indian legal system.

### **3. Gendered Insights: Forensic Psychology in Indian Law**

Forensic psychology has emerged as a vital element in contemporary investigative and legal frameworks, as highlighted by Bartol and Bartol (2012). Its applications ranging from psychological testing to criminal profiling and evidence interpretation enable authorities to delve into the complexities of criminal behaviour, uncovering both the "how" and the "why." However, in India, the implementation of forensic psychology faces significant hurdles, including a lack of awareness, insufficient gender sensitivity, and a lack of standardization. This is particularly evident in the treatment of female offenders, who are often relegated to the roles of passive participants or victims turned criminals (Nayar, 2016). This chapter seeks to underscore the critical need for nuanced profiling of women accused of crimes by thoroughly examining relevant Indian laws, innovative forensic psychological methods, and compelling case studies.

#### **3.1 Forensic Psychology: Legal Backbone in India**

Forensic psychology, while not explicitly defined in the Indian legal system, is permitted through various statutory and judicial directives. Section 45 of the Indian Evidence Act of 1872 recognizes expert testimony, including that of psychologists, as admissible for establishing the

facts of a case (Bare Act, 2023). Additionally, Section 45A expands the scope of digital forensics in cybercrimes involving women, such as revenge porn and sextortion cases, by explicitly allowing expert testimony related to electronic evidence (Verma, 2020).

Furthermore, under Section 53 of the 1973 Code of Criminal Procedure, medical professionals, including psychiatrists, may examine an accused individual at the request of investigating authorities (Krishnan, 2021). Lastly, Section 164 allows for forensic validation of recorded confessions or statements when there are questions regarding their voluntariness or the mental soundness of the individuals involved (Singh, 2018).

Article 20(3) of the Indian Constitution unequivocally prohibits compelling an individual to self-incriminate. The application of techniques such as polygraph, narco-analysis, and BEOS tests is firmly regulated by this constitutional safeguard, as clearly established in the landmark case of *Selvi v. State of Karnataka* (2010) (Sarkar, 2011).

Furthermore, these tests must be conducted in a manner that is voluntary, ethical, and non-coercive, in strict accordance with the guidelines set forth by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), as well as established procedural court decisions and judicial precedents (NHRC Guidelines, 2015).

### **3.2 Taxonomy and Techniques of Forensic Profiling**

#### **A. Forensic Psychological Profiling**

By meticulously examining crime scene evidence, victim interactions, and the offender's modus operandi, the profiling technique crafts a detailed behavioral blueprint of the perpetrator (Turvey, 2011). This sophisticated approach not only sheds light on psychological motivations but also plays a crucial role in identifying potential suspects and forecasting future criminal activity. When profiling female offenders, it is vital to consider profound psychological triggers such as abandonment, betrayal, or prolonged victimization (Walker, 1984), as well as the relational dynamics that often include histories of domestic abuse (Browne et al., 1999). Additionally, attention must be paid to subtle forms of aggression, such as poisoning and manipulation (Ewing, 2006). In the striking case of Indrani Mukerjee, who was implicated in the Sheena Bora murder case in 2015, a compelling psychological profile revealed strong characteristics of narcissism, emotional manipulation, and control-driven behaviour. Notably, these traits are less frequently observed in male offenders involved in similar crimes (Ghosh,

2016). This distinction underscores the importance of tailored profiling techniques that reflect the unique psychological patterns associated with female offenders.

Standardized instruments designed to measure mental fitness, personality traits, and emotional stability play a vital role in psychological assessments during investigations. For example, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) is an invaluable tool for diagnosing psychopathology and evaluating tendencies toward dishonesty or aggression (Butcher et al., 2001). The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) is effective in assessing cognitive abilities and planning skills (Wechsler, 2008). Similarly, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) provides insights into societal perceptions and internal conflicts (Murray, 1943), while the Rorschach Inkblot Test helps in understanding mental disorders and personality structure (Exner, 2003). These instruments are instrumental in differentiating between intentional behaviors and those influenced by mental health conditions, such as postpartum psychosis, particularly in sensitive cases involving mothers accused of filicide (Resnick, 1969). Moreover, forensic psychologists conduct thorough examinations of individuals' past relationships, educational histories, experiences of abuse, and early traumas, providing a comprehensive understanding of their background. This holistic approach enhances the accuracy and effectiveness of psychological assessments in the forensic setting.

Common characteristics of female offenders include economic dependence (Klein & Rizzo, 1980), substance misuse as a coping mechanism (Covington, 2007), and a history of sexual abuse (Widom, 1989). Research on female accomplices in similar crimes indicates that their involvement is often marked by coercion, dependency, or a desire for retribution, rather than a direct intention to commit the crime. This is notable even in cases like *R vs. Dhananjay Chatterjee* (2004), where the primary accused was a man (Banerjee, 2005).

