Theoretical Frame Work of Suicide

Meaning, definition and nature of Suicide

Suicide (Latin: *suicidium* from *sui caedere*, to kill one self), The deliberate taking of one's own life. Suicide may be compulsory, prescribed by custom or enjoined by the authorities, usually as an alternative to death at the hands of others, or it may be committed for personal motives. Depending on the time and place, it may be regarded as a heroic deed or condemned by religious and civil authorities.

The word suicide means a person voluntarily putting an end to his life. It is obvious, on a plain reading of the definition of “suicide” that the cause and circumstances leading one to take such a decision are wholly irrelevant for deciding the question as to whether the death was a suicide or not. A person who is frustrated or defeated in his life, or considers himself to be frustrated or defeated in life, may on the spur of the moment or after proper deliberation, come to the conclusion that he needs to put an end to his life. On the other hand, a person who is otherwise happy and claims to be successful in life, and had led a contented life may also take a conscious decision of putting an end to own life such a decision may be taken on a full consideration of the relevant facts nevertheless on a plain meaning of the word “suicide” it is difficult to say that decision taken to voluntarily put an end to one’s life, in the latter case where a person claims to be successful in life and happy, is not suicide.

“Suicide is the act of voluntary and intentional self destruction.”

Suicide is a reaction to the problems that apparently can not be solved in any other way. It is the final response which a human being makes to inner emotional distress.

Theories of Suicide

Durkheim’s Theory - Durkheim in his book "Le Suicide" described the concept of suicide in very articulate manner. Durkheim theory is considered to
be a pioneer theory so far as sociological factors are concerned. Durkheim considered that the “egoism” and lack of moral restraint are the main causes of suicide. His theory assumes that for all societies there is some optional equilibrium or integration of egoism-altruism on the one hand and anomie-fatality on the other. Any change in the relative strength of these ideas (or forces) will produce an increase in social disintegration which lead in turn to an increase in the suicide rate and in particular type of social relations associated with the “force” that is on increase. He there by establishes relation between suicide rates and the incidence of different types of social relations. But the great shortcomings of the theory is that there are no means of measuring these forces of egoism, anomie etc. Except with reference to a change in the suicide rate. Yet Durkheim believed that one or more of these forces was responsible for the variation of suicide rate.

Most contemporary studies of suicide focused on individual characteristics.

Durkheim studies connection between individual and society. He believed that if he could show how what is seen as the most individual act is actually the result of the social world, he would show the usefulness of sociology and his rules of sociological method.

Durkheim developed the concept of ‘Anomie’, which means "Condition of normlessness, a moral vacuum, the suspension of rules, a state sometimes referred to as deregulation. Anomie presupposes a prior condition in which behavior is normatively determined. A painful social crisis upsets the equilibrium disturbs largely number of people, greatly atton - votes the negative force of tradition and produces widespread Anomie." He explores the differing suicide rates among Protestants and Catholics, explaining that stronger social control among Catholics results in lower suicide rates. According to Durkheim, people have a certain level of attachment to their groups, which he calls social integration. Abnormally high or low levels of social integration may result in increased suicide rates; low levels have this effect because low social integration results in disorganized society, causing people to turn to suicide as
last resort, while high levels cause people to kill themselves to avoid becoming burdens on society. This work has influenced proponents of control theory and is often mentioned as a classic sociological study.

Durkheim's intensive study of suicide is more than an interesting statistical analysis of an important empirical topic. Here, Durkheim is vitally concerned to show how empirical data support a theoretical doctrine, like exteriority and constraining power of a given order of social facts.³

Rejecting, most of the accepted theories of suicide, Durkheim on the basis of his monographic studies, claims suicide as primarily a social phenomenon in terms of the break-down of the vital bonds of group life. In his classic study, Le Suicide, he demonstrates that neither psychopathic factors, nor heredity, nor climate, nor imitation, nor poverty, nor unhappy love, nor other personal motives alone form a sufficient explanation of suicide. Certain persons take to suicide for one or more of these reasons, but a majority of suicides reflects a group break-down of some sort. The decay in social solidarity and the incidence of suicide go hand-in-hand. The individual who commits suicide must be living under negative social pressure and is cut off from his social group. We may illustrate Durkheim's position by means of a few analysis given by him.

Durkheim, for example, has found a high suicide rate among the persons living in a state of "abnormal" marital status. This is because of the disintegrative influence of a disorganised family group. A well-knit family group, he contends, exerts a wholesome and integrative influence upon its members and checks the development of any feeling in favour of committing suicide, This is not because of any magical influence of the marriage, state of the family, but because of the cohesive character of any intimate and closely knit social group that exerts its constant pressure upon its members to guard against any reckless distaste for life. That is why, according to Durkheim, men who have never enjoyed the affectional aspect of marriage (the single), or those who have once enjoyed and lost it (the widowed and divorced), tend to commit suicide much more frequently than those whose contact with the family group is intimate, wholesome and unbroken.⁴
A similar explanation is given by Durkheim in respect of religion in checking the suicide rate. This checking influence of religion, says he, is neither because of the religious concepts themselves, not because of the widely accepted religious belief that self-destruction is sinful and religiously forbidden. It is rather because "the religious life is the eminent form and the concentrated expression of the whole collective life." Religion through its varied beliefs, traditions and practices exerts a compelling, regulatory and obligatory influence over the individuals, besides integrating them into one single moral community. With the stronger nature of these regulatory beliefs and practices, the solidarity and integrity of social life increases and the incidences of suicide decreases. In an opposite case, the individuals are more apt to be demoralised and prone to commit suicide. The Protestant Church, for example, lacks an internal solidarity, and, as such, has no institutional device to check its members effectively against suicide. In the orthodox Catholic and Jewish faiths, on the contrary, this solidarity is their most basic feature and, therefore, a lesser number of suicides is found among them.\(^5\)

Durkheim analyses suicide under four general headings-

(1) Egoistic Suicide  
(2) Altruistic Suicide  
(3) Anomic Suicide  
(4) Fatalistic Suicide

(a) **Egoistic Suicide** - Egoism is a state in which the ties attaching the individual to others in the society are weak. Since the individual is only weakly integrated into the society, their suicide will have little impact on the rest of the society. In other words there are few social ties to keep the individual from taking their own life. This Durkheim saw as the cause of suicide among divorced men and has been cited as the cause of rising teenage suicide by contemporary sociologists. Egoistic suicide is where people kill themselves for their own individual interest. This usually occurs in societies where social bonds are weak.
with a law levels of social integration due to emphasis put into individual rights, welfare and interest. You could say that this society has the norms and values to think of themselves, causing them to be more individual rather than coming together as a society. These people are often encouraged (for example, by their religious) to make their own decision and therefore accept the consequences. This may mean that other people of the society see it as acceptable that a person has killed themselves due to failure or unhappiness. To conclude this type of suicide is caused by a low amount of social integration and could lead to a high suicide rate in society.

Durkheim infers that an important type of suicide (egoistic) is caused by an insufficient participation by the individual in the life of a group. This type of suicide occurs when an individual feels himself too much isolated from the social group. This situation takes place when integration of the individual with his social group is much disturbed or when the internal cohesiveness of sufficient intensity is not maintained with a group. The individual in himself is of little value, and what he derives from participation in a social group can give purpose and significance to his private existence. Under such a situation, every individual is over busy in his own way, and cares for none; so much so that some individual feel isolated, slighted, hurt and ignored, and, therefore, commit suicide finally to save themselves from such a state of isolated life. For this reason, the single and the divorced persons, who are unable to enjoy the affectional bonds of family life, and, therefore feel isolated are more liable to commit suicide than the married people. Our modern society, characterised by impersonal, self-centred, and secondary associations and control, leaves the individual socially isolated, and entirely cut-off from the normal contacts of intimate, personal and primary group life. This is why, no doubt, a great many suicides in modern society are a result of this situation.

Durkheim comments on this situation in modern society as follows: "Suicide varies in inverse ratio to the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual is a part." In other words, "suicide is both a concomitant of an index to the relative degree of social disorganization in modern society."
An organised and integrated society places certain duties for the individual members to perform, and regulates their behaviour through certain rules and procedures. Every individual works under the regulative pressure of these rules and procedures, and normally, cannot go against them, because they are the collective representations of the group itself. But, in a disorganised and disintegrated society, lacking in internal cohesiveness, the state of affairs is just the opposite. Every individual is free to plan and act according to his own caprice, and is guided by his individual wishes and interests. He may even take law in his own hands, and may go to any extent to violate the social codes. At a later stage, he finds to develop an attitude of carelessness not only towards his group, but also towards his own life itself. Thus, a disorganised society lays the foundation of personal disorganization in that degree which ultimately ends in suicide.

