

Various explanations have been given for the analysis of the deviant behaviour of a person. Starting from the pronouncements of Social Darwinists like Lombroso that the criminals are born and not made upto the presently widely accepted Cloward and Ohlin's sociological theory of Blocked Opportunities, in between we have had many other explanations by scholars like Sheldon, Goddard, Healy and Bronner, Sutherland, Bonger, Quetlet and Merton. Most of these writers have explained crime as a homogenous phenomenon without reference to the question of sub-types or differences in the form it takes. However, some of these explanations have become outmoded and have lost their scientific validity though some have their champions even today. Recent studies in Sociology, Psychology and Criminology have indicated that criminals cannot be understood fully except in the context of the total social and genetic situations within which they live and try to adjust themselves. During the past one or two decades particularly, there has been growing awareness and recognition of the fact that anti-social behaviour can best be comprehended in terms of the interrelationship between personality, culture and social systems. The criminal behaviour of women has also to be understood within this frame of reference, i.e., in terms of the interrelatedness between their personality characteristics,

their social organisations and their internalised cultural values.

#### THE PROBLEM

The present paper concentrates only on one type of female offenders, viz., the murderers and has two major purposes: (1) to discover motivation in murder and conceptualise on the role of family in the criminal homicide of women, (2) to study how the family adjusts itself in a situation of crisis created by the absence of a woman due to her imprisonment. Our approach to the analysis of female's murder is based on "Family-centered explanation". To treat the murder committed by a woman in terms of all or even some of the above-mentioned explanations would have introduced a complexity unmanageable within the confines of this paper. For this reason, we have been primarily concerned with the pattern of family relationships. By analysing the structural problems of family organisation and by studying the types of functional problems in women's families of procreation, an attempt has been made to test and verify the hypothesis that a high proportion of murders committed by women are due to maladjustment in interpersonal relationships within the family. The hypothesis and the doctrinaire interpretation is however tentative.

The study is based on the case studies of 136 murderers interviewed in the three states of Rajasthan, Punjab and Madhya

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Pradesh in India.\* Out of approximately 200 female convict prisoners every year in each of these three States, about 65 percent are those whose term of imprisonment is less than six months while 35 percent are those who get more than six month's imprisonment. In the later group, about 20 percent are murderers. The interviews of all the murderers in the jails in the three States at the time of study i.e. 50 in Rajasthan, 27 in Punjab, and 59 in Madhya Pradesh provided a basis for the present analysis.\*\*

#### THE SAMPLE

The study indicated that the popular belief regarding the relationship between female homicide and some sub-cultural variables like caste, residence and social class etc. is misleading. 70.6 percent murderers in our sample were caste—Hindus, 16.1 percent Sikhs, and 13.3 percent scheduled tribals, Muslims and members of backward castes. Of the 96 caste-Hindus, 37.5 percent belonged to upper castes, 40.6 percent to intermediate castes and 21.9 percent to lower castes, indicating thereby that it cannot be inferred, as is commonly done, that the female murderers in particular and female offenders in general come from the lower castes.

Further, 76.5 percent offenders were found to have a background of rural life while 23.5 percent came from towns and cities. From this it should not be inferred that because 7.6 out of every 10 murderers

come from villages, therefore, female murder is necessarily a rural phenomenon. In fact, of the total population, 83.07 percent in Rajasthan, 80.4 percent in Punjab, and 82.3 percent in Madhya Pradesh is rural. This shows that when only 16.93 percent of the population in Rajasthan, 19.6 percent in Punjab and 17.7 percent in Madhya Pradesh is urban, 24.0 percent of the murderers in Rajasthan, 29.6 percent in Punjab and 20.3 percent in Madhya Pradesh in our sample had an urban background. It may be concluded thereby that urban areas produce more female murderers than rural areas.

The age variation in female homicides revealed that young women commit more murders than the middle-aged or the old. The analysis of the commitment age showed that 61.8 percent women were young (below 30 years), 32.3 percent were middle-aged (30 to 50 years) and only 5.9 percent were old (above 50 years). The peak age of murder was found to be varying from 25 to 35 years, the mean being 30.8 and median 26.3. This is the age at which a person is both chronologically and mentally matured and is biologically and socially capable of understanding and performing the marital and other social roles.