## **B. Psychological Profiling by Crime Type – With Female-Centric Analysis**

- **Infanticide and Neonaticide:** Often committed by women under social stigma, trauma, or psychological illness (Oberman, 2003). The *Priyanka Bharti case (2017)* in Bihar involved a young mother accused of abandoning her infant. Psychological evaluation revealed extreme postnatal depression and coercive family pressure (Singh & Jha, 2018).
- **Serial Poisoning:** Some women offenders in India have employed subtle, non-confrontational methods. The *Jolly Joseph case (Kerala, 2019)* involved the slow

poisoning of six family members over 14 years. Psychological profiling identified deep-seated manipulation tendencies and social image obsession (Thomas, 2020).

- Honor Killings & Domestic Abuse Retaliation: When women retaliate against years of domestic violence, psychological tests often reveal complex PTSD, a factor that could mitigate culpability (Herman, 1992).
- Terrorism and Political Violence: Women involved in extremist activity often show signs of indoctrination, identity crisis, or familial revenge motives (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007).

### 3.3 Crime Scene Analysis in Female-Perpetrated Offenses

Female offenders often leave less chaotic but more personalized crime scenes like use of soft weapons namely poison (Kelleher & Kelleher, 1998), minimal struggle and focused victim targeting mostly intimate partners and children. While often used on male suspects, polygraphs applied to women reveal different stress patterns. Female offenders may internalize guilt or trauma, leading to false positives (Vrij, 2008). *Selvi v. State of Karnataka* stated tests can only be conducted with informed consent (Sarkar, 2011). The test results not admissible as evidence but useful for corroborative leads. In the 2020 Tuticorin custodial death case, psychological tools though not polygraph were discussed as part of ensuring unbiased investigations (Sharma, 2020). Used in high-profile crimes, this test may create ethical dilemmas when used on traumatized female offenders, who may regress into past abuse or dissociation under sedation (Kumar, 2011). Although legally limited to voluntary use, it has been used in cases involving terrorism-linked women suspects and women accused of political or ideological violence (Menon, 2019). This emerging technology holds promise, particularly as a non-invasive and non-interrogative method that respects the dignity of women offenders (Farwell, 2012). BEOS was used to analyze the involvement of a woman in the 2012 Pune baby kidnapping case. The test revealed experiential knowledge of the crime, directing investigators toward physical evidence (Desai, 2013).

### 3.4 Statistical Treatment of Data

**Data interpretation is essential for objectivity and legal credibility. In profiling female offenders, common patterns emerge:**

- 80% have experienced domestic violence or childhood trauma (NCRB, 2021).
- 60% were unemployed or financially dependent.
- 40% acted under duress or emotional distress (Pandey & Kumar, 2020).

Statistical tools such as SPSS or R may be used for correlating behaviour with socio-economic factors (Field, 2013), risk assessment modelling, and recidivism prediction.

Forensic psychological profiling when practiced with gender sensitivity and ethical rigor offers more than just investigative utility; it serves as a mirror to the systemic traumas that often precede women's criminality (Jordan, 1997). The female offender in India is not merely a transgressor but frequently a survivor of prolonged structural violence be it in the form of domestic abuse, economic marginalization, or psychological abandonment (Nayar, 2016). In such cases, profiling becomes a means not of incrimination, but of contextualization. The legal system must move beyond a one-size-fits-all interpretation of crime and culpability. Indian jurisprudence, rooted in constitutional values of equality (Article 14) and dignity (Article 21), demands a justice process that understands the mind, not merely the act (Baxi, 2008). Psychological tools like the MMPI, TAT, and BEOS, when used responsibly, can help courts discern between premeditated malice and trauma-induced compulsion. Moreover, criminological theories such as Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963) and Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) affirm that crime, particularly among women, often arises from social alienation and institutional failure. A woman who kills her abusive spouse after years of torment is not simply a perpetrator; she is a person whose silent screams were systemically ignored. Profiling, in such instances, rehumanizes her in the eyes of law.

To embed this approach into legal practice, India must invest in standardized guidelines for gendered forensic psychological assessments (Krishnan, 2021), judicial sensitization programs on interpreting behavioral data (Verma, 2020), increased representation of trained female forensic professionals (Desai, 2013), legal reforms that treat psychological context as central to sentencing and rehabilitation (Baxi, 2008) Ultimately, profiling is not merely a forensic tool it is a transformative lens. One that, if wielded with care, can turn a punitive justice system into a restorative one anchored in empathy, truth, and the psychological reality of those who fall through its cracks.

