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**Psychoanalytic Interpretation of the Killings by Javed Iqbal Mughal aka Kukri**

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Farhan Kamrani<sup>1\*</sup>**Abstract**

The current case study article is an attempt to interpret the killings by notorious serial killer of Pakistan, Javed Iqbal Mughal aka “Kukri” via a psychoanalytic prism. For this purpose, facts about the case were collected from authentic secondary sources (like international news reports, books and encyclopaedic works) and analyzed. It utilized case study method. The analysis reveals that he was a homosexual paedophile sex offender who was a psychopath and megalomaniac. He had a high need for dominance and control. Before the precipitating event, he was dominated by his sexual drive and was using his ability to fulfil it by creating opportunities of encounter with his preferred sex objects. But in response to the attack, he developed a very strong vengeance fantasy and due to a lack of superego, he was dominated by death instinct and executed his vengeance fantasy. It appears that what forced him to complete this process was his desire of fame that was present even before he was attacked by a masseur but was intensified as it glorified his revenge. This article reveals the psychological process that manifested in the killings by Javed Iqbal and explains the phenomenon in context of the thinking and behaviors of a psychopath.

**Keywords:** Antisocial Personality Disorder, Javed Iqbal, Kukri, Pakistan, Psychodynamics, Serial Killing

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**Introduction****Case Details and Background**

Javed Iqbal Mughal aka “Kukri” was a notorious Pakistani serial killer who claimed that he had killed 100 boys between ages 7-17 years. He confessed to his crimes in a detailed letter sent to Jang Newspaper and later he surrendered himself to the authorities in the same newspaper’s head office in Lahore, Pakistan. Death sentence was awarded to him and his accomplice 17 years old Sajid Ahmed, while two of his accomplices, Muhammad Nadeem and Muhammad Sabir, were given life imprisonment. Javed and Sajid

committed suicide in jail in 2001(BBC News اردو, 2021; BBC, 1999; Butt, 2022).

This case was widely covered by both national and international media and a book (Sohail, 2002) has been written about him. Recently a movie was released that depicted Javed Iqbal and his killings (Aleeha, 2023). All these works on Javed Iqbal are much of sociological nature and very much focused on the external causes of his behavior. But despite this interest, very limited work has been done to analyze the mind of Javed Iqbal and to find the real motives and meanings of his crimes. This article is an attempt to know the mind of Javed Iqbal and psychological causes of his behavior, rather than a sociological or criminological explanation. The researcher utilizes a psychoanalytic prism to analyze this case.

**Methodology**

Current study utilizes case study method in the classical psychoanalytic manner. As the person under study is not alive so the facts about the case that are in public domain have been analyzed. The facts are scattered

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in various newspaper reports, documentaries, media reports, personal interviews of people who knew Javed Iqbal and his family members and colleagues. But all these scattered facts are, at times, contradictory and based on subjective opinions and non-scientific clichés.

For this reason, an approach was applied to use the most authentic sources that are usually international news organizations that follow strong ethical and professional standards in reporting and presenting facts. As a case study, this article is similar to the analytical work by Freud (1911) in which he analyzed the book by Daniel Paul Schreber and developed the theory about paranoia. The current article is more similar to the memorandum by Murray (1943) that was later published as a book, that psychoanalyzed Adolf Hitler and predicted his behavior in the event of Germany's surrender. It is relevant to note here that in that work Murray also relied on the information about Hitler in public domain, i.e., Hitler's own book, articles and books about him by his countrymen and interviews of people who met him.

As a qualitative work, case study is dependent on the approach of the researcher. And the researcher clearly states that this article is strictly based on the classical psychoanalytic approach of psychology so no mentions of any other approach of psychology (cognitive, behavioral, humanistic or any other) has been given.