(b) **Altruistic Suicide** - Altruism is a state opposite to egoism, in which the individual who commit suicide based on altruism die because they believed that their death can bring about a benefit to the society. In other words, when an individual is too heavily integrated into the society, they will commit suicide regardless of their own hesitation if the society's norms ask for the person's death. Durkheim saw this as accruing in two different ways:–

i) Where people saw themselves as a worthless or a burden upon society and could therefore commit suicide. He saw this as happening in ancient or 'permitine' societies but also in highly traditionalized army regiments, such as imperial or elite guard, in contemporary society.

ii) Where people saw the social world as meaningless and would sacrifice themselves for a greater ideal. Durkheim saw this happening in 'Eastern' religions, such as the 'Sati' in Hinduism. Same contemporary sociologists have used this analysis to explain 'Kamikaze' pilots and the cult of the suicide bomber.

Altruistic suicide occur in societies that sees the individual needs as less important than the societies as a whole. As individual interest was not important,
Durkheim stated that in an altruistic society there would be little reason for people to commit suicide. He stated excepting if the individual is expected to kill themselves on behalf of the society.

An example of this rate type of suicide would be suicide bombers who are willing to take their lives for thus religious and Hindu widows throwing themselves on their husbands funeral pyre.

This type of suicide occurs when the integration of the individual and the group is too close and intimate. So much so that he is controlled completely by the group without any regard for his personality or individuality. He is only a member of his group, and nothing more; and, therefore, can be called upon to sacrifice even his life, whenever required, for the sake of the group. On moral ground, its justification is that it is taking of one's life for the sake of a cause. Psychologically, it is based on the individual's sense of duty to sacrifice himself for the sake of large: social unity. In short, self-destruction is caused under the pressure of social need, or moral codes. Among the members of primitive groups, the pressure of moral codes combined with the psychology of duty is so powerful that people commit suicide mechanically - so easily, and almost casually. Men and women who are old and invalid, women whose husbands are dead, men or women who disgrace the group through the utter violation of certain group morals are socially designated for altruistic type of suicide

(c) Anomique Suicide - Anomie is a state in which there is weak social regulation between the society's norms and the individual, most often brought on by dramatic changes in economic, conjugal, sexual or social circumstances this type of suicide happens when the social norms and laws governing the society do not correspond with life goals of the individual. Since the individual does not identify with the norms of the society suicide seems to be a way to escape them. For this type of suicide, Durkhiem pointed out that people are naturally selfish and put their own needs and interests first he said that there is a frame work of 'acceptable behaviour' within a society and if this framework is weaken the people will revert to their natural selfishness. These restraints are usually weakened by social change so Durkheim linked social change with there rate of suicide.
This type of suicide has been described by Durkheim as "suicide anomique" or "normless" suicide. This type of suicide is due to sudden breakdown of the social equilibrium, such as arises from sudden business depressions, inflations, etc. Suicides after bankruptcies or after winning a lottery, are examples of this type. It follows, therefore, that such suicides are not only conditioned by some sudden disastrous change in the life of an individual, but can equally be governed by some sudden change for the better in his life. The impoverishment per se or, in other words, increase of poverty, is not an adequate explanation of such suicides, because the rate of suicide increases not only in case of severe break in the equilibrium caused by sudden impoverishment, but also when caused by prosperity. The important fact to be noted in this connection is that many persons are unable to adjust themselves to, such sudden and violent changes in their life organization, whether the change is towards a happy, or an unhappy, direction. Under such circumstances, says Durkheim, "suicide anomique" solves their personal dilemma. Since the individual has no way of restraining the unlimited propensities, this must be done by some force exterior to him. Social desires can be regulated only by a moral force. Durkheim views the collective order as the only legitimate moral force that can effectively restrain the social and moral needs "Either directly and as a whole, or through the agency of one of its organs, society alone can play this moderating role; for it is the holy moral power superior to the individual the authority of which he accepts."

However, occasionally this mechanism breaks down and normlessness ensues. Durkheim writes: "But when society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, it is momentarily incapable of exercising this influence; thence come the sudden rise in the curve of suicides...... In case of economic disasters, indeed, something like a de-classification occurs which suddenly casts certain individuals into a lower state than their previous one. Then they must reduce their requirements, restrain their needs, earn greater self-control. All the advantages of social influence are lost so far as they are concerned; their moral education has to be recommended. But society cannot adjust them instantaneously to this new life and teach them to practise the
increased self-repression to which they are unaccustomed. So they are not
adjusted to the condition forced upon them, and its very prospect is intolerable;
hence the suffering which detaches them from a reduced existence even before
they have made real of it.

In short, Durkheim conceived of anomie as a social condition of
normlessness or the deregulation of normative structure, that is the failure of
the collective moral order to restrain the overweening ambition, greed and
unlimited aspirations.

(d) Fatalistic Suicide - Fatalism is a state opposite to anomie in which
social regulation is completely instilled in the individual; there is no hope of
change against the oppressive discipline of the society the only way for the
individual to be released from this state is to commit suicide. Durkheim saw
this as the reason for slaves committing suicide in antiquity, but saw it as having
little relevance in modern society. Contemporary sociologists have argued that
modern fatalistic suicide occurs in such societies as Japan, where social mobility
is so limited by social norms that individual fulfillment is impossible.

So this type of suicide scene to occur in overly oppressive societies,
causing people to prefer to die than to carry on living within this society, this is
an extremely rare reason for people to take their own lives, but a good example
would be within a prison; people prefer to die than live the a prison with constant
abuse.

According to Durkheim, catholic society has normal levels of integration
while protestant society has low levels Durkheim thus defined suicide as the
act of severing social relationships and conclude that suicide may be caused
by weak social bands. Durkheim believed that the social bond is composed of
two factors, which are social integration (attachment to society's norms). He
believed that suicide rates may increase when extremities in these factors occur.

Thus, "The curve of suicide" may be accounted for only sociologically. It
is the moral Constitution of society which at any given moment fixed the numbers
of suicide, for every society there exists a collective force of a certain energy
which pushes individual to kill themselves. The movements which are performed by such a person and which on the first approach, may appear as a manifestation of their individual temperament in reality are nothing but the result and exterison manifestation, of a corresponding to its morphological structure and collective Constitution, has its own collective proclivity to the act of suicide and it is this collective proclivity which determines individual proclivity to suicide but not contrariwise. Such is the final conclusion at which Durkheim arrives in his study and concept of suicide.

**Concept of Suicide in India**

Hinduism is an extremely diverse religion. Although some tenets of the faith are accepted by most Hindus, scholars have found it different to identify any doctrines with universal acceptance among all denominations. Most Hindus believe that the spirit or soul - the true "self" of every person, called The atman - is eternal, The purusharthas are the canonical four ends or aims of human life. These goals are from, lowest to highest importance.

i) Kama (sensual pleasure or love),

ii) Artha (wealth),

iii) Dharma (righteousness or morality) and

iv) Moksha (liberation from the cycle of reincarnation).

According to the monistic / pantheistic theologies of Hinduism (such as The Advaita Vedanta school), the atman is ultimately indistinct from 'Brahman', The Supreme spirit, 'Brahman' is described as "The one without a second", hence these schools are called "non - dualist". The foal of life according to the Advaita school is to realize that one's atman (soul) is identical to Brahman, The Supreme soul. The Upanishads state that who ever becomes fully aware of atman as the inner most core of one's own self, realises their identify with Brahman and thereby reaches. Moksha calibration or freedom.

Other Hindu schools, such as the dualist Dvaita Vedanta and other bhakti schools, understand Brahman as a Supreme being who possesses personality.
On these conceptions, the atman is dependent on Brahman, and the meaning of life the achieve, Moksha through love towards God and on God's grace. Life is the gift given by God and he alone can take it.

In Hinduism, suicide is frowned upon and is considered equally sinful as murdering another. Hindu scriptures state that one who commits suicide will become part of the spirit world, wandering earth until the time one would have other wise died, had not committed suicide. The ghost can feel hunger and thirst, but can not eat or drink.

"In ancient India the suicides was a legal act approved by the society. The various forms of suicides approved by the society were johar (mass suicide of self immolation) of ladies from the royal families to avoid humiliation from enemies, sati, samadhi (termination of one's life by self restraint on breathing) atremarpana (self - sacrifice).\(^8\)

Suicide was permissible in certain circumstances in ancient India. This is evident from the statement of Manu when says-

"A Brahman having got rid of his body by one of those modes (i. e. drowning, precipitating, burning or starvation) practised by the great sages, is exalted in the world of 'Brahmana' free from sorrow and Fear"\(^9\)

Manu further says that no water is to be offered for the benefit of those who kill themselves.

Govardana and kulluka, while writing commentaries on Manu said:

"A man may undertake the mahaprasthana (great departure) on a journey which ends in death, when he is incurably diseased, or meets with a great misfortune, and that it is not opposed to Vedic rules which forbid suicide".\(^{10}\)

वेदोपनिषद्

"असूर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसावृता: ||
ताँस्ते प्रेत्याभिभिग्छन्ति ये को घात्यहृन्नो जना: ||"

युद्धवंद 40/33, ईशावायोपनिषद्-3
The people deserve to be called phantom or nocturnal whose spirit are covered by darkness of bad ideas like suicide. Any one who destroy himself or kill himself will fully against. The practice, the spirit of the animals or destroy part of the body or to suicide, he certainly phantom 'That Assure are covered by the darkness. Who do not even know that the spirit of live and die what is the duty of Karma they suicide them selves. When the creature walked on the path of self-depreciation it is certainly his own violation of the spirit. The spirit is immortal, it is light-knowledge this truth is the foundation of spirit. Selfishness, deceit betrayed, the sin of violence, enjoyment by unlawful way, the depreciation of luxury etc. are case of assassination.

