

## **The Changing Face of Addiction: A Journey of 35 Years of Kripa Foundation**

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**I**n the year after the Canonisation of Mother Teresa, Kripa Foundation owes a special debt of gratitude to the saint of the gutters. It was she who first felt the need to find a solution to the cause of abject poverty. Her sisters felt the helplessness of dealing with the poor who had hit rock bottom of poverty and hunger owing to Addiction to alcohol and drugs. In the year 1981 she showed me a dying destitute at *Asha-Daan* who was a former Air Force Pilot! It was with the three persons recommended by the then superior Sr. Cabrini, along with the road side drunks and drug addicts especially along Chapel Road, that Kripa Foundation was born. The average age of our clients in those days was 45 to 55 years. While today the average age has dropped to 14 to 24 years! Above all there is a global trend of increasing addictions, not just to Alcohol but all kinds of substances and behaviours. With the easy availability of disposable money and the attraction of seeking pleasure oriented entertainment, all kinds of agents of self-gratification are making an inroad into gullible youth and adults. There is a captive clientele for all satanic creative self-gratification. The most widespread one being ‘pornography’. With the easy and cheap access to technology like mobiles and internet, even underprivileged and destitute children are observed indulging in such

preoccupation. It was Carl Gustav Jung who remarked that Addiction is a “fight between Gods.” He said that God and Satan are at war and Satan uses mind altering substances such as Alcohol to deviate the original thirst in the human being. He explains that we all thirst for love, for God. However instead of exploding in this love and God, Satan deceptively “implodes” this thirst through all kinds of Addictions. Dr. Jung also said that he did not like the word “Satan” because of the misuse of this phenomenon by Religions in the form of “the Devil.” But it is this Evil that has cleverly named Alcohol “Spirit” and makes people think that they are able to handle this chemical with their own strength which is a deception. Because an alcoholic or addict would never be able to fight this evil with their own strength and would be doomed to relapses and repeated failures until they either lose their mind or have an untimely death! Hence the formula that Dr. Jung gave is “*Spiritus contra spiritum*” meaning; only by God’s Spirit (His Grace) can one overcome the spirit, viz. alcohol! And so the entire effort of the Archdiocesan project for battling Addiction and AIDS is named Kripa, which in Sanskrit means “God’s Grace.”

Addiction also brings about many addiction related ailments such as HIV AIDS. Through the KRIPA AIDS project we are able to reach out to those afflicted by a variety of blood borne pathogens. From primary care projects for prevention of addiction and HIV infection to the care and support of HIV AIDS infected, Kripa has multiple projects across the country that cover not only the individual afflicted but also the family and society that is “affected”. In the dimension of the family and society the big obstacle is “Denial.” Both family members as well as society at large are not aware of the wide spread phenomenon of Addiction. Our educational institutions and especially the management of many are to-

tally blind to the presence of all kinds of addiction rampant within their premises. In a renowned institution we also came across ex-students and dropouts operating as Pedlars! There are some very affluent institutions that have attracted many parents to send their children for higher education. Even Medical and Engineering Colleges including Management Institutions are challenged by the presence of an ever growing lobby of “Weed users.” The tragedy is that while the kids tell their parents and also themselves believe that this is not a drug, we have an increasing number of cases who are the victims of cannabis and alcohol induced Psychosis and schizophrenia.

There is also a ‘Holier than thou’ attitude of ***“It is a dubious luxury to think that you are not an addict.”***

the Parent generation who think that addiction is a problem of the youth but their child would not be affected. It was Dr. Vernon Johnson who said that “it is a dubious luxury to think that you are not an addict.” A Kripa recovery from a slum discovered that his father was a gambling addict and had even gambled away the ‘mangal sutra’ of his wife! The man was then coerced into treatment by the timely encouragement of the Parish Priest where he was employed. Today addiction has become a life-style for many. Owing to the rise of materialistic attraction and affluence, all kinds of greed and attachments to so called “status symbols” are driving our people into a life style that brings about stress and stress related ailments. One of the major fall out of stress is Addiction and so when people talk of “chilling out” it is mainly giving in to all kinds of gratification that drag them into compulsive use.

In the recent teachings of Pope Francis, especially “*Amoris Laetitia*” one finds most relevant instructions to prevent giving rise to an addictive generation. The role of the family is

paramount in the prevention of addictive behaviour. Many children, totally oblivious of the genetic predisposition fall victim to social use initially and then slip into compulsive use. Those not having this component may be able to quit relatively easily and walk away from this evil while about one tenth of the youth destroy their entire career and life. Hence building strong relationships in the family is the best investment that Parents can make, moreover, the most precious gift one can give their child is the quality of love they observe between their parents. Martin Buber said that Love is an '*I-thou*' relationship. When a person does not receive that love one chooses a substitute and it becomes an '*I-It*' relationship. That '*It*' stands for a variety of addictive substances as well as sex, gambling, power and god in the form of religious fundamentalism. The changing face of addiction is making our life more and more insecure and uncertain. It is therefore necessary that we identify the addictive component in all break down of the human being and work as friends of Kripa to restore our original blessing.

The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. The only way we can fight this evil is by a strong sense of fellowship. The healing principle of Kripa is 'mutually shared vulnerability empowers one another.' We invite more and more youth and families to become friends of Kripa and spread the good news that though Addiction is a "no-cure" ailment, there is treatment and recovery and we can all be "wounded healers" in the likeness of Jesus. As the twelfth step of the self-help model states, "having had a spiritual awakening ...we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."