

OLIVE GREEN PAGIDEE (TURBAN) NUMBER 6879077!

- by **G. Jayaprasad Rao**, DSP, CID

The sensational Triple Murders that occurred in 1983 in A.O.C. Cantonment Area in North Zone Hyderabad, had made all the people in the area to shudder. S.I Sri.Akbar Ali Khan of Thirumalgiri P.S. was busy in sorting out the complaints that came to the P.S. on the night of the Christmas Festival and he was taken aback when he received a telephone call from AOC Office that there was a male body lying in a corner in their ground with hands and legs tied with an Olive Green Pagidi. He immediately rushed to the scene with his staff and came to an immediate conclusion that it was a ghastly murder. But who was this unfortunate young man killed on the occasion of a festive day?

As usual, the formalities of taking a complaint and registering a case U/s 302 IPC were completed. Inquest over the dead body was done under the supervision of the DCP, North Zone. A Special Team was constituted which was led by me. Our efforts to establish the identity of the deceased did not yield any fruit. The D.C.P. left the scene instructing us to spare no efforts to detect the case.

We did not get disheartened for our failure in our attempt in establishing the identity of the deceased young man for several days and continued making relentless enquiries. At last, a break

through came when a RPF Constable came forward and stated that he knew the deceased. He further revealed that the young man was a pimp and that his name was Babu. We sighed in relief and renewed our efforts to nab the possible offenders who could have any motive to murder a pimp. We came to the conclusion that he must have been done to death by a 'customer' in a quarrel regarding 'rates'. Then who were his girls and who were his 'clients'? We started to pamper the known local call girls but it was not an easy task to take the girls into confidence who remained tight lipped on being approached by the police.

When we were immersed in this mysterious murder, another shocking report put all of us in confusion. A body of a young woman was found in a toilet behind A.O.C. main building. We rushed to the place and immediately concluded that she appears to be a call girl. We had no difficulty in getting her identity. She was a sex worker by name Susheela. She had lived for some time in Punjab and knew the Punjabi language. She often visited the cantonment area and catered to the needs of military bachelors.

Then we tried to link both the murders as one was a prostitute and the other

was a pimp. We learnt that Babu specialized in getting customers to the soldiers and that Susheela was one of his girls. Then who could have engaged Susheela on the fateful night and what might have caused their murders?

Then one thing struck us. The turban with which Babu's hands and legs were tied must be that of a Sikh Jawan, we closely examined the Pagidee cloth. I found slight traces of a number on it. I thought that the Number on it was 6878077. This must be the number of a Havaladar, which was put on the Pagedee for identification by the Dhobis. Our team started making enquiries for Punjabi Havaladars as the higher ranking officers do not have numbers.

For further confirmation, the Pagidee was taken to FSL where it was examined under an ultra violet lamp but the number on the turban could not be deciphered correctly. However the number 6878077 belonged to Havaldaar Karthar Singh but at the time of the offence, he was not in AOC Hyderabad and he was residing in Delhi, having retired from service. But still a police party went to Delhi to examine his complicity but it was confirmed that he was in Delhi at the time of the offence and hence his complicity was ruled out.

The number on the Pagidee, though not clear, could be 6879077, and not 6878077? We thought we'll try.

The place where Babu's body was found was in the vicinity of the Subedar

bachelor quarters and Susheela's body was also found in the same area. The number on the turban happened to be given to Halvaldars but not Subedars. But still we made discreet enquiries about the Sardarjis residing in those 32 bachelor quarters and learnt that only one Sardarji by name Preetham Singh, who is the Subedar, was residing there. We also learnt that another Sardarji by name Mohansingh Cheema occupied one of the quarters till recently, but vacated the quarters, having applied for voluntary discharge from service and that he is living in a rented house in Lal Bazar. We also gathered that he was trying for employment in Oman.

