

Sexual Jealousy Leads to Devil's Butchering: Case Report on Postmortem Mutilation

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Abstract

A murderer may try several methods to dispose off or hide a dead body, so that his crime can remain undetected. The most frequently used methods include burial of corpse in an unusual or impervious place; charring the body beyond the state of recognition; dropping the weighted down body in the open sea or river; dismemberment of the body and further chemical treatment. Dismemberment is a relatively rare method in which, after killing the victim, the murderer uses a very sharp cutting heavy weapon (a saw, axe, meat chopper, etc.) to sever the limbs and cut the body into small pieces. This is generally done immediately after the crime, although a long time may pass between the two events. The dismembered body may then be further subjected to chemical treatment (acid digestion) that will result in non-identification of the deceased and hence non-discovery of the murderer. This presentation describes one such incident of dismemberment and mutilation of a dead body by the perpetrator, where the body was divided into 6 pieces and stored in a refrigerator, with the intention of disposing off the different segments in the near future by the perpetrator. Postmortem examination revealed the nature of weapon used to mutilate the corpse.

Keywords: Postmortem Mutilation; Homicide; Dismemberment; Sexual Jealousy.

Introduction

Sexual jealousy is a basic emotion. Although it lacks a distinctive facial expression and is unlikely to solve problems of survival, it evolved because it solves adaptive problems of mating sexual jealousy also leads to tremendous destruction, from humiliation to homicide [1]. The perpetrators act mostly with the aim of facilitating body removal, covering up the traces of the crime, and hindering identification (defensive mutilation). This is generally done immediately after the crime, although a long time may pass between the 2 events. More rarely, they are motivated by factors such as aggression against the victim, (aggressive mutilation); dismemberment accompanying lust murders or necrosadistic murders (offensive mutilation); as well as winning a trophy or a fetish (necromaniac mutilation) [2]. In defensive mutilations, the perpetrator divides the body of the victim into pieces that allow for transporting the corpse and concealing it where it

will not be noticed. In the majority of cases, the head and extremities are cut off the trunk, or the body is cut in halves across the trunk. Much less uncommonly, a forensic medicine expert comes across a corpse divided into smaller parts, with fragmentation of the trunk and extremities. Such cases pose difficulties to a forensic expert, and often it is difficult to determine the cause of death and the mechanism by which fatal injuries were inflicted. The present case describes one such incident of aggressive mutilation of deceased due to sexual jealousy of the assailant and subsequent dismemberment of the dead body.

Case History

A 32 year old male was not appearing at his workplace for 3 days, following which his brother filed a missing complaint at nearest police station after which teams were formed to locate him. The

brother informed the police, that the deceased was close friends with his neighbor and he used to visit the place frequently. These two were also colleagues at the same workplace. When police reached his friend's home, it was locked from outside, and other residents of the building said that they have not seen him in the last 3 days. On breaking open the door, the room was empty and there was nothing suspicious around. Only, there was small amount of reddish fluid dribbling from below a partially opened refrigerator, inside which were several black polythene bags. The concerned Investigating Officer requested Head of Department, Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, AIIMS, New Delhi for a scene of crime visit. On his intervention, one of the plastic bags was cut open with a blade and that bag was found to contain the severed head of a male human corpse. When the other plastic bags were opened, other parts of a dismembered human corpse were found inside them. These bags were removed and sent to AIIMS Mortuary for Postmortem examination.



Fig. 1: Refrigerator with black polythene bags showing body at the scene of crime

Postmortem Examination was conducted, which revealed that there was a swelling near right eye in peri-orbital region. There was slight greenish discoloration and peeling of the skin present on all the dismembered segments except the skull and face which was kept in the topmost freezer segment of the refrigerator. The body was dismembered into the following seven parts:

- i. Skull & upper two cervical vertebrae with an incised wound at lower end.
- ii. Chest and upper part of abdomen with both arms.
- iii. Lower abdomen upto knee.
- iv. Right leg extending from knee joint to the foot.

- v. Left leg extending from knee joint up to foot with an incised wound at upper end.
- vi. Right forearm extending from elbow joint up to the tip of fingers.
- vii. Left forearm extending from elbow joint up to the tip of fingers.

None of these wounds showed any vital reaction, which meant that the body was dismembered after the person died, using a heavy weapon with a sharp cutting edge.



Fig. 2: Showing upper torso dismembered parts



Fig. 3: Showing lower torso dismembered parts

The following injuries were present, which were ante-mortem in nature, showing infiltration of the surrounding tissue along with vital reactions in the underlying tissue:

- i. An incised wound of size 3 cm X 2 cm present over helix of right ear.
- ii. An incised wound of size 5.6 cm X 2.6 cm, bone deep, margins of bone lined with clotted blood, placed obliquely over the right temporo-occipital region of skull 3 cm above the right mastoid process.
- iii. An incised wound of size 6 cm X 1.7 cm, bone deep, margins of bone lined with clotted blood, placed obliquely over the right temporo-occipital region of skull 2 cm from injury no. ii.