"रज्जुश्रस्व विषेषतिपि कामक्रोधवशेष यः ।
धातयेत्मयमात्मां स्त्री वा पापेन मोहिता ।।
रज्जुना राजयां तां चान्द्रालेनापकष्ये ।
न श्यामशानविधितेषा न संबंधिक्रियात्मया ।।
बन्धुस्तेषा तु य: कृष्णलेनकार्यक्रियाविद्यम् ।
तद्विं स चर्चेनाच्छल्लाः चांसवाजनवाद्वा पशुच्छये ।।"

अर्यास्तः-7/82

If a person under the influence of passion or anger, or a woman infatuated by sin, were to commit suicide by means of rope, a weapon or poison, he shall be dragged with a rope on the public road by a *chandala*. There shall be no cremation rite for them nor obsequies by Kinsmen. Any relative who performed funeral rite of such person shall meet the same fate afterwards and shall be abandoned during his life time by his Kith and Kin. Who ever associates himself with such persons, who perform forbidden rites, shall for feet with in a year the privileges of conducting or superintending a sacrifice, of teaching and of giving or receiving gifts, so does other, having dealing with these.

All the Dharmasastras condemn suicide as a great sin.

*Parasara IV 1-2*
If a man or a woman commits suicide out of extreme pride, or love, or anger, or on account of fear, he or she falls into hell for sixty thousand years.

This provision expressess a strong sentiment against suicide.

Yama 20-21

If a person who tries to commit suicide but survies should be punished with a fine of two hundred panas. And he should undergo the prescribed penance. If the person dies the body should be smeared with an impure substance. His sons, friends etc. should be fined one pana each.

Committing suicide under certain exceptional circumstances such as extreme old age and illness, if it was inevitable, to avoid suffering, was declared to be no sin.

"कायात् क्रोधाद् भयाद् वापि-यदि चेत् संज्ञाजेत् तनुम्।
सोनन्तं नरं क्यादि आत्मह्रृत्वकारणात्।"

महाभारत-6/145

If a job, anger or fear From The body, he abandoned it because of suicide is in eternal hell.

There are two types of death a natural and other will full. It is natural that his death will not occur, automatically get. It is natural that his death is unwavering. There is not a set back, but the will full (Yatra Sandhya) death is the variety of means - through the material is possible. While also able to kill himself by the
will to sacrifice his body other name is suicide. Thus, in fact, the suicide is barrier in physical changes.

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यः शास्त्रविद्यामुपसृण्य वर्तते कामकार्यः।
न ससिद्धिमवानोपि न सुखं न परां गतिम्।
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श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता-16/23

The man who behaves arbitrary except the science of law, he neither gets *siddhi* nor *Param sukha* and *Param Gati*.

Civilized conduct, or good conduct is always in natural manner. The morality or the behavior. As to ignore the science of law man does not achieve the ultimate goal. So suicide is arbitrary, free will and misconduct. It always declines human civilization and culture.

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संस्कारश्च भूतेशु तिथिन्तं परमेश्वरम्।
विनाशित्वविनश्यत्यत्यं यः पश्यति स पश्यति।।
संस्कारश्च हु सर्वं समवस्थितंमीश्वरम्।
न हिन्नस्त्यात्मनात्मानं ततो याति परांगतिम्।।
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श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता-13/27-28

People who are destroying all the creatures in God and be fair to the immortal view to see, the same reality, for all the people to be fair in the view of God (by their own do not delete) by the *spirit of the spirit*. The violence is not, therefore, they are to receive *Param Gati*.

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तथा शरीर भवति देहादू येनोपपादितम्।
अध्यानं मतकश्यायं प्राप्तश्यायं गृहादू गृहम्।।
द्वितीयं कारणं तत्र नान्यत् किं विहितं
तद् देहं देहिना युक्तं पंचभूतेशु वर्तते।।
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पराणगीता-12-13

People who found the body as gift by God and kill themselves mude headly. They undo their body in agonizing circle of birth and death. Such people as a means of salvation for the human body also found suicide because of the
benefits to be deprived of a home from home in the human body like a second body to receive them. They have to be revived in the second state there is no reason except suicide.

All-Summary

"अन्धातामिस्वा हि सूर्यां नाम ते लोकाः (लोका: प्रेत्य)
स्त्रेष्ठ्य: प्रतिविधीयन्ते य आत्मधातिन आत्मेभवज्ञो मन्यते।"

उत्तरामचरित-4/9

'Rishis' say that who kills himself is buried in demons folk of darkness and without the sun (light less) appointed for free.

"सतिगुर अगे अरदासि करि साजनु देड़ मिलाइ।
साजनि मिलिये सुखु पाइआ जमदूत मुएं बिखु खाई।"

गुरुग्रन्थ साहिब-सिरीरागु महला-1/5

They brother, to meet Parmatma ask for 'Sat Guru' do, Lord - 'It may get a sense of pleasure, the reality is. The person who kills himself never meet Parmatma.

**Forms and Modes of Suicide**

(A) **Forms of Suicide**

The great nineteenth century french sociologist Emile Durkheim, in his book, Le Suicide (1897) illustrates the types of suicide he advocate. In this book he discusses four different kinds of suicide: Egoistic suicide, Altruistic suicide, Anomic suicide and Fatalistic suicide.1

i) **Egoistic suicide**: Egoistic suicide according to Durkheim, is caused by lack of social integration of society in the religious sphere, domestic and the political sphere the more weakened the groups to which he belongs, the less depends on them, the more he consequently depends only on himself and recognize no other rules of conduct that are founded on his private interests. The individual ego asserts itself to excess in the face of the social ego and at its expense; it may be called egoistic the type of suicide springing from excessive individualism.
ii) **Altruistic suicide**: Altruistic suicide is characterized by a sense of being overwhelmed by a group's goals and beliefs. It occurs in societies with high integration, where individual needs are seen as less important than the society's needs as a whole. If excessive individuation leads to suicide, insufficient individuation has the same effects. When a man has become detached from society, he encounters less resistance to suicide in himself, and he does so likewise when social integration is too strong. Bartholin, in his book reports that Danish warriors considered it a disgrace to die in bed of old age or sickness, and killed themselves to escape this humiliation. The Goths likewise believed that those who die a natural death are destined to languish forever in caverns full of venomous creatures. So old men would throw themselves from the high pinnacle called 'The Rock of the Forefathers' and accordingly they assigned a delightful abode to those who commit.

iii) **Anomic suicide**: This type of suicide is due to certain breakdown of social equilibrium, such bankruptcy or after winning a lottery. In other words, anomic suicide takes place in a situation which has cropped up suddenly. It reflects an individual's moral confusion and lack of social direction, which is related to dramatic social and economic upheaval. It is the product of moral deregulation and lack of definition of legitimate aspirations through a restraining social ethic, which could impose meaning and order on the individual conscience.

iv) **Fatalistic suicide**: Fatalistic suicide is the opposite of anomic suicide. It happen when a person is excessively regulated, where their futures are pitilessly blocked and passions violently chocked by oppressive discipline. It occurs in overly oppressive societies, causing people to prefer to die than to carry on living within their society. A good example would be that some people prefer to die than live in a prison with constant abuse and excessive regulation that prohibits them from pursuing their desires. This type of suicide is due to overregulation in society.
Suicide as a form of defiance and protest

Heroic suicide, for the greater good of others, is often celebrated. For instance, Mahatma Gandhi went on a hunger strike to prevent fighting between Hindus and Muslims, and, although he was stopped before dying, it appeared he would have willingly succumbed to starvation. This attracted attention to Gandhi's cause, and generated a great deal of respect for him as a spiritual leader. In the 1960s, Buddhist monks, most notably Thich Quang Duc, in South Vietnam drew Western attention to their protests against President Ngo Dinh Diem by burning themselves to death. Also in the 1960s, Quaker Norman Morrison committed suicide by self-immolation to protest the United States involvement in the Vietnam War. Similar events were reported during the Cold War in eastern Europe, such as the deaths of Ryszard Siwiec and later of Jan Palach and Jan Zajic following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, or Romas Kalanta's self-immolation in the main street of Kaunas, Lithuania in 1972. More recently, in 2006, an American anti-war activist, Malachi Ritscher, died by suicide by self-immolation as a protest against the Iraq war. In Ireland there exists a long tradition of hunger strike to the death against British rule, predominantly in Northern Ireland during the infamous 1981 hunger strikes, led by Bobby Sands, which resulted in 10 deaths. The period caused international outrage as shown, for example, by the Indian parliament standing for two minutes of silence or, the Iranian government renaming the street in Tehran on which the British Embassy stands to "Bobby Sands Street", named after the first hunger striking, such as Terence McSwiney in Cork. Critics may see such suicides as counter-productive, arguing that these people would probably achieve a comparable or greater result by spending the rest of their lives in active struggle. This is a contentious issue, especially when one considers that the Northern Ireland hunger strikers who died trying to obtain certain prisoners rights (e.g. POW status, right to wear own clothes, right not to have to work, etc.) actually had nearly all their requests eventually granted in the years after the spate of 1981 hunger strikes happened.