The indication of the relationship between the crime of murder and membership in lower-class group was suggested by the fact that 8.5 out of 10 murderers' husbands were engaged in lower-class occupations. 56.6 percent respondents' husbands were

\* Though the number of murderers studied is small and may appear to be inadequate for warranting generalisations made in this paper, but considering the fact that the total number of murders committed by the females in a year is always very small, these cases give enough background for developing and verifying hypothesis for exploratory purposes.

\*\* All Women convicted and imprisoned in Rajasthan are kept in the Female Reformatory in Central Jail at Jaipur, while those of Punjab and Delh are kept in Ludhiana District Jail and of Madhya Pradesh in Jabalpur Central Jail. 32 murders in female Reformatory in Jaipur (Rajasthan) were studied in May-June 1966 and 18 in November-December 1968, while 27 murderers in Ludhiana were studied in December 1968 and 59 murderers in Jabalpur in October 1969.

agriculturists, 25.0 percent were engaged in some service, 15.4 percent were self-employed (tailors, goldsmiths, pujaris, shopkeepers, bidi-makers, potters, milk-sellers, contractors, wood-cutters etc.), 1.5 percent were unskilled labourers, and 1.5 percent were unemployed or retired persons. Wolfgang's (1958, 178) study of 588 victims and 621 slayers in Philadelphia between 1948 and 1952 had also revealed that 9 out of 10 criminal homicides were in lower class occupations.

The data on the income of the family showed that as many as 85.3 percent offenders come from very poor or poor families (with less than Rs. 300 p.m.), 11.0 percent from middle-class families (with Rs. 300-600 p.m.) and only 3.7 percent from upper-class families (with more than Rs. 600 p.m.). Though this economic status does not necessarily indicate the role of poverty in female murder, yet it is significant in the sense that low income is an important contributory factor to family tensions, and a combination of unsatisfactory social relationships and poverty is conducive to criminal behaviour. Further, the upper-class behaviour system prescribes norms that are different from the behavioral norms of the lower class. There exists a cultural antipathy between many rationalisations of women of the lower class on the one hand and the behavioral norms under which the women of the middle and upper class live on the other.

The discussion of various components above indicates the role of sub-cultural factors in female murder. Bearley's (1932) and Wolfgang's (1958) studies of homicides in the United States also give us such insights into what the later terms the 'Sub-culture of violence'.

#### VICTIM IN MURDER

In large number of cases, the offenders and the victims were found to be heterogeneous with respect to sex and age. Only in 15.6 percent cases, the offenders' victims were persons of their own sex and in 42.6 percent cases of the same age group.

This heterogeneous characteristic of homicide in offender-victim relationship in our study is just the anti-thesis of homogeneous relationship found by Edwin Driver (1961, 153-158) in his study of 144 cases in Madhya Pradesh, or by Harlan (1950, 744) in his study of 500 male and female murderers in Alabama, or by Berg and Fox (1947, 115) in their study of 200 male murderers in Michigan, or by Sutherland (1950, 543-554) in his study of 324 female murders.

Further, in 81.5 percent cases, the victim had some kinship relationship with the offender. In 103 cases, the victim was a member of the offender's family while in 8 cases, he was outside the family (Hu Si So = 2, SiDa = 1, Si SoSo = 1, DaHuFa = 1, distant Kin = 2, Hu Si Da-in-law = 1). Of the 103 family members involved as victims, 92.2 percent were members of the family of procreation and 7.8 percent were members of the family of orientation (FaBrDa = 2; FaBrSo = 2; Brwi = 2; BrDa = 1 and Si = 1). Out of 95 members from conjugal families, in 55 cases the victim was husband, in 18 cases the woman's own child (So = 10; Da = 8), in 4 cases ego's secondary kin (Sowi = 3, SoSo = 1), in 3 cases ego's Co-wife's son, and in 15 cases, the husband's primary or secondary kin (HuFa = 2; HuBr = 3; HuSi = 2; HuMo = 3, HuBrWi = 2; HuBrSo = 2; HuFaMo = 1). This fact of victim being usually a kin or a close associate of the offender in crimes of murder