## Results and Discussion

### The Psychological Profile of Javed Iqbal Mughal aka Kukri

#### *A Homosexual Sex Offender*

Through various accounts of family members, close friends and neighbours, it is now established that Javed Iqbal was an active (top) homosexual, a paedophile, a hebephile and mysoped (Butt, 2022). As homosexuality is not an acceptable expression of sexuality in the religious and traditional Pakistani society, and paedophilia is not accepted in any society, Javed hid his reality in different masks. To

fulfil his sexual desires, he built various traps to seduce young children. These traps included a video game shop with various other attractions like pet snakes and other exotic animals. Also, he started a small-scale workshop in which only young children were employed (BBC News اردو, 2021). His regular sexual offences were the cause of his divorces, his removal from his family residence and his expulsion from his native locality. They also had some legal repercussions (BBC News اردو, 2021). But he continued his sexual offences (Butt, 2022).

#### *A Lack of Superego (Antisocial Personality Disorder)*

Javed Iqbal was a psychopath. According to psychoanalytic theory, psychopaths lack superego. They have no conscience or ego ideal (Ewen, 2010). This makes them immune to guilt. As they have no internal barrier of any behavior, they can engage in any crime and feel no guilt, shame, regrets or remorse. But they have a sense of reality and know the demands of reality. If they ever follow any rule, it is because of the real or imagined fear of legal or other consequences based in the external reality. This lack of superego is the cause of higher rates of criminal activities by the people suffering from antisocial personality disorder.

Javed Iqbal was engaged in a number of illegal and criminal activities throughout his life. As he feared the consequences of his continued sexual offences, he made friends with police personnel and higher-ups in his surroundings (BBC News اردو, 2021). He had placed one of his photos with a former governor of Punjab province in his drawing room with the intention to show-off his connections to the people around him (BBC News اردو, 2021). He also possessed some firearms which he never used but showed off to his friends (BBC News اردو, 2021). These and similar acts enabled him to continue his paedophilic activities without getting involved in any legal case.

He also edited a newsletter for Punjab police, titled "anticorruption" (BBC News اردو, 2021). He used this as a tool to gain influence on police as a journalist who favours them. He used to boast his connection with police and also this activity fulfilled his need for fame.

### ***Anal Sex, Child Abuse: The Underlying Need of Domination and Control***

Before the main crime (i.e., the killings of 100 children), he engaged in anal sex with prepubescent boys. This act has multiple meanings in the specific context of his nature. Sex is a means of reproduction and pleasure. Anal sex does not have the element of reproduction in it. For the active (top) participant of anal sex, the act of sex is very much the same as vaginal sex as the organ of satisfaction is male genital. So, it is usually seen that the active participant of anal sex usually engages in vaginal sex also. But he was exclusively attracted to boys and only wanted to engage in anal sex with them (BBC News اردو, 2021). Psychoanalytically, this signifies that the psychological pleasure was dominating the physical pleasure. Need for anal sex with younger individuals is associated with the need for domination and control. The usual physical posture of this act is so that the active participant is physically dominating the passive participant. This need for domination and control is also supported with his other behaviors like connecting with the powerful and boasting it before the less powerful, and showing-off.

### ***A Megalomaniac Cult Leader of Children whom He Sexually Abused***

Javed Iqbal used to live with the young children who worked for him (Butt, 2022). He attempted to control all aspects of their behavior. He acted like a dominating cult leader. He even took them to hill-stations for recreation (BBC News اردو, 2021). This behavior was apparent in his pre crime history. He had 3 accomplices who were children. This set of behavior also fits in with his need for domination and control. It is relevant to note here that he was a very

average looking person who was short and could not be described as beautiful or handsome by the standards of beauty prevalent in his era. He had some wealth and could be placed in the middle socio economic class but was from a humble background and did not possess excessive wealth. He could not dominate people by his overwhelming physical strength, beauty, wealth, or power. So, he built a cult of younger individuals among whom he was the most powerful and tall despite his short stature and height (BBC News اردو, 2021).

The children had come from an underprivileged background and worked in his workshop. He was wealthier and powerful in all aspects in comparison to them. In addition to this, he sexually abused them, therefore, he felt that he was controlling their sexuality too.

His megalomania is also apparent in many accounts of his behavior before the crime but a very good example can be seen in the final entry of his diary,

"My count has reached 100. He was a handsome 16-year-old Bhutan boy ... he came from Peshawar. With the grace of God, my mission is complete. Tears roll down my cheeks. I will make sure that my mission, and my message reaches the world." (BBC News, 1999).