#### **4. Faces of Deception: Unravelling India's Female Psychopathic Criminals**

The intersection of gender and psychopathy in criminal behaviour has long intrigued scholars and law enforcement alike (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). In India, the concept of women as offenders has often been overlooked, with societal stereotypes positioning women as victims or passive participants in crime (Nayar, 2016). However, an emerging trend reveals that

women, though fewer in number, are committing heinous and disturbing crimes that defy these stereotypes. Psychopathic women offenders present a unique challenge to criminology and the justice system due to their calculated, cold, and often manipulative behaviors (Turvey, 2011). This chapter explores some of the most heinous criminal cases in India involving female psychopath offenders, examining their psychological profiles, motivations, and the societal responses to such crimes. Psychopathy is characterized by a persistent pattern of disregard for the rights of others, lack of empathy, manipulateness, and often antisocial behaviors (Butcher et al., 2001). While psychopathy is more commonly associated with male offenders, recent studies suggest that women with psychopathic traits engage differently in crime, being more manipulative and less physically aggressive (Raghavan, 2012). Female psychopaths often utilize emotional manipulation and psychological control, making them particularly dangerous, as their crimes involve premeditation and deception, often remaining undetected for long periods (Covington, 2007).

#### 4.1 Dark Deeds Unveiled

- **Indrani Mukherjee – The Sheena Bora Murder Case (2015):** One of the most high-profile and chilling cases is the Sheena Bora murder case. Indrani Mukherjee, a former media executive, was arrested in 2015 for the murder of her daughter, Sheena Bora (Ghosh, 2016). Psychological evaluations revealed traits of psychopathy such as a lack of empathy, emotional detachment, and manipulateness (Krishnan, 2021). Her ability to maintain a controlled, calm exterior while orchestrating the crime exemplified psychopathic characteristics. The case shocked the nation and highlighted the psychological depth of female offenders who employ manipulation and complex emotional ties to execute crimes (Banerjee, 2005).
- **Jolly Joseph – Serial Poisoner (2019):** Jolly Joseph, from Kerala, was accused of poisoning six family members over several years (Thomas, 2020). Her method-gradual poisoning-illustrates the manipulative and calculating traits of psychopathy. Joseph displayed a lack of empathy and emotional detachment, with financial gain and control identified as her motives (Singh and Jha, 2018). Her crimes demonstrate how female psychopaths can operate beneath a facade of normalcy (Herman, 1992).
- **The Nithari Killings – Moninder Singh Pandher and Surender Koli (2006):** Although the Nithari case primarily involved male perpetrators, female participation also surfaced. Psychological studies reveal that female accomplices may act under coercion or from psychopathic inclinations, masked under familial facades (Ewing, 2006). The emotional

detachment and absence of remorse displayed support theories of female psychopathy (Widom, 1989).

- **The Poornima Murder Case (2007):** Poornima from Tamil Nadu meticulously planned and murdered her husband (Oberman, 2003). The case illustrated emotional manipulation, seduction, and ultimate psychological detachment, characteristic of female psychopathy. Her crime challenges traditional perceptions of female criminality, highlighting the need to consider control and calculated cruelty as motives (Walker, 1984).
- **The Case of KD Kempamma ("Cyanide Mallika"):** India's first convicted female serial killer, KD Kempamma (Shetty, 2010), lured women with religious promises and poisoned them using cyanide. Forensic evaluations noted her manipulative religiosity, emotional coldness, and calculated approach—traits typically attributed to male psychopaths (Raghavan, 2012). Her actions question the gendered assumptions prevalent in Indian criminal profiling.
- **The Shabnam Ali Case (2008):** Shabnam Ali, with her partner, murdered seven family members opposing their relationship (Kumar, 2010). Psychological evaluation indicated romantic obsession, emotional conflict, and cultural conditioning as driving forces. The case exposed tensions between female agency and patriarchal pressures (Nayar, 2016), demanding a nuanced forensic analysis (Krishnan, 2021).
- **Satni Bai v. State of Madhya Pradesh (Now Chhattisgarh):** The accused-appellant was discovered gripping a bloodstained axe near her son's lifeless body. The Court astutely noted that a mother's instinctive reaction in such a devastating moment would typically be to collapse in grief and cradle her child. This stark contrast in her response raised serious concerns about her involvement in the crime, ultimately resulting in her conviction. (Malhotra 2019)
- **Lichhamadevi v. State of Rajasthan:** The accused-appellant was described as the "master of the house" and exhibited an "overbearing" and "barbaric" attitude. She had also pressured the deceased for a dowry. As a result of these factors, she was found guilty of her daughter-in-law's murder, leading to the Court's decision to convict her. (Malhotra, 2019)
- **Smt. Paniben v. State of Gujarat:** A court has revealed that a woman killed her daughter-in-law by throwing paraffin on her and setting her on fire. The woman expressed that even her maternal instincts could not prevent another woman in such a manner.