TABLE 1  
HOMOGENEITY AND HETEROGENEITY IN AGE GROUPS OF OFFENDERS  
AND THEIR VICTIM

		<i>Age-group of</i>		
<i>Offender</i>		<i>Victim</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Homogeneity	Very young	Very young	1	0.8
	Young	Young	35	25.6
	Middle-aged	Middle-aged	21	15.4
	Old	Old	1	0.8
			58	42.6
Heterogeneity	Very young	Young	4	3.0
	Young	Infant	15	11.0
	Young	Very young	7	5.1
	Young	Middle-aged	12	8.8
	Young	Old	9	6.5
	Middle-aged	Infant	8	6.0
	Middle-aged	Very young	4	3.0
	Middle-aged	Young	7	5.1
	Middle-aged	Old	6	4.4
	Old	Infant	1	0.8
	Old	Young	2	1.5
	Old	Middle-aged	3	2.2
		78	57.4	
TOTAL			136	100.0

(Infant = Below 5; Very young = 5 to 16;  
Young = 16 to 30; Middle-aged = 30 to 50;

Old = Above 50).

was also found by Bullock (1955, 572) in his study of urban homicides in Texas, by Svalastoga (1956, 40) in his study of 172 Danish cases, and by Sutherland (1950, 548) in his study of 324 murders of females. Wolfgang (1958, 212) however, had found such relationship only in 23.13 percent cases in his study of 588 homicides.

Out of 25 non-family members involved as victims, 23 were members of the primary groups viz.; the neighbourhood and the village (village = 11, neighbourhood = 12) and 2 were strangers (patient = 1; husband's friend = 1), showing thereby

that primary relations need more to be controlled in the case of female murderers.

#### MOTIVATION IN MURDER

As explained earlier, the etiology of female murder can be understood best on the basis of the conjunctive approach of personality and situation, but as already pointed out, we shall concentrate here only on the analysis of the structural and functional problems of women's families leading to homicides.

Out of 55 cases in which the husband

was the victim, the murder was committed, in 25 or 45.5 percent cases due to illicit relations of the offender with some man; in 6 or 10.9 percent cases, due to illicit relations of the victim with some woman; in 15 or 27.3 percent cases due to conflict with husband and/or maltreatment by husband; in 3 or 5.4 percent cases offenders accepted committing of husband's murder to save their son, brother and paramour respectively; in 5 or 9.1 percent cases, the offenders showed their innocence and reported false implication for the offence; and in 1 or 1.8 percent case murder was committed because husband wanted to criminally assault ego's daughter from the first husband.

In the first 25 cases, 10 women had illicit relations with husband's brothers, 7 with villagers, 3 with husband's friends, 2 with husband's brother's son, one with sister's husband, one with the Patwari of the village and one with a colleague-doctor.

Out of the 18 cases in which the victim was the woman's own son or daughter, in 7 cases the murder was committed because the children were illegitimate and the women were afraid of social ostracism; in 4, women had altercations with their husbands and in the heat of anger they killed their children; in 2, it was the result of mental aberration of the women (offenders); in one, the woman reported false implication by some unknown person and police; and in each of the remaining four cases, the child was killed either because the son often reported his mother's (ego's) illicit relations to his father, or because of the ego's conflict (with son) over property, or because the woman wanted to propitiate the goddess, or because the woman tried to commit suicide along with her child due to in-law's maltreatment (she was saved but the child was killed).

Out of the 22 cases in which the victim of the murder was some member of the husband's family (other than the husband or the child), in three, the husband's father and in one each HuMo, HuSi and HuFaMo were murdered because they ill-treated the respondents; in two, the sons' wives were murdered because they had failed to bring expected dowry; in two, the husband's brothers were killed because either they tried to molest the ego or forcibly marry her against her wishes; in three, the co-wives' children were killed due to conflict with co-wives; in fourteenth, the husband's brother's son was murdered because the respondent's husband had developed illicit relations with his brother's wife and the respondent wanted to retaliate by killing the woman's child; in fifteenth, the husband's brother's wife, who was also ego's real sister, was killed because ego's husband had developed illegitimate relations with the victim; in sixteenth husband's brother's son was killed while ego, victim, and victim's friend were drinking wine and they came to blows in the state of intoxication; in next three cases victim was killed either because of conflict with her (HuBrWi) over property or because she (HuMo) objected on ego's 'nata' (marriage without obtaining legal divorce) with her husband's brother (i.e. victim's son) or because she (SoWi) had illicit relations with some villager; and in the last three cases in which respondents were charged for killing husband's brother's son or husband's mother or husband's sister, they claimed false implication.