### **The Precipitating Event**

On September 17, 1998, Javed Iqbal took a young masseur to his house. Another young boy, Arbab (aged 7 years), was already living with him. This masseur was raped by Javed in the presence of Arbab (who, it is assumed, was regularly abused as he slept with him in his room). When they were asleep, the masseur woke up, took a gun from the cupboard and attacked Javed and Arbab with its butt, hitting them on head many times before fleeing the house. The injury was fatal for Arbab and Javed was critically injured. A police case was filed by Javed's brother against the masseur but after police inquiry a case was filed against Javed for raping the masseur. This event was repeatedly referred to by Javed as the

cause of killings by him (BBC News اردو, 2021).

### ***Damage to Self (Assumed Sexual Dysfunction)***

The head injury received by Javed was very severe and after that, his health deteriorated. According to him, this incident made him sexually impotent (BBC News اردو, 2021). It is debated whether this impotence was real or imagined. But as he claimed, it might be related to sexual performance or the impact of decline in physical health. Being knocked down by someone whom he dominated was a new experience for him. Psychologically, it meant that instead of him, his sexual object dominated him and inflicted pain upon him. It should be taken in consideration that Javed Iqbal used to act as a benefactor of those he sexually abused (BBC News اردو, 2021). This image of a benefactor might be his justification for his behavior. Psychopaths do not need to feel “just” or “right” but they do create some justification that they usually give to their allies, associates or confederates. According to Holms, “Most hebephiles molest kids and think they are sharing something special with their victims — that’s how they justify themselves psychologically and subjectively,” (Butt, 2022). In this context, he might have taken the act of masseur as extreme ungratefulness and a rejection. According to his logic, he was special and was bestowing love by his sexual act and the recipient should have accepted this and submitted to it rather than revolting and attempting to kill him. This incident is very important in this case as it was the first time that his sexual advance (Eros) was confronted with aggression (Thanatos). In the time of recovery from his wounds, he felt weak and dominated by things that are not under his control.

### ***Damage to Cathected Object: Death of Seven Years Old Arbab***

The process of investing oneself into objects or persons in one's world is known as cathecting, or developing an object cathexis in psychoanalytic terms.

An individual cathects himself to, or invests herself in, objects in the external world which have served, or which may serve, to gratify instinctive desires. Through this, an individual is able both to focus attention on objects capable of providing gratification and to delay the urgency of need satisfaction (Ewen, 2010).

Arbab who died in the attack by the masseur was a sexual object of Javed and it is assumed that he was somehow also a part of the act of the masseur’s rape. His contribution might be just observing or making fun of the masseur as he was also attacked with Javed as a revenge of rape (BBC News اردو, 2021). His death is mentioned both in the confession of Javed Iqbal as well as in his dairy. This indicates that Arbab’s death was considered a personal loss. It indicates that he was a cathected object. Loss of his life also meant that Javed was unable to control all aspects of Arbab’s life as he was attacked in his presence and killed. His death meant loss of a cathected object and it also proved that Javed was not in control of everything around him.

### ***Damage to Cathected Object: Death of Mother***

In the hospital and afterwards, Javed’s mother took care of him. She was old and had difficulty taking care of him. She died after some months. Javed also mentioned her death in his confession as a cause of his acts (Butt, 2022).

In the Freudian system, the child wants to possess the mother. As he is weak and father is powerful, the child starts to feel that if he tries to possess the mother completely, he can enrage the father who will castrate him as a punishment (Ewen, 2010). This anxiety causes the latency period and the development of superego.

As psychopaths do not possess superego, it is assumed that they do not feel castration anxiety and they do not go through a latency period and hence they do not develop superego. Mother is a cathected object for every child but in Javed Iqbal’s case, it can be said that this cathexis was severe and the

damage to her was considered a personal loss by him. Hence, it also contributed to the vengeance fantasy.

