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First woman serial killer nabbed

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BANGALORE: She is perhaps the country's first woman serial killer. The city woke up to this chilling news on Monday. Before wrapping up the year, the city police nabbed K D Kempamma alias Mallika (43) who trapped women in distress and killed them with cyanide.

Kempamma killed six women since 1999 till date. In the last three months alone she had murdered five women, all from Bangalore. On Sunday, Kempamma was arrested by the Kalasipalyam police when she was trying to dispose of the jewellery of the victims. Upon interrogation, she admitted to the crime.

The numbing revelation that she killed her gullible victims in cold-blood while they were asleep or praying has shocked the city. City police commissioner N Achuta Rao said: "She had single handedly murdered six women by using cyanide and decamped with their jewellery and valuables."

The gory story unfolds thus: Kempamma would visit temples near Bangalore posing as an ardent devotee but keep a watch for women in distress. She would then skilfully gain their confidence by listening to their tale of woes and advise them to perform *mandal pooja*, a special *pooja*, to overcome their problems.

She would offer to arrange the *pooja* in a temple on the outskirts of the city. She would then take them to a nearby temple where she would forcefully make them drink water laced with cyanide by holding their nose. Once the victim was dead, she would rob them of their jewellery and money. In some cases, she killed her victims while they were asleep.

Kempamma, a resident of Kaggalipura who was running a chit fund business, married Devaraj, a tailor at NIMHANS. She was abandoned by her husband in 1998 when she incurred huge losses.

She was thrown out of her house. She then chose the murderous path. She committed her first murder on Oct 19, 1999 in Hoskote when she killed Mamatha Rajan (30) while she was praying. Her last victim was a 30-year-old woman who had no male child. Kempamma killed her while she was sleeping. Between Oct and Dec this year, Kempamma committed five murders, all in Bangalore.

In 2001, she was arrested by the Bidadi police while trying to rob jewels from a house where she was performing a ritual. She was sentenced to six months imprisonment and was released after her term.

Police are yet to make a thorough investigation. "We are collecting details of murders that took place in temple premises during the last few years. We are asking medical experts if they have come across any case of cyanide poisoning. Efforts are on to trace those who supplied the deadly drug to the killer," West DCP K V Sharat Chandra said.

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