

SOCIAL STIGMAS AND ORTHODOX CULTURE IN INDIAN SOCIETY-BRUTALITY ON HUMANITY

Dr. Anurag Arora, Junior Resident, Forensic Medicine, Gian Sagar Medical College, Banur, Patiala
Dr. R K Gorea, Professor and Head, Forensic Medicine, Gian Sagar Medical College, Banur, Patiala
Dr. Manisha Sharma, Assistant Professor, Anatomy, Gian Sagar Medical College, Banur, Patiala
Dr. K K Aggarwal, Additional Professor, Forensic Medicine, Government Medical College Patiala

Abstract

The lightning achievements and success in field of medicine and technology are still left with some darkness behind; as our society is still facing the grunt of false beliefs and orthodox views regarding diseases and their treatment. Orthodox treatment in the name of Spiritualism and religion is old practice worldwide and is also prevalent in India. Encouragement and acceptance of such indigenous practices are thought to be due to sub-optimal medical facilities, high degree of illiteracy and some deep-rooted common beliefs. The boom of science, high quality formal education, medical facilities and industrialization could not stop the silent intrusion of spiritual and religious modes of therapies. One of such cases of psychological illness was brutalized by tantric treatment is being reported in this paper.

Keywords: Tantrik; Social stigmas; Spiritualism

Introduction

Even in today's modern and advanced world the devil of illiteracy is persistent and lacking of awareness is a common feature. The market that has been established by the quacks and cheats has resulted in the humiliation and agony to the mankind which is a big set back to the humanity. Though less common in the urban sector, the harassment of individuals suspected of being held by some supernatural powers or black magic has been widely reported from the rural areas. It is often motivated by the orthodox culture and beliefs and in extreme circumstances has extended to acts of violence and murder.

The false treatment on the name of God and his powers based on illogical and irrational beliefs ranges from mental trauma, physical torture, killing of child [1] or certain animals as 'bali' leads to family disharmony and breakdowns and ultimately to depression and suicidal tendencies.

Case report

Eliciting one such example, speaking out the brutality in itself is the case study of a psychiatric patient, 32 years old, male, resident of a village, who had come to the emergency department of Gian Sagar hospital with complaints of being disoriented, not even recognizing family members, not talking to anyone and not taking anything orally for last 3-4 days. On physical examination-Pulse was 114 pm, B.P. was 90/60 mm with no Cyanosis, clubbing, oedema or pallor. Respiratory System and CVS were normal. On examination of CNS- on both sides there was plantar flexion. Abdomen was soft and there was no organomegaly.

In spite of the fact the patient had a positive family history of psychiatric disorders, it was not recognized and nobody ever got the right treatment and the agony was still lingering and handed over to the next generation. Even when a person is already dead is given false hopes that person will again become alive and is given tantric treatment and which is accepted by the society [2].

Regarding patient's history, he was alright till 5th august 2009, rakshabandhan, and started acting abnormally after 10 days when

he started talking more and irrelevant, fighting with family members and avoiding food, water or tea. Also there is history of episodes of intermittent attacks of violence including shouting, tearing clothes and attempts to catch hold of the ceiling fan, lasting 15-20 minutes.

Patient has studied till class 9th standard and works in a factory on daily wages. No history of smoking or drinking. No history of other physical disorders like diabetes or hypertension. No history of delusions, hallucinations or suicidal tendency.

His parents are alive and both of his sisters are married. History of psychiatric disorders present in mother and family. One of his sisters has broken marriage and stays with them who remains silent all the time and disoriented to surroundings and taken care by her mother.

Patient is married since 3 years and has one female child with no history of domestic violence or family disputes. He used to be very playful to her daughter and humble to relatives. After the patient started showing abnormal behavior, his elder sister took him to her place, Panchkula, near Bassi for treatment from a local baba Tantrik where he suffered the pain of being a part of orthodox society. Baba started torturing him physically and mentally claiming to chase off the bad or evil supernatural powers troubling him, scratched his whole body with hot iron rod peeled off the skin from many areas, hooked iron nail on his feet, put the iron rod in his ears wounding him badly. All this torture has made patient to lose his mental control. Once patient was washing his mouth in emergency, GSMCH and he was complaining that someone has given him iron and he is spitting it out.

Finally patient was admitted and started treatment under psychiatry with medicines after treating his injuries.

T. Psyquit (Quitapine), T. Riscon (Risperidone), T. Laeax (Lorazepam), Inj. Serenase and Inj Lorazepam as per the requirements.

This patient was fortunate enough to see the hospital before it would have been too late to resuscitate but still our society has lots many victims who are not even noticed and their life gets smashed away because of this filthy culture of Tantriks making money out of the superstition and misbelieves prevailing in our society.

Conclusions

What is needed in such cases is mental health education, destigmatization, facilitating adequate treatment, improving the self-esteem of the person, Utilizing the differently abled persons and community based rehabilitation (CBR).

Our government has started the fight against this blot on our culture long back in the form of Mental Health Act – 1987. What is required now is the support and cooperation from the community. Each and everyone should be made aware of their rights and responsibilities under this act e.g. incorporating scientific knowledge and mental disorder may be considered at par with other physical illnesses

Admission procedures should be simplified, any private person can report mental illness to the magistrate and discharge procedures made easier for such patients. There should be separate hospitals for under-16, addicts, and psychopaths. If anybody causes cruelty to mentally ill patients should be punished under this act.

References

1. Sedhuraman R. Superstition over daughter lands couple in jail. The Tribune 129(324) Late city Ed. Chandigarh 23 Nov 2009:18
2. Gorea RK. A case of mummification reported as spiritual coma. Cited in Vij K. Textbook of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology - Principles and Practice, 4th Ed, Elsevier, New Delhi 2008:130