People who commit suicide may not always be suffering from depression
or despair. Some people may kill themselves for the purpose of experiencing life after death, or have a different existential, religious or philosophical motive. This points out that views of suicide are individually and culturally subjective.

(ii) Suicide in Judicial custody

A person who has committed a crime will often commit suicide to avoid prosecution and disgrace:

◆ Colonel Alfred Redl was presented with the evidence of his espionage and shot himself to avoid a trial.

◆ Budd Dwyer, a Treasurer of Pennsylvania, killed himself on January 22, 1987 while on live television after being convicted (wrongly, he claimed) of financial crimes, in order to draw attention to his case and to enable his widow to draw survivor benefits (since he died before being removed from office).

◆ More recently, Deborah Jeane Palfrey, dubbed the DC Madam by the media, was convicted on April 15, 2008 of racketeering, using the mail for illegal purposes, and money laundering. On May 1, 2008 she was found dead by hanging and apparent suicide.

(iii) Military suicide

In the desperate final days of World War II, many Japanese pilots volunteered for kamikaze missions in an attempt to forestall defeat for the Empire. Near the end of World War II the Japanese attempted to design a small bomb laden aircraft whose only purpose was kamikaze missions. However, the craft was a failure, partly because its range was insubstantial to that of other more conventional planes but also because it was produced at a far greater cost than even the Japanese felt necessary to spend on their kamikaze pilots. In Nazi Germany, many soldiers and government officials (including Adolf Hitler and many in his inner circle) killed themselves rather than surrender to Allied forces; Luftwaffe squadrons were formed to smash into American B-17s during daylight bombing missions, in order to delay the highly-probable Allied victory,
although in this case, inspiration was primarily the Soviet and Polish taran ramming attacks, and death of the pilot was not a desired outcome. Whether such pilots were engaging in heroic, selfless actions or if immense social pressure motivated them is a matter of historical debate. The Japanese also built one-man "human torpedo" suicide submarines.

However, suicide has been fairly common in warfare throughout history. Soldiers and civilians committed suicide to avoid capture and slavery (including the wave of German and Japanese suicides in the last days of World War II). Commanders committed suicide rather than accept defeat. Spies and officers have often committed suicide to avoid revealing secrets under interrogation and/or torture. Behaviour that could be seen as suicidal occurred often in battle, for instance a soldier falling on a grenade to save his comrades. Other examples include soldiers under cannon fire at the Battle of Waterloo who took fatal hits rather than duck and place their comrades in harm's way. [verification needed]

The Charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War, Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg in the American Civil War, and the charge of the French cavalry at the Battle of Sedan in the Franco-Prussian War were assaults that continued even after it was obvious to participants that the attacks were unlikely to succeed, and would probably be fatal to most of the attackers. Japanese infantrymen usually fought to the last man, launched "banzai" suicide charges, and committed suicide during the Pacific island battles in World War II. At Saipan and Okinawa, civilians joined in the suicides. Suicidal attacks by pilots were common in the 20th century: the attack by U.S. torpedo planes at the Battle of Midway was very similar to kamikaze.

(iv) Ritual suicide

Ritual suicide is the act of suicide motivated by a religious, spiritual, or traditional ritual.

An extreme interpretation of Hindu custom historically practiced, mostly in the 2nd millennium, was self-immolation by a widow as an assurance that she will be with her husband for the next life. This, however, is extreme, and is
looked down upon by other Hindus in most cases. Other rituals of self-immolation or self-starvation were used by Hindu, Jain and Buddhist monks for religious or philosophical purposes, or as a form of extreme non-violent protest. In China, some groups would practice suicide for similar reasons. In Japan, rituals of suicide like seppuku by men and jigai by women were practiced.

(v) Dutiful suicide

Dutiful suicide is an act, or attempted act, of fatal self-violence at one's own hands done in the belief that it will secure a greater good, rather than to escape harsh or impossible conditions. It can be voluntary, to relieve some dishonor or punishment, or imposed by threats of death or reprisals on one's family or reputation (a kind of murder by remote control). It can be culturally traditional or generally abhorred; it can be heavily ritualized as in seppuku or purely functional. Dutiful suicide can be distinguished from a kamikaze or suicide bomb attack, in which a fighter consumes his own life in delivering a weapon to the enemy. Perhaps the most famous example of dutiful suicide is a soldier in a foxhole throwing his body on a live grenade to save the lives of his comrades.

Examples

◆ Disgraced Roman patricians were sometimes allowed to commit suicide to spare themselves a trial and penalties against their families. An example of this was Emperor Nero who reportedly committed forced suicide following a large fire that burned through much of Rome.

◆ Erwin Rommel, found to have foreknowledge of the German attempt on Hitler's life, was threatened with public trial, execution and reprisals on his family unless he killed himself, which he did.

Suicide has also been attributed to conflicts in cultural values and social disorganization. Some modern theories go to include psychological variables also. Henry and short (1954) believe that the socio-economic status change is the basic sociological cause of suicide. But this factor alone does not explain the phenomenon because under the similar circumstances some persons
commit suicide and almost all other do not. Therefore, another supplementary cause of a "different personality" has also been proposed in the form of frustration, aggression, self theory, loss of meaning theory etc.

Among psychological theories, the approach of Freud is considered to have first stated comprehensive psychological insights into the phenomenon of suicide. In his conception, suicide is a primarily intra-psychic phenomenon starting from within the mind, primarily the unconscious mind of an individual. To Freud, suicide is a process wherein feelings of love and affection which had originally been directed toward an internalized love object had become, as a result of rejection and frustration, angry, hostile feelings, because the object had become internalized and part of the self, the hostile feelings are directed towards the destruction of the self. Thus, suicide from a psychological point of view might be described as murder in the 180th degree. This approach has been criticized as lop sided for ignoring various social factors and focusing on a single complex or psychological constellation. Suicide occurs due to a variety of factors like shame, guilt, frustration, over-loyalty, erosion of prestige, loss of company of dear one's and not only due to hate and revenge.

Recent psychological theories emphasize interaction between both social and psychological factors as mutually enhancing roles in each individual suicide. For a clear understanding of suicide one will have to know how the social forces exert pressure in the totality of the individual and how the thoughts, emotions and ego function, within the individual. Theories apart, the general experience shows that the rates of suicide are increasing with the complexity of the society. High aspirations and expectations resulting in failures, low level of morality, exploitations, unemployment, financial loss and frustration in love affairs are responsible for high rates of suicide in modern times. Society and State will have to work together to minimize the number of factors responsible for suicide.

Causes for committing suicide are many. These being mental disease and imbalances, unbearable physical ailments, affliction by socially-dreaded diseases, decrepit physical conditions disabling the person from taking normal care of his body and performing the normal chores, the loss of all senses or of
desire for the pleasure of any of the senses; extremely cruel or unbearable conditions of life making it painful to live, a sense of shame or disgrace or a need to defend one's honour or a sheer loss of interests in life or disenchantment with it, or a sense of fulfilment of the purpose for which one was born with nothing more left to do or to be achieved and genuine urge to quit the world at the proper moment. 

(vi) **Copycat Suicide**

A copycat suicide is defined as a duplication or copycat of another suicide that the person attempting suicide knows about either from local knowledge or due to accounts or depictions of the original suicide on television and in other media. Sometimes this is known as a Werther effect, following the Werther novel of Goethe.

The well-known suicide serves as a model, in the absence of protective factors, for the next suicide. This is referred to as suicide contagion\(^1\). They occasionally spread through a school system, through a community, or in terms of a celebrity suicide wave, nationally. This is called a suicide cluster. Examples of celebrities whose suicides have inspired suicide clusters include the Japanese musician Hide and Yukiko Okada.

To prevent this type of suicide, it is customary in some countries for the media to discourage suicide reports except in special cases.

**History**

The nature of copycat suicides suggests that it is a phenomenon that must have been with us since the development of civilization. One of the earliest known associations between the media and suicide arose from Goethe’s novel Die Leiden desfungen Werthers (The SorrrQwsolf Young Werther), published in 177A. In that work the hero shoots himself after an ill-fated love, and shortly after its publication there were many reports of young men using the same method to commit suicide. This resulted in a ban of the book in several places. Hence the term “Werther effect”, used in the technical literature to designate
copycat suicides.\textsuperscript{12} The term was coined by researcher David Phillips in 1974.\textsuperscript{13} Copycat suicide is mostly blamed on the media.

