



Row over alleged suicide in Edo

Family accuses man of killing wife

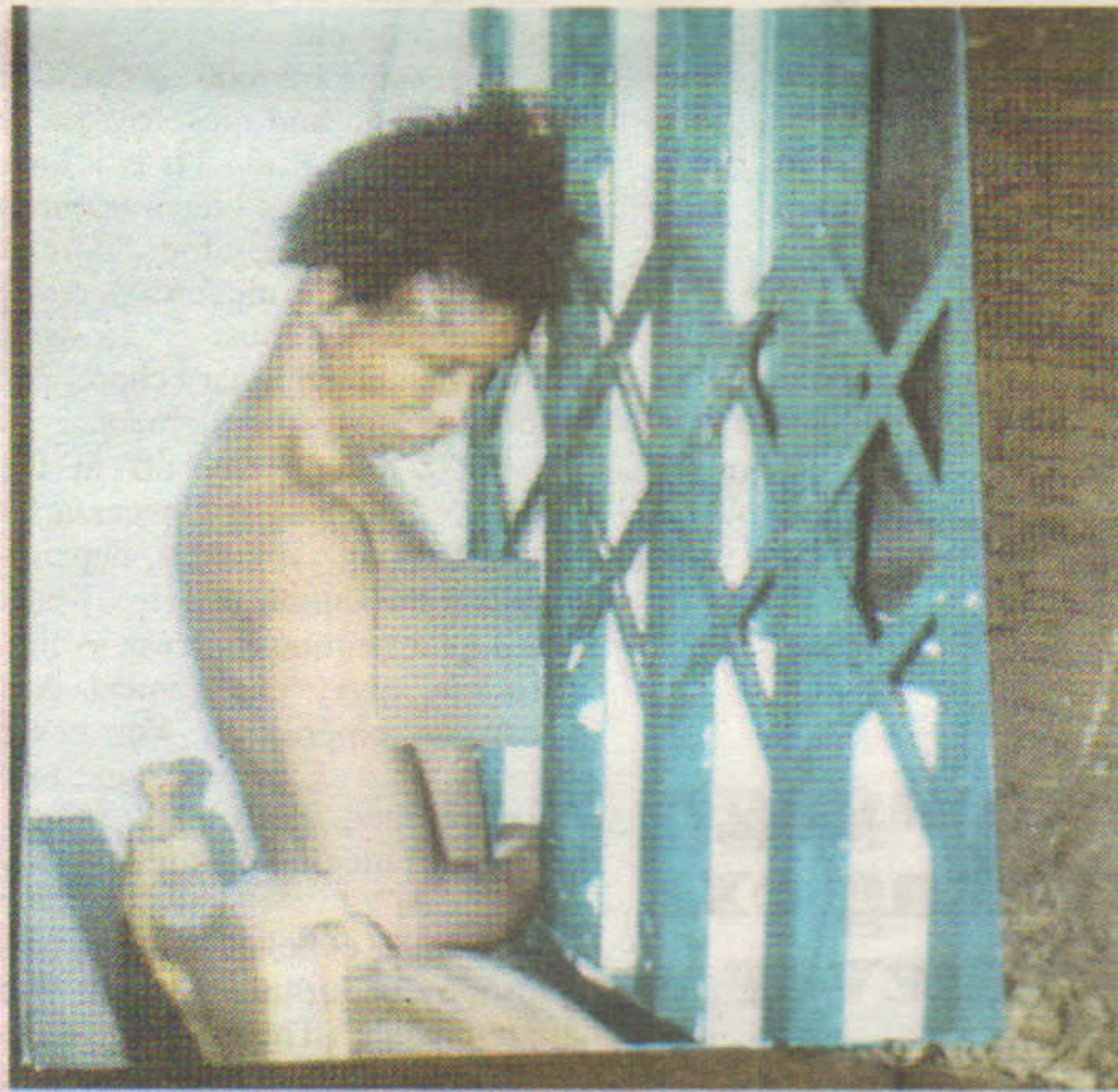
BY CHIOMA IGBOKWE

On December 30, 2013, the news of the death of a 30 year old woman, Mrs. Margaret Atogwe was announced. The story which made headlines was that the mother of two and a school teacher committed suicide as her lifeless body was allegedly found tied on the window protector in her husband's house at No. 2 Abek Street, Ayogwuri village, Uzairue, Et-sako West Local Government Area of Edo state.

According to the report which was also published by *Saturday Sun*, neighbours of the deceased said that the corpse was found dangling from the ceiling of a dark small room, believed to be the room of the deceased. Her husband, Mr. Mark Atogwe was said to have alerted the police at Auchi who took photographs of the body and moved into the nearest mortuary.

