

The Man Behind the Royal Massacre

Surendra Sherchan,¹ Devavrat Joshi¹

¹Mental Hospital, Lagankhel, Nepal.

ABSTRACT

Delusional disorder is a relatively uncommon psychiatric condition in which patients present with non-bizarre delusions, but with no accompanying prominent perceptual disturbances, thought disorder or significant and sustained mood symptoms. Apart from their delusions, people with delusional disorder may continue to socialize and function in a normal manner and their behavior does not generally seem odd or bizarre to others for many years of the onset of their symptoms. Because of this, they are brought to the clinician many years after the onset of their symptoms, only when their delusional behavior becomes overt. Thus, identifying and treating delusional disorders in time is a challenging task.

Keywords: *delusion; grandiose; persistent delusional disorder.*

INTRODUCTION

A delusion is a firm, unshakeable and false belief which cannot be shaken by giving any logic or evidence to the contrary. This belief is not shared by anyone else from the person's social, educational and cultural background.¹

A delusional disorder is a condition where the person develops gradual onset of long standing, encapsulated, non bizarre delusions. 'Bizarreness' of the delusion may be difficult to ascertain, especially among different cultures. Generally, delusion may be considered to be 'bizarre' if they involve situations that do not plausibly occur in real life.^{1,2,7}

Delusional disorders occur more commonly in middle aged or old aged individuals and constitute less than 1% of the total psychiatric diagnoses.¹

The central theme of the delusional system in case of delusional disorders may be persecutory, grandiose, jealousy, erotic, somatic or mixed and delusional disorders have been sub-categorized on the basis of the predominant theme.^{1,2,3}

A careful history taking along with a detailed mental state examination usually leads to the detection of such cases. A case of delusional disorder which was on the national news because of the nature of its presentations is being discussed here. This case was identified only after the client fell into police custody and was subsequently examined by Psychiatrists, and his disorder was presumably maintained for decades at sub-threshold levels, so that even his close acquaintances were not fully aware of his morbid mental state consisting of encapsulated grandiose delusions.

CASE REPORT

Mr. TPS, a 59 year old married man, was brought by the police for evaluation of his mental status. He had been kept in custody after he claimed himself to be the mastermind behind the infamous Royal massacre which took place at the Narayanhiti palace, in a press

Correspondence: Dr. Surendra Sherchan, Director, Mental Hospital, Lagankhel, Lalitpur. Email: drsherchan_s@yahoo.com, Phone: +977-01-5004004.

conference which was telecast on a national private television channel.

On being interviewed, initially the patient claimed that he was perfectly alright and had no problems and it was him who had planned that event.

As per the patient, after completing his primary schooling in India, his father brought him to Kathmandu in 1963 A.D. and got him enrolled in a school here. He said that this was done on the request of late King Mahendra, whom he claims to be a very close acquaintance of his father.

In his school, though his teachers told every student to 'develop their overall personality'; he feels that this was a special message for him. While he was in the 5th grade, he was told by a certain teacher to read a particular 'fairy tale' in a book at the school library. This tale was about a Prince who possessed special powers by which he could understand the language of different kinds of animals and birds. He read this story over and again for 7 consecutive years but though he knew the story, he couldn't understand the hidden meaning of it. On one particular day, after completing his Senior Cambridge in 1970 A.D., he just happened to flip through the pages of the same fairy tale book. On that day, suddenly, a new thought dawned upon his mind. He says that though the story was quite straightforward and simple, there were many special messages in it. He realized that he was being given special attention in the school and was being trained indirectly as a 'covert' (an undercover security agent), as he was to work as the chief of the Royal Intelligence Bureau (RIB). This was similar to the prince in the tale who was being given special trainings and special attention as he was to become the future king. He now came to realize that 'they' wanted to train him in such a way that he can take the full responsibility of his job and work in an efficient manner. He also suddenly learnt the ability to find out the 'hidden messages' in printed texts and also was able to convey his messages in similar manner. He realized that everything was being done by 'them' including King Mahendra and many other people working for the national security, whom he had never met in person.

