

STUDY ON 5834 DRUG ADDICTS AND PEDLARS ARRESTED FROM JANUARY 1984 TO JULY 1986.

Whether it be the problems of enforcement or those relating to de-addiction and the rehabilitation of the drug abusers, the most serious handicap, even in a place like Delhi, has been the absence of any data, compiled at one place based on field study. Sociologists, Psychiatrists and Social Workers, devoted to the task of combating drug menace, have made significant contributions, but in piecemeal, creating little impact on the overall scenario. No comprehensive plan of action could thus be drawn up for any of the affected places. Seminars, Conferences and Workshops, which have been galore on this most topical subjects of the day have yielded some results, but in vague terms.

In the past couple of years, in the 80's, a consciousness has taken grip of the public mind that this problem has to be confronted on a war footing, frontally, and that shortcuts will not work. It can't be done without an authentic study on various features and trends of drug abuse. The present study on 5834 drug pedlars and addicts of Delhi arrested between 1st Jan, 84 to 31st July 86 by Delhi Police is an attempt in this direction. It has not been possible to know the exact number of drug addicts even in a city like Delhi, let alone in a vast country like India. However, this study could be developed into a project which could be the basis for a 'Action Plan' on more concrete terms.

DIMENSIONS

Addiction is a necessary evil and drug addiction, on a lesser scale, is concomitant factor in any given society. Drugs are something related to the devious course of the human psyche and the tensions which urge for such an artificial relief, though always misconceived. Some of the drugs may be genuine pain killers but it is confirmed scientifically that the majority fall in the mirage of pain or tension relieving experience. Whatever be the cases, we leave it to the experts to explore the psychology of the drug addicts and to find out about the problem at the grass-root levels on day-to-day basis, the dimensions have to be defined and the problems concretised. Perhaps, several thousand social surveyors may be required to undertake the census of the drug addicts only the major metropolitan cities of the country where the problem has projected itself in a big way. No such exercise has been undertaken by the governmental or non-governmental organisations so far. With regard to only one Metropolitan city i.e. the UT of Delhi, it has been voiced on public platforms time and again that there are between fifty thousand to three lakh drug addicts. This figure cannot be confirmed, nor denied by any responsible government agency, including Delhi Police. There is, however, little doubt that the number of drug pedlars alone run into several thousands in Delhi and this decidedly reinforces the belief that the number of addicts could well be over several-folds.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In all fairness, the study of drug pedlars and addicts in Delhi should have been undertaken by a social or a voluntary organisation which could have gone street-to-street with a well drafted questionnaire to seek the information and prepare a survey report. Since this was not forthcoming and

there was an urgency to undertake some kind of study, we decided to first of all collect the information available on police records and, subsequently, to enlarge the area of study in order to conduct this study, go down to the ground level A team of officers, including the officials of the Research Cell and Crime Record Office of Delhi Police, were joined with a bigger team of dedicated subordinates at the beat level in order to conduct his study.

Limitations of the enforcement process have obviously placed limitations on this study itself. For instance, the information collected relates to the persons arrested who are not exactly indicative of the persons affected by this problem. Inevitably, the enforcement is mostly in respect of the drug abusers who were found operating and caught mostly on the streets or in public places. It has not been possible to cover those abusers, specially the addicts, who have been consuming drugs in the privacy of their homes or such other places where the hands of law did not extend. The criticism that the police did not apprehend the abusers from the affluent classes is valid to the extent that such persons could successfully evade apprehension.

