Case Report

Dyadic Diwali

Sanjay Gupta* & Hitesh Vaishanav**

Abstract

The festival of Diwali is the symbol of victory of good over evil, hope over despair and prosperity over misery although this sounds very echoic, but there are some less privileged people in our society for whom Diwali brings jealousy, envy, feeling of insufficiency, frustration and even death. We received a case on the day of Diwali involving Homicide-Suicide (Dyadic death). Dyadic aspects of Diwali (for that matter any other festival as well) are highlighted in the present article in the light of the case.

Key words: Diwali, Dyadic, Homicide-Suicide, Drowning, Forensic Sociology

Introduction

Diwali is a festival of joy, happiness and lights. People of all caste and creeds enjoy and celebrate the Diwali. According to Hindu Mythology it is victory of truth upon evil. But on other hand, Diwali raises dispute in families either related to economical status in society, as celebration of festival do need additional funds to by some materials and sweets. On the occasion of Diwali people burst firecrackers, buy new clothes, enjoy sumptuous sweets and so on as the family budget may permit. Sometimes if a family experience constraints of funds, dispute, difference of opinion and domestic quarrels among family members may invite adverse consequences of ending life.

Dyadic death is one of the most tragic forms of inter family violence and associated with family disruption, psychological trauma and financial crisis.

Dyadic death is defined as a lethal event in which an individual kills another and subsequently commits suicide immediately or with in short period.

Homicide-Suicide deaths, though rare, are universal phenomenon reported from all over the world. They have been reported from China, Florida, Australia, Cleveland, Finland, Hampshire, Central Virginia, Paris, Chicago, Yorkshire and Humberside, England and Wales, and India. The striking common feature in all such deaths is a family relationship or close bond between the perpetrator and victim/s. Rosenbaum had described in his study that most investigations of Homicide-Suicide are done by police, coroners of the court, and there is little or no input from psychiatric and other medical personnel.

Case history

Dead bodies of four people were submitted for autopsy at Department of Forensic Medicine at Pramukh Swami Medical College, Karamsad, Dist.Anand on dated 09-11-2007 (the day of Diwali). All four dead bodies belonged to a nuclear family comprising of five members from lower socioeconomic class involved in occupation as labor due to illiteracy. The alleged history given by police (Statement of surviving wife) revealed that family members returning to home after offering prayers at temple were pushed into a canal by the family head himself. Some financial issue over Diwali celebration raised a dispute between the husband and wife while way back home. As husband was already suffering from joblessness, he very easily became agitated, frustrated and angry and he threw all three children and his wife in a canal nearby and ultimately committed suicide by submerging himself as well at the same place. The wife, however survived as she clinged on the...
Observations

Table: 1 Details of family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>The relationship of the perpetrator to the victims</th>
<th>Fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Survived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 month</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

canal's wall. Even though all four dead bodies were fresh and showed postmortem findings of ante mortem drowning, sternum in all cases were preserved for comparative diatom test (diatoms recovered from the sternum bone were matched with water sample taken from canal), the analysis of which helped in concluding cause of death as drowning.

Discussion

India is a large country with diversity on many fronts. Its economic diversity includes a large section of society which we categories as poor. These are the people who have a long and baffling struggle in order to survive. Besides economic disability these people have to face and overcome agitation, anger, frustration, depression and social evils.

In this case report head of family (male) threw all family members in a canal (Homicide) and then committed suicide by drowning. Socioeconomic factors like poverty, lack of education, lack of awareness about available resources and joblessness and psychological factors like domestic quarrel, frustration, agitation and anger were responsible for this dyadic death.

Gupta et al10 has reported that incidence of dyadic death in particular region ranges from 1.96 to 7.96% during the space of 5 years. The present study shows incidence 3.33% of dyadic death out of all homicide cases, which fall within the range observed by Gupta et al10.

The feature of relationship between perpetrator and victim/s was almost similar in the present case as well as other Indian reports.4,15,17 That is to say either they are family members or closely related member of families, however this feature showed a variation in form of line in relationship(without a social sanction ?) in developed countries like Australia.13

The method of killing in the present case was similar to observed by Gupta et al14 that is death by drowning. But was not similar to the method of killing reported by Travis et al18, who observed a significant incidence of homicide method by shooting (16%), strangulation (36%), smothering (14%) and stabbing (14%). Though their study reveals drowning as a method of killing, it comprises only 2%.

Dalal et al1 have reported accidental explosion injuries leading to death of six people involved in manufacturing firecrackers and untoward incident indirectly related to Diwali celebration. The present case is different from others on the aspect of etiology of dyadic death. None of previous reported cases had a background of festival and festival related domestic dispute. In the present case, probably the head of the family lost his patience under stress of satisfying the economical needs of his family members for celebration of one of the most important festival of Hindu mythology. Though in India the nature of celebration of festival is uniform and similar in a particular area or locality (fortunately or unfortunately human habitats are also as per economical status and or other parameters), the enthusiastic reporting of celebration of such festival by rich people in electronic media do create a sense of flaw and jealousy in the category of less privileged class (media is always eager to report the way celebrities of different field celebrate festivals like Diwali, Holi etc.).
In India usually the perpetrator is charged under S.302 of Indian penal code for homicide and such case fall under category of “trial before a court of sessions”. The investigating officer, on completion of investigation files for “abatement summary” under S. 173 of Cr. P. C. to the court and court orders the case to be closed. Thus other than legal formalities of abatement of the sessions case, other issues which has potential to emerge out during trial does not subsist. Subsequently such cases are left on the mercy of no body. A multidisciplinary approach by a team comprising of psychologist, psychiatrist and social organizations deserves attraction to study and evaluate the parameters of social, educational, economical and religious background.

We are of the opinion that such deaths are preventable or at least can be minimized by gestures by NGO's and other agencies by educating a particular class of society. The suggestion is an ideal one, which is very easy to express but quite difficult to follow and implement.

Under the circumstances we would not hesitate to coin a term “POOL CELEBRATION OF FESTIVAL”. Though this term in medical literature is found to be almost negligible, but if we look back into the history, it was Balganga Dhar Tilak, popularly known as LOK MANYA TILAK who can be awarded all and full credit of “SARVAGANIC GANESHOTTASAV” (celebration by a committee at a locality with variable voluntary contribution) celebrated in the state of Maharashtra mainly and in small scale in other state of India, reflect the similar spirit. We suggest that such pool celebration on other festivals like Holi, Diwali, Kite flying etc. may help to address such extra medical factors prevailing in deprived class of society and can be an effective remedy for such preventable deaths.

Summary and conclusion

It has been made very clear by Hon’ble Supreme Court that right to life guaranteed Article 21 of the Constitution should be taken to mean right to life with human dignity, free from exploitation. The circumstances in form of etiological factors do not involve any exploitation but do appreciate the human instinct of dignity.

The unfavorable social and economical circumstances in a class of society do shake the component of dignity on festive occasions. As the administrative set up in the country fails to address such issue, it shall be taken as moral task of the forensic fraternity to participate in a multidisciplinary approach and help the people by concentrating on “Forensic Sociology”, meaning thereby contributing in social aspects perceived during the role as Forensic expert.

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