

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

MORAL VALUES AND DRUG ADDICTION

Sir, A search for peace and happiness in our mortal life consciously or unconsciously is the goal that we all aim towards. Wealth and property are amassed to achieve contentment, but often without real happiness being secured. This does not mean that poverty is great and we should remain poor! It is the unnecessary craze for money that is the root of all evils. The incidence of psychiatric illness, suicide and divorce in Western countries is much higher than in our country [India], which suggests affluence by itself fails to usher in mental peace and tranquillity. The human race must maintain constant endeavour for scientific advancement and materialistic progress but, at the same time, must not deviate from nurturing the higher moral values of life such as love, sympathy and respect for others. Wise sages of ancient ages sought enlightenment through meditation, and preached that real peace and tranquillity can only be achieved through renunciation of worldly pursuits. The pleasure of helping a man in distress is one which is unique and unsurpassed by the delights afforded to us by material objects and entertainment, which please us for a limited period only.

At present, globally, a devastating trend has emerged in mankind's constant search for happiness and worldly pleasure – the menace of drug addiction. Addiction has many faces. First, consider tobacco addiction, in its many forms – as cigarettes, Bidi, Zarda, Snuff, Pan Masala, Khaini

and so on. Tobacco-related illness, such as cancer and heart disease, is taking a great toll globally. Second, alcoholism, which is no less of a problem. Alcoholics stop caring for themselves and their family and gradually fall prey to various kinds of illnesses such as cirrhosis, liver cancer and dementia. Third, the cannabis group of drugs, which includes Ganja, Bhang, Charas etc., takes the addict into the kingdom of unreality and ecstasy, invariably to be followed by depression, extreme lethargy and disorientation. Fourth, come medicinal drugs such as benzodiazepines, opiates and other types of sedatives and tranquillisers. They are easily available in some countries from high street shops, even without a doctor's prescription, and they invariably reduce the efficiency and mental faculty of a person. Last, but most importantly, heroin addiction, which is the most dangerous problem that challenges the modern world. Once addicted to it, it becomes almost impossible for one to leave its grip.

The younger generation is the future of our country. The mature members of society must protect our children from these dangerous menaces by example and cultivation of a sense of morality and self-sacrifice, which can be achieved by compassion, love for fellow human beings and other living creatures. Universal brotherhood should be our common objective.

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Erratum

Dr C.D.R. Pengelly, author of the letter 'Increasing Body Weight' published in the last issue of *The Journal*, would like to point out that there was an inconsistency between the text and the table in his letter. Line 18 of Dr Pengelly's letter should read 'the BMI levels have been increased by 5.9%'. We hope that no inconvenience has been caused by this error.