### **The Pre-action Imagery and Preparation**

The attack by the masseur took place in September 1998 and Javed Iqbal recovered in 3-4 months. His killings started in July 1999 (BBC News اردو, 2021; Butt, 2022). It means that the period of his physical recovery is also the time in which he developed the ideas of revenge (the vengeance fantasy) and planned the course of action he was about to take. This vengeance fantasy is very important for the understanding of this crime.

### ***The Vengeance Fantasy***

The desire for vengeance can be explained psychoanalytically as a desire to destroy the source of pain. The pain stems from the loss of an object into which the individual had invested psychic energy via the process of cathexis (Wilson, 1981). Two events occur when an individual loses a cathected object. The first is that the individual is forced to leave, or decathect, the internal image of the object. An example of this is the process of mourning. Little is known about this period of Javed Iqbal's life. Did he mourn? Did he exhibit any regrets? It is assumed that his personality profile does not support that he mourned. Mourning helps disconnect the libido that was invested in the lost objects. But most probably, Javed Iqbal psychologically drifted towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> reaction.

The second reaction to the loss of a cathected object is an increase of instinctive drive toward release. By being forced to restore the balance between external and internal reality, the ego's capacity to bind instinctive drives, and thereby prevent their surging into consciousness, is temporarily weakened (Wilson, 1981). Pain, the effect associated with the loss, is experienced internally and gives rise to the unconscious instinct of self-preservation (biological survival). This need for self-preservation then presses toward consciousness as a desire to destroy the source of the pain in

the external world. The external manifestations of this highly charged state can be seen in edginess, sleep disorders, rage, and cognitive repetition of the trauma in both consciousness and dreams. Although no information about Javed Iqbal's dreams is available, it is evident that he went through a cognitive repetition of the trauma as he wrote it down in his dairies.

His ego, that was faced with the situation of having to decathect the image of the lost love-objects in order to restore balance between internal and external reality while simultaneously controlling a powerful instinctive drive to destroy the source of the pain, the ego struggled to maintain its balance. Most of the time in similar situations, the rage that is initially directed toward the entire world is cathected as quickly as possible to become object-specific; i.e., the rage focuses on the object perceived to be the true cause of the pain: the offender. If the offender is known to the victim, the victim instinctively searches for the offender, seeking to actualize the self-preservation impulses by killing the offender, thereby, stopping the pain associated with the loss. In Javed Iqbal's case, it is unknown whether he tried to find or kill the masseur or not. It is assumed that the masseur might be out of his reach or killing him might be difficult or impossible. It is also assumed that he lacked courage as all his offences are in situations when he trapped his victims. So, he might be fearful of facing the masseur who almost killed him in the past.

In those situations where the offender is unknown or unreachable (what the author assumes in Javed Iqbal's case also), discharge of the impulse occurs through cathecting the impulse to alternative gratifying objects. In such cases, a fantasized image of the offender is created and then vengeance in fantasy is exacted towards it (Wilson, 1981).

In Javed Iqbal's case, his vengeance fantasy centred on his probable sex objects i.e., the boys of younger ages. He would fantasize

to take revenge from all of them and would take revenge that is many times bigger than the loss. It appears that he considered all of them one category and wanted vengeance from all of them and teach them a lesson they will never forget.

It is relevant to note here that in Pakistan's culture, the concept of revenge is very much valued (Hussain, 2022). In the specific context of rural or less privileged backgrounds and low education groups, revenge from people who belong to a certain clan/family/religion/caste/culture is rampant and prevalent. So, it is not unusual in this case that all the homeless/poor children were considered in the masseur's category and revenge was directed towards them.

This revenge also had some aspects that are many times overlooked. For instance, he nominated one of his friends from the past as his accomplice in the murder, He also nominated his brother and some other individuals (BBC News اردو, 2021; Butt, 2022). Later it was confirmed that all these allegations were baseless and he somehow wanted to settle some scores with them. This also points to the vindictive nature of Javed Iqbal.

He also claimed that he did these killings because police treated him unjustly and registered a case against him when he was attacked (BBC News اردو, 2021; Butt, 2022). This very much looks like the justifications mostly given by psychopaths regarding their crimes. But it is true that Javed Iqbal felt betrayed by police because he used to boast about his links with police but this connection did not benefit him in the masseur's rape case.

