Experiences of A Former Drug Addict

BY CHANDRA

Perhaps it is fair for me to imagine that each of you listening to me now is filled with curiosity to hear what a formerly drug-dependent person has to say about himself. Yes, it is true that I am one of those persons you have been hearing about—a "Junkie"! I too experienced a curiosity, like you have now; but my curiosity led me into taking Mandrax (as many as seven at one time), Malcidon, Doriden, Vesperex, Marijuana (Ganja), and Hashish. Later on I was hooked on smoking Smack (Heroin) and then injecting it. Towards the end of my addiction I was also injecting Morphine, as much as four times a day.

All of this I did in the past. And it is because I have been able to completely overcome all of this, because I am now completely free of what was a real enslavement, that I have allowed myself to be persuaded to speak to you now. My only hope is that as a result of today's symposium you will be better able to bring the same liberation to the many others, my brothers and sisters throughout Nepal, who may chance to come into your care.

Just out of high school I found myself on my own. I needed to support myself and soon became clear that this could be done with relative ease in the interesting company of tourists, especially in Kathmandu's Freak Street, Basantpur and Makhn Tole areas.

Walking and talking with tourists, guiding them around places of interest, was an exciting experience. I was at first scared to smoke with them when they all sat around places like the former Earth Room, the Original Pleasure Room, or the Monk's Pleasure Room. This was three years ago. But the atmosphere was so relaxing; everyone was doing it, so that I too joined in when they passed around the CHILOM, filled with tobacco and ganja or hashish. At first I got stoned, and was unable to walk or talk. I was afraid that my reddened

eyes would betray me, so that I took to wearing sunglasses to conceal this. I had heightened perceptions and many thoughts, but not clear reasoning. Hashish-smoking is usually done in groups, and a session could last several hours.

All around me people were taking pills, LSD, cocaine and other preparations. Eventually I decided to try these too, out of curiosity I used to think, as all junkies do, that I would not get addicted. Pills were hard to get for a beginner, but friends were always around to help. You can imagine what type of friends I had in those days. My good friends were all left behind; I had only the company of addicts. I found that Mandrax, for example, when taken on a full stomach, would quickly bring on a contented state of well-being and eager anticipation. Anything fast and quick was appealing. I felt kind of aggression so that on one occasion, bolstered with Mandrax, I readily took up a challenge from a fellow bigger and better-built than myself. In front of the RNAC's Main Office I let him have a volley of kicks which caused him to run away !

Once while employed in a Thanka shop I went to collect money from someone who had taken stock on credit. The older brother in that house was smoking a "Joint" of Smack. Lightheartedly, I asked to have a puff—never realizing that this was making a big jump in the quality of my drugs and addiction. At first I felt fresh, confident and jumpy. Later I slept. I soon made other visits, not only to collect the shops's money, but to get more Smack. I didn't know where I could get it for myself and by myself, and so I searched for a source of Smack and increased the frequency. I found a Manangi guy who was sniffing heated heroin through a rolled one-rupee note. I desired to do this also, and did on the second visit. Soon I found myself selling Smack for him. I would work with three or five grams of Heroin, and had no trouble selling it because the stuff I had was of good quality.

One-eighth of a gram of Smack costs Rs. 50.00; a Nepali can get a gram of good Heroin for Rs. 400.00, but a foreigner has to pay Rs. 600.00. This is much more costly than gold. One-eighth of a gram of Smack can produce between three and five Bonks: a single puff was worth Rs. 5.00. A Bonk is a bamboo pipe in which heroin and tobacco are mixed and then smoked. Some of my friends used to make a "cocktail", mixing hashish with Heroin. But I preferred only a single trip, and could sleep afterwards, forgetting everything. Good Heroin produces an itching sensation all over. My Hashish days were over.

Hashish-smoking was always with a group of friends. But when I took up Smack I found the group separated, if not physically at least mentally. At first I smoked Smack only once a week; then twice; then three times. Many dropped out because it was too expensive. Others would beg it from us who had it, like beggars—and this made me feel small and annoyed. An addict has little interest in anyone but himself. And for himself he has no interest in food, drink or other pleasure—only for his drugs.