After this realization, 'they' have always interacted with him in an indirect manner. He has always worked through hidden and coded messages only, which he seems to pick up from newspapers, radio, other media, the way in which other people interact with him and day to day happenings.

He said that he took the responsibility of the chief of the RIB in 1970. He said that he doesn't have any formal appointment letter or any paper stating the terms and

conditions of the post. However, he got the information about his appointment through coded messages in a newspaper. Through this 'coded message', he also came to know that he was supposed to work as an undercover officer, in a secret manner, with the main aim to protect the national interests and security of the country. He worked alone and sometime in conjunction with other members of the RIB, who were all undercover and not directly visible to him. The 'tenure' of his post was supposed to last till the reign of 3 successive kings. After the reign of the 3rd king in succession ends, he'd be free to hand over his responsibilities and his post to a successor and would be free to start his family life. However, before starting his family life, he was supposed to spend 1 year in an unknown destination (gupta baas). During this period, he was supposed to forget all the information he had gathered during his career, regarding national security and had to prepare himself for a retired family life. Throughout his tenure as the RIB chief, his duty was to report everything that is in interest of the country, through hidden messages in newspapers or other means of mass communication. He says that others including the kings, politicians, bureaucrats and security chiefs were always able to pick up and decode his messages. He was able to get their responses in a similar manner.

He said that he traveled to many places during his career, in order to learn different skills that were needed for carrying out the responsibilities of his post, in an efficient manner. There were no trainers as such but he said that there were many senior 'coverts' in places he visited, and they all taught him different skills that were needed through 'hidden messages'.

Around the year 1973, he somehow sensed that it was essential to bring all the money that had been deposited in foreign banks or which had been invested in foreign locales, back to the country. It was essential to do so, in order to pay all the pending national debts. He conveyed this information to the then King Birendra, through special messages in a magazine. If nothing was done by the king to bring back the money, the King and his close allies were to be killed, in order to safeguard the interests of the country. He did warn the King regarding the consequences if he didn't comply with the aforementioned task. However, he denied having met King Birendra or any of his family members in person, during his entire term.

The massacre of the King and his family that took place in 2001 was carried out according to his detailed plans of 1973. This had become essential in order to protect the national interests and the security situation of that time. He said that since the King did not take any concrete steps even after getting all the symbolic messages and reports, he had to face such consequences.

However, as per the available corroborative evidence, during the period of 1999 to 2008, he was put in custody inside the Nakkhu jail, for some offense, the details of which are not known. And at the time when the massacre took place in the royal palace, he was fully within police custody.

After the death of King Mahendra, followed by the death of two successive kings, King Birendra and King Dipendra, during the massacre, he was free to start his family life, as 3 kings had died in succession. Thus, before handing over his post and responsibilities to a successor, he published his 'coded' resignation in a newspaper. After this, he left for India, where he spent 1 year in anonymity, as part of the 'gupta baas' and returned back in 2007.

As the Royal regime ended and the country became a republic, he felt that it was the right time to disclose the mystery behind the massacre in the Royal palace. Thus, in order to inform the public regarding this matter, he organized a press conference, where he claimed to be the real mastermind behind the Royal massacre. This event was televised in a private national television channel in August, 2009. Keeping in view of the sensitivity of the matter, he was immediately arrested by the police and was taken into custody.

He lives in a nuclear family, with his wife and son. As per his son, he never interacted much with his family members. He did take responsibilities at his home and work, but at times, he was away from home on one of his 'missions'. He never informed them about where he was going when he went on his 'missions'.

Most of his close relatives were found to be resentful of him as he used to be excessively engaged with tasks of very ambitious natures causing much social discomforts and financial catastrophes in the family, instead of just carrying out his usual family responsibilities. He has had taken many high risk ventures - He fought an election for membership to the national parliament which he lost, ran many community development projects in the name of a trust created by the name of his father's nick name "Rumaale saahu's trust" (meaning trust by the name of a wealthy person who had smashed his fortune by selling towels), hatched business plans of importing Russian helicopters, importing petroleum from Saddam Hussein's Iraq etc. Many of his schoolmates and friends felt that he was very impressive who could influence people, one who used to spend a lavish lifestyle and used to be engaged with unusual, big scale business plans.

