

SUICIDE: A CRY FOR HELP



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Suicide is a ubiquitous social reality. It is the tragic culmination of one's pent up emotions and morbid feelings. Every case of suicide is a sign of hopelessness and helplessness not only for the hapless individual but also for the society that fails to inspire hope in the life of the victim. It is a tragic end to a person's will to live, nay utter failure of society to act as a veritable custodian of the dreams and aspirations of its young members. It is a breach of trust between the individual and society; collapse of the collective conscience.

It is true modern day life is a life of speed and stress. People are found wanting more and still more. They set targets after targets. Life becomes more mechanical, moving like a wall clock. Living becomes akin to running a marathon race with the sole objective of coming first. The joy of participation is diminished. All this takes a heavy toll on life. Individual achievement becomes the norm, resulting in the life of seclusion. You tend to withdraw from society both during pain and pleasure. Your feelings and emotions get bottled up inside you, crying for an outlet. Against this backdrop, when you face any tragic situations, you grow desperate and desolate. As there is none you could share your grief with, your sense of aloneness and emptiness would be both deep and real. This brings to my memory the predicament of the Ancient Mariner:

*Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity
on*

My soul in agony!

There is a sense of dejection here, a craving for grace and mercy. This is true to most people contemplating suicide—a desperate attempt to quit life; seeking a permanent solution to a temporary problem. It is a paradox again that everyone who wants to kill himself is in dire need of help; his every cell of the body cries out for some help or rescue. This is evident from the inbuilt mechanism in human body. That is the instinct for survival against all odds and vicissitudes. The following lines suggest what might be

going in the mind of the person at the time of suicide:

I am going to die, but I don't want to die! Somebody help me. I don't want to die!

Life Paradoxes

One wonders, whether life truly offers endless possibilities and limitless choices? Can one deny that we have the moon after every sunset? Is it not a fact that there are countless stars to illuminate the world in the absence of the moon? Does delight not follow despair? Does either joy or woe stay with anyone permanently? Is our life not just a pleasant sojourn in the general drama of pain? Then, why do many of us choose to end our lives? This is evident from the number of suicide cases registered in totally literate states like Kerala. The high tech city Bangalore is already on the path of becoming the suicide capital of India. It is seen that the higher the cognition level of a person, the greater seems to be the possibility of his suicide. The situation is alarming especially among the city bred people having an urbane outlook. As suicide is fast becoming a modern day reality; there is a need, as never before, to recreate this reality.

High Risk Personnel

It is always a challenge to save a precious life especially when the person has decided to destroy his own life. Such people fall into the category of high risk zone. The sooner we are able to identify them, the brighter could be the possibility of saving those lives. Following are among the major contributing factors to the rise of suicide:

Lonely souls

Those who live isolated from their loved ones could be called lonely souls. Such persons often feel lonely and uncared for. To this category belong many unmarried persons, especially the chronic bachelors and divorcees. Defense personnel who live a life of hardship as majority of them stay away from their family while posted to places far from normal human habitats are often susceptible to suicidal tendencies. This is evident from the unprecedented rise in the rate of suicide among them not only in India but across the world. It would be pertinent to mention here that an eminent French socialist Emile Durkheim in his seminal work entitled SUICIDE described way back in 1897 the rate of suicide as a social reality. This social reality, however, bites more in the present day society where interpersonal relationship is



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cracking like a fragile wall. The most traumatic outcome of weakening of this human bonding can be seen in the phenomenon of Divorce becoming a global emotional experience today contributing to a life marked by Anxiety, Stress, Frustration, Depression & suicidal syndromes.

Shocks & Setback

Many a time, suicide is the result of some shocks and setbacks. The shock could be emotional, cultural or financial just as one could suffer a setback in the academics and professional life. The number of students committing suicide these days during and after the exam is constantly on the rise like many of the youth working in corporate succumbing to the work pressure. Sadly, every morning newspaper reports some cases of suicide where the financial loss proved to be the trigger for suicide. The shock or setback could also come with the passing away of a loved one. That could create a void in the life of the person contributing to a feeling of worthlessness. Suicide also appears to be the way out of humiliation or disgrace suffered at the hands of one's parents, colleagues,

boss, teachers or the community at large. Parents and teachers in particular must deal with the adolescent children with love and empathy. The focus now ought to shift from finding fault to finding them doing something right. Appreciation and approval can bring cheers to the most depressed and disgraced of people. With positive feedback along with a pleasant outlook, many of the suicidal tendencies especially among the youth could be nipped in the bud.

However, people suffering from mental illness like clinical depression, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) or personality disorder like schizophrenia need to be treated by the psychotherapist. Similarly, drug addicts and alcoholics fall into the high risk zone, they need to be identified and treated before they could become inveterate offenders.

Prevention

Suicide is a blot on the face of humanity. Life being the most precious gift, it has to be preserved at all costs. We need to know, suicide is not the problem of an individual; it is our problem. It is but natural that when you do not know

what to do with your grief and are feeling unloved, suicide could appear to be a better choice than life. We need to identify people having low self esteem as this is the common denominator among the majority of people choosing suicide as a way of ending their problem. We need to inspire such people, reach out to them with unconditional love and empathy. They need help; love and laughter could be the bricks to rebuild their lives. They are very sensitive people; we can ill afford to be judgmental. We will have to work hard to restore their communication channel first. They must trust us; we need to become their confidants. Only then, can we make them realize that the darkness of charcoal, under pressure can turn into diamond. Blessings often come into many shapes and sizes. Life cannot be seen as a jigsaw puzzle to be solved but sheer joy and mystery to be lived.

It would only be in the fitness of things to share with my readers the considered views of Susan Rose Blauner on suicide as expressed in her book *How I Stayed Alive* when My brain was Trying to kill Me. Her following beliefs and views assume great sig-

nificance as she could survive three suicidal attempts after living with suicidal tendencies for eighteen long years:

- 1) Most suicidal thinkers don't want to die; they just want their feelings to change or go away.
- 2) Every single feeling we experience eventually does change-with or without any help from us. They never stay the same or at the same intensity.
- 3) Feelings and thoughts are just electrochemical impulses in the brain.
- 4) It is possible to outthink the brain, actively change feelings and eventually eliminate suicidal thoughts.
- 5) The reality of suicide is far different from the fantasy. Most suicidal thinkers romanticize their death by suicide, failing to realize that any suicide gesture or attempt can result in permanent brain, kidney or liver damage, loss of limbs, blindness or even death.

To sum up, it could only be said that something ought to be done to make suicide a thing of the past. Ever one living on this beautiful planet has a right to be alive. We must remember that crises are generally time bound. Once, solutions are found, feeling of depression gives way to the sense of jubilation. All that we need to do perhaps is to grow more loving, understanding and caring; we need to be kinder still to one another. In the words of Gautama Buddha:

*Looking after oneself, one looks after others.
Looking after others, one looks after oneself.*