PSYCHO-DYNAMICS OF KORO
(A Case Report)

R. KHUBALKAR, M. A. (Psy.)
O. P. GUPTA, M. D. (Medicine)

Koro is an acute anxiety reaction characterized by the patients desperate fear that his penis is shrinking and may disappear into his abdomen, leading to his death (Freedman et al., 1976). This culture bound syndrome is said to occur almost exclusively among people of Malay archipelago and South Chinese who refer to it as Suk-Yeong (Yap, 1965). Two cases from Canada (Dow and Silver, 1973); two cases from India (Shukla and Mishra, 1981; Chakraborty, 1982), have been reported. Recently epidemic of Koro has been reported in four districts of Assam (Datta et al. 1982).

CASE REPORT

Concerned case was of an unmarried male student of 21 years, who reported a lack of erection and loss of strength in his penis. Also that it had become smaller, and he feared that the process of decreasing size will continue and he would become a useless man. Besides, he manifested symptoms or feelings of extreme restlessness, brooding, guilt, anxiety, palpitation, sweating, tremors of hands, inability to concentrate and inability to do anything substantial in life. He also showed hopelessness about his entire future. No overt psychotic disturbances were evident. He had history of masturbation for three years, which reduced gradually and stopped completely 6 months before he came for treatment. No family history of mental illness was recorded. There was no history of similar or other kind of illness with the patient.

His father had a small furniture shop. He was seventh in order of birth among fourteen siblings. Family atmosphere was described to be quite unpleasant. Father was over burdened with economic and legal problems and was described to be negligent and unconcerned about the children, especially about him as he (patient) insisted on education than business. Sibling rivalry was also reported.

He was given treatment in the form of psychotherapy (reassurance citing examples), anxiolitics and antidepressants. He did not turn up to report his condition but came when informed by post. On his second visit, he was free from the recurring thought of shrinkage of penis but did not show much improvement in his anxiety and depression, on third visit it was found that he had taken steps to continue education and had improved relationship with family members but no remarkable subjective difference could be observed in his pessimistic outlook.

After continuing the treatment for a month or so he stopped coming for treatment, however it was informed from another source that he was performing well in social and personal fields.

PSYCHODYNAMICS

Strained relationships with the family members led him to isolation and eventually to the company of friends.
where he developed habit of reading pornographic literature and indulged in masturbation. This created a feeling of guilt in him and he tried to draw none about it's effects. In one of the books he read that excessive masturbation can lead to reduction in the size of penis and he developed a notion of shrinkage of his penis.

COMMENTS

Chakraborty (1982) described Koro as a "culture bound psychogenic disorder". While Dutta et al. (1982) related it to exposure to hearsay or witnessing a Koro case as an important predeterminant. Yap (1965) stressed on poor education immature and dependent personality and lack of confidence in his virility.

From this case it seems that development of Koro is rather a learned phenomenon which results in an insecure person by some kind of accidental or occasional exposure of such ideas by reading, hearing or witnessing a case.

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