

EDITORIAL

TEENAGE DRINKING—A PLEA FOR INTERVENTION

That we are interested in reviewing the problems of Alcohol, Alcoholism or the Alcoholic is not a matter of any special or undue consideration. What is however timely, crucial and compelling is the growing frequency of its use amongst the teenagers. That a higher proportion of the young is adopting alcohol as a means of communication in other countries should not be the sole determinant for our youth to do the same. Whether it is a reflection of time or re-emergence of this social habit with venegence, as a result of lifting of prohibition in a number of states, fact of the matter is that more and more teenagers are now seen consuming alcohol in the parks, on the footpaths, in the parked automobiles or in the railway trains and where not ! It has frequently resulted in arousal of rage, aggression, fist fights, indiscretion and even transient antisocial acts. The participants in the social drama obviously hail more frequently from urbanized societies with higher per capita income, greater education and fewer restrictive bonds on adoption of modernity. Attention to this menace has been drawn by Behavioural Scientists and National Committee on Drug Addiction appointed by the Govt. of India (1977) which singled out alcohol as the most commonly abused substance. In a wider context this is a problem which would need study in any developing country when agriculture tends to modernise and agricultural society moves on to an industrialized one. Some problems obviously attain a more peculiar and perplexing trend when the post industrialized era sets in.

In the consideration of operating phenomenon, it is observed that mass 'production' of the educated youth by the universities and other institutions, with attendant and growing unemployment, associated with disintegration of family as unit of soberity and consequent breakdown in interpersonal relations have all created a situation in which youth of today finds himself bewildered and helpless. He is no longer a child nor has risen to be a man. He is one of the many thousands of adolescents who have left college but have failed to achieve autonomy. Whether these are precursors for consuming alcohol, and drugs remain to be established. He does believe that drug usage can "resolve", without much personal effort a number of problems that have been causing him considerable "psychic pain". It is not surprising that these young have identified such issues as boredom, discouragement and lack of alternatives as major contributing phenomena towards their drinking or drug use. Changing cultural values and emergence of new systems must receive their due share in the perpetuation of the new order. Growing urbanization, increasing economic stresses, a new family order, and loosening of interpersonal, social, affectional and supportive bonds are leading to estranged relationship of many a young people within their group and their families. We would like to believe that our cultural values had a prohibitive influence on such addictive tendencies as are being witnessed today. We are convinced that our contemporary patterns of living are isolating our individuals. No wonder, then, these newer, untested, untried systems not yet fully imbibed have resulted in gratifications through phantasy. Movies have only made the problem attain a three dimensional pattern by open display of scenes overwhelmingly reminiscent of a most unrealistic pattern of life or living. Whatever be the predisposing facets, tragedy is that once the experience of addiction or abuse

starts, compulsions take care of the rest of individuals' resistance. Added to this the youths feel called upon to demonstrate romance and love and when such "affairs" get prematurely broken as a result of emotional instability, it leads to frustration and refuge in alcohol. The recognition of the habit as a symbol of affluent behaviour and status makes matters worse.

Thus we observe that a multitude of factors seem to be responsible for alcoholic abuse amongst the teenagers. And if such is the experiences and impression of other responsible sections of our society, we would like to suggest a high level team of scientists both behavioural and social, as well as administrators and educationists to get together and explore the problem in depth. A set of preventive predictive or curative principles may thus emerge.

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REFERENCE

Drug Abuse in India (1977) Report of the Committee appointed by the Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi.