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A MICROCOSMIC STUDY OF DRUG ABUSE: THE PUNE EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Drug addiction is “a state of periodic or chronic intoxication, detrimental to the individual and the society, produced by repeated consumption of a drug either natural or synthetic” (Dupont, 1984). The United Nations World Drug Report of 2015 states, “It is estimated that almost a quarter of a billion people between the ages of 15 and 64 years used an illicit drug in 2013. Globally, some 246 million people use illicit drugs and almost 200,000 of them die using drugs”. According to the Press Trust of India it is estimated that there are about ten million alcoholics, nine million cannabis or marijuana users, 250,000 opiate users and nearly one million illicit drug users in India. Like a shadowy octopus, the problem of drug abuse has reached even the school rooms in Pune, India, and it is high time that preventive measures and awareness programs be launched in our schools so that our students will recognize the enemy before it strikes.

In this research, it was decided to seek permission from the authorities of a Government Recognized High School (GRHS) and a Government Drug Rehabilitation Centre (GDRC) in Pune, India. Permission to carry out the research was granted and the data was collected from these two centers. To determine the extent of the problem, simple surveys were administered and data collected from the High School children after working out a stratified random sampling of the population under study. Preliminary data was obtained and this was followed by in-depth interviews from recovering addicts who were admitted to a Government Drug Rehabilitation Centre. The major analyzed findings will be presented in the form of a power point presentation at the 4th International Scholars Conference at Manado, Indonesia. Besides the many findings, here are a few highlights:

- Many addicts take to crime in order to be able to support the habit. Some steal while others get involved in the drug trade.
- More important than the economic costs is the “human cost” in terms of misery, self-destruction and suffering not only of the addict, but also of those close to him, such as his family, his friends and co-workers.
- Research shows that current treatment techniques used with heroin abusers are not very effective and even with years of treatment the relapse rates as high as 90% are common.
- Most of the addicts know that once they have developed a tolerance to heroin, following detoxification, they would require a smaller amount of heroin to obtain the same effect.
- What greater shock can the parents experience than to find that their own child is experimenting with or has become addicted to that which is capable of making life a living hell!
- As part of the educational program, in all our schools in Pune, regular audio-visual and other awareness programs projecting the effects of drugs being pushed today by peddlers must be urgently undertaken.

A closer look at this social evil shows us that it is our children who are most vulnerable to the influence of drug abuse. As parents, teachers, administrators and conscious citizens, we need to educate ourselves about the dangers of drugs so that we can teach our children about “this trip without a return ticket”. Yes, we must go further still by convincing them that drugs are morally wrong.

