

Living together in heaven: A case report of suicidal pact of loving couple

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Abstract

The loving couple mentally decide to tie the knot to live together in heaven in optimism thinking that to be the real world for them. A loving couple age around 18 year, wanted to live together by fear of being opposed from both the families as they belonging to different caste, the loving couple disappointed to leave the world for heavenly abode. Subsequently tied together with a single ligature material *dupatta* and hung them from the branch of a tamarind tree. The inspection of spot of occurrence in undisturbed condition, coupled with PM report and chemical analysis from SFSL report could confirm the death of the loving couple was pact of suicidal hanging. This present report highlights the death of loving couple with the crime scene examination. Being a forensic expert, we visited the crime scene to differentiate the suicidal pact and homicidal death.

Keywords: Loving Couple; Forensic Expert; Hanging; Ligature mark; Suicidal Pact

1 Introduction

A suicidal pact is a rare phenomenon in forensic practice, which shows a mutual agreement between two people, who determine to end their life together, usually at the same time and almost always in the same place. (Salih MA,1981). Suicide pact occurs due to love and association between the participants but there may be social or financial reasons as well (Sarkar S, Srinivas B, Grover S, 2014).

World Health Organization (WHO) in 2015, made review of 56 countries, which found that hanging was the second commonest method of suicide in most countries, following poisoning. In some countries, such as Germany and Japan, hanging has been ranked as a leading method of suicide, while in India; it is the second leading cause of suicide after intoxication (WHO, 2018)

Hanging is a form of violent asphyxia death in which the body is suspended by a ligature from above that constricts the neck and prevents entry of air into lungs. the constricting force is the weight of the body (Reddy, 2008), Sometimes the body is completely suspended from above, and this is called complete hanging. when some part of the body touches the ground, the procedure is called incomplete or partial hanging (Nandy, 2010)

2 Material and methods

The present study is based on the first hand observation during the crime scene investigation, although secondary sources also used to conceptualise the present paper.

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3 Results

3.1 Case Report

On 19.04.2021 at around 6-7 AM the informant was walking alone from home to his maize field. On the way he saw a girl and boy was hanging from the branch of a tamarind tree with each end of a single *dupatta*. Then the informant along with other villager went to police station to inform about the incidence. By receiving the information Investigation Officer informed us through mobile phone for forensic add. Then we along with Investigation officer moved to the scene of occurrence.

3.2 Observation from the Spot of Occurrence

When we reached at the spot of occurrence a 18 year old girl and a 18 year old boy belonging to different caste group was hanging from the branch of a tamarind tree with each end of a single cream colour *dupatta*. The spot was situated within the forest and in-between the two villages. The scene was undisturbed without signs of any foul play.

We measured the height of the branch from the ground 263 cm and circumference of branch was 38 cm. The height of the boy and girl was 167 cm and 140 cm respectively. Maximum height of the three assembled stone one on one was 33 cm. The hanging ligature material *dupatta* was crossed over the branch and both ends were used for making two nooses for hanging. By tearing the *dupatta* in its length and joint by making knot its two ends to increase the length of *dupatta* So that they could hang themselves in same ligature material. On the same branch of tamarind tree another ligature material red colour *gamchha* was tied with one end and other end noose was present.

Boy was hanged one end of the *dupatta* and knot was found above backside of the right ear and head was tilted left side. He was wearing a blue-black white colour checked full sleeved shirt, orange coloured Necker and dark blue coloured underwear. The left eye was closed and the right partially opened. His mouth was semi-opened, tongue pressed between the upper and lower jaws and slightly protruding out with bluish at the tip, three teeth of upper jaw were visible. On the neck clear ligature mark was present and it was brownish black in colour. The ligature mark was obliquely present over neck. His Both hands were straight, a yellow coloured metal bracelet was worn on the right wrist, fist of both hands were semi-opened. Remains of dripping dried saliva were found from chest to stomach. Right leg of the deceased was straight; foot was above the left leg of the girl and left leg was slightly bent at the knee, the heel was touching on the stone and the toe was touching the girl's left thigh. Semen and stool were not passed out. Rigor mortise was present all over the body at the time of examination. No external injury observed in the body of the boy.

On the other end of the ligature material *dupatta* girl was hanged and knot was found backside of the left ear and head was tilted right side. She was wearing a multi-coloured top, orange colour leggins and black colour inner. Her both eyes were semi-opened. Her mouth was semi-opened, tongue pressed between the upper and lower jaws and slightly protruding out with bluish at the tip, two teeth of upper jaw were visible. The ligature mark brownish black in colour, obliquely present over neck. Her both hands were straight and touching the ground, a black coloured thread was worn on the left wrist, fist of both hands were semi-opened and residue of rubbing tobacco was found in the both palm. Both legs bent at the knees, the lower part of the both leg from the knees to feet were touching the ground. All measures had been taken in consideration during the observation of her body at the spot of occurrence. Her private part of body was observed by her female relatives who were presents there and told that no external injury in private part. No external injury found in the body of deceased. Rigor mortise was present all over the body at the time of examination. On the spot of occurrence two mobile phone, a pair of sleeper, rubbed tobacco on *tendu* leave, one empty stainless glass and empty drinking plastic water bottle were found and these items were collected to send forensic science laboratory for further chemical examination.

4 Discussion

According to Locard's exchange principle, there is an exchange of material evidence between the accused, victim, and the crime scene (Kumar B et al 2022). in this particular case we don't found any struggle mark on the ground near the spot of occurrence as well as in their bodies. Any kind of injuries were absent on their bodies, which ruled out the homicide. The head of both was found tilted against the knot, in hanging head is always found tilted against the knot. The fist of both was clinched position with thumb drawn inside the fist, it also remarkable features of hanging. As the knot of ligature of the boy on backside of the neck, dribbling of dried saliva present over the chest and it is a vital indication of a suicidal hanging. Tongue of both were found protruding out with bluish at the tip, bitten between teeth, also indicate the hanging. One foot of the boy was touching the stone and another foot girl's thigh while the girls both leg was touching the ground. in such condition public were considering it as homicidal but it was because of overall

length between toe and anchor increases due to tightening of not, ligature stretch, feet relaxation and weight of the girl. On the basis of above observation of spot of occurrence and body of them we came to the conclusion that it can be the case of suicidal pact between loving couple. Later it was supported by the autopsy report and toxicology analysis of the both of them viscera samples were found positive for the alcohol and negative for the poison as well as drug.



Figure 1 Observed Scene of Crime by Forensic Expert

5 Conclusion

The present case is unique as a common ligature was used by the loving couple to complete the process of hanging. Very few cases were reported who hanged themselves using a single ligature. Single ligature might be used by the couple so that simultaneous death can be ensured. A state of fear that their respective parents would not be agree to their marriage or they wouldn't want to disappointed them as both are belonging to different caste, which might have triggered them to take such an extreme step. As the absence of suicide note, it cannot be commented who took the decision, while who participated in the suicide pact. It is also difficult to predict that they took decision to committing suicide after drinking alcohol or it was drunk to eliminate the hesitation as their respective viscera report were found positive for the alcohol. Although, in the process of investigation IO was found that their respective parents were not aware about love affair even none of the family members.

Crime scene examination helps investigators to reconstruct the event that leads to the death of the victim. Before conducting any post-mortem examination, it is always useful to conduct a crime scene investigation by a forensic expert to conclude the opinion and it is also useful for investigating agency too. Here, this case stands, unique, in view of crime scene investigation carried out by a team of forensic experts prior to post mortem examination.

Compliance with ethical standard

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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