

-o-o-o-o- 'DRUG ABUSE : IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Narcotics are a general term for substances that produce lethargy or stupor and relief from pain. The term used to be applied for opium or coca leaves or any compound, manufactured salt or portion thereof, even though their action may not be narcotic. The qualified physician used to prescribe these substances on prescriptions within the parameters medical regulations. The drug abuse came to be recognised as a social evil in the 19th Century and an attempt was made to control the source of supply through International co-operation, prohibit it through criminal penalties and also help in the treatment of abusers with the help of medical and public health authorities. The USA took the lead in International controls and China in repressive laws.

Human mind, restless and innovative that it is, discovered substance both natural and synthetic, to alter his mood and to influence his behaviour and health. Opium, derived from Poppy plant (*Papaver Somniferum* L.); Cocaine from the leaf of the Coco-bush (*Eriphroxylon Coca*); and cannabis products from Hemp plant (*Cannabis Sativa* L.). The application of these substances to render relief to man from pain and disease also brought pleasurable sensation, sometimes negative and toxic, but generally beneficial. Drugs or medicine used without therapeutic necessity can do more harm than good; generally speaking, drug taking without medical justification constitutes abuse.

Opium, as a drug, has been used for the benefit of mankind for thousands of years. In the 'Iliad' of Homer, Opium as a drug was credited with 'Inducing forgetfulness of pain and the sense of evil'. Thomas Sidenham, 17th Century English physician, felt that to practice medicine without opium was callous to a degree. It was considered to be Therapeutic Panacea.

It was the Chinese Emperor Yung Ching who attempted to control Opium in 1729 and related its consumption with misery, crime and evil; but, nowhere else in the world such a view was taken by then. The extraction of Morphine, the active principal agent of opium, in 1806 and its therapeutic use through hypodermic syringe in 1843 was an invention of sort. For the injured soldiers of American Civil War Morphine came as a hope for living, but, in the same breath, its addiction came to be known as 'soldiers disease'.

About the same time, South America experienced another drug following the Spanish Conquest. Coca plant had the remarkable capacity to help the Spanish and, subsequently, the Latin Americans and other countries to help them endure the most 'inclement, penurious and adverse weather conditions'.

Cannabis also came to be accepted for similar reasons but, its derivate 'hashish' became the agent of Hasan-ibn-al-Sabbah for grand visions of a splendid super life to his followers. To the criminals and to the assassins, it became an inspiration to commit crimes and slaughter.

The Chinese High Commissioner Lin-Tse-Hsu seized and destroyed 4 million pounds of pure opium in 1839 from the British ware houses in canton and this caused opium war of 1840. For the British, Opium was just a source of revenue and a monopoly merchandise for British international trade. The Chinese lost the opium war but they succeeded in creating the first ever resistance to the

Opium incursion into China which later came to be known as the country of opium takers. But for the opium over casting the Chinese life, things would have been entirely difficult for that country.

The pharmacological definition of Narcotic drugs is the 'substance that brings relief from suffering caused by pain and produces sleep'. The term 'Narco' means to benumb or deaden.(iv) Stuporous state of mind is described as 'Narcolepsy or Narcosis. Morphine, similarly, associated the Greek god of sleep and dreams. For Alkaloids, the conventional pharmacological suffix is 'Ine' i.e. the second syllable of Morphine.

Opium poppy was noticed by the primeval man as an annual 3 to 5 ft. in the Asia Minor (Turkey) and later it was found growing in many parts of the world, including the Far East. Its cultivation was also associated with cheap labour, i.e. 280 manhours for one kg. of opium and the high yielding poppy plant of the Near East.

Alcohol, that is, Ethanol, Ethyl Alcohol or grain alcohol, was perhaps the first substance of abuse in the history of mankind. Alcoholic and Ethelakohlic beverages were found prevalent from the pre-historic times. They were the accidental by-products of human ingenuity, fermentation of honey into mead, of grain into beer and of fruit juices into wine. In 800 A.D. Jabir-ibu-Hayyan used the term alcohol, in its arabic phonetic as 'alcohol'.

Hallucinogens, such as, Marijuana or Marihuana, Hashish and Atropinic drugs are taken from the Hemp plant which grow wild in the tropical and temperate zones of the world. For at least four centuries they have been put to various usage, as cash crop in Kentucky State of U.S.A. to make stalk fibre into ropes, seeds for poultry and feed for birds. Seed was crushed to produce oil for paint and soap and the solid residue used as cattle feed and fertiliser.

Physicians in the Middle and Far East used Cannabis for medical profession for centuries. The Western physicians used them for Sedation and Hypnosis, analgesic, Uterine, Dyspantion, Spastic conditions, e.g. tetanus, since mid- 19th century. About the same time, the great literary figures, Balzac, Gervais and the drugs Terminology; standardisation by Interpol. Alexander Dumas gave his inspired accounts of experience under the influence of Cannabis. Cannabis was very much part of the religious and recreational lore of the time.

In 1545, the historical account shows that cannabis was used by the Spanish as fibre in Chile. The Marihuana vice was brought to Brazil about the same time by the West African slaves and it was carried to the USA by the American Kubin and Zabin sellers. This silent flow of drugs went on uninterrupted as an accepted goods traffic for centuries before they were found to be dangerous. In 1920's there was public alarm in the USA against such drugs which were found to be more dependence causing and less expensive than alcohol. By then, it had taken hold of the lower socio-economic stratas, and became very prevalent among the criminals Jazz musicians and the art performers. The nexus between the drugs and the crimes grew through 20s and 30s and finally, in the U.S., a uniform Narcotic Drug Act was enforced.