METHODOLOGY & MATERIAL

The study is based on the information already existing on the records of Delhi Police. This information was first of all classified District, Police Station and Beat-wise as the intention was to conduct the study on the ground through the existing machinery of Police. The Police Organisation in the U.T. of Delhi is divided in districts, sub-Divisions, police Stations and Beats. The real operative level in this organisation is the Police Station, more particularly the Beat Constables who take charge of and operate in the smallest police jurisdictions. Once the documented material of our study was classified, the questionnaire was prepared according to the types of information that were meant to be collected from the subjects. This related to the broad classifications of drug pedlars and drug addicts, arrested during a given period i.e. from Jan.1, 1984 to July 31st, 1986. Information had been collected with regard to the affected age groups, family status, profession/occupation and the types of locality. The Socio-economic findings of this study are more of incidental in nature as individual lives have not been very deeply probed into and the task was limited i.e. to identify the endemic areas in Delhi for an 'Action Plan'.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The period frame of the study, as indicated, is from 1st January 1984 to 31st July, 1986, and the subjects are the individuals arrested during this period under NDPS Act (after 14th Nov. 85) and prior to under Dangerous Drugs Act, Opium Act and Excise Act (excluding the cases of illicit liquor). During this period 5834 persons were arrested by Delhi Police which included 1507 by North district Police, 2252 by Central District, 554 by East district, 257 by New Delhi district, 623 by West district, 401 by south district and 240 by Delhi Railway Police and Palam Airport Police. The arrested persons belong to all groups of the drug abusers including the drug addicts, big and small traffickers, pedlars and the street pushers. Among these categories, there are rich, the poor and the middle classes, and also individuals from different occupations and shades of life. Distinctions have not been made while conducting this study and the broad information collected are common to all categories of subjects. The seizures of drugs could vary between a few milligrams to hundreds of kilograms, the broad and dominant features being the study of drug abusers, irrespective of type s and categories subjects, and localities in which they operated or inhabited.

PARAMETERS

The master-chart based on the finding of the study will indicate the break up of the different sub-groups and the parameters i.e. the age, family status, profession and types of locality. Following deliberations and deep thinking, the arrested persons were divided between addicts and pedlars. Majority of the 5834 persons were arrested as pedlars though it was strongly suspected that some of them could be pure addicts. Under the new law i.e. NDPS Act, the addict has been distinguished from the pedlar as being some one who is found in possession of a drug less than the notified “small quantity”, who attempts to prove that it is for his own consumption. While relevant discussions on the subject will follow, broadly, an attempt has been made to identify the pure pedlars instead of pure addicts as some of these persons arrested were not found to be addicts at all.

On the basis of our experience and some discussions about the affected age groups, the individuals have been divided in three categories i.e. below 16 yrs. Of age, between 16 and 30 years of age and above 30 yrs. Similarly, under the heading ‘family status’ groups have fallen in lower, middle and affluent classes.

Partly based on experience i.e. the likelihood of certain groups of occupationals, professional and free lancers being more involved in drug abuse, the groups have been categorized as school and college students, Government servants, private service holders business-men, shopkeepers, transporters, truck drivers and others. In the last category of “others” fall the daily wage earners, the rootless migrants looking for jobs and the unemployed and the under-employed categories of people.

The types of localities have also been sub-divided in order to identify the endemic areas. The subjects fall in the categories-locality-wise-Posh colonies, government colonies, Middle Class Colonies, Jhuggi Jopri and Re-settlement colonies.

Apart from these categories, a separate study has been conducted with regard to the criminal involvements of the individual subjects. It was deemed to be essential on account of the much talked about nexus between the drugs and the crimes whether crimes breed drugs or the drugs can be cultivated in the fertile ground of criminality? Whether they create or supplement each other, etc?

RESULTS OF STUDY

The attempt, first of all, was to find out the number of addicts amongst pedlars, and vice versa. Of the 5834 persons arrested during this period, the subjects of our study, 4365 were found to be addicts. The addicts, for the purpose of this study were not exactly the same as defined U/s 27 of the NDPS Act. We have taken a realistic criterion and identified those persons as addicts who were found in possession of heroin and such derivatives up to 25 grams and charas, opium and such other drugs up to 200 grams in quantity though a notification of the govt. under NDPS Act. The police enquiries were made to confirm whether these individuals were drug addicts or otherwise. The number of pure pedlars among the subject was just 1469.