Out of 8 cases in which victims were the members of ego's family of orientation, in two cases in which father's brother's daughter and father's brother's son were victims, egos denied having committed the offences; in three cases brother's dau-

ghter, father's brother's daughter and father's brother's son were killed because respondents quarrelled with victim's parents; in one, sister was killed because she had developed illicit relations with ego's husband, in one brother's wife was killed in the state of intoxication; and in the last case, brother's wife was burnt alive because her father had insulted the ego over dowry issue.

In the murder of eight kins who were not the family members, in one case husband's sister's son was killed because of ego's dispute with her husband's sister; in another, sister's son's son was killed to propitiate goddess, in third daughter's husband's father was killed because he ill-treated ego's daughter; in fourth, husband's sister's son was murdered in the state of intoxication; in fifth, husband's sister's daughter-in-law was killed because ego had developed illicit relations with victim's husband and she (ego) wanted to get rid of her (victim); in sixth, sister's daughter was killed due to mental aberration; and in the last two cases the respondents who were also real sisters killed their distant uncle because he objected to one of the respondent's marriage with a boy of her choice.

Lastly, in the homicide of 25 non-family members, 8 villagers, 5 neighbours and a villager's daughter were killed as the result of a dispute over land or some other issue with the victim or victim's primary kin; in four cases victims (tenant = 1; husband's friend = 1; villagers = 2) were killed because they tried to molest egos; in two cases a village-girl and the land-lord's wife were killed because they had developed illicit relations with the respondents' husbands; in one, the neighbour was strangled because she had seen the ego and her paramour in a compromising position;

in one, the neighbour's child of seven years was thrown in a well by the ego being mentally upset due to her own child's death; in one a villager was murdered because he tried to criminally assault ego's sister; in one, the ego-nurse killed her patient of forty years age while helping her in the abortion of an illegitimate child; and in the last case of a villager's murder, the respondent claimed false implication by the relatives who wanted to get rid of her in order to take over her property.

This analysis gives us five important conclusions:—

(i) The largest group, little more than two fifths, (42%) of the murders grew out of sexual infidelity and little less than two fifths (39%) were the result of disputes and altercations. In other words, the major situations which motivated murders were illicit relations and ill-treatment by husband or in-laws and disputes.

(ii) Women's murders can be explained in terms of their contradictory or ill-defined roles in the family. Role collision (in which two different individuals — either husband and wife or daughter-in-law and parents-in-law etc. — have roles which are in conflict in some respect), role incompatibility (in which the same individual—the woman—plays roles which have contradictory expectations), and role confusion (in which there is a lack of agreement among group (family) members about the expectations for a given role) create struggle for a woman which sometimes compels her to indulge in felonious act.

(iii) In 60.3 percent cases, murders were committed due to familial maladjustments.

(iv) 50.7 percent crimes were victim-precipitated.

(v) 52.9 percent murders were the product of provocation rather than a sudden impulse or premeditation.

Before we analyse role conflicts and familial maladjustments, some reference to victim-precipitated crimes is necessary.

#### VICTIM-PRECIPIATED CRIMES

Victim-precipitated crimes are those in which victim is a direct and positive contributor to the criminal act by inciting the offender to overt action. (Wolfgan : 1962, 388). Of the 69 V.P. cases in our sample, in 12 cases, the immediate provocation was husband's infidelity, in 24 cases, it was ill-treatment of the ego by the victim, in 18 cases, it was the use of vile names by the victim during an argument between the offender and the victim, in 8 cases it was either striking a blow by the victim (husband or father-in-law or neighbour) in an altercation with the ego or the use of some weapons in attacking her, and in 7 cases it was victim's attempt to molest ego or her near kin.

