

SUICIDE OR HOMICIDE: HOW IT MIGHT HAPPEN

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ABSTRACT: In every crime situation, whether simple or mysterious ones, scientific crime scene experts play a very vital role in providing clues and helps in drawing up accurate and logical conclusions. In the present scenario in India, the number of deaths due to murder/suicide has been increases anomalously. In the present case study, a female 26 years old dead body was found at her home. Door of the house was closed from out-side and she was lying on floor. During initial investigation Police presuming that it might a case of suicide. The crime scenes were visited and evidences have been scientifically examined for giving expert opinion to solve the case.

Keywords: Homicide; crime scene investigation; physical evidence.

Introduction

Forensic science is a diverse, interdisciplinary field that is rapidly expanding in terms of public interest and importance in the administration of justice [1]. Mobile crime scene investigating team plays an important role to sorting numerous important and sensational crimes in Rajasthan, so that forensic experts can reach at the spot al early as possible. Over the years, criminals have tried many ingenious ways to hide, clean up, and remove evidences like blood, weapon and tools etc. but this is an area where criminal justice technology has always stayed one step ahead of them [2-3].

In this paper, we divided the paper into two sections. Section I deals with the basic methodology which is to be adopted during the investigation of homicide or suicide. Section II presents a case study with photograph. The purpose of this report is to give a brief and relativistic simplistic approach of how a murder/homicide/suicide case should be investigated.

Section I: Methodology

In any crime situation, whether simple or mysterious ones, scientific crime scene examination play a very vital role in providing clues and helps in drawing up accurate and logical conclusions [4]. There may be situations where the police reports are incomplete as sources of information. This is because the police are primarily interested in determining whether a homicide was committed. Nevertheless, in evaluating a possible suicide, it is highly desirable to have a description of the scene of death, including position of body, and to have evidence gathered at the scene, such as weapons, pills, poisons, and notes, etc. In addition, it is important to reconstruct the habits of the victims both in connection with the method of death, and

regards to the person's general lifestyle [5- 6]. Through this paper, a very systematic mythological approach to examine the scene of occurrence while examine a homicide or suicide [7]. Point wise observations should have been followed:

- (a) Scene of occurrence (SOC)
- (b) Dead Body and its circumstantial evidences
- (c) Injuries and wounds on the body of the victims
- (d) Tools/Weapons nearby the body
- (e) Analysis the statements of the family members and relatives
- (f) Financial background
- (g) Circumstantial Evidences at spot of occurrence

All the above observations at the SOC, while examine and investigation process, will leads to the team in a proper and right direction. A systemic approach on the spot will help to solve the crime in less time with fewer efforts.

In addition, it is important to reconstruct the habits of the victims both in connection with the method of death, and regards to the victim's general lifestyle. From a forensic point of view, what should we note at the scene of occurrence and to be analyzed in all directions like homicide/suicide/murder/accident?

Point where forensic experts should be concentrates the following points [8]:

- (a) Height/weight of the parties.
- (b) Who is fearful of whom, means victim and culprit connection with the SOC?
- (c) Detail of statement and corroboration.
- (d) History of domestic violence, assaults, or criminal history.
- (e) Use of alcohol or drugs at the spot of occurrence.

- (f) Whether either party is subject to a restraining order or on domestic
- (g) Violence probation.
- (h) Pattern evidence of any tool marks.
- (i) Injuries consistent with reported statement.
- (j) Examine hands for any hair, blood, fiber, or evidence of epithelia cells
- (k) After strangulation (fingernail scrapings in case of struggling observed).
- (l) Signs of symptoms of strangulation.
- (m) Offensive/defensive injuries.

Even all above factor, expert must have full view and open minded search near and closer area of the spot. Sometimes, spot itself have some clue and circumstantial evidences most probably found.

