

Drugs and Related Administrative Problems in Defence Services

AIR CDRE. S. K. MAJUMDAR*

Introduction

The use and misuse of "Drugs" have in the past been subjects of strongly held opinions. Tobacco, tea and coffee, were also grouped as "drugs" in the past. Sir Aubrey Lewis (Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, University of London) has written: "60 or 70 years ago, the list of drugs which caused concern, included tea and coffee. The results of excessive coffee were painted in alarming colours—the sufferer is tremulous and loses his self-control; he is subject to fits of agitation and depression. He has a haggard appearance. As with other such agents, a renewed dose of the poison gives temporary relief, but at the cost of future misery. Tea is no better; tea has appeared to us to be especially efficient in producing nightmares with hallucinations which may be alarming in their intensity."

Historical Perspective and Propagation

Throughout history societies used various drugs. Many backward communities continue traditional patterns of drug use even now. In India, the "Sadhus" have used cannabis in various forms (ganja, bhang, charas) as also opium, from time immemorial. The Sadhus have justified their addiction to these drugs advocating their unique power of uplifting the soul. In certain parts of India, the use of bhang, which is taken orally,

is neither illegal nor socially unacceptable.

After the Second World War, the use of hallucinogens like Marijuana, and LSD/DMT has become more rampant in westernised and industrialised societies. This was associated with a new form of pop music and pop art and a new way of thinking and teaching. The expression such as 'Generation Gap' and 'Student Revolt' have become common currency over the past few years. A certain degree of conflict between adults and adolescents is perfectly healthy. Children in the process of becoming adults rebel against their parents and teachers in order to break away from the security of childhood.

The rapid technical progress that has occurred in recent years has had significant repercussions on the mental health of young people. The general health has improved, so have standards of nutrition, medicine and education; but social maturity has failed to keep pace with the progress in other fields. A further factor of importance is that the values of society themselves have changed.

Drug in Defence Services

In a recent survey carried out in the U. S. Armed Forces in Vietnam, it was found that the drug problem is not signi-

* Air Officer Commanding, Air Force Station, Jalahalli, Bangalore-560013

ificantly different from that of the youthful population in the United States, either in the level or in the kind of drugs used. The other ranks contribute the maximum percentage whereas involvement of the commissioned and non-commissioned officers is much less. Heroin has become more popular in Vietnam, a shift from smoking heroin to injecting it has taken place. Perhaps the cheap cost and the near purity of the heroin, according to an American report, point to the probable conclusion that heroin availability is subsidised by the enemy. The price is one five hundredth the street price in large U. S. cities. It is, however, claimed that prompt action by the Army has recently diminished the risk of heroin addiction for those not yet hooked.

Anti-drug abuse educational kits are widely used at American bases around the globe. Besides printed material, they include slide and tape recorded interviews with heroin addicts, all of them painting bleak picture of drug abuse. There is a coloured video tape that effectively drives the point in G I language.

Drug Addiction in Other Countries

Like U. S., South Africa's Army has been plagued by increased narcotics addiction within its ranks. General Cockcroft, Surgeon General of South African Armed Forces estimates that 10% of youth of South Africans have experimented with drugs. But Greefswald is the home base of what is perhaps the world's most unusual body of soldiers every man is a drug addict.

In Britain also the drug menace is being increasingly felt. According to a recent

Daily Mail report, the British detectives are fighting the drug menace to young soldiers. The report says that the communists are using cut price narcotics to hit at the West's defences. Every member of the British Army's Special Investigation Branch is being given special training to fight drug taking.

During World War II, drugs (stimulants) were deliberately prescribed for combatants engaged on exceedingly challenging assault operations, specially where action would be prolonged. Today according to a U. N. I. news report, a team of American doctors disclosed a US Army secret study in which it found that a single marijuana injection could put dogs into suspended animation upto eight days and on recovery they were found normal. Doctor Harold F Hardman of the Medical College of Milwaukee says, "in the event of casualties, with similar injections, the injured could be put safely into suspended animation until proper medical attention could be arranged." He believes that the US Army study has shown the hibernation powers of marijuana to be useful as a battlefield aid.

