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# Criminal Psychology of Serial Killers Behind Closed Doors

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“One awful night a starving traveller knocks the door, when its opened looks around.....he or she is warmly welcomed and then what now remains is a house held in silence” fear finds its dwelling in every heart when crimes fasten themselves, a criminal affecting the society has his own identification distinct of the society. An identification of a criminal personality is key to reroute the mind of a criminal which is enclosed by his own fantasies. Criminal psychology is a subject that revolves around mental faculties of crime and helps to curb the same. Long from the time we have lived murderers persist and when one successfully comprehends the reason for such murders they can be eradicated, among such perpetrators are serial killers who plan, attack and murder. To combat such dangerous killers one has to dig deep into their mind, which reveals all and provides settlement to the issue. Today thereby investigations are lead by forensic or criminal psychologists who aid and assist the public officers to track down the criminal by chalking out profiles of them; these are used in every stage to locate any future crimes. From its emergence psychology has categorized murderers on the basis of their actions which forms a lead every times its modified, the significance of psychology can be better inferred by the existence of man himself as one is what his/her mind reflects.

The world of crimes is by virtue of its existence a part of the common manhood, and though it can be denied and diluted there exists a history behind every criminal Act and this can be studied. When studied it becomes untangled to aid and assist all other forms of developments in this unlikely world and might even control them to an extent. This link between a criminal and his mind is fathomed through the subject of Psychology. Criminal Psychology or Criminological Psychology is a study that highlights the behaviour and personality of a criminal and their natural instincts or *in the words of G.H Gudjonsson and L.R.C Haward Criminal Psychology is* “The branch of applied psychology which is concerned with the collection, examination and presentation of evidence for judicial purposes”<sup>2</sup>

Over the years many criminals have been tracked down with the help of this massive tool of

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<sup>2</sup> Mahima Sharma, *Scope of Criminal Psychology*, LEGAL SERVICES INDIA, (Apr 3,2020),<http://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-1024-scope-of-criminal-psychology.html>

conscience. There are various questions that revolve around a crime and a criminal such as what beholds it, what instigates it, does motive exist, and whether in this contemporary world a desire to earn bread and butter is so imminently powerful that it could forerun crimes. The constant effort of Psychologists and Criminologists has brought a light to the topic and attached certain characteristic personalities to the criminals. Above all forms of criminals are serial killers who tend to retreat back to the society and create an imbalance; India has also experienced some of the wildest malefactors for instance Devendra Sharma, The Nithari Killers, Autoshankar, Charles Sobhraj, Thug Behram, Cyanide Mohan, M. Jaishankar, Akku Yadav and others.<sup>3</sup>

A “Serial Killer” as the name suggests is one who has number of hosts or victims and conducts a murder over a specific time frame with a particular motivational gain. Most of the serial killers work alone but in certain cases ranging from 10 to 35 percent work in the form of duos or pairs, in this each of them has a specific role to play. But these serial killers who have a propensity to raise all forms of fright and alarm are having certain similarities, usually when their emotional faculties tend to become unreceptive without any knowledge of remorse and affection during their period of infancy, such form of situation leads to certain disorders in their personality. They as children might have experienced rejection, isolation, trauma and others building them into a person who is reluctant of effects of their actions. A study has indicated that 42% of convicts who have then been serial killers were subjected to physical abuse, 74% psychological abuse, 35% who suffered sexual abuse, and about 29% of them were accident prone children.<sup>4</sup> Such decay in ones personality brings a tendency to rift their thinking abilities from the natural world. Thereby being no driving factors of motivation in a killer except the satisfaction of the Act of crime that brings to them, to their dismay it only holds a diversion from the dissatisfactions encountered by them.

The FBI symposium in USA in the year 2005 stated that a manslayer selects his/her host on the basis of the availability, vulnerability and desirability. There might also be situations where one chooses the victim even on the basis of suffering he or she has experienced. It was further observed that a serial killer can have several motives to commit the murder such as financial gain, any form of ideology or anger against society, power or thrill related to crime or any sexual based motivation can be a reason for the crime.

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<sup>3</sup> Raj Das, *16 serial killer you'll be shocked to know*, SCOOP WHOOP (Apr 2, 2020), <https://www.scoopwhoop.com/inothernews/gruesome-indian-serial-killers/>

<sup>4</sup> *The psychology of a serial killer*, WEB LEMOYNE, (Apr 3 2020) [http://web.lemoyne.edu/~Freemams/index\\_files/psych\\_serial.htm](http://web.lemoyne.edu/~Freemams/index_files/psych_serial.htm), (reference: The only living witness-Stephen G)

These types of offenders are having a topology or a classification that distinguishes them from each other. Holmes and DeBurger have divided them into groups of four as the mission oriented, Hedonistic, visionary and power-control serial killers. A mission oriented killer is the one who deems that it's their calling to kill the victims and they are riding the world with their mission, in such cases victims are women, homosexuals etc, Joseph Paul Franklin who killed 12 black males is an example for mission oriented topology.

A Hedonistic killers on the other hand are those who are not driven by any force but kill purely for the purpose of thrill and joy for example to obtain any form of sexual pleasure from the victim such the killer Jaffrey Dahmer. A Visionary Murderer are those who commit offences in the light of any suffering or psychological illness, one among them was Son of Sam or David Berkowitz, these are killers who have been compelled or have received any command to kill, just opposite to them are the power-control oriented killers who only undertake the activity in the guise of bloodlust and fake power and control, Ted Bundy who received a lot of media coverage operating between the years 1946-1989 is one among those who conducted various homicides to acquire power and control.