Shocked that their fears have been confirmed, late Margaret's family claimed that they were alerted days after the incident questioned the fact behind their in-law's claim. Police ordered a full investigation and arrested Mr. Atogwe who as at press time is being detained at the State Criminal investigation department, Benin.

Scared that Mr. Atogwe might evade justice, elder brother of the deceased, Steve Ayonote who claimed to be representing his family visited the Sun Publishing



headquarters in Lagos refuting claims that their sister committed suicide. Armed with a copy of a petition addressed and received by the Commissioner of Police, Edo State command, Steve lamented that their sister had raised the alarm severally that her life was in danger but all attempts to permanently separate her from her husband failed.

He claimed that he was not surprised as her sister was the third wife of her husband after two failed marriages. "One of his wives died mysteriously, the second one ran away and is yet to return and now my sister. We hope that this crime will not go unpunished."

According to him, sometime in March 2013, Margaret ran back home alleging that her husband wanted to use her for money ritual. "She came home at 1.30am shouting that she narrowly escaped death, as her husband was busy chanting incantations before she escaped. My father who had received several complaints about his activities insisted that my late sister will never return to that house again.

"She had to relocate to Lagos and stayed in my house for three months while her husband was desperately looking for her. Towards the end of April, she had to travel down to Edo for verification exercise organized for all

teachers in the state.

"She also used the opportunity to fight for the custody of her two children. We were still planning to return her bride price when we learnt that she had a secret meeting with her husband in the house of my aunty, Mrs. Yakubu.

"My brothers quickly rushed to her house only to be told that she had returned to her husband's house. I was very annoyed and my aunty insisted that we should stop interfering in her marriage and allow her to sort herself out."

Disappointed, late Margaret family decided to let her be since she is an adult. They however got the shock of their lives when some members of the community came on a condolence visit. "On December 13, 2013 people started trooping into our house. Wondering what could be the problem, since the festive period was almost over; they said that they came to console my father over the death of his daughter. We actually heard about her death from strangers.

"Confused, we made some calls and it was confirmed that Margaret was dead and has since been deposited in the Mortuary. His husband had also taken photographs and also reported the case to the police in Auchi divisional police headquarters.

"At the police station, we were told by the police that when they visited the crime scene, they met our sister naked and the AC cord on her neck at the spot where she allegedly committed suicide. They claimed that they were the ones who removed the body to the mortuary. They were surprised that we came days after the incident as our In-law; Atogwe told them that he was the only members of the family in Edo state.

"They later gave us photographs which showed that the AC cord was on the deceased neck tied to the window protector while her body was resting on the said window protector and the two legs of the deceased touching

the floor. The photograph never showed any sign of cut, bruises or any injury on the corpse."

Still not convinced, the Ayonote family proceeded to the mortuary to see for themselves in the company of police and medical personnel with the intention to conduct an autopsy. "We discovered that there was a very deep machete cut on the back region of the body particularly on the spinal cord.

"There were bruises on her face and other part of the body that even a blind man will see that she was murdered. The case of suicide was stage managed and some policemen conspired with him to tell the world that our sister committed suicide.

"He claimed that it was the mortuary attendant that inflicted the injuries on her body. The question should be on what basis? It was because of these anomalies that we petitioned the Edo State command who ordered that the case be transferred to the state Criminal Investigation Department in Benin."

On the possibility of insanity, Steve said: "My sister was a primary school teacher till she died. If she was insane or showed any sign, her employers will not leave the fate of those children in her hands. He never denied that he took my sister severally to herbalist rather he claimed that he did it to protect her from evil spirits. Our sister was very healthy and never showed any sign of insanity. He lured her back to destroy her because he is quite aware that the law does not accept spiritual cases.

"I know that my sister cannot come back to us. All we want is justice and that likes of Mr. Atogwe will understand that such crime will not go unpunished. Most especially let our women learn from my sister's experience that all that glitters is not gold. Whatever that was responsible for his failed marriages has consumed my sister."

For the family several questions remain unanswered. Some of the questions highlight includes the following: Did the police not see the deep machete cut on the back region of the deceased and bruises on her face when they arrived at the scene of the crime, before they deposited the corpse in the mortuary? Did the police not see any blood stain at the scene of the crime? How can someone commit suicide with A.C cord tied to the window protector and the same body resting on the window protector and two of her legs on the floor without the body being suspended in the air or dangling? Who cut the deceased on the back region particularly on the spinal cord? How did the victim sustain injuries and bruises on her face?

Meanwhile *Saturday Sun* learnt that the police had called for an autopsy on the body while Mr. Atogwe remains detained at the state CID, Benin.

The Divisional Police Officer in Ayowiri, DSP Abdullahi Gusau, who reportedly confirmed the incident, said:

"My officers were at the scene of the incident but we are still investigation the exact cause of the death."

Efforts are on to bring about the true picture surrounding the controversial death."