Case Report

CONCEALED HOMICIDE
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Abstract
Adulterous relations sometimes force people to commit certain crimes including murder. After committing the crime they may try to conceal homicide, in order to go scot free and to lead a life of a respectable person. But the role of Forensic expert is of paramount importance to give justice to the culprit. The paper projects the features of ligature strangulation, mentality of perpetrators who after strangling the victim, tried to hide the crime by disposing of the dead body by burning and the role of Forensic expert helpful in bringing the culprit to book.

Keywords: Conceal Homicide, Ligature strangulation, Burning, Forensic expert.

Introduction
Compression of the neck by a ligature is not an uncommon method of homicide. Burning of the body to try to conceal the homicide may complicate the situation by making it difficult to interpret the findings. We hereby report a case of homicidal ligature strangulation with extensive burning of the body and the role of forensic experts in unearthing the facts.

Case report
A black bag found at the roadside in Mumbai, bystanders informed the local police. On opening the bag by police officer found a dead body of unknown, 20-25 years, male, wearing blue colour T-shirt, faint black underwear, yellow nylon rope was encircled around the neck and burn injuries over the body. The hands and legs of body were tied with the yellow nylon rope, sticking bandage was encircled around the face. An onion was thrust inside the oral cavity of the victim. Subsequently the dead body was identified by his father and relatives. Examination of the deceased body revealed moderate built, marked pallor with ligature strangulation associated with burns.

External injuries noted were:
1) Ligature strangulation mark around the neck with multiple scratch abrasions around the neck, face.
2) Contusion over the lips.
3) Abrasion over the left shoulder.
4) Burns over the body at places.

Internal examination of the body revealed:
1) Fracture of the greater cornue of hyoid bone.
2) Infiltration of the blood in the neck tissues.
3) Contusion of the neck muscles.

The ligature mark over the neck was ante mortem.
The burn injuries over the body were post-mortem mostly to hide the crime by disposing of the dead body by burning after homicidal strangulation.
Observations

Externally there was ligature mark around the neck with scratch abrasions suggesting of strangulation. On dissection of the neck, contusion of paratracheal area, fracture of greater cornue of hyoid bone, contusion over 2\textsuperscript{nd} to 5\textsuperscript{th} tracheal ring anterolaterally. Onion was thrust inside the oral cavity, congestion of the conjunctive, dried blood stains at mouth and nose. There were superficial to deep burns over lower abdomen, back, thighs and genitalia. On dissection there was no red line of demarcation, no infiltration of blood at burn areas. Indicating the burns were post-mortem in nature.

During autopsy viscera was preserved to rule out poisoning. On Chemical analysis, no poison was detected in viscera.

Photograph 1: Showing burn injuries. (front view)

Photograph 2: Showing burn injuries. (back view)

Photograph 3: Showing onion thrushed in oral cavity.

Photograph 4: Showing contusion of lips.
Photograph 5: Showing ligature strangulation. (front view)

Photograph 6: Showing ligature strangulation. (left view)

Photograph 7: Showing ligature strangulation. (right view)

Photograph 8: Showing contused neck tissues.

Opinion

The cause of death was opined as, Asphyxia, as a result of compression of neck due to strangulation with post-mortem burn injuries.

Discussion

Discovering a burnt body in an unfamiliar, outdoor or abandoned place, scene or autopsy findings attributable to a violent death, evidence of use of accelerant and absence of vitality signs are factors in concealed homicidal death. Laryngeal injuries secondary to manual strangulation are seen more often by the forensic expert than by the otolaryngologist. Forces sufficient to fracture thyroid and cricoids cartilage are usually sufficient to cause acute asphyxia and death. \(^{(1,2)}\) Strangulation is one of the oldest and widely used methods of committing murder in the Indian subcontinent. It is usually carried out by constricting the neck either with the hands, elbow or other parts of body or by ligature, stick and the like. \(^{(3-5)}\) The paper projects the features of homicidal strangulation, mentality of perpetrators who after strangling the victim, tried to hide the crime by disposing of the dead body by burning and the role of forensic expert in the bringing the culprit to book.
Conclusion
1) The laryngohyoid injuries provide helpful information in the differentiation of suicide from homicide.
2) Reveals the mentality of perpetrators who, after strangling the victim, tried to hide the crime by disposing of the dead body by burning.
3) The forensic expert can help the judiciary in particular and public at large in bringing the culprit (accused) to book and justice to the departed soul (victim).

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