同歸於盡

A man in Jiangxi (江西) drove his car onto the pavement and mowed down more than 20 people, most of them students. Four or five of them died, and a few others were seriously injured.

The man then stabbed himself in the stomach with a knife. He did not die and was arrested.

The tragedy was no accident. The man was reported to be a gambler who had lost everything. He was apparently trying to kill and injure as many as possible before taking his own life. His intention was “同歸於盡” (tong2 gui1 yu2 jin4) with his innocent victims.

“同” (tong2) is “together,” “歸” (gui1) “to go back to,” “於” (yu2) “in,” “at,” and “盡” (jin4) “to come to an end.” Literally, “同歸於盡” (tong2 gui1 yu2 jin4) is “together returning to an end.” It means “to perish together,” “to end in common ruin,” “to die together.”

同歸於盡 (tong2 gui1 yu2 jin4) is a drastic move by those who are desperate, but it is not uncommon.

It is an act perpetrated by suicide bombers. This is also something soldiers do in a hopeless situation – take down as many of their enemy as possible before dying.

Japanese kamikaze pilots who flew their bomb-loaded planes into Allied naval vessels are prime examples of the act of “同歸於盡” (tong2 gui1 yu2 jin4). “同歸於盡” (tong2 gui1 yu2 jin4) is also often the tragic ending to love affairs that go wrong.

Terms containing the character “盡” (jin4) include:

盡力 (jin4 li4) – to try one’s best
盡快 (jin3 kuai4) – as soon as possible
盡頭 (jin4 tou2) – the end of the road
盡責 (jin4 ze2) – to do one’s duty