

Study of Suspected Burning Case: A Homicide or A Suicide

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Abstract

Protection of spot of occurrence is very important for the investigation purpose. In a suspicious death case requires the greatest efforts on the part of forensic expert who visits the crime scene. It is generally best to suspect the worst, a homicide. In an interesting case study, it was reported that a burnt dead body of a lady was laid inside her house when the doors of the room were bolted from inner side and windows were found opened. Some clay-tiles had been removed from the clay-tiled roof and it was alleged that her husband put her to fire and ran away from the roof way.

Careful examination of spot revealed that the possibility of creating hole in the clay-tiled roof after incident of fire, from the outside not from the inside, which lead the direction of investigation in the other direction. In these types of cases the forensic expert must be thoroughly familiar with all aspects of homicide, suicide and accident investigation.

Keywords: Reconstruction of Crime Scene; Homicide; Suicide

Introduction

Forensic experts in mobile unit in Rajasthan routinely visited various "Scene of Occurrence" to assist the investigating agencies, to collect and preserve the clue materials left by the culprit at the spot for laboratory examination [1,2]. But, sometimes forensic expert helps through examination of spot, reconstruction of the same and another aspect to find out the actual truth behind the crime [3]. In the present study demonstrated the scientific perspectives and careful observations in crime scene investigations. The spot examination dealt with the question of I.O. that whether the matter is related to suicide or is a homicidal attempt. A lady was found burnt inside the room when the room was bolted from inner side. A wooden framework and clay-tiles made the roof of the room. The garments of husband of deceased were found moistened by kerosene. The I.O. expressed allegation that the suspect closed room from inside and set her to fire and then he remove clay-tiles of the thatched roof and ran away. The spot examination was carried out in the light of above allegations and observations of the team are explained in the next section.



Figure 1: Location of spot of crime and location of the doors back and front door their situation of latches.



Figure 2: Location of spot of crime and location of the doors back and front door their situation of latches.

Observations

- i) **Spot:** The said house contained two successive rooms and an open verandah. The outer side room opens into alleged room via an iron door. The walls and floor of the house were cemented but the roof was covered by clay-tiles. The double panel iron entry door of alleged room was found bolted from inner side. The latch of door was found intact and soot deposition was observed. The backside double panel iron exit door was found bolted and locked

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Figure 3: Location of spot of crime and location of the doors back and front door their situation of latches.



Figure 4: Burnt Dead Body near the dead body material was scattered.



Figure 5: The floor near about entry door burnt materials.

from inner side. Charred remains of printed clothes like material were dispersed inside the room. A capped container embossed parampara was placed onto the kitchen platform near the dead body and it contained approximately half-liter liquid having smell like kerosene. Burning effect was also noticed on this container. A filled matchbox labeled sunflower was found near the container and it was moisten by liquid having smell like kerosene. Approximately 6-7 used matchsticks were found near about the dead body (Figure 1-4).

ii) Dead body of Victim: The bare and burnt dead body was lying down onto the floor and material was scattered on the floor near

about entry door and below the dead body. A liquid having smell like kerosene was dispersed on the floor near about dead body and some dispersed water was also found (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

iii) Roof of the room: A framework of wooden sticks and of clay tiles made the roof of the room. Near about entry door 16-17 kelu (bricks) were found removed from their normal position and thus creating a hole in the roof. The height of roof from the floor was found approximately 15 feet. Below this hole, partially burnt newspaper was spread on the stone slab having dimension approximately 7'x1' and height 6' from the floor. The dust and

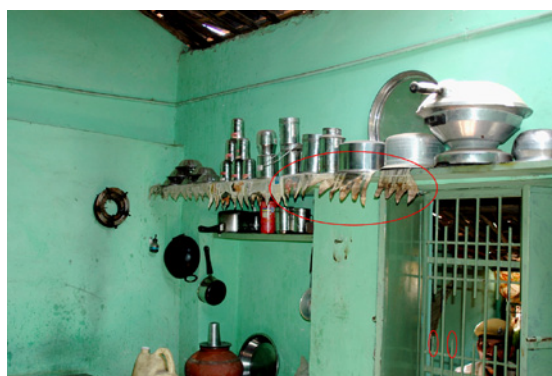


Figure 6: The partially burnt newspaper.



Figure 7: Entry door 16-17 kelu (bricks) were found removed from their normal position and thus creating a hole in the roof.



Figure 8: The wooden stick in the so-called hole was found pulled up and bent vertically towards upper side.

other objects were found undisturbed on this stone slab. It seems impractical that one can remove the clay-tiles from inside without using stone slab or without taking ladder like support. The thatched roof was examined from upper side. The removed kelu were lying haphazardly and scattered in all directions and some of the removed kelu were found some 7-meter apart from the created hole. Some wooden sticks that support the kelu were found broken. Some 1.5 meter apart from this hole, a single clay-tile was found removed from its normal position thereby indicating that first unsuccessful attempt to create a hole in the roof was offered here. Upon careful examinations of removed kelu and created hole, it was observed that burning effect and soot deposition was found only on the floor facing lower part of kelu. Similarly blackening was found on the floor facing part of sticks of wooden framework. One wooden stick in the so-called hole was found pulled up and bent vertically towards upper side giving angle of 60°C from the roof-floor to the bent stick. The edges of the broken and bent stick were seems to be fresh and dusting on this was found intact. Except on the fresh broken part, blackening and soot deposition was observed on the floor facing part of this stick. Treading marks of dispersed liquid having smell like kerosene was observed on the clay-tiled roof from the climbing point to the alleged hole, created by the husband of deceased ([Figure 6-8](#)).

Reconstruction of Crime Scene and Conclusion

In the light of brief facts told by I.O. and above observations the discussed crime scene may be reconstructed in following manner. To resolve the disputed matter between the lady and her husband, she decided to end their life and moisten them self by inflammable liquid. Mr. x denied and came out to the room. She bolted room from inside and put herself to fire. Mr. x tried to save her and finally he went to the roof. First he effort to remove clay-tiles from one side, thereafter he succeeded to remove clay-tiles and could create a hole other side in the thatched roof. The possibility of creating hole in the clay-tiled roof after incident of fire is indicated.

Discussion

Crime-scene reconstruction is of value when reconstruction is started at the scene during the initial phases of the investigation, during the investigation, and during the adjudication process. The forensic expert may determine, while the interviews are being conducted, if the stories being told by the victims, witnesses, and/or suspects are true. By knowing the events as reconstructed, the IO conducting the interviews may be able to detect deception or Crime Scene Reconstruction inconsistencies as reported by the forensic expert [6]. The use of this knowledge can be a powerful tool in the hands of an experienced investigator.

One can understand the significance of Locard's Principle, there is always something left behind regardless of its minutiae and it is up to the criminality to find it. The victim can no longer speak about what happened to them, but; the evidence (especially trace evidence) can reveal volumes about what really happened. If the crime scene investigator (s) and their team are diligent, evidence will be recovered that will eventually lead to the capture and conviction of the criminal (s) responsible. The diligent crime scene processing team should follow established protocol and respond accordingly.

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