### **The Act**

Any act of violence is a manifestation of death instinct. And like love instinct, the details of the manifestation are very important for the analysis of the psychodynamics of the person who commits it. Killing a human being by a bullet after a heated argument and a fist fight and killing someone who is trapped inside the killer's house by a chain and then

dismembering his body and immersing it in acid, are two very different things. In both stated scenarios, the crime is the killing of a person but the motive and psychology behind both are poles apart.

Javed Iqbal's actions were not just a response of anger but an expression of hate. But more than hate, there appears to be a desire to teach a lesson to the supposed category of people who attempted to challenge him, his domination and control. In this way, he was regaining his control and dominance over the category of people that revolted against him by attacking him and killing his cathected objects, 7 years old boy Arbab and the mother (who, he assumed, died due to his decline).

It is widely believed that the 3 accomplices of Javed Iqbal, (Sajid Ahmed, Muhammad Nadeem and Muhammad Sabir) were the children that he first trapped to sexually abuse and kill and then he made them partner in his crimes but the Author is of the view that this assumption is wrong. It is known that he had a workshop and had many prepubescent children working for him, who, according to his brother (BBC News اردو, 2021), were like his bodyguards. This cult was already present and under the control of Javed Iqbal. All these children were regularly sexually abused by him and lived with him at his residence. This cult acted like Charles Manson's "family" who under the influence of their leader committed the crimes (Jenkins, 2024).

Javed with the help of his accomplices lured homeless children into his house where new clothing was given to them, they were fed and were photographed. And after some time, they were strangled by a chain while they were watching TV. All strangulations were not committed by Javed. His accomplices also committed the killings in his presence (Blanco, 2017). The bodies were dismembered and dissolved in acid later to be thrown in sewerage, and in the latter killings, in a nearby water stream (BBC News اردو, 2021; Butt, 2022). There are certain psychological aspects of the crime that relate to his overall personality

and discussed under the following headings.

### ***The Magical Number of 100 and Its Importance in Pakistani Culture***

Javed Iqbal was asked by a journalist why he “killed 100 children? Why not 200? 500?” He answered that he has the resources to continue this but he did not. He did not give any reason for this (BBC News اردو, 2021). Because the reason for the choice of this number may be unconscious. 100 has remained a number that is used as a proverb of excess in Urdu language. “سو بار کہے” (Have said hundred times) is a common phrase used to express that something has been mentioned countless times. It is also relevant to note here that in Pakistan till 1985, the highest currency note was of 100 rupees (State Bank of Pakistan, 2024). In cricket, 100 runs mark a century. When a cricketer completes 100 runs, he boasts his achievement by raising his bat in response to the applause of the spectators. Cricket is a very famous sport in Pakistan and these 100 killings can also be seen as inspired by the century in cricket.

He assumed that 100 killings will be the highest number of killings by any serial killer and he wanted to make a record by doing so. This indicates his need for fame.

### ***The Psychological Need to Dismember the Bodies and Dissolving Them in Acid***

After strangulation of the victims, he dismembered their bodies before dissolving them in acid (Butt, 2022). From a criminal’s perspective, it might be considered a way of getting rid of the evidence and easier way of disposing of them (i.e., utility). This reasoning might be true of a murder or a series of murders in which the motives are other than that of a serial killer. For instance, if a robber kills someone his motive is to rob the victim, killing is just a means of getting valuable possessions. If the robber disposes of the body, the reason is that he does not want to get caught. But when serial killers kill, they do not use the principle of utility. Their killings are based on their choice and they gain pleasure from their crimes. Cutting the bodies of the

victims into pieces and then desolation in acid represents the complete annihilation of the “enemy”. As no traces of the existence remain. He was taking revenge from an assumed enemy category and he wanted to make an example of his enemies. He claimed that he will “make 100 mothers cry” (BBC News اردو, 2021; Butt, 2022) and for this he wanted to make his crimes as heinous as they could be. Here is the interplay of Eros and Thanatos in a sadistic manner in the sense that Javed sexually abused his victims (i.e., Eros is satisfied by the physical act), he killed and deposited the bodies (Thanatos is satisfied by the physical act), mothers will cry knowing the miserable deaths of their children (Thanatos is satisfied by this imagery).