**Factors in suicide reporting**

Publishing the means of suicides, romanticized and sensationalized reporting, particularly about celebrities, suggestions that there is an epidemic, glorifying the deceased and simplifying the reasons all lead to increases in the suicide rate. Increased rate of suicides has been shown to occur up to ten days after a television report\textsuperscript{14} Studies in Japan\textsuperscript{15} and Germany\textsuperscript{16} have replicated findings of an imitative effect. Etzersdorfer et al.\textsuperscript{17} in an Austrian study showed a strong correlation between the number of papers distributed in various areas and the number of subsequent firearm suicides in each area after a related media report. Higher rates of copycat suicides have been found in those with similarities in race, age, and gender\textsuperscript{18} to the victim in the original report. Stack\textsuperscript{19} analyzed the results from 42 studies and found that those measuring the effect of a celebrity suicide story were 14.3 times more likely to find a copycat effect than studies that did not. Studies based on a real as opposed to fictional story were 4.03 times more likely to uncover a copycat effect and research based on televised stories was 82\% less likely to report a copycat effect than research based on newspapers.

Many people interviewed after the suicide of a relative or friend have a tendency to simplify the issues; their grief can lead to their minimizing or ignoring significant factors. Studies show a high incidence of psychiatric disorders in suicide victims at the time of their death with the total figure ranging from 98\%\textsuperscript{20} to 87.3\%\textsuperscript{21} with mood disorders and substance abuse being the two most common. These are often undiagnosed or untreated and treatment can result in reductions in the suicide rate. Reports that minimise the impact of psychiatric disorders contribute to copycat suicides whereas reports that mention this factor and provide help-line contact numbers and advice for where sufferers may gain assistance can reduce suicides.
Social Proof Model

An alternate model to explain copycat suicide, called “social proof” by Cialdini, goes beyond the theories of glorification and simplification of reasons to look at why copycat suicides are so similar, demographically and in actual methods, to the original publicized suicide. In the social proof model, people imitate those who seem similar, despite or even because of societal disapproval. This model is important because it has nearly opposite ramifications for what the media ought to do about the copycat suicide effect than the standard model does.

Journalism codes

Various countries have national journalism codes which range from one extreme of, “Suicide and attempted suicide should in general never be given any mention.” (Norway) to a more moderate, “In cases of suicide, publishing or broadcasting information in an exaggerated way that goes beyond normal dimensions of reporting with the purpose of influencing readers or spectators should not occur. Photography, pictures, visual images or film depicting such cases should not be made public.” (Turkey) Many countries do not have national codes but do have in-house guidelines along similar lines. In the U.S. there are no industry wide standards and a survey of in-house guides of 16 US daily newspapers showed that only three mentioned the word suicide and none gave guidelines about publishing the method of suicide. Craig Branson, online director of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), has been quoted as saying, “Industry codes are very generic and totally voluntary. Most ethical decisions are left to individual editors at individual papers. The industry would fight any attempt to create more specific rifles or standards, and editors would no doubt ignore them.”

Journalist training

Australia is one of the few countries where there is a concerted effort to teach journalism students about this subject. The Mindframe national media
initiative followed an ambivalent response by the Australian Press Council to an earlier media resource kit issued by Suicide Prevention Australia and the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention. The UK-based media ethics charity Media Wise provides training for journalists on reporting suicide related issues.

(vii) CULT SUICIDE

A cult suicide is a mass suicide by the members of a cult. In some cases all, or nearly all members have committed suicide at the same time and place. Groups which have committed such mass suicides include Heaven's Gate, Order of the Solar Temple, Peoples Temple (in the Jonestown incident) and the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God. In other cases, such as Filippians and the Taiping, a group has apparently supported mass suicide but without necessarily encouraging all members to participate.

Known cult suicides

Peoples Temple

On November 18, 1978, 918 Americans died in Peoples Temple-related incidents, including 909 members of the Temple, led by Jim Jones, in Jonestown, Guyana. The dead included 274 children. A tape of the Temple's final meeting in a Jonestown pavilion contains repeated discussions of the group committing "revolutionary suicide, including reference to people taking the poison and the vats to be used." On that tape, Jones tells Temple members that Russia, with whom the Temple had been negotiating a potential exodus for months, would not take them after the Temple had murdered Congressman Leo Ryan. NBC reporter Don Harris and three others at a nearby airstrip. When members apparently cried, Jones counseled 'Stop this hysterics. This is not the way for people who are Socialists or Communists to die. No way for us to die, We must die with some dignity.' At the end of the tape, Jones concludes: 'We didn't commit suicide, we committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world.' The people in Jonestown died of an apparent
cyanide poisoning, except for Jones (injury consistent with self-inflicted gunshot wound) and his personal nurse.\textsuperscript{31} The Temple had spoken of committing "revolutionary suicide" in prior instances, and members had previously drunk what Jones told them was poison at least once before, but the "Flavor Aid" drink they ingested contained no poison.\textsuperscript{32} Concurrently, four other members died in the Temple's headquarters in Georgetown.

**Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God**

On March 17, 2000, 778 members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God died in Uganda.\textsuperscript{33} The theory that all of the members died in a mass suicide was changed to mass murder when decomposing bodies were discovered in pits with signs of strangulation while others had stab wounds.\textsuperscript{34} The group had diverged from the Roman Catholic Church in order to emphasize apocalypticism and alleged Marian apparitions.\textsuperscript{35} The group had been called inward-looking movement that wore matching uniforms and restricted their speech to avoid saying anything dishonest or sinful.\textsuperscript{36,37} On the suicide itself locals said they held a party at which 70 crates of soft drinks and three bulls were consumed.\textsuperscript{38}

This version of events has been criticized, most notably Irving Hexham,\textsuperscript{39} and a Ugandan source states that even today "no one can really explain the whys, hows, whats, where, when, etc."\textsuperscript{40}

**Solar Temple**

From 1994 to 1997, the Order of the Solar Temples members began a series of mass suicides, which led to roughly 74 deaths. Farewell letters were left by members, stating that they believed their deaths would be an escape from the 'hypocrisies and oppression of this world." Added to this they felt they were 'moving onto Sirius." Records seized by the Quebec police showed that some members had personally donated over $1 million to the cult's leader, Joseph Di Mambro.
Heaven's Gate

There was also another attempted mass suicide of the remaining members, which was thwarted in the late 1990s. All the suicide/murders and attempts occurred around the dates of the equinoxes and solstices, which likely held some relation to the beliefs of the group.41

On March 26, 1997, 39 followers of Heaven's Gate died in a mass suicide in Rancho Santa Fe, California, which borders San Diego to the north. These people believed, according to the teachings of their cult, that through their suicides they were 'exiting their human vehicles" so that their souls could go on a journey aboard a spaceship they believed to be following comet Hale-Bopp.42 Some male members of the cult underwent voluntary castration in preparation for the genderless life they believed awaited them after the suicide.43 On March 30, 1997, Robert Leon Nichols, a former roadie for the Grateful Dead, was discovered dead in his California trailer, with a note nearby that read in part "I'm going to the spaceship with Hale-Bopp to be with those who have gone before me." Using propane gas rather than vodka and Phenobarbital to end his life, Nichols, like the members of Heaven's Gate, had his head covered by a plastic bag and his upper torso covered with a purple shroud. Nichols connection with the cult is unknown.

In May 1997, two Heaven's Gate members who had not been present for the mass suicide attempted suicide, one succeeding in the attempt, the other going into coma for two days and then recovering.44 In February 1998 the survivor, Chuck Humphrey, committed suicide.45

Suspected cult suicides

Branch Davidians

On April 19, 1993, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms siege of the Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas ended with an assault and subsequent firestorm that destroyed the compound and killed most of the inhabitants. During the siege, highly concentrated C.S. gas and pyrotechnic "flash-bang" grenades46
were fired. Some believe these devices ignited the gasoline stockpiled inside the building.

Richard L. Sherrow, a fire and explosion investigator hired by plaintiffs in a civil lawsuit to investigate the cause of the fire stated in his conclusion that "the fire originated in the southeast corner tower from the tipping of a lit Coleman-type lantern which fell onto combustible materials, most likely bedding materials, as the room was utilized as sleeping quarters, and was most likely caused by violent contact or mechanical shock associated with the CEV removing the corner of the southeast tower directly under the point of origin."48

The mainstream media reported immediately after the fire that the Branch Davidians, when being overrun, started fires, and therefore this incident was a 'cult suicide' or even a murder-suicide perpetrated by the leaders. However, some independent journalists, academics, and other experts contend that the fires could have been an accident or result of a panic. Others accuse the ATF of inadvertently causing or even intentionally starting fires during the assault.

Disputed cult suicides

The Family International

At the beginning of 2005, The Family international gained renewed media attention due to the premeditated murder-suicide of former member Ricky Rodriguez, biological son of current leader Karen Zerby and informally adopted son of the group's founder, David Berg. It revived allegations that the group is abusive and inciting of suicidal ideation. Thus his death was widely called a "suicide of a cult member", or "cult suicide", though this view was far from universal. The event made it to popular culture in oblique references in NBC shows Third Watch and Law & Order.50

Defenders of the group contend that Rodriguez's behavior was not typical of the group, and that there is no evidence their members are more suicidal than those in mainstream society.51
Las Canadas suicide sect scare

Heidi Fittkau-Garthe, a German psychologist, and a previously high-profile Brahma Kumaris, was charged in the Canary Islands with a plot of murder-suicide in which 31 group members, including five children, were to ingest poison. After the suicides, they were told they would be picked up by a spaceship and taken to an unspecified destination. However a more recent article in Tenerife News casts doubt that there was any intention on the part of the group to commit suicide.