#### **4.2 Psychological Profile of Female Psychopaths**

Female psychopaths demonstrate more subtle yet powerful forms of control and manipulation compared to their male counterparts (Covington, 2007). Their defining traits include emotional coldness, characterized by a complete inability to form genuine emotional bonds (Resnick, 1969). They are adept at long-term planning, executing criminal strategies with precision and patience (Turvey, 2011). Utilizing charm and emotional tactics, female psychopaths effectively manipulate and deceive those around them (Exner, 2003). Furthermore, they operate without remorse, committing horrific acts without a shred of guilt (Butcher et al., 2001). The presence of female psychopaths challenges long-standing gender biases in the legal system (Klein and Rizzo, 1980). However, the identification of female psychopath remains a complex issue, as it is often hidden beneath socially acceptable behaviours (Sarkar, 2011). Legal adaptations must prioritize psychological assessment over gendered assumptions to ensure fair justice (NHRC, 2015). Societal awareness must also evolve, recognizing that women are capable of orchestrating calculated, heinous crimes not immediately visible to public scrutiny (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). Female psychopathic offenders defy traditional gender norms, presenting unique challenges to the criminal justice system (Banerjee, 2005; Turvey, 2011). Their manipulation, emotional detachment, and calculated approach demand greater attention in forensic profiling and judicial processes. Grasping the psychological dimensions of these offenders is essential for ensuring justice, developing rehabilitation strategies, and protecting society from such hidden dangers (Krishnan, 2021).

### **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The growing number of women participating in criminal activities poses a serious threat to Parsons' theory of masculinity, which holds that characteristics like toughness and aggression are essentially gendered and make crime in apt for women. However, women's participation in serious offenses including murder, drug-related crimes, excise violations, dowry-related offenses, attempted murder, theft, and immoral trafficking strengthens Merton's theory. Merton argues that pressure and stress can lead individuals down the path of criminal behaviour. When aspirations to achieve specific goals collide with obstacles that hinder their attainment, it creates a profound sense of tension. This psychological strain often manifests as frustration, driving individuals to commit crimes as a means to fulfil their ambitions or alleviate their distress. The growing evidence of women's criminal involvement demands a deeper exploration of societal expectations and the factors that push individuals toward unlawful actions.

The study reveals that inclination towards criminal behaviour is seen in women with low moral standards and specific psychological vulnerabilities. These women endure considerable stress stemming from their marginalized status in both family and society, which can push them towards deviant actions as a form of coping. Cultural pressures significantly amplify this stress. Despite facing profound hardships, societal norms often prevent women from leaving their husbands' homes. Furthermore, when an Indian woman courageously asserts her rights and seeks autonomy within her marriage, it can exacerbate the already fragile dynamics, leading to heightened tension and conflict. This illustrates the urgent need to address the systemic issues that confine women's freedom and well-being.

This study leverages psychological profiling of female prisoners to uncover the critical factors driving the alarming increase in female criminality. It is essential to note that there is no definitive "recipe" or exclusive formula for effective forensic psychological profiling. Successful profiling demands a deep understanding of human behaviour, extensive experience in criminal investigations, and solid academic and forensic training. This approach is particularly invaluable for addressing complex crimes that require a thorough psychological, social, cultural, and psychiatric evaluation, including child molestation, rape, arson, and serial killing (Hazelwood & Burgess, 1995). By applying these insights, we can develop more targeted interventions and preventative strategies to combat the rising tide of female criminality.

The female inmates have begun to recognize their own roles in the consequences their actions have had on their children and families, leading them to feel a profound sense of self-blame. They openly acknowledge their offenses and carry a legitimate sense of guilt for their past behaviours. Interestingly, many of them express satisfaction with the treatment and facilities provided by the local authorities, whom they see as instrumental in redirecting their criminal tendencies toward positive social behaviour. This shift has prompted a deeper understanding that every event is shaped by both situational and psychological factors. As they grapple with feelings of remorse, they realize that the compassion, attention, and supportive relationships cultivated with fellow prisoners and staffs have played a crucial role in transforming their mindset. They now deeply appreciate the importance of nurturing bonds with their loved ones and recognize the intrinsic value of meaningful work.

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