### ***The Psychological Need to Keep Record of the Killings***

Javed Iqbal kept the clothing and footwear of his victims. He also took their photographs, noted their names, parent’s names and addresses in his notebooks and presented this evidence himself to the media and police (Butt, 2022). Keeping trophies and mementos of the victims is a common practice of serial killers (Newcomb, 2024) but the meticulous record keeping, almost like the record that police keep of criminals, is a unique feature in his psychology. There are some causes of this behavior. First of all, he knew that he was going to showcase his crimes to the world. For this, he needed evidence that his victims existed. The manner in which he disposed of the bodies, there were no ways to substantiate his claims. So, he kept a complete record of the killings in order to prove his claim when the time comes. Also, there was a strong desire for fame in him and he thought that he was creating history so he was very conscious that his “achievement” could not be challenged by anyone.

### ***Why Surrender?***

He sent all the details of his crimes to the police. Police came to his house and he came out with a pistol that he pointed towards himself and said that he would kill

himself if they tried to arrest him. Police thought that he was a mad man and the latter was just a prank. They left him. After this, he sent these details to a newspaper and after that, this event was widely reported in the media. Javed Iqbal along with his 3 accomplices went missing. In his house some human remains along with posters with the pictures of children, bag of the victim's footwear, jugs full of human hair, and bag of victim's clothing were found. Javed was on the run but after some time, he surrendered in the presence of the media (BBC News اردو, 2021; Butt, 2022). The question remains why did he send the details of his killings to the police and when he himself send this to police? why did not he surrender when they came to his house? And if he was unwilling to surrender, why did he send the details to the newspaper and why did he run away when he himself confessed in the letter? What actually was he trying to achieve?

The Author is of the view that there was a conflict in Javed's needs. He was struggling with the need of self-preservation that is basic instinctive drive, and need for fame. This struggle was very apparent in the first attempt when he himself sent the details of his crime to police (Butt, 2022). Even after his arrest, the need for self-preservation emerged and he denied the guilt (Butt, 2022). The need for fame was overwhelming that is why, he surrendered so that in a sense, he can live in history, i.e., become immortal (symbolically).

### Conclusion

To this point, the author has pinpointed various psychodynamic aspects of Javed Iqbal. They can be summarized as follows,

- Javed Iqbal was a megalomaniac and boastful, homosexual paedophile sex offender who trapped young children to fulfil his desires.
- He acted as a cult leader and had a strong need to dominate and control.
- He continued his sexual offences until he was attacked by a masseur whom he had raped.

□ In this attack, he was critically injured while his 2 cathected objects were lost.

□ He developed vengeance fantasy but instead of the actual cause of the loss, his anger was developed towards the whole category of the boys who were like the masseur (homeless, and poor.)

□ He used his cult and created a trap for young homeless boys, but this time, the victims were not only sexually abused but annihilated.

□ During and after this act, he was overwhelmed by the need for fame, so much so that it finally overcame the need of self-preservation and he surrendered to the authorities.

As discussed earlier, people with antisocial personality disorder do not possess superego (hence no "ego ideal" or "conscience"). They tend to fulfil their Id impulses by any means and are never bothered by the concepts of good or evil. Javed Iqbal was no exception to this. Before the attack by the masseur, he was dominated by his sexual drive and was using his ability to fulfil it by creating opportunities of encounter with his preferred sex objects. But in response to the attack, he developed a very strong vengeance fantasy and due to a lack of internal barrier of any bad behavior (i.e., superego) he was dominated by death instinct and he executed his vengeance fantasy. It appears that what forced him to complete this process was his desire of fame that was present even before he was attacked by the masseur but was intensified as it glorified his revenge.

### Contribution of Author

Faarhan Kamrani: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the author.

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### Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [F.K.] upon the reasonable request.

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