

By Sidharth Mishra



The much awaited, debated and speculated report from the team of experts of the department of Forensic Medicine of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in the Sushant Singh Rajput (SSR) death case came on Saturday last. Given the airtime which has been consumed by this particular unfortunate incident in the past three months, it should have invited several sessions of intense debate on television.

It did not happen that way, as the AIIMS report came, as English poet TS Eliot had penned, “Not with a bang but a whimper.” The report was conclusive -- there was no evidence of poisoning. The AIIMS forensic team’s description has definitely taken the wind out of the sails to those having concluded that SSR was “drugged and murdered.” They would now have to invent new theories to keep themselves afloat

Thankfully given the hunger the media has for the TRPs, the Hathras incident has come to grab the eye-balls, and most of the channels have conveniently decided to not play up the AIIMS report much.

There was a lot of speculation whether the CBI, which is investigating the case, would accept the report or ignore. There is a precedence of another investigating agency, Delhi Police, not ‘collecting’ an AIIMS report of conclusively stating that Congress MP Shashi Tharoor’s wife Sunanda Pushkar had died of poisoning.

The report in Sunanda Pushkar case was given by the team of experts despite there being a pressure from the establishment to state otherwise. Standing their ground almost cost the

CBI Does Well to Accept AIIMS Report in SSR Case

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forensic team's leader his job. However, so far there is no evidence to show that in the SSR case there was any pressure to give any tailor-made report. However, given the dominant narrative in the media, and claims made by SSR's family's lawyer, it must have been very challenging for the AIIMS team to come out with the finding which went against the tide.

Now coming to the content of the report, it rules out presence of any poisonous substance in the viscera. The report is also not indicative of the presence of any evidence of psychotropic drug in the viscera. In its conclusion, the team is stated to have given 150 international references in support of its findings.

Where does the case go from here? The absence of poison and drugs could very well derail the line which is being pursued by some of the law-enforcing agencies specially the Narcotics Control Bureau as the the report is conclusive that it was a case of death by suicide.

For pursuing the line of the murder, the investigating agency cannot claim that SSR was first drugged and then hung, as presence of drug in viscera has been ruled out. Does that bring immediate relief to accused Rhea Chakravarti and others? Not necessarily.

Even as the CBI decides to accept the AIIMS report and consider it to be a case of suicide, it can still pursue criminal case of abetment to suicide against the accused persons. However, with circumstantial and forensic evidences against the accused persons almost evaporating, the investigating agency would largely have to depend on technical evidence.

Given its track record, the AIIMS team has given a most scientific and objective report, which would certainly be cited as a case study for the future generation of the students of forensic medicine and toxicology, that is science of poisoning. To overcome any charge of bias being leveled against it, the CBI has done well to accept the scientifically prepared report.

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