

## 'Love Murder' or 'Mercy Killing' of the Wife in Life-Long Agony

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A senior couple had lived happily together for around 43 years with no history of intimate partner violence. The husband was 72 years and the wife 69 with three grown-up children. One year ago, the wife accidentally fell off the balcony and became quadriplegic. She was bed-ridden with urinary and fecal incontinence. The aged husband was nursing her in his maximum capacity. He became depressed when all possible treatment modalities (Western, Ayurveda, Unani, Oriental etc.) proved to be of no help in giving her the slightest improvement. Several times, he suggested his wife for self-deliverance by committing suicide together. This was declined by the wife. One day he confessed in their shrine room in front of a Buddha statue that his actions be pardoned as they are done out of pure love to her wife and then killed her by cutting her throat with a sharp weapon. Few minutes later, he was rescued by his children when trying to cut his own throat while attempting to hang himself at the same time. On examination, the accused was neutral in mood. He was referred to the Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist. Though this could be an altruistic murder, the mental state of the accused should be assessed in many aspects. It is also worth finding out the root-causes for such dyadic homicides within non-violent relationships. Sri Lankan Penal Code does not recognize an entity with diminished responsibility termed 'mercy killing'. Could the discretion of the court be used towards a lesser charge?

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