Tiananmen Square self-immolation incident

On January 23, 2001, six people set themselves on fire in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. The state-media claimed them to be Falun Gong practitioners. Time magazine said that it was possible for misguided practitioners to have taken it upon themselves to demonstrate in this manner, sparking a propaganda bonanza for the Chinese authorities.

Falun Gong in New York denies that these people could have been practitioners on grounds that the teachings explicitly forbid suicide and killing. Falun Gong and some third-party commentators point to apparent inconsistencies in the governments version of events, and claim that the incident was staged in order to turn public opinion against the practice and build support for its crackdown against the movement.

Martyrdom

Some argue that martyrdom, as found in religions such as Christianity or Islam, is tantamount to suicide. This argument states that by accepting-- or even inviting-- their own death, the martyr is committing something like assisted suicide. This theory is not in itself new. Richard Manus's unflattering biography of Thomas More indicated More felt hesitant about accepting martyrdom too easily, for fear that would be too similar to suicide. This idea has gained more currency in modem times.
Most mainstream religions traditionally forbid members to take their own lives. Martyrdom generally involves losing one's life (usually passively) due to one's religious beliefs or practices. The Roman Catholic Church considers life to be a gift whose sole "owner" is 'God", who is consequently the only individual who may legitimately decide when to interrupt it. Special cases exist, such as the giving of one's own life to save that of another, but most cultures do not consider such acts to be true suicides.

Islam arguably has the harshest view of suicide of any major religion. Therefore some of the lowest suicide rates are found in Muslim nations like Jordan or Egypt. Still, the extreme Islamist movement has strongly encouraged many Muslims to accept a theology in which becoming a suicide bomber is not considered suicide. Instead, it is described by the extremists as a "martyrdom operation", the purpose of which is to kill the enemy. From this viewpoint, one's own death is a consequence, rather than a goal. Hundreds of Muslims, primarily Palestinians and Saudi Arabians, have died in the act of killing both military personnel and civilians in this fashion over the last decade, mostly in the Middle East. In 2001, 19 died in such a way in the United States.

Related to this, some would suggest that if "martyrdom" is ever directly self-inflicted it becomes cult-suicide. This line of thought leads to debates about whether the self-immolation of Buddhist monks in Vietnam was cult suicide. One camp believes that in a sense it was cult suicide, but the other disputes this as it was ultimately a political action rather than a religious one. This argument could also apply to suicide bombers if their actions are understood as political rather than religious. However, added to this the self-immolation was of an individual rather than condoned by the leadership of a group. No recognized Buddhist organization is known to have asked Thich Quang Duc, for example, to immolate himself.

Mass suicide can also occur as a means of escape when a religious group perceives itself to be hopelessly besieged by its enemies or other adverse external pressure. These external foes may be real or imagined. The legend of
Masada, and similar examples, are sometimes explicitly used by cult-suicides as a justification. They may say that like those at Masada they are in danger from an evil empire, even if that evil empire is imaginary. They therefore prefer death to surrender, hence criticisms have arisen over the occasional glorification of Masada.

**(viii) FORCED SUICIDE**

Forced suicide is a method of execution where the victim is given the choice of committing suicide or facing an alternative they perceive as worse, such as suffering torture; having friends or family members imprisoned, tortured or killed; or losing honor, position or means.

**In Ancient Greece and Rome**

Forced suicide was a common means of execution in ancient Greece and Rome. As a mark of respect it was generally reserved for aristocrats sentenced to death; the victims would either drink hemlock or fall on their swords. Economic motivations promoted some suicides in ancient Rome. A person who was condemned to death would forfeit property to the government. People could evade that provision and let the property pass to their heirs by committing suicide prior to arrest.

Probably the most famous forced suicide is that of the philosopher Socrates, who drank hemlock after his trial for corrupting the youth of Athens. Seneca also killed himself in response to a request by the Roman Emperor Nero,

who himself was forced to commit suicide at a later date. Other famous forced suicides include those of Brutus, Mark Antony and Emperor Otho.

**Asia**

Forced suicides have occurred in ancient China, where generals who were responsible for major debacles that seriously brought a downfall in the course of a state’s history would be held liable and were given orders to commit
suicide. It was also the most common way to execute female criminals, as it was considered more humane than beheading.

The ancient practice of sati, in which a recently-widowed woman would immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre,\textsuperscript{56} generally is not considered a type of honor killing.\textsuperscript{57} However, the extent to which Sati was a purely voluntary act or one that was coerced is actively debated. There have been some incidences in recent times, such as the Roop Kanwar case,\textsuperscript{58} in which forced sati was suspected\textsuperscript{59} Additional cases are under investigation,\textsuperscript{60} though no evidence of forced suicide has yet been found.\textsuperscript{61}

Japanese seppuku falls into this category. The culture of Bushido practiced by the samurai expected them to ritually kill themselves if found disloyal, sparing a daimyo or shogun the indignity of executing a follower. This was especially the case in the Edo period, and Asano Naganori was a clear example.

**Modern Europe**

Another famous example is the forced suicide of Erwin Rommel, a field marshal in the Second World War German Army. After Rommel lost faith in Germany's ability to win the war, and came under suspicion for having taken part in the July 20, 1944 plot to kill Adolf Hitler, he was forced to commit suicide. Due to Rommel's popularity with the German people, Hitler gave him an option to commit suicide with cyanide or face dishonor and retaliation against his family and staff. Since the guilty verdict had already been entered, the option of facing trial was hopeless, and thus, in order to save his family and his honor, he was forced to take cyanide.

**As a substitute for honor killings**

A forced suicide may be a substitute of an honor killing when a woman violates the norms in conservative Islamic societies. According to a BBC report,\textsuperscript{62} the United Nations is, as of 2006, investigating reports of forced suicides of women in Turkey.
INTERNET SUICIDE PACT

An Internet suicide pact (cyber suicide pact) is a suicide pact made between individuals who meet on the Internet.

Background

Although the majority of such internet-related suicide pacts have occurred in Japan, similar incidents have also been reported from other countries including China, South Korea, Germany, Australia, Norway, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and Sweden. The first known Internet-related suicide pact occurred in Japan in October 2000, with a later February 2003 incident, involving a young man and two young women, that "became a landmark incident of Internet suicide pacts in Japan due to heavy media coverage."

Despite the alarmed response of the media, however, Internet-connected suicide pacts are still relatively rare. Even in Japan, where most of such pacts have occurred, they still represent only 2% of all group suicide-pacts, and less than 0.01% of all suicides combined. However, they do seem to be on the increase in that country: 34 deaths from such pacts occurred in 2003; at least 50 are estimated to have occurred in 2004; and 91 occurred in 2005. One notable example would be Hiroshi Maeue, who on March 28, 2007, was sentenced to death by hanging, alleged to have murdered three participants in a suicide pact.

An article published in the British Medical Journal in December 2004, by Dr Sundararajan Rajagopal, Consultant Psychiatrist from St. Thomas' Hospital in London, highlighted the emergence of the disturbing new phenomenon of cyber suicide pacts, addressing it from a psychiatric perspective. The author had commented "The recent suicide pacts in Japan might just be isolated events in a country that has even previously been shown to have the highest rate of suicide pacts. Alternatively, they might herald a new disturbing trend in suicide pacts, with more such incidents, involving strangers meeting over the Internet, becoming increasingly common. If the latter is the case then the epidemiology..."
of suicide pacts is likely to change, with more young people living on their own, who may have committed suicide alone, joining with like-minded suicidal persons to die together”.

**Compared to traditional suicide pacts**

An article published by the Canterbury Suicide Project ("Suicide Pacts", Christchurch School of Medicine, New Zealand, May 2005) makes some notable comparisons between the nature of "traditional" suicide pacts and more recent Internet-related suicide pacts (or, as described in the article, "cyber-based suicide pacts"). It points out that, traditionally, suicide pacts have been extremely rare; usually involve older individuals (50-60 years old) and very few adolescents; and tend to be between individuals with family or marriage-type relationships and differing, but complementary, psychiatric pathologies. On the other hand, the growing number of Internet-related suicide pacts are almost the exact opposite: they involve young people almost exclusively; tend to be between complete strangers or individuals with platonic friendship-type relationships; and the common characteristic between them would seem to be clinical depression.

The article also points out that the trend of Internet-related suicide pacts is changing the way that mental-health workers need to deal with depressed and/or suicidal youngsters, advising that it is "prudent for clinicians to ask routinely if young people have been accessing Internet sites, obtaining suicide information from such sites, and talking in suicide chat rooms".