Our hopes of detecting the case were decreasing day by day. In a desperate attempt, we made enquiries about the Halvaldar number of Preetham Singh before he was promoted as Subedar and finally a real breakthrough came in the case as it came to light that the number of Preetham Singh when he was Halvaldar was none other than 6879077, which was found on the Pagidee. Immediately I ran to my D.C.P. and informed him about the fact and he gave me an O.K signal to interrogate Subedar Preetham Singh. When I approached AOC authorities, Brigadier Verghis permitted me to take Preetham Singh for interrogation on the condition that the Subedar should be subjected to interrogation only in the presence of the Military Police. Subedar Preetham Singh did not give any useful information in the beginning but

requested for a days time to make up his mind. But all through his interrogation which continued up to 2 A.M, in the night he appeared to be tense and was sweating profusely, and our suspicion increased when I cross-questioned him about his Havaladar number on the pagidee for which he did not properly account for. As he asked for 24 hrs time to make up his mind, he was handed him over to Military Police with a request to produce him before us on the next day.

The next day morning at about 6.A.M, I received a telephone Call at my residence from North Zone Control room breaking a shocking news that Subedar Preetham Singh was reportedly found dead in his bachelor quarters. I was shocked and frightened that his death would be attributed to me as I had interrogated him as a suspect in a double murder case and I immediately called on my DCP who by then had already received the news of the death of Subedar to be murder! I sighed in relief that I escaped from being an accused in a case of custodial death!

We went to the scene of offence and our preliminary investigation revealed that Preetham Singh was strangled to death with his own Lungi. All the three mysterious murders confused even senior officers. Our determination to break the mystery behind the three unsolved murders threw a challenge on our professional competency.

I started making enquiries about the possible persons who could have any reasons for murdering Preetham Singh. My enquiries revealed that Preetham Singh's friend Mohan Singh Cheema met him after he was sent away from the P.S. after my interrogation. I approached Bregador Varghis with a request to permit me to interrogate Cheema and informed me that he was going to discharge Cheema from service then and there as he has already applied for such discharge and that I was at liberty to take him for interrogation.

Immediately after the discharge notice was served on Mohansingh Cheema I brought him to Mahankali P.S. where we interrogated him at length. At last Mohansingh Cheema broke and confessed his guilt.

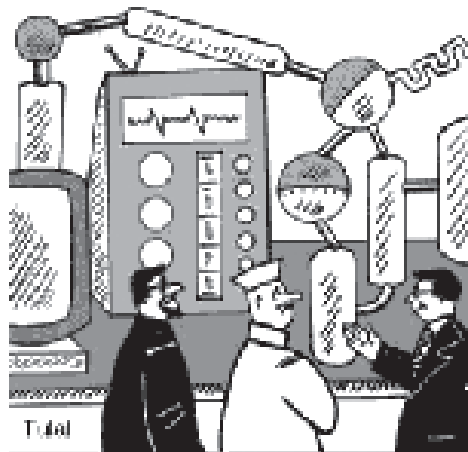
The high drama went like this. On December 25, X-mas day Preetham Singh and Mohansingh Cheema went to Sec,bad Railway Station, where they contacted the pimp Babu for a call girl and Babu agreed to send a girl by name Susheela for Rs, 40/- for the night and also agreed to send the girl to their quarters. Babu also accompanied Suseela to the bachelor Quarters. In the quarters Preetham Singh and Mohansingh Cheema, both wanted to enjoy the girl to which Babu objected and demanded Rs 10/- more. Preetham and Cheema being in a drunken state got wild at Babu and throttled him to death. Susheela started shouting and both of them throttled her also to death as she

had witnessed their act. In the same drunken mood they carried the body of Suseela to the unused toilets behind the AOC main building and left the dead body there. They came back to the quarters and thought about the best way of getting rid of the body of Babu. As his body was heavy, they tied the hands and legs of Babu with an old Olive green Pagidee of Preetham Singh and Mohansingh Cheema carried the dead body by hanging it on his shoulder and threw it behind the bushes near AOC ground.

Mohansingh Cheema had become restless when the interrogation of Preetham Singh was done and was

frightened that Preetham Singh would disclose his part in the double murder and met him in the night after I sent him back Preetham Singh to his quarters after interrogation. Mohansingh Cheema went to his quarter in the night and saw the doors ajar, went inside and found Preetham Singh in deep sleep and strangled him with his own lunghee as he was desperate to some how bury his involvement in the two murders.

That is how Pagidee number 6879077 solved the three mysterious murders which had rocked the entire Cantonment area at that time.



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