In a case of hanging, the expert need to know the all the following factors described below:

- (a) Knot
- (b) Ligature mark
- (c) Position of head
- (d) Partial Hanging
- (e) Other signs

Types of hanging:

- (a) Accidental Hanging
- (b) Suicidal Hanging
- (c) Homicidal Hanging
- (d) Post – Mortem Hanging

Accidental hanging may occur during play or at work at height. Suicidal hanging is a common method to commit suicide in India. A typical method of self suspension is to attach a rope to a reachable height such as beam, window casing, ceiling fan branch of three, etc. Homicidal should be suspected (a) sign of struggling, disturb/disorder of room and furniture and signs of violence (b) clothing of the victim's found torn or disarranged and (c) types injury offensive or defensive, nail marks point to manual strangulation. In the case of post-mortem hanging, a person may be murdered and the dead body suspended to be stimulated as suicide. At the SOC, the forensic expert should search signs of dragging to the place of suspension.

Section II

Case Study I: Case of Perfect (Complete) Hanging

In this case, the investigating officer wanted to know from the forensic expert is whether it is a suicide or homicide. Our observations at the spot clear everything as demonstrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3:

- (a) Spot of occurrence: The location of the spot was a tree in a land of farmer was not being farmed last one year. A young male body was hanging, and the public of the

village was protecting that it was murder. After our scientific add, the IO was in satisfactory form to satisfy the villagers.

- (b) Tree: The tree was stand alone in a farm. The shoes of the deceased were lying near the tree, from where the person possibly climbed.
- (c) Knot at tree: A non-sliding knot was observed on the tree.
- (d) Knot on the neck: Single sliding knot was present at the neck.
- (e) Ligature mark: the patterns of ligature can also be signature of happening as suicide, in this case the oblique ligature marks observed without continuous nature, and due to tightness of the sliding know with weight the neck of the deceased was compressed.



Figure 1: Shoes lying near tree.



Figure 2: Signature of complete hanging and photo.



Figure 3: Position and gesture his hand (closed position).

Case Study II: Case of Partial Hanging

In case study II, it was registered under 174 CrPC. Observations at the SOC are demonstrated in Figures 4 and 5, as below:

- (a) Spot of occurrence: The location of the spot was a public garden, sitting bench in the middle of the colony, approximate time of occurrence was about 10 PM to 11 PM at night.
- (b) Bench: The bench was grided metallic black coloured. One end of the plastic packing rope was tied with non-sliding knot at the height of 3 feet from the ground. No struggling marks were observed at the spot.
- (c) Knot at Neck: A knot at the back of the neck of the victim, single sliding knot at high up position of neck was detected.
- (d) Ligature Mark: As per reported in literature [5,9] patterns of ligature can also be signature of happening as homicide and suicide, in this case the oblique ligature marks observed without continuous nature.
- (e) Tongue Biting: As clearly seen from photo 3, the swollen bluish tongue sandwich in between lips and drops of saliva from an angle of mouth, indicate that, suicidal nature of incident.

The cloud of doubt in the case was cleared through our team observations and case was registered under 174 Cr.PC, as per IPC “which define an incident/suicidal death investigation”



Figure 4: Bench where the dead body was laying in the garden.



Figure 5: Natural tongue biting due to hanging.

Case study III: Partial hanging

In this case, a police constable attempted suicide with a very small space and to achieve the height, he used a 1 foot stone. Figures 6 and 7 shows the photos of the case.

- (a) Spot of occurrence: A the duty place, one constable was found dead in the morning, after night duty. No other person was on duty with him at the time of early morning.
- (b) Stone as the tool: The stone near his feet was used to achieve the height of the upper knot on the stone beam. A non-sliding knot at the height of 6 feet 9 inches from the ground. No struggling marks were observed at the spot.
- (c) Knot at Neck: A knot at the back of the neck of the victim, single sliding knot was observed.

On the basis of our observations, this case was registered under 174 CrPC.



Figure 6: Hanging of a police constable on duty.



Figure 7: Types of both the knots explains everything at the scene of occurrence.

Case study IV: Homicide

In this case study, our team was called to visit the SOC; the case was registered under 174 CrPC. After our through examination of the SOC and seeing the dead body our observation lead the reader to the proper direction of investigation.