#### FAMILIAL MALADJUSTMENTS

Many murders take place after a long period of interpersonal difficulties for which murder represented a possible solution. Most murders of this cumulative type arise out of these long-standing personal frictions. They may involve disputes between husbands and wives, or between daughter-in-law and some close relatives of in-law's families, or between daughters and some members of families of orientation. The study revealed that in 82 or 60.3 percent cases, the murders were committed due to prolonged personal disputes. Of these 82 disputes, 57 cases involved disputes between spouses either due to the illicit relations of egos (29 cases)

or illicit relations of ego's husbands (9 cases) or ill-treatment by husbands (19 cases), while 18 cases involved disputes between respondents and the members of their families of procreation. The other parties in these later disputes were either the husband's parents (5 cases) or husband's siblings (3 cases) or husband's brother's wife (2 cases) or ego's co-wife (3 cases) or ego's own son or son's wife (5 cases). Of the 7 cases of conflicts with the ego's members of families of orientation, in 4 cases the conflict was with father's brother, in 2 with brother's wife and in one with real sister. Even of the 20 women who denied the offence and reported false implication, 11 said they were falsely implicated by their family members (HuBr=5; HuFa=1, HuSi=il, HuBrSo=1, and husband's distant uncle = 2). The reasons given for false implication were : conflict over property = 3; conflict on issue other than property = 2, jealousy = 2, desire for illicit relations = 1, to save oneself from prosecution = 1; and not known = 2. Knowing thus the important role of intra-family conflicts in female murder, it is necessary to investigate the causes of stresses in the family.

In the analysis of stresses leading to murder, we will first see how familial maladjustments are related to age at marriage and then analyse the family structure, the stresses and the resultant crime.

The mean age at marriage in our study was 13.6 years and the median 15.2 years while 87 (or 65.0 percent) women had married in childhood i.e. before 15 years of age. This, however, does not mean that immediately after marriage, they had gone to their husband's house and started leading a married life. 47 or 35.1 percent women had gone to live with their husbands before 15 years of age, 70 or 52.3

percent between 15 and 20 years of age and 17 or 12.6 percent between 20 and 25 years of age. We can say that on an average, the woman started leading a married life at the age of 15.4 years. It can also be said on the basis of the above figures that 117 or 87.4% women were not ready physically and/or mentally for shouldering responsibilities of marriage. Marital adjustment, involving interaction between husband and wife, is a complex problem. The basic assumption in adjustment is that the personality characteristics and past behaviour of the person control his or her future conduct. The development of the personality traits and characteristics in turn depend upon chronological age and many other factors. Since in 96 or 71.6 percent cases, women in our sample were very young at the time of marriage (i.e. below 18 years of age), they had not developed their traits fully to help them in familial adjustments. They lacked patience, perseverance and prudence necessary for preserving the marital union. This created tensions in many families. Of those women who reported conflicts in their families, 70.3 percent were married before 14 years of age. In many cases these conflicts ultimately resulted in homicides.

As far the relationship between adjustment and family structure is concerned, it was found that besides facing the problem of adjustment with husbands, 32.3 women had also to face the problem of adjustment with kins other than husbands in their families of procreation. The following table describes the family situation of the respondents at the time of committing the crimes.

Though Table 2 distinctly shows that only 2.2 percent marriages had failed yet it should not be presumed that in all the

Table 2

TYPE OF FAMILIES AT THE TIME OF  
COMMITTING MURDER

<i>Family Situation</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Married and living with husband and/or children	64	47.0
2. Married and living with husband, children and in-laws	44	32.3
3. Married and living with parents	11	8.1
4. Married but deserted and living with parents	3	2.2
5. Widow and living alone or with children	11	8.1
6. Widow and living with parents	1	0.8
7. Unmarried and living with sister (unmarried)	2	1.5
<b>TOTAL :</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100.0</b>

119 cases in which women were living with their husbands and/or in-laws, the marriages were happy. Marital unhappiness is far more pervasive than statistics pertaining to joint residence of husband and wife or woman and her in-laws. In fact, 54.6 percent respondents had described their relations with husbands as not so well or extremely unwell. The reasons for the failure of marriages (66 cases) were described as : adulterous relations of respondents (39.5 percent), husbands' unfaithfulness (12.1 percent), maltreatment by husband or in-laws (36.4 percent), conflict with co-wives (4.5 percent), husbands' chronic illness (3.0 percent), and desertion by husband (4.5 percent). Here, it is worthwhile to see how long our respondents stayed with their husbands after marriage and before conviction. 9.9 percent lived with their husbands for less than one year, 9.1 percent between 1 to 2 years, 18.2 percent between 2 to 5 years, 20.7 percent between 5 to 10 years, 13.2 percent between 10 to 15 years, 11.6 percent between 15 to 20 years, and 17.3 per-