There was no known history suggestive of any underlying organic cause for his symptoms. All the relevant laboratory investigations including a CT - Scan

were all within normal limits. There is no history of any sustained mood or anxiety symptoms. There was no history suggestive of any hallucinations, disorganized speech, negative symptoms or catatonic symptoms. There is no evidence of any substance dependence except for occasional use of alcohol and nicotine. His mental state examination was unremarkable except for the presence of occasional circumstantial answers and abnormal content of thought including many odd and strange beliefs, delusions of grandiose ability, delusion of reference, delusional misinterpretations and a well systemized delusional system centered on a single theme. A diagnosis of persistent delusional disorder (grandiose type) was made and treatment was recommended.

DISCUSSION

Delusional disorders constitute around 1 to 4% of all psychiatric admissions. Among the delusional disorders, the grandiose subtype is the least well described variant. The individual suffering from this subtype mostly believes himself or herself to be rich, powerful and having certain special abilities. He may be content with himself because of this and is unlikely to seek any help; especially psychiatric help. If he/she remains sufficiently able to function in the community, the delusions may be undetected for long durations. In few cases of this type that have been described, many have usually been seen in custody after they have committed an offence under delusional influence. This case was also diagnosed very late; only after it took a legal turn secondary to the patient's "acting out" of his delusional beliefs.^{2,3,4}

Differential diagnosis of grandiose delusional disorder may include mania, schizophrenia and organic brain disorders (especially affecting the prefrontal cortex). The grandiosity in mania is usually associated with euphoria, over activity and at times irritability. Mood may be extremely labile and the themes of the grandiose delusions are usually unstable and varied. However, in the current case, the grandiose theme is well systemized and has remained stable over the course of many years. There are no accompanying features, especially sustained elated or irritable mood supporting a diagnosis of mania.^{5,6}

Unlike in a case of schizophrenia, there is no evidence of any perceptual disturbances including hallucinations, throughout the course of his illness. There is no evidence of any disorder of the form of thought. His thinking, behavior and speech are well organized. Other mental functions including his fund of knowledge and abstraction are relatively intact. There are no restricted or inappropriate emotional expansions. His personality has also not deteriorated despite such a long history and

is still able to interact reasonably well with others. The only psychopathology includes delusions of grandiosity/grandiose ability and reference, all centered on the same theme.^{3,6}

Organic brain disorders, especially affecting the prefrontal cerebral lobes may give rise to delusions, usually along with disinhibited behavior, labile mood and usually some degree of cognitive deficit. There is nothing to suggest the possibility of an organic cause in this case. The patient's cognitive abilities including orientation attention, concentration and memory are totally intact.^{1,2,5}

The importance of this case lies in the sense that it has taken so many decades to come to the attention of his close acquaintances and was maintained almost in sub-syndromal form until recent few years with presumably active symptoms. No person has had ever suspected about his mental health till his recent custody after his appearance in national television after his press conference related to a highly sensitive unresolved national issue.

Another important point is that the contents of his delusion which has involved matters like national security, state secret agency of active monarchy, return of property deposited in the foreign banks by then kings and masterminding of royal massacre in the palace. The encapsulation of such systematized delusional thoughts with a very high profile grandiose content in the backdrop of his probable hyperthymic

personality features may have presumably kept him out of suspicion of any mental illness for such a long time.

Next important point about this case is the treatment implications and human right issues of people living with mental illnesses. Despite the fact that treatment was recommended for this case, the subject spent many years of his life in impoverished conditions of Nepal's jail. Human rights issues are pertinent as with no national mental health legislation, many people living with mental illnesses after committing offensive crimes have been deprived of proper evaluations and they have been denied the deserved treatment and rehabilitation as well. This representative case symbolically challenges the conscience of human civilization as so many of the mentally ill people are passing their life in prisons, deprived of evaluation, treatment, rehabilitation and protection of their rights.

CONCLUSION

This case illustrates the fact that symptoms of persistent delusional disorders may not become overt and noticeable to others for a very long time, even for decades at times. Recognition and timely management of delusional disorders is of paramount importance but is a challenging task.

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Mental Hospital, Lagankhel, Lalitpur.

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