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Book Review

Drug Addiction Among The Students Of Dhaka University (A Sociological Study).

By Prof. M. Afsaruddin

AMONG the major contemporary social evils the world over, drug addiction compares with AIDS in terms of its baneful influence on the society. Drug addiction is of very recent growth in Bangladesh. The author rightly observes that since 1978 illegal drug trafficking started in our country and drug addiction in the society including in the student community. Thus, the book is a timely response to a social malady which is "assuming an alarming proportion in Bangladesh". Its author, a leading sociologist of Dhaka University, fulfills a social expectation.

The book presents first the world scenario of drugs, the nature and extent of drug abuse and trafficking in Bangladesh. It then seeks to identify the actual state of affairs among the students of Dhaka University who—as the author claims—are largely representative of the student community in the country. Finally, the book suggests measures to eradicate drug abuse.

The major findings of the book relate to education, occupation, income and family size of the parents of the students identified as drug addicts. These data are intended to provide a social background of the families the addicts come from. It is revealed that the addicts come of educated, affluent families. By pressuring parents and by other manipulations the addicts collect the necessary money. The drugs used include heroin, methadine, marijuana, cocaine, hashish, ganja, opium, sleeping pill with heroin. The study identifies the places in the city of Dhaka where drug is available and consumed. Once taken, drug can hardly be given up.

A large majority of the addicts have been on it for the last 2-3 years. Smoking of cigarettes—both foreign and domestic—also goes with drugs. A major reason for drug addiction is frustration (28%) and it is always consumed with friends (90%). VCR is the enjoyment for most addicts (74%) indicating that its effect has not been healthy at all. The effect of religion and the habit of offering Friday prayer are anything but regular. Another interesting discovery is that discipline at their home is of

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moderate nature and that most parents are normal. This suggests that the addicts look to drugs for conditions outside home, (love affairs, frustration, just to pass good time with friends, etc.).

Having shown the drug addiction level among the Dhaka University students, the author goes on to suggest how the evil can be fought at social, governmental, family, school and religious levels.

The book is well researched. It has presented us with the most recent information about the menacing problem and its societal effects. True, Dhaka University has been in the forefront of most social, intellectual and political movements including the freedom fighting. It is also true that Dhaka University is increasingly becoming a place for several sorts of anti-social activities like drugs, hijacking, smuggling, arms and in-fighting among student groupings. If such things are not nipped in the bud, these would corrode social bonds and incapacitate our youths. Thus, the book is a contribution to our social consciousness to grapple with drugs.

However, the etiology of the book may be open to question. It claims that 100 students have been interviewed (p.3). Fine. How are these 100 students chosen? How many male and female? If the number is

the sample size, how big is the universe? On what criteria, have these students been selected as drug addicts?

The names of 17 students of Dhaka University who collected data are given in page 73. What about the names of 5 teacher-supervisors who guided the field research? It is claimed that the researchers were given "sufficient instruction" about the survey. Does it ensure reliability and validity of data collected? The steps taken to increase reliability and validity are not specified. What is the guarantee that the responses are most reliable? Have these been cross-checked by other relevant information, such as—the opinion of the Provosts and House Tutors of Halls concerned, the doctors treating the drug addicts, and the parents presumably supplying the money? These cross-checks would have increased the validity further.

The author observes that the number of addicts is increasing in an alarming pace (p. 12), but does not quote any official figure. It would be useful to have the increases shown year by year from 1978 to 1993 for a trend. Whatever figures are quoted (pp. 12-13), these have not been documented by source. At the same time, it must be conceded that such figures are difficult to collect as many are not reported at all.

The appendices are valuable. Appendix-B gives the entire questionnaire for the readers to follow the questions asked. The bibliography is useful, but it has no entries in Bengal or any publications from Bangladesh. Several spelling mistakes can be noted throughout the book, may be due to bad proof reading.

These comments notwithstanding, the book deserves to be studied by policymakers, politicians, university students, teachers and the parents for a proper perspective of the drug addiction among Dhaka University students.

The book has been reviewed by Prof. Muhammad Anisuzzaman, published by Association for Social Advancement (ASA), Dhaka and priced at Tk. 60/-.