Stephen Giannangelo has provided a *Diathesis-stress model* to describe the process of becoming a serial killer<sup>5</sup>, it spots that serial killers have infirmity or trait that is habitual and built-in which makes them to behave in a manner paramount to killing, if such a trait comes in contact with any other form of environmental aggravation then it creates dysfunctional problems. The problems contest against one another crushing the criminal to a self drawn fantasy world, as one resides longer in such a trap the person sets off to become one crossing all potential limits of morality. In the gust of the same he/she attempts a murder forcing the victim to live up to his fantasies, but when this expectation fails the killers attempt another crime, hence making it a ritualistic or obsessive-compulsive behaviour.

The preferred age for any person to set forth to the vicious world of crime is mid 20s or about 28 years of age, most of these crimes decline or the criminals retreat by 40s or 50s though excluding the exceptions to such certainty. In general parlance most of them have only average IQ levels except few, any considered killer would fit in the technical definition of a Psychopath, but every psychopath is not a murderer since 1 in 150 people turns out to be the same. A study conducted on 5000 convicts by Kent Kiehl a Neuroscientist states that most of the psychopaths

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<sup>5</sup> *Violent crimes*, SAGEPUB, (Apr 5 2020), [https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/23890\\_Pages\\_369\\_371.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/23890_Pages_369_371.pdf)

turn to be criminals and are subjected to neural malfunctions. Thereby they either are psychopaths or have an anti social personality (Sociopaths), but as this does not amount to legal insanity one cannot plead not guilty. Most of them have a calm persona in contrast to their predatory practices. A killer by such nature is not provoked but only undertakes the hunt he/she feels the need of it, the host falls prey to them as they are good at twisting individual's perception and manipulating the person in concern. On the other hand a thrill oriented or Hedonistic killer lacks any form of empathy and finds delight in inflicting slow and gradual pain on their victims.

Relying on the above factors in can be brought forth that a serial killer is not made or born unlike that is speculated, but the susceptibility in each case varies as to whether such qualities are genital or are due to anti social temperament.

Indian Subcontinent has also seen many serial killers who engulfed in their worlds of disorder, cruelty, and gruesomeness has instilled terror in the hearts of many. Gowri Shankar, popularly known by the *Auto Shankar* is one among them. He was born in Vellore district and created dread in the city of madras between the years 1987-1988, Auto Shankar committed six murders and many more between the timespan commencing from a woman named Lathika. Even before any form of killings Shankar had a history in illicit brewing (coconut liquor) and conducting prostitute houses (flesh trade) along with his five accomplices, finally Shankar was tracked down and arrested by the Chennai police leading to the unearthing of bodies of his victims. On the basis of the criminal profile it can be inferred that Auto Shankar was a power-control serial killer.

Similarly *Charles Sobhraj* who is often referred to as the Bikini killer is a very famous serial murderer who robbed people to live his riches and then calmly executed his plan to earn the victims trust and later defraud them, between the years 1975-1976 he killed about 12 people. Motive of such killers is mere financial gain to live an extravagant life. Thug Behram who is India's prolific murderer has killed almost 931 people during the years 1790-1840 and he first strangulated his hosts before looting them completely. A proper review of criminal's profile provides a conscious figure of the criminal activities or his ideologies and even aids to rehabilitate them at an earlier stage of their life. A considerate view in this matter is also that and effective research on a criminal mind can aid the hunt of the criminal in most of the cases, as "people are what they think and how they do what is thought"

Criminal Psychology first originated in the year 1897 with the book written by Hans Gross and after which it took about 60 years for another attempt to be made by Hans Toch to evolve a

book with infinite details on the subject matter. The psychological view of crimes has drawn its genesis from countries like Europe, Russia etc. In India the first department of its kind was set up in Calcutta University in 1916 and later in the year 1972 a National Institute of Criminology and Forensic sciences was established in Delhi to extract the psychological essence of offences. In accordance with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report of 2018 crimes in India have increased by 1.3% i.e. now encompassing about 50 lakh and above rate of offences within the country<sup>6</sup>, also with overriding prison cells our country faces a shortage of Criminal Psychologists and who stand in the posts to advice are not given adequate authority to deal with the matter. This shortage not only limits the numerical aspect of inability to redress issues but also there lies no development in the field of the understanding the state of mind of a criminal. Since, an adequate control can be enforced on the rate of criminality by solving problems at ground level i.e. from where the insight of an offender begins. Apart from it to address any issue of the convicts a counsellor is required, making the necessity for larger requirements higher and stronger. Though India has notable criminal Psychologists like Ahuja Trehan Kapur, S.L Vaya and others but the lack of availability is still scare and insufficient. In the course of time criminal Psychology from its very inference has evolved bringing change in the perspective that a criminal is sinner to a drastic swift that he or she can be even a victim of situations, this approach seeks to give resolution to pondering issues of heinous cycle of wrong. The Science of mind is an insight to a man and also a revolution that addresses criminal activities at the stage of its inception. Serial killers like Madan bhawanlal Nayak can be easily curtailed to refrain from wrongful activities by getting acumen of their mind. In fact Psychology is a facility bestowed to solve complex mind. The subject has enabled to figure out that a healthy person does not torture and it is the person who is tortured, who tortures others. Hence as said by Carl Jung “*In all chaos, there is a cosmos and in all disorder there is an order*”,<sup>7</sup> and if there exists disorder, order can be brought by correcting behaviour.

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<sup>6</sup> *Crimes in India Increased*, LIVEMINT, (Apr 6 2020) ,<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/crime-in-india-increased-by-1-3-in-2018-ncrb-11578562577195.html>,

<sup>7</sup> Shabdita Pareek, *24 quotes on human psychology by Carl Jung*, SCOOP WHOOP, (Apr 6 2020), <https://www.scoopwhoop.com/carl-jung-quotes-on-human-psychology/>