**Suicide pacts and the Internet**

The recent deaths of nine people in Japan, in October 2004, apparently in two suicide pacts -seven suicides in one pact and two in the other-have brought the relatively rare phenomenon of suicide pacts into the limelight. What
is unusual is that these pacts seem to have been arranged between strangers who met over the Internet and planned the tragedy via special suicide websites. This is in contrast to traditional suicide pacts, in which the victims are people with close relationships.

A suicide pact is an agreement between two or more people to commit suicide together at a given place and time. In England and Wales, for epidemiological purposes, people who have committed suicide within three days of each other in the same registration sub district are considered potential victims of a suicide pact. A related phenomenon is homicide-suicide, in which a person commits a murder and then ends his or her own life. Dyadic death is a term that encompasses both suicide pacts and homicide-suicides. A suicide cluster is a group of suicides that occur closer together in time and space than would normally be expected in a given community, with suicides occurring later in the cluster being motivated by earlier suicides. In mass suicide, several people commit suicide usually influenced by charismatic leadership, strong loyalties, or religious beliefs.

Two major epidemiological studies on suicide pacts have been carried out in England and Wales, 36 years apart. The second study showed that the incidence of suicide pacts had declined by 27% in that period. On average, one suicide pact occurs every month. Suicide pacts almost always involve people well known to each other, mostly spouses, most of them childless. Most of the victims belong to social classes I, II, and III, and a noteworthy proportion work in professions allied to medicine. The methods used are generally less violent; poisoning by exhaust flumes from a vehicle is the most common. But where access to violent means is easier, such as firearms in the United States, suicide pacts entail more violent methods. Most victims leave jointly signed suicide notes.

Although, by definition, both victims make a joint decision to die in a suicide pact, studies of survivors of pacts have shown that this is not always
the case.73 In cases where the decision was not mutual, the deceased member is likely to have been the instigator, male, depressed, and to have had a history of self harm, whereas the survivor is likely to be the coerced, female, not mentally ill, and with no previous history of self harm.

Suicide pacts account for less than 1% of the total number of suicides. Both members typically employ the same method. Occasionally, the partners may both use multiple methods to ensure death.74 About half have psychiatric disorders and a third have physical illnesses.75 In an international comparison of suicide pacts, pacts between spouse were found to predominate in the United States and England, between lovers in Japan, and between friends in India.76 The relationship between victims of suicide pacts is typically exclusive, isolated from others, and the immediate trigger for the pact is usually a threat to the continuation of the relationship, for example, impending death of one member from an untreatable physical illness.77

Suicide pacts have been associated with a rare psychiatric disorder called folie a deux.78 In this condition, two people share the same or similar delusional beliefs. The relationship among people with this psychotic disorder is also usually enmeshed and isolated from the rest of society. Just as in some suicide pacts where one person instigate the plan, in folie a deux the delusion is characteristically imposed by the dominant member of the relationship onto the other person. While suicide pacts are usually seen between spouses, folie a deux is commoner among sisters, usually spinsters.

The potential negative role of the internet in relation to suicides has been highlighted previously.79 An increasing number of websites graphically describe suicide methods, including details of doses of medication that would be fatal in overdose. Such websites can perhaps trigger suicidal behaviour in predisposed individuals, particularly adolescents.80 Cybersuicide refers to suicides or suicide attempts influenced by the internet. Scientific literature on cybersuicide mainly pertains to solitary suicides, and little information exists about the internet and suicide pacts.
The recent suicide pacts in Japan might just be isolated events in a country that has even previously been shown to have the highest rate of suicide pacts. Alternatively, they might herald a new disturbing trend in suicide pacts, with more such incidents, involving strangers meeting over the internet, becoming increasingly common. If the latter is the case then the epidemiology of suicide pacts is likely to change, with more young people living on their own, who may have otherwise committed suicide alone, joining with like minded suicidal persons to die together.

General practitioners and psychiatrists should continue to remain vigilant against the small but not insignificant risk of suicide pacts, especially while encountering middle aged depressed men who have dependent submissive partiers. While assessing risk, one may specifically ask whether a depressed patient uses the internet to obtain information about suicide.

B) Modes of Suicide

In India, of the various methods of committing suicide, drowning occupies the first position, and after it comes hanging. In England hanging occupies the first position, then follows poisoning, cut-throat, and lastly drowning. In Indian, men resort to drowning and hanging as a means of self-destruction in about equal numbers while six out of seven women who commit suicide prefer the water. In England four times as many males as females destroy themselves by hanging, and four times as many males as females by cut-throat, whilst the number of males and females who commit suicide by drowning and by poison is about equal. The number of suicides by lethal weapons in exceedingly small compared with that which exist in England. The most common causes of suicide in India are... jealousy, familial discord, destitution and physical suffering. Jealousy, with all the bitter feelings which it engenders is the cause of a large number of female suicides.

Suicide Methods

A suicide method is means by which a person purposely kills himself or
herself. Examples of methods that have been used to commit suicide are listed below. Though individuals with suicidal feelings may consider these methods, most eventually do not act on them.\textsuperscript{81}

(i) Shooting

Shooting oneself with a pistol, rifle or shotgun is one of the most common means of suicide for men in societies where firearms are widely available. Within nations with strict firearms control laws, it is generally confined to policemen and soldiers as a suicide method. Studies show that "while gun levels influence the choice of suicide method, they have no effect on the number of people who die in suicides."\textsuperscript{82} However, a counter-argument is that a suicide attempt made with a gun is more likely to be successful than one made by another method.\textsuperscript{83} Suicides accounted for 55\% of U.S. firearm deaths in 2005.\textsuperscript{84} A counter-counter-argument is that other factors, such as living alone and using illicit drugs, have even more of a correlation to suicide.\textsuperscript{85}

(ii) Bleeding

Exsanguination is a method of death which is caused by blood loss. The particular term exsanguination originated from the Latin word: ex ("out of") and sanguin ("blood"). It is usually the result of damage inflicted on arteries. The carotid, radial, ulnar or femoral arteries may be targeted.

- Cutting wrists

This entails cutting through the wrists with the aim of tearing open the radial artery and may damage the tendons, ulnar mid median nerves which control the muscles of the hand, which can result in temporary or permanent reduction in sensory and motor ability.\textsuperscript{86}

- Cutting the carotid artery

Cutting the throat is also a method of exsanguination. Damage is inflicted to the carotid artery which carries blood to the brain, and it takes no longer than a few minutes to lose enough blood for death to occur, although death could
also be caused by blood clogging the trachea. People who do this often cut the recurrent laryngeal nerve, the nerve that goes up to the voicebox and larynx, and lose their voices.

It was also practiced as a ritual suicide method in Japan called jigai, by noble women for the same purposes as seppuku was used by men.

(iii) Drowning

Suicide by drowning is the act of deliberately submerging oneself in water or other liquid and staying there long enough to prevent breathing and deprive the brain of oxygen. Due to the body's natural tendency to conic up for air, drowning attempts often involve a heavy object, to circumvent this reflex. If the drowning is stopped before death, oxygen deprivation can cause brain damage.

(iv) Suffocation

Suicide by suffocation is the act of inhibiting one's ability to breathe or to limit the oxygen uptake while breathing, which causes asphyxia. This may involve a plastic bag tightly sealed over the head, or confinement in an enclosed space without oxygen. These attempts usually involve using depressants to make the user pass out before oxygen deprivation which prevents any escape instinct or panic. The method common in terminally ill or sincere "want-to-die' candidates is to use a gas, such as nitrogen or helium. Helium is freely available to inflate party balloons. It is odorless and acts painless and quick. The person loses consciousness after a few gasps and death will occur within minutes. While it is advocated to fill a plastic bag with the helium and let it slide over the head, people with understandable reservation using a plastic bag can also use an anaesthesia mask to inhale the helium. This last statement about using a mask is doubtful, says Derek Humphry of the Euthanasia Research & Guidance Organization (ERGO). Right to die groups with huge experience of helium deaths have found that either the mask does not fit the face, or blows off the face from the force of the helium gas injection. A plastic bag secured at the neck, with the helium piped in, has been found to be the only sound way in hundreds of cases.
Coma comes in seconds, death in a few minutes, so the unpleasantness of the plastic bag is fleeting.\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{(v) Electrocution}

Suicide by electrocution involves using a lethal electric shock to kill oneself. A high enough voltage can overcome the high resistance of the skin and pass a sizeable current through the body. A large alternating current through the body can seriously disrupt nerve signals and can cause the heart to go into fibrillation.

\textbf{(vi) Explosives}

Suicide by explosives involves setting off high explosives (HE) in close proximity to the body. A sufficient quantity of high explosives would cause death instantaneously by destroying the body so thoroughly that life would end instantly - indeed, before the nervous system could register the explosion. Shattered organs, broken bones and internal bleeding from the blast wave would be likely causes of death where insufficient HE was used. The use of low-powered or home-made explosives would be likely to cause severe burns rather than immediate death.

When explosives are detonated with the intent of also harming others in close proximity it is commonly known as a suicide bombing.