cent for more than 20 years. Thus, since the majority of marriages (62.8 percent) were in existence for over 5 years, we can say that the women had sufficient time to understand their husbands' nature and adjust themselves to their new homes. In spite of this long period available for adjustment, nearly one half of the offenders as already stated, had disputes with their husbands or in-laws. Marital discord specifically refers to a situation where there is a discrepancy between the role expectations and role behaviours of husband and wife in relation to each other. It may, therefore, be maintained that it was because of this heavy strain in family and intense emotional conflicts experienced by our respondents that had ultimately led them to commit murder. The situation was produced in part by the irresponsible behaviour of their husbands and in-laws and in part by the fact that the wives had problems of their own which their husbands were unable or unwilling to handle. This supports Abrahamson's (1960, 185) broad viewpoint that the force which compels a person to commit homicide is a conscious or unconscious feeling of social inadequacy, often caused by frequent frustrations. However, it is to be recognised that individuals vary in the amount of conflict which they experience, in the techniques they utilise in the solution of conflict and in the degree to which they utilise particular techniques. In other words, a wide variety of personality patterns showing varying degrees of organisation and disorganisation need be analysed in a woman's criminal behaviour, besides analysing the situation which compels her to commit murder.

But concentrating on the family situa-

tions which produce female murderers, we can set up a typology. Four types of families can be referred to in this context:

- (1) Families in which there is a great disparity of age between husband and wife.
- (2) Families where husbands and wives have several strained relations.
- (3) Families where women have to face traditional and uncompromising in-laws.
- (4) Nuclear families having no kinship relations with any other families and in which the husband because of the nature of his work remains absent from the house most of the time.

On the basis of this typology, we may conclude that crises in the relations of a woman with her husband and in-laws centre round (i) infidelity (ii) upsurge of hostility due to ill-treatment and (iii) major emotional disturbances.

#### CATEGORISATION

In the light of the above discussion, we may now categorise women murderers into various groups on the basis of preplanning and emotionalism, and the personality and the situation involved. Our data show that 68 or 60.2 percent murders were preplanned and perpetrated by some kind of wilful, deliberate and premeditated means while 45 or 39.8 percent were committed in a sudden heat or anger and without premeditation.\* Banay (1963, 232) also has referred to murders committed in sudden anger. Classifying murders on the basis of

\* These figures relate to murderers who had confessed their crimes. 20 murderers had denied the offence and 3 maintained that they had accepted crime to save somebody.

the situation in which they occur, he has given 3 types: (i) which result from a long period of hostility i.e. prolonged interpersonal disputes or longstanding personal friction, (ii) which occur in sudden anger or crisis situation, and (iii) which are committed in connection with another crime. But if we apply his classification on our sample, we will be able to explain only a small percentage of our murders. We have to take into consideration both the personality of the murderers and the situation in which they had killed persons in their categorisation. On this basis, we may divide them into 5 groups:

- (1) Frustrated murderer : To this group belong women who could not adjust themselves to the new life after marriage. They were under almost constant strain. Frictions and conflicts arose in their lives which brought forth criminal activity.
- (2) Emotional murderer : In this type, roused emotions of the women released their pent-up feelings and caused murder. The women lost their self-control and acted impulsively.
- (3) Revengeful murderer: This includes women whose hate and contempt for the culprit led to a desire for revenge.
- (4) Accidental murderer : These are women who had no intention of committing murder but did so accidentally either while saving themselves from being seduced or while protecting themselves from physical assault. Apparently their crime was carried out without forethought.
- (5) Mised murderer : These are women who were clinically sane and normal.

They committed murder either because they were incited by their paramours or were compelled to commit murder in a conscious or unconscious feeling of sexual and/or intellectual inadequacy. These murderers were so completely dominated by their inner forces that no means were too foul for achieving their goal. In this group, we may also place those women who killed their children born out of wedlock. The immediate motive in their crime is obvious — they did not want to make their life complicated. Fear of their parents and/or in-laws and of society created a desperate desire in their minds to get rid of their illegitimate children.

Of the 114 murderers in our sample, who had accepted the committing of crimes, 18.4 percent may be said to be of the first type, 23.7 percent of the second type, 12.3 percent of the third type, 26.3 percent of the fourth type and 19.3 percent of the fifth type. This shows that in no case, murder was the result of a woman's disregard for law, or that murder was committed in connection with another crime.