Age-wise distribution was the following: 3 below 16 years, 3459 between 16 and 30 years and 2573 above the age of 30 years.

Family status-wise, keeping in view the socioeconomic status: 4334 from the lower class, 1484 middle class and 16 from the affluent class.

Divided under various heads of occupations/professions: 12 school and college going students, 19 govt. servants, 1816 in private service, 171 businessmen, 197 shopkeepers, 3 transporters, 31 Taxi drivers, 20 TSR drivers, 10 truck drivers, 211 rickshaw-pullers, 73 cart-pullers and 3025 others. The broad group under the heading 'other' cover the daily wage earners, the porters of all types and other such people who did not have any fixed occupation.

The types of localities were again sub-divided keeping in view the socio-economic patterns of the subjects, the idea behind being two fold, i.e. to find out their concentration in various types of localities and to again find out the classes of people affected by this problem. Divided locality-wise 80 subjects were found to be residing in the posh colonies, 50 in govt. colonies, 2783 in Middle class (including lower middle class) colonies, 2084 in Jhugi Jhopri colonies and in the Re-settlement colonies.

ENDEMIC AREAS

Since this study was undertaken with a view to enable the government and the agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, to act upon it, the endemic areas in Delhi have been identified. Endemic areas have been divided in 9 groups of localities and the percentage of the concentration of the drug abusers arrested by Delhi Police taken out. The said percentage and the concentrations have again been taken out Police Station wise. For instance, the maximum concentration was found in the areas of Police Station Pahar Ganj and Nabi Karim i.e. 16.32 percent, the areas affected being gali Sangtarashan, Multani Dhanda and Nabi Karim. The next were Police Stations Jama Masjid and Hauz Qazi. 7.66 percent of the total, the areas affected being Shahganj, Chitli Qabar and Katra Gokul Shah. They are followed by Police Stations D.B. Gupta Road and Karol Bagh, percentage being 6.39 percent, Subzi Mandi, Kashmeri Gate, 6.34 percent, Kotwali, Town Hall, Lahori Gate, 5.94 percent, Mangole Puri, Punjabi Bagh, 4.06, Ashok Vihar Adarash Nagar, Jahangirpuri, 4.14, Sadar Bazar Bara Hindu Rao, 3.78, Seemapuri, Seelam pur, Nand Nagri 3.65. The contiguous areas have been roped together, generally Police Station wise.

SOME BROAD FINDINGS

Contrary to the popular notions and common belief about the classes and groups affected by the drug it has been found that the poor and not the rich are the real and majority victims. It may be true that the prevalence of drugs among the youngster of richer class has increased but their number is far from being alarming. What is most alarming is the number of subjects found in the lower stratas of society.

ii. It has been found that the majority of drug pedlars are drug addicts as well. The pedlars and the consumers, specially those hooked on to heroin or smack, operate in a suicidal, vicious circle. In this trade there are traffickers, big and small, pedlars and street pushers. While the major traffickers invest money in this most lucrative of the existing illicit trades, they do not become part of this vicious circle. They are not the consumers and they do not become addicts. Unlike these traffickers,

majority of the small pedlars and street pushers who carry small quantities of drugs often consume the same in the company of other addicts. They sell as they want to earn enough to sustain their urge. Majority of the persons verified. i.e., 4365 are those found unemployed or under-employed individuals, mostly in their teens or early twenties, caught up in this vicious situations.

iii. Related to the pedlar-consumer circle was found another trend which is true as much for an individual as community or the country at large. The 'transit point' invariably turns into consuming point. The individual, who is a pedlar today and a transit point, is likely to become a consuming point i.e. an addict tomorrow. On a larger canvass, most of the countries, like Pakistan and India, who were merely transit points, subsequently become major consuming points. Similarly, the city of Delhi which earlier happened to be just a transit point in the international trade of narcotics, in course of time has become a major consuming point with thousands of addicts.

