False medical certificates settle the case

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The practice of issuing false medical certificates seems to be quite widespread. During the 1980s, as a legislator I recall publicly quoting the different rates at which money is charged for issuing false medical certificates in medico-legal case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code. The then civil surgeon confirmed my assertions but expressed his helplessness.

In the early 1990s, The Times of India and Nawan Zamana, a Punjabi daily from Jalandhar, carried reports alleging that doctors at the Amritsar civil hospital routinely issued false medical certificates, and gave full details of some 10 cases. The matter was raised in the Assembly and after a year, two doctors were transferred. It was sentencing a murderer to six months’ jail.

Recently, I came to know of a property dispute involving a retired officer of the LIC, and his sons from two marriages. The officer helped one set of sons attack their half-brother and his wife to evict them from their legal residence. In the attack, the daughter-in-law was beaten on her head with an iron instrument and started bleeding profusely. The officer and his sons inflicted themselves with minor injuries before going to the police, where the daughter-in-law had also gone. All of them were told to get medical certificates from a civil hospital. The officer got himself admitted into the hospital, along with his son. The daughter-in-law was threatened by goondas outside the hospital and could not be admitted till the police and local public intervened.

In the meantime, the aggressors got medical certificates under Section 326 and 324 for small injuries while the daughter-in-law was given a certificate under Section 323, which is non-cognisable. The local assistant superintendent of police ordered registration of criminal cases against the aggrieved son and his severely-injured wife, along with two neighbours who had tried to help them. They were saved only when the local people agitated. The ASP ordered an inquiry and the injuries were found to be self-inflicted. The ASP also ordered the registration of cases against those who had got a false FIR registered at the police station. This however, has not been done so far.

Four innocent people would have been sent to jail and possibly convicted on the basis of false medical certificates but for a chance public agitation. There is no doubt that many more people suffer because of this practice.

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