Borrowing Erikson's (1959, 121) idea, we may suggest positive and negative alternatives available to the woman as she seeks ego identity during sociological crises. Table below reveals this scheme in compact form.

**TABLE 3**

Type of murderer	Positive and Negative Alternatives
1. Frustrated	Integrity Vs. Disgust
2. Emotional	Trust Vs. Mistrust
3. Revengeful	Initiative Vs. Suppression
4. Accidental	Autonomy Vs. Shame
5. Mised	Intimacy Vs. Isolation.

Here we have associated the type of the murderer with her social capacities and culturally provided opportunities and limitations. It shows that personality unfolds through woman's readiness to be aware of and to interact with a widening social radius.

From the point of view of punishment of these murderers, we may give three basic types: (1) whose murder is under provocation, (2) whose murder is in self defence, (3) whose murder is felonious. Since murder under provocation is committed by accident or misfortune or in the heat of passion, this type of murderer deserves sympathy and very lenient punishment. It would be worthwhile to experiment on these offenders by releasing them on probation to assess whether the scope of probation could be extended to cover even some so-called heinous crimes. In the case of murders in self-defence, we suggest confinement in a penitentiary for a very short period, for this type of murder is committed in self-defence or as a result of threats or menace sufficient to show that the woman's life was in danger. Lastly, since Felonious murder is committed wilfully, the murderer may be given deterrent punishment.

#### CRISIS AND FAMILY'S ADAPTATION

The criminal behaviour of a woman is dysfunctional to the family in which it occurs in the sense that the family has to face a crisis of what Hill (1949) 'calls dismemberment' and 'demoralisation'. The former refers to the crisis of absence of a member due to imprisonment and the later refers to social disgrace and social stigma of the family due to its member's criminality. Both make woman's husband and her children suffer emotional and social deprivations. The important problems faced by the husband and other family members be-

cause of these crises are; The sexual adjustment, the management of children, shame and guilt, hostility by the kinship groups and loneliness. Seen as a primary group, woman's family consists of three sets of role-relationships: (1) those between wife and husband, (2) those between mother and children, and (3) those between householder (or housewife) and her dependents. With the imprisonment of a woman, the social roles of wife, mother and householder cease to be performed in the family as they were performed formerly. The absence of a woman thus requires a reorganisation of role-relationships and re-allocation of role-functions in the family. The complexity of such re-alignments calls upon the biological, psychological and social adaptive resources of the individual family members.

The study of the adaptation by the children requires the analysis of the structure of the households in terms of the number of children in the family and the age-groups to which they belong. 40.3 percent respondents in our sample had no children, 15.7 percent had one child. 15.7 percent had two children, 10.4 percent had three children and 17.9 percent had four or more children. The age of these children was: below 3 years = 8.1 percent; between 3 and 5 years = 16.7%; between 5 and 10 years = 31.9 percent; between 10 and 15 years = 28.7 percent; and above 15 years = 14.6 percent. These figures show that only 80 women were faced with the problem of the care of their children and the total number of children to be looked after by them was 198. Of these 80 women, 23 had brought 31 children with them in the jails (8 women had one child each, 4 had two children each and one had five children). Thus, only 167 children of 57 mothers required some care in their (mother's) absence. Of these 167 children, 86 were -

above ten years of age and assuming that these children could look after themselves, only for 81 children of 62 mothers, somebody had to adopt the role of mother in the family. The mean age of the children who required the care was 5.2 years.

The data collected showed that out of 62 persons who had to look after 81 children, in 23 cases the mother's role was taken by child's father, in 11 by father's mother, in 8 by elder brother, in 4 by elder sister, in 3 by mother's brother's wife, in 6 by mother's mother, in 3 by father's brother, in 1 by sister's husband, in 1 by father's brother's wife (widow) and in 2 by Anathalya (orphanage). Thus, in 35 or 56.4 percent cases the roles were taken over by the primary kins of the children in the family of procreation, in 21 or 33.9 percent cases by secondary kins (14 in family of procreation, 6 in family of orientation and 1 kin outside family), in 4 or 6.5 percent cases by tertiary kins (3 in family of orientation and 1 in family of procreation), and in 2 or 3.2 percent cases by strangers. Or it may be said that in 50 or 80.7 percent cases, somebody from the respondent's family of procreation, in 9 or 14.5 percent cases, somebody from the family of orientation, in 1 or 1.6 percent case some kin outside the family, and in 2 or 3.2 percent complete strangers took up the roles of mother and householder for the children in the absence of their mothers. Knowing something about the role of various individuals in the Socialisation processes by which children assume one or another styles and roles, we may maintain that the adoption of roles of a cook, mother and a householder by persons not directly responsible for child's care in the absence of his mother creates

serious problems of unadjusted personalities for the society.