iv. The drug trafficking, specially with regard to the choice of drugs, is a fluid situation. In the same society, Hashish or Mandrax may be the most the popular drugs today, tomorrow, heroin and other types of Opium derivative may gain currency and finally cocaine or some other drug, as in the west, depending on the trade or availability. The pattern of seizures and arrests in Delhi indicates that in 1980 there was not a single case of arrest or seizure of heroin, in 1981, 102 grams, in 1982, 16 grams, in 1983, 2.52 KG, in 1984, 25.67 KG in 1985, 162.017 KG and in 1986 the peak 166 Kg. In 1980, there were 2245 cases in 1983, 1323 cases in 1986, 2247 cases. The seizures of drugs indicating availability increased dramatically in 1980's with a sudden drop in seizures in 1987 when it came down to 60 Kg of heroin. It is, perhaps, on account of the claimed impact of the enforcement of the new law, and the growing consciousness that there is a semblance of control on drug scene. The faster rise in the consumption of heroin is due to the fact that its consumption increases in geometrical proportions unlike the other drugs which increased in mathematical proportions and also because this derivative of Opium is perhaps the most addictive of the drugs. True to the changing pattern in this trade, future may hold out some other drug.

v. The broad socio-economic analyses of the background of the drug addicts and pedlars indicates that a peculiar mix of poverty, rootlessness, sense of loneliness and longing for home and lack of a fixed occupation or a settled life presents the ideal breeding ground for a drug addict. The majority of the addicts, in the age group of 16 to 30 years, living in the lower middle class, Jhuggi Jompri and Re-settlement colonies, with uncertain occupation fall in the above category. The rootless migrants, i.e., the poor and mostly uneducated lot, drawn from villages and small towns, to a big city like Delhi, initially get lost, and subsequently loose their moorings. A daily wage earner who may be getting Rs.30/- to 50/- a day and may be remitting Rs. 500/- PM to his home, gets hooked on to the drug out of loneliness and boredom and in the company of the pedlars and addicts. And once he is there he is unable to extricate himself. Gradually, he becomes an insensitive person left with no dreams or urges, in a stoned existence.

CRIMINALS AND FOREIGNERS AMONG ABUSERS

Another revealing statement has been prepared showing the criminal records of the drug pedlars and drug addicts arrested during this period. At least 648 persons were found having previous involvement, the district-wise breakup being, 227 North, 215 Central, 82 East, 4 New Delhi, 101 West and 29 South. Again, it was found that atleast 466 of the total were persons having convictions

earlier, 295 being had characters of different Police Stations, 3 being dacoits, 20 robbers, 10 snatchers, 20 burglars and 134 knifers and 647 persons having a record of drug pedlars.

As such, there is nothing in this findings to counter the much talked about the crime drug nexus. It is an interesting observation that the majority of important drug traffickers and pedlars in Delhi today are those who used to be bootleggers sometime back and a large number of them infact belong to the community of 'Sansis', an ex-criminal tribe, who mostly live in Jhuggi Jhompris and resettlement colonies of Delhi. All the members of this sansi families, including the women and children used to run almost a cottage industry of illicit liquor in the past. Bootlegging and illicit brewing became much less profitable with the Govt. taking over the liquor business in Delhi. At this crucial time in early 1980's, entered heroin (smack) in big way the illicit trade of Delhi and the bootleggers who were doing a less profitable business immediately shifted to this new commodity.

Among 224 foreigners arrested, the Afghanis and the Srilankans have been found to be the two major groups among the drug traffickers/pushers in Delhi. Both of them are refugees, again the migrant rootless variety, with a totally uncertain present and future and with no fixed occupation. Temperamentally, as well, they are more emotional and vulnerable. Some of them are addicted while most others earn money out of peddling.