- (a) Scene of occurrence: The spot was an alone house, built in the center of the colony and locked from out-side as per IO explained. There was no any other window, pen or hole in the house to escape from it without opening the door. Paper and food was scattered near the body. A dead body of lady age approximate 26-30 year old, was lying on the bed sheet. Splashes of blood were found near the head of the dead body. (Figure 8)
 - (b) Dead body and its circumstantial evidences: As per the dead body was two-three days older, it was not able to stay on the room at all. Even though, watching her head from the back side, one hole was found on head back right hand side ear. The bone might have been broken. (Figure 9)
 - (c) Injuries and wounds on the body of the victims: The injury on her back right head was suggest that might have been caused due to blunt forces, which has been made with the help of blunt weapon/tool/stone. (Figure 10)
 - (d) Tools/Weapons nearby the body: There was no any tool or weapon was found near the dead body.
 - (e) Analysis the statements of the family members and relatives: The dead body was unidentified before our team visit, after watching her hand we have suggested that her name might be “KARI” as written on her left hand. After our direction next
- (f) Financial background: As per family member they were not very rich and she left the village with a known to search a job in the city.
 - (g) Circumstantial evidences: These evidences played key role to solve this case. In this case three main circumstantial evidences like (i) door was locked from the outside; (ii) Name of the lady on her left hand for identification and (iii) as per landlord statement, the house was allotted for rent before three to a person, and the dead body, might have been the three days older means that the crime was happened on the same night.



Figure 8: In the round ellipse showing the entrance of the house.



Figure 9: In the round showing injury on the head back side.



Figure 10: In this photo circles showing the splashes of blood near the wall.

After the meticulous reconstruction of event, with carefully gathered evidences it was concluded might have been a case of murder (Homicide). Spot examination should be held without delay, but even delayed spot examination will enormously help in reconstructing the incident. So scene investigation may be late but it's never too late, we still can find something.

Discussion

A variety of staged crime scenes are encountered by the investigating officers. Some time suicide may be staged as homicide by family members or friends to avoid the embarrassment for social or religious reasons.

While dealing with such cases of suspicious deaths, the forensic expert should adopt a scientific approach to evaluate the incidence with logical and systematic approach at the scene of crime and during examination of the dead body, by using his/her forensic aspect, approach and experience to reconstruct the actual happening.

While giving any opinion, the numbers of knots, tightness and method of knotting should be considered. Fingernail marks may be seen, either from the victim attempting to remove the ligature, or from the assailant attempting to secure the ligature or restrain the neck from moving must be noted. When the ligature is pulled tightly from behind either completely encircles the neck or may see only on the front generally observed. Ligature marks produced after death do not show bruising.

Directions of Forensic Investigations at SOC of Suicide/Homicide:

While visiting a SOC of suicide/homicide, one must keep in mind the protocol to follow:

- (a) Visit to the scene of crime by senior police officers/ I.O./ forensic expert is a must.
- (b) External appearance of face, head, eyes, tongue biting, ears etc. should be noted.

- (c) Any evidence of struggle marks, physical evidence in the fists, nails and necks are important.
- (d) Any pieces of cloth suspected to have been used as gags should be collected and examined carefully for the presence of saliva.
- (e) The neck position must be examined carefully for injuries, ligatures, knots by means of ropes/ strings. The nature of ligature mark i.e. appearance, position, dimension, number of such ligature marks should be noted. Location where the rope/cord attached i.e. fan, hook or etc.
- (f) Photographs of the entire body, injuries and other physical evidence should be made available along with the case file.
- (g) Laboratory specimens for analysis should be collected properly checked and packed.

As suicide is a big problem, no single approach is likely to contribute to a significant substantial decline in suicide rates in India and all over world. Medical/Clinical studies of suicide prevention are hindered by methodological and ethical problems, especially since many people at risk do not have contact with clinical care in India. Future research work must be focused on the development of assessment based suicide-prevention and treatment protocols.

Conclusion

Forensic crime scene investigation is the best methodology to ensure that an investigation is properly conducted and justice is served. Using this methodology, one can prevent the abrupt end of an incomplete investigation and allow for the best use of the physical evidence found at crime scenes though which, IO can summarise the actual happening and stages of crime.

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