\textbf{(vii) Hanging}

Hanging is the prevalent means of suicide in pre-industrial societies and is still more common in rural rather than urban areas.\textsuperscript{88}

The traditional death penalty of hanging by gallows consists of a rope tied to a fixed object (i.e. the gallows), with one end tied into a hangman's noose and placed around the neck. The person falls through the release of a trap dooj (or leaps from a height, in the case of suicide), and death is instantaneous due to breaking of the neck.
Vehicular Impact:

Jumping in front of a fast-moving vehicle, especially a large one, such as a truck or train, can prove fatal. A classic example of suicide involves one tying oneself to railroad tracks in order to be run over by an oncoming train. This may be traumatizing to the driver of the vehicle. Failure would likely result in massive body damage including fractures, brain damage, organ bruising, or long-term to permanent disability.

Jumping in front of an underground train is a common form of suicide in London. Where a deep drainage pit is present, this halves the likelihood of fatality. Separation of the passengers from the track by means of a partition with sliding-doors is being introduced in some stations but this is expensive.

Car "accidents"

Some car accidents are in fact suicides. This especially applies to single-occupant, single-vehicle accidents. "The automobile lends itself admirably to attempts at self-destruction because of the frequency of its use, the generally accepted inherent hazards of driving, and the fact that it offers the individual an opportunity to imperil or end his life without consciously confronting himself with his suicidal intent".

The real percentage of suicides among car accidents is not reliably known; studies by suicide researchers tell that 'vehicular fatalities that are suicides vary from 1.6% to 5%". Some suicides are misclassified as accidents because suicide must be proven. "It is noteworthy that even when suicide is strongly suspected but a suicide note is not found, the case will be classified accident. Some researchers believe that suicides disguised as traffic accidents are far more prevalent than previously thought. One large-scale community survey among suicidal persons provided the following numbers: "Of those who reported planning a suicide, 14.8% (19.1% of male planners and 11.8% of female planners) had conceived to have a motor vehicle "accident"... Of all attempters,
8.3% (13.3% of male attempters) had previously attempted via motor vehicle collision.\textsuperscript{93}

\textbf{(x) Jumping}

The impact from jumping off a great enough height can shatter organs and tissues. If a person jumps from a tall bridge into water, the person may die by impact rather than by drowning. Such jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge, of which there have been 1,300 incidents between 1937 and 2006, were depicted in the documentary film The Bridge.

The 70 m (225 ft) plunge from the Golden Gate Bridge has proven to be fatal in 98% of cases. The jumper would hit the water at 120 km/h (about 75 mph).\textsuperscript{94} Most die of internal bleeding due to broken ribs which pierce the heart, lungs, liver or spleen. Survivors, who generally have hit the water feet-first, have often had their femurs shattered.\textsuperscript{95}

Authorities have tried to prevent jumping suicides by building fences or other barriers in potential areas, such as high towers and bridges. In some areas authorities have also installed telephones which link directly to suicide prevention hot lines.\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{(xi) Poisoning}

For more information on the historical use of poison for suicide, see History of poison.

Suicide can be committed by using fast-acting poisons, or substances which are known for their high levels of toxicity to humans. For example, most of the people of Jonestown, in northwestern Guyana, died when the leader of a religious sect organised a mass suicide by drinking a cocktail of diazepam and cyanide in 1978.\textsuperscript{97} Sufficient doses of some plants like the belladonna family, castor beans, and others, are also toxic.

- \textbf{Drug overdosing}

Suicide by pharmaceuticals (“overdosing”) is a method which involves
taking medication in doses greater than the indicated levels, or in a combination which will enhance each drug's effect. Reliability of this method highly depends on chosen drugs. Average fatality rate for overdoses in the US is estimated to be 1.8%.  

Assisted suicide group Dignitas reported that there was no single failure among 840 cases, where an overdose of a former sleeping pill active agent Nembutal was used. While barbiturate (like Seconal or Nembutal) are considered a safe option for suicide, it is becoming increasingly difficult to acquire these drugs. Today they are only available as a dilution and are used by veterinarians to put down animals.

However, a typical drug overdose uses random prescription and over-the-counter substances. In this case death is uncertain, and an attempt may leave a person alive but with severe organ damage, which may prove eventually fatal itself. Drugs taken orally may also be vomited back out before being absorbed. Considering the very high doses needed, vomiting or falling asleep before taking enough of the active agent might be a serious hurdle.

Analgesic overdose attempts are among the most common due to easy availability of over-the-counter substances. Overdosing may also be performed by mixing medications in a cocktail with one another, or with alcohol or illegal drugs.

This method may leave confusion over whether the death was a suicide or accidental, especially when alcohol or other judgment-impairing substances are also involved and no suicide note was left behind.

- **Carbon monoxide poisoning**

  A particular type of poisoning involves inhalation of high levels of carbon monoxide. Death usually occurs through hypoxia. In most cases carbon monoxide (CO) is used because it is easily available as a product of incomplete combustion; for example it may be released by cars and some types of heaters.
Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas, so its presence cannot be detected by sight or smell. It is harmful to humans since the CO molecules attach themselves to hemoglobin in the blood, displacing oxygen molecules and progressively lowering the body's oxygenation, eventually resulting in death.

In the past, before air-quality regulations and catalytic converters, suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning would often be achieved by running a car's engine in a closed space such as a garage, or by redirecting a running car's exhaust back inside the cabin with a hose. Motor car exhaust may have contained up to 25% carbon monoxide. However, catalytic converters can eliminate over 99% of carbon monoxide produced.

The incidence of suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning through burning charcoal, such as a barbecue in a sealed room, appears to have risen. This has been referred to as 'death by hibachi'.

- **Detergent-related suicide**

  Detergent-related suicide involves mixing household chemicals to produce hydrogen sulfide or other poisonous gasses.

(xii) **Self-immolation**

Self-immolation usually refers to suicide by fire. It has been used as a protest tactic, most famously by Thich Quang Duc in 1963 to protest the South Vietnamese government; and by Malachi Ritseher in 2006 to protest the United States' involvement in the Iraq war. The Latin root of 'immolate' means 'sacrifice', and is not restricted to the use of fire, though common media usage uses the term self-immolation to refer to suicide by fire.

(xiii) **Seppuku**

Seppuku (colloquially "harakiri") is a Japanese ritual method of suicide, practised mostly in the medieval era, though some isolated cases appear in modern times. For example, Yukio Mishima committed seppuku in 1970 after a failed coup d'etat intended to restore full power to the Japanese Emperor.
Unlike other methods of suicide, this was regarded as a way of preserving one’s honor. The ritual is part of bushido, the code of the Samurai.

Dressed ceremonially, with his sword placed in front of him and sometimes seated on special cloth, the warrior would prepare for death by writing a death poem. With a selected attendant (kaishakunin, his second) standing by, he would open his kimono, take up his wakizshi (short sword), fan, or a tanto (knife) and plunge it into his abdomen, making first a left-to-right cut and then a second slightly upward stroke. On the second stroke, the kaishakunin would perform daki-icibi, when the warrior is all but decapitated, leaving a slight band of flesh attaching the head to the body, so as to not let the head fall off the body and roll on the floor/ground; which was considered dishonorable in feudal Japan.

(xiv) **Apocarteresis (suicide by starvation)**

Starvation has been used by Hindu, Jain and Buddhist monks as a ritual method of suicide.

(xv) **Beheading**

A device capable of beheading the user (a guillotine for instance) can be used for suicidal purposes. Results of the cutting action of the device depend mainly on what nerves and blood veins the device cuts. The more arteries supplying blood to the brain are cut, the sooner the death comes. Cutting nerves which transfer control signals for vital body functions, like breathing, is also irrecoverable and lethal.

(xvi) **Suicide attack**

In a suicide attack in the strict sense the attacker dies by the attack itself, for example in an explosion or crash caused by the attacker. The term is sometimes loosely applied to an incident in which the intention of the attacker is not clear though he is almost sure die by the defence or retaliation of the attacked party. This can also be referred to as murder/suicide.
Such attacks are typically motivated by religious or political ideologies and have been carried out using numerous methods. For example, attackers might attach explosives directly to their bodies before detonating themselves close to their target, or they may use car bombs or other machinery to cause maximum damage.

Islamic extremist terrorists have engaged in suicide attacks numerous times in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and also against the West at other times. Perpetrators believe the gains to others, or to a religious, political or moral cause, outweigh their personal loss and/or that they will be rewarded in the afterlife.

Additionally, teenage students (most often in the United States of America and recently in Finland) have committed several notable suicide attacks in recent years, in the form of school shooting massacres. Often, these suicide attacks involve guns or homemade bombs brought into high schools or college campuses. After the attack, the perpetrator will commit suicide before being captured by police.

(xvii) Indirect suicide

Indirect suicide is the act of setting out on an obviously fatal course without directly committing the act upon oneself. Indirect suicide is differentiated from legally defined suicide by the fact that the actor does not pull the figurative (or literal) trigger. Examples of indirect suicide include a soldier enlisting in the army with the express intention and expectation of getting killed in combat. Another example would be provoking an armed officer into using lethal force against them. This is generally called "suicide by cop".
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