Hemp cultivation has a history of three to four thousand years of cultivation, primarily for strong fibre and oil contents of various use. This was used as psycho-active drugs in different countries, including India. The Mexican variety was considered 70 times more potent than the

Swedish, so was the Cannabis Indica which was also considered to be of much higher potency. The term Marijuana is from the Spanish Maryjane, the Mexican slang for cheap tobacco. The dry flowering tops of the hemp plant was called Ganja in India, 'Kif' in North Africa, Dagga in South Africa, also 'Bhang' (the leaves and the stalk) in India and in middle East and parts of South America. 'Hashish', an Arabic word, was used for dry grass, same as charas in Indian.

The use and the subsequently abuse of the habit forming drugs is perhaps as old as the history of mankind. Only the drugs, their types and abuse have changed from age to age and generation to generation. India is amongst the prominent countries having a long history of the use of intoxicants. Various intoxicants, 'Madira' and Somaras' i.e. alcohol in the ancient times, opium and its various preparations in the medieval times and later cannabis and various opium derivatives, have been found in use. As a society, we have not lagged behind others and perhaps all types of drugs including heroin, angel dust and even cocaine by all classes and categories of people have become prevalent.

Poppy cultivation in this country has been a historical reality and a number of events including wars and diplomacy are entwined with this magic plant in this country. First cultivated along the sea coast, gradually poppy crept through the islands. During the Mughal period, it became an important commodity for trade with China and other South East Asian countries. Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India brought this trade under the state monopoly and also controlled its production, distribution sale and to certain extent, its possession. Poppy for free cultivation was prohibited and gradually its production, same as that of opium, was restricted to the quantity of export and for internal consumption for the limited purpose of medicinal and scientific usage. The traditional poppy growing areas of MP, Rajasthan and U.P. have stuck to its cultivation till date.

Cannabis has been growing in Europe, Asia and Africa for thousands of years. China used Cannabis for medicinal purposes in the beginning but soon with the passage of time it turned an abuse. History of Cannabis is abuse in India in order through its medicinal use was known since the beginning. Hempseeds have been found in plenty during the excavations in scandinavian region and there are ample references in the ancient Chinese History. In the entire Indian peninsula, there was a tradition of cannabis intoxication besides its commercial cultivation, trade within country and export. Northern, Central and South Americas have their own history of cannabis cultivation and abuse.

During certain periods, in Europe same as in other parts of the world, cannabis and its derivatives were considered to be a miracle drug. The intellectuals, like the members of 'Hashish Users Club' in Paris in 1850 gave lurid accounts of their drug experience on trips under intoxication.

The commercial cultivation of opium, poppy, it seems, originated in India by the Arab traders who introduced opium to the Chinese during 19th Century- B.C. The ancient Chinese used opium as a cure for dysentery and also to curb appetite during famine. As a popular medicinal drug its export from India in junks increased in volume and by 1600 A.D. the British East India Company established its monopoly trade of Indian opium and in China the Company set up trading post at Canton. They imported 3 million worth of trade goods and 12 million of silver annually in lieu of the exports silk and spices amounting to 15 million annually. The Company was losing 12 million worth of silver every year and to compensate it they substituted opium for silver and forced opium export worth 12 million into China every year.

The British Empire thus poisoned the Chinese society with this deadly drug which had a sickening effect on Chinese who came to be called 'a nation of opium takes'. To counter it in the beginning the Chinese emperor passed a law in 1876 against opium smoking. As mentioned, the emperor attempted to prohibit the abuse of smoking opium but he failed to enforce the law. In 1800, he prohibited the opium import and ordered seizure of 20,000 chests of opium from a British ship on Canton harbour, each chest containing about 150 pounds of drug. It led to a direct confrontation between the British and the Chinese which culminated in the famous opium wars of 1840-42, when the British refuses to hand over an English Seaman who had killed a Chinese. The Chinese lost the opium war and while surrendering they had to heavily compensate the victors for the confiscated opium chests and by declaring Amoy, Canton, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai as the free ports. They had to also hand over Hongkong to the Britishers on a long term settlement.

Viewed historically, the opium wars may be considered to be the first great victory of the Narco power over legally established govt. the victory of insanity over sanity. Opium import in China went up 3 times in the next decade. In 1911, the Britishers however agreed to restrict opium trade from India and its cultivation in China.

By this time, both British and U.S. had experienced the problem of drug addiction. Opium which had surreptitiously entered, had started nibbling into these countries and by mid-nineteenth century become a disturbing feature. The introduction of hypodermic needle in 1855 led to opium injection for prompt relief from pain and its increased utilisation on account of a mistaken relief that oral intake was more dangerous and injection could take away the desire and addiction. Morphine isolation by about 1805 to 1817 was considered to be a great discovery and a cure for opium addiction. The civil war in the USA from 1861-1865 created thousands of therapeutic addicts amongst the war injured, particularly the soldiers who used morphine and opium, mainly through hyodermic needle. It is an irony of history that the West, particularly Britain, which encouraged opium and callously forced opium callously forced opium on China, itself suffered major problem of opium addicts, introducing by the Chinese immigrant labour. In the USA and New Zealand opium which started as a social fad sprung up in hundreds of dens for addicts. Morphine when discovered was considered to be a cure for opium addiction, heroin was introduced as a substitute and cure for morphine, opium and liquor addiction. Heroin was discovered by a German Chemist (DRESSEN) in 1874 and became popular by the turn of the century as an addiction free drug. It was much later, in the 20th Century that the govt. realised that the drugs could a major socio-economic problem and could also disturb the political stability. Once the laws were enacted, drug smuggling and its clandestine operations began. The second world was and the Vietnam war contributed significantly towards the problem of drug abuse in 20th Century. It is estimated that Vietnam war created at least 4,00,000 heroin users.

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