Eventually I moved in with a fellow named Rishi, and sold for him. I only began to realize that I was addicted when my own funds were insufficient. I could get only limited amounts on "credit". Then I noticed fellows bringing tourists to Rishi's to buy one, three or five grams, and thus earning a commission. So I did this too. My own credit had stopped. I could not sleep. I only wanted to make money quick. I realized that I was a junkie. I sold what I could of my own possessions at ridiculous prices; I raided my brother's pockets, intending, of course, to pay him back. But then I experienced the "Sick". I got gooseflesh, running eyes and nose, sneezing, coughing and yawning. To overcome all this distress I had to become a dealer.

I learned the sources of Smack. Smack is no problem if you have cash in Kathmandu. My only problem was money. I exchanged ideas with others on sales, distribution and making easy money. I made direct contact with a wholesaler. He brought in Heroin from Changmai, via Bangkok where he paid between \$3.00 and \$9.00 only per gram. I sold it for Rs. 400.00 or even Rs. 500.00, from which I had to give Rishi his cut. I only wanted to sell this stuff so I could earn money and smoke at the same time. But soon all my profits went into smoking Smack!

Cheap quality. Heroin is often mixed with pulverized Mandrax tablets. But I cut my Heroin with Glaxo-D Glucose and had a better product. You can test it in water: pure Heroin dissolves immediately in water; the impurities which have been "cut" in will float in the water.

Life went on this way; my health was deteriorating; food was of no interest; constipation was frequent. Only the smoking of Smack in a Bonk was of interest.

Once when my own Smack supply was exhausted, I went to Rishi's and saw an Anglo-Indian there injecting himself with Heroin. Jokingly I said I too wanted some. He prepared it for me, and then I couldn't back out. I experienced my first "Fix" of Smack!

I experienced sneezing (it was good stuff !) and was stoned. Less than one-eighth of a gram lasted me all day, and this was an advantage because smoking Heroin only lasted for a matter of hours. This was cheaper, and saved time so that I could spend more time earning and less in smoking to meet my needs. Smoking decreased; "Fixes" increased. And now I found that the smoking was less effective; I needed the needle.

But this was too expensive still for a working boy like me ! So, one time when Smack was not available I was led on to fixing Morphine instead. I took only one-quarter of a gram. Morphine costs Rs. 50.00 per gram to an ordinary customer; I could get it for Rs. 45.00.

The first Fix of Morfine was different. It produced a Flash; my eyelids, facial muscles and skin tingled all over, and itched ! If I had been badly in need of a Fix I would find myself sneezing and freezing. But once I got what I needed I would return to a normal state and could carry on my daily business.

I spent roughly eight months on Smack-fixing and combined this with Smack-Smoking. I spent only four months on Morphine. Heroin was like a Father; Morphine was like a Mother. You cannot live without the one or the other ! I once took four Fixes of Morphine within twenty minutes. It caused me to vomit violently.

During all this time I had a number of jobs. Others could see the effects of drugs on me; I couldn't see them myself. I had been attracted by the confidence and peace I observed in others who took drugs; I wanted to imitate this. The main reasons why youth take drugs are curiosity, a need for acceptance, and a desire for pleasure—all perfectly normal motives. But inwardly, I regretted my dependence and felt helpless. I simply could not quit and recover my former good spirits—such as you see me having now ! At that time I lived in fear of being discovered by others, especially by my new employer. My addiction made me selfish and mindless of others. I was truly but helplessly hooked !

Then, the inevitable happened; I was on a nine-day trek and had only a seven-day supply of drugs. The sickness, nausea, weakness, vomiting, stomach trouble, tears, yawning and coughing. This craving and a freezing sensation were much more painful than the fact that my employer now discovered my habits. Fortunately, my Boss had a heart. He took me to Shanta Bhawan Hospital; they referred me to the Social Sevice Centre, This led me to Dr. Kunwar, and thus I had the elements of my treatment placed in my life's path. This was only three months ago.

Time is too short for me to tell you how great it was to re-discover real life ! The interior joy of a new life still floods me. I saw for the first time in years the beauty of a sunrise, of flowers and mountains. I am now living truly free !

This is my story, very abbreviated, You have heard the other speakers this afternoon as well. It's all true ! Yours is a life dedicated to healing others. Help to heal this great wound in our Nepali society too—in any and every way you can ! All our Heroin comes from Thailand; all our Opium and Morphine comes from Benares. And the chief distributor in Benares is a Medical Doctor ! I speak for many fellow Nepalese, some of whom are successfully treated, and some of whom are still ensnared. We owe it to them, and to our society, and to ourselves to bring all this to a halt ! Doctors: yours is a big and important part. Do what you can- Please !

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