- iv. Multiple (4 in number) incised wounds present in an area of 10 cm X 7 cm, over the right side of face just below the right ear.
- v. An incised wound of size 6.1 cm X 2.8 cm, muscle deep, placed vertically over the left side of face 2 cm lateral from outer margin of left eyebrow.
- vi. An incised wound with surrounding reddish blue contusion of size 4 cm X 2 cm, muscle deep, placed obliquely over the lateral half of left eyebrow.



Fig. 4: Injuries over the Right side face



Fig. 5: Injuries over the Left side of face

On Internal Examination, upper parts of trachea and oesophagus were found to be missing. Internal contents of small intestine and large intestine were extruding out with putrefactive changes, as the torso was dismembered at the fifth lumbar vertebral level, with an incised wound. On dissection of scalp, sub-galeal haematoma was seen in an area of 10 cm X 9 cm with 40- 50 ml of clotted blood present underneath the injury over the right temporal region accompanied with fracture of the right parieto-temporal region of skull. On dissection of skull extra-dural haemorrhage in an area of 11 cm X 10 cm with clotted blood amounting to 120-150 ml was present over the right parieto-temporal region of skull. Rest of brain matter was congested with an intact base of skull. Time since death was opined to be about one week prior to postmortem

examination. Cause of death was opined to be cranio-cerebral injury due to combined effect of multiple injuries over the skull from a sharp force impact. Dismemberment of the body was done postmortem.

Discussion

Dismemberment is a relatively rare method whereby after killing the victim, the murderer uses a very sharp cutting weapon (a saw, axe, meat chopper, etc) to sever the limbs and cut the body into small pieces, which is done usually immediately after the crime. Dismemberment of the corpse allows the murderer to clear the scene of the crime and also makes it easier for him to transport the body even for long distances, without raising any suspicion [3]. Postmortem mutilation is inflicted with different motives – indeliberate mutilation, the reason is to get rid of the body and make its identification more difficult; in aggressive mutilation, postmortem mutilation usually follows an act of outrageous killing of the victim [4]. Corpse dismemberment is associated with considerably strenuous physical effort and the offender usually restricts the dismemberment to the minimum, which is necessary to conceal the corpse [5].

Internationally, the famous “Drum Murder case”, “Ruxton case” and “The Baptist Church Cellar Murder case” are the major among other cases illustrated in medical literature of 20th century [6]. In the well-known Connecticut case of 1986, Richard Crafts destroyed the body of his wife using a wood chipper and after an exhaustive search at a nearby lake, the investigators recovered only a few fragments of human tissue [7]. Spitz has described the typical appearance at dismembered ends in bones, i.e. fragmentation of severed edges of long bones by axe, parallel- horizontal or oblique furrows in bone surface caused by skipping of saw blade [9]. In Indian context, a few cases have been reported by authors. Patowary and Barbhuiyan have reported a case in which scientific reconstruction of skeletal remnants helped the investigation to solve a gruesome murder, after superimposition, DNA typing and chemical analysis [9]. Reconstruction of injuries in a custodial death and other relevant findings were found to be useful by Mangal et al. [10] Garg has discussed about the importance of reconstruction in skeletonised human remains in solving a murder mystery of an unknown person who later was found to be dacoit killed by villagers [11]. Singh et al. has described a case where parts of a dismembered body

were submitted for investigation by police on a piecemeal basis, at intervals of few days, and a close comparison of the skeletal remains revealed that the different parts were of the same individual [12].

In the present case the accused and the victim were workplace colleagues: the former a butcher and the latter a bartender. The bartender had an illicit affair with the butcher's wife, and the husband caught them red handed one week prior to the incident. He planned the murder, out of sexual jealousy, and devised a plan to dispose the dead body. The alleged accused sent his wife to her maternal home and invited his friend to dinner and drinks. The victim was initially incapacitated by the injuries over the skull and face which finally lead to the death. In order to conceal and dispose the dead body, the accused dismembered it using his meat chopper into multiple pieces and preserved it in refrigerator. He planned to dispose these packets individually one by one, so that his butchering was not discovered. However, before he could dispose of the dismembered body, he fled from his house due to severe mental exhaustion after this ghastly crime, leaving behind the body in multiple packets inside the refrigerator. After crime scene visit by a Forensic Medicine expert and a thorough Postmortem examination were done, the police started their investigation and the culprit was caught from his relative's house within 48 hours, and he confessed to his crime. In this case, the detection of skull fractures and extradural hemorrhage could not have appeared after the victim's death, during the body dismemberment. These injuries had been caused by a hard, heavy & sharp cutting weapon. The pattern & site of injuries suggested that there was deliberate attempt to mutilate the body even after death. Multiple & repeated forceful inflictions indicated elements of deep anger, revenge & possibly anatomical knowledge by the assailant and an intention to dispose of the body secretly was evident. Intense sexual jealousy produced a murderous rage in the assailant and he committed this heinous crime.

Conclusion

The case illustrates importance of minute and detailed examination and reconstruction of mutilated segments of the body in order to establish identity and individuality of the person. From the nature of injuries, the weapon involved can also be detected. The accused committed this murder out of sexual jealousy against his wife and her paramour. In spite of dismemberment and decomposition of the corpse, a medicolegal examination allowed for determining not only the

cause of death but also the mechanism by which the injuries had been inflicted.

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