Husbands' adjustment depends upon their reactions about their wives' crimes and convictions and the length of separation. Since husbands could not be interviewed personally, their reactions were acquired from their wives, assuming that their answers would be unbiased. Husband's feelings about their wife's crimes included feelings about (i) whether they felt their wives were actually involved in crimes or not i.e. degree of wife's guilt and (ii) if guilty, what forced them to commit crimes. Their feelings about convictions were to include feelings (i) at the time of arrest (ii) fairness of trial (iii) feelings of shame and guilt and (iv) length of sentence.

Out of 62 husbands alive,\* 23 or 37.1% felt that their wives were falsely implicated in the offence while 39 or 62.9 percent accepted the crime committed by their spouses. The causes of crimes as seen by these 39 husbands were: influence of others, i.e. provocation = 12; victim's vilification = 7; being carried away by emotions = 7; desire to be faithful to husband = 5; intellectual deficiency = 5; and unsatisfactory home conditions due to domestic quarrels = 3. Such feelings were bound to affect their (husbands') feelings at the time of arrest of their spouses. 16 or 25.8 percent respondents said that their husbands could not swallow the accusation and felt horrible; 27 or 43.5 percent said that their husbands assured them of their sympathy and cooperation; 14 or 22.6 percent said that their husbands became very angry and refused to help them in any way; and 5 or

\* Out of 136 cases studied, in 55 the husbands were killed, in 13 the respondents were widows at the time of committing crime, in 2 the husbands were convicted along with their wives, in 2 the husbands had deserted their wives, and in 2 the respondents were unmarried.

8.1 percent said that their husbands told them it (punishment.) would teach them a lesson. It was because of such reactions that only 28 or 45.1 percent husbands tried to get some legal aid for their wives' trial. But this also does not mean that in the remaining cases, husbands did not try to engage lawyers due to their antagonistic reactions to their wives. In fact, in large number of cases, husbands could not arrange for the legal aid because of their poverty.

Regarding the feelings about the fairness of the trial, 12 or 19.4 percent husbands considered the trial extremely unfair; 9 or 14.5 percent husbands considered it as unfair; 32 or 51.6 percent husbands considered it as fair, and 9 or 14.5 percent husbands considered it as extremely fair and just. Their reactions about the length of sentence were: too severe sentence = 33.9 percent; little harsh sentence = 24.2 percent; proper sentence = 37.1 percent, and less sentence = 4.8 percent. And lastly, as far their feelings of shame and disgrace were concerned, 13 or 20.9 percent husbands felt ashamed in the beginning and did not dare to go outside though gradually they have now become reassured. One husband divorced his wife and six contracted 'Nata' (remarriage) after some time.

The length of separation from the wives is also one important factor in the degree and type of adjustment made by the husbands. After taking into consideration the remission to be earned by the prisoners, it was estimated that the husbands had to

remain alone in 56 cases for more than 10 years, in 5 cases for 5 to 10 years and in 1 case for 2 to 5 years. All this data shows that though in large number of cases wife's crime evoked strong tension in husband's mind, yet the reaction was not very severe as to create serious problems of adjustment.

To conclude, it may be maintained that since murder committed by women is due to maladjustment in family and not because of criminal tendency or disorganised personality, there is a great need for a flexible sentencing policy for female murderers. As all female murderers are first offenders i.e. they do not have criminal careers, or criminal behaviour is not a significant part of their life organisations, their banishment from society into a correctional institution, whatever rubric it claims, is not sufficient to bring about the required change in attitudes and values inimical toward society. The sentence has to be adjusted to the character and the treatment needs of the offender, considering the causal factors in their crimes. The present system of police investigation and punishment needs be replaced with a system based on social investigation and consideration of personality make-up and circumstances in which the felony was committed. Sentences wholly unrelated to the feelings, attitudes and values of the offender, and the compelling situations and circumstances in which they are developed are less likely to succeed in their retributive, deterrent, or reformative aims.

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