Profit Motivation

Today illegal trafficking in abusive drug is one of the most lucrative business all over the world. The great difference between the official and black-market prices easily diverts the attention, energy and resources of the unscrupulous. They are tremendously well organised, extremely cautious and heavily financed. This aspect should be kept in mind in the preventive measures.

Drug Abuse in India

In India the extent of the problem is not exactly known because no organised survey has been conducted in this field. However, from the newspaper reports, it is evident that the use of drug is prevalent amongst high school and college students specially in large cities and towns. Survey carried out in various parts of the world established that the school and college going students in their teens are among the most vulnerable ones to the use of psycho-active drugs. Similarly, in India with the spread of Hippie Cult drug addiction is gaining social respectability and is said to be spreading like wild fire amongst country's youth on whose shoulders rests the future edifice of the country. A sample survey made in Delhi University established that drug addicts belong to higher income group. Their reasons for drug taking were fun, adventure, pleasant experience, frustration or anxieties and all were introduced to the drug by their friends.

Administrative Measures in Relation to Services in India

Though Customs, Police and the Government are interested in the control of drug abuse, their measures have not yielded satisfactory results. The reason why the administrative action against drugs addiction has been ineffective is that taking drugs is only one part of a way of life that has to be considered as a whole. Since we draw upon our universities for recruitment in all branches of our service, we have to be watchful that drug addicts are not sucked in the circulation of our armed forces. We should, therefore, be particularly careful at National Defence Academy, Air Force

Academy and all centres where Cadets are recruited and trained.

The administration should gear itself up so that the nation in general is kept away from drug influence. In this modern age it is well known that the use of man/machine/media concept is very effective to get the optimum out of a situation. Drawing a similar analogy, in planning and implementing programmes to control and reduce drug abuse and to prevent more widespread use in the future as far as possible, the administration should bear in mind the agent/host/vector/environment concept.

Agent	— The drug
Host	— The man, the receiver
Vector	— The man, the pusher
Environment	— The factors that effect the chance of effective exposure and ultimate decider of propagation pattern.

All these factors play an important role in the genesis and development of drug dependence. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary for the administration to launch a multi-pronged approach to achieve the optimum result. Whilst approaching this problem one aspect requires special emphasis—the administration should bear in mind that India is traditionally an extremely tolerant country and traditional values are not easily broken. India has weathered many a storm and has come under a variety of influence and continues yet to maintain its traditional character. There may be difference of opinion amongst historians whether India had been one political unit but there is no difference of

opinion that India has always been a single cultural unit. It has, therefore, a tremendous built in resistance to withstand any force that tends to break away its culture and bond. We must take full advantage of its natural strength; and the administration should not hurriedly act in a manner where the drugs come to acquire the glamour of the 'forbidden fruit'. It is often said that administration should take action for improvement of living conditions, recreational facilities, games etc, and these will help towards prevention of drug addiction.

At the moment, units and formations of armed forces are neither geared so as to ensure detection nor assure that no illegal trafficking takes place. What is required therefore is that the administration should embark on a strong concentrated effort directed inter-alia against unscrupulous drug traders. Be that as it

may, the administration cannot and should not work on a concentrated unidisciplinary approach. Since the etiology, prevention and control of drug addiction involve multiple administrative problems that exceed the scope of any one skilled profession or group and since the knowledge of the problem is so imperfect, it is imperative that a multidisciplinary approach be made to their solution. The inter-relatedness of the disciplines as well as contribution of specific disciplines must also be recognised. To mention a few, the administration should draw upon talents and experience of persons as diverse as sociologists, cultural anthropologists, epidemiologists, attorneys, legislators, jurists, criminologists, pharmacologists, toxicologists, biochemists, physiologists and so on.

The problem, however, should not be overplayed or exaggerated.