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### Mothering through Addiction

Drug addiction and alcohol addiction seem to be increasing day by day all over the world. People losing the control of their life when they face stress related to family, society or workplace. The commitments of the modern generation are more than that of the ancient generation and failure to fulfil the commitments often results in some kind of addiction. Addiction and mental diseases are common both among the males and females. But the female addiction seems to be more severe than the male addiction considering the variety of roles females needed to exercise in the family and society. Among females, the addiction of mothers seems to be most dangerous to the society.

"Mothers who are addicted to crack is a long debated topic that can be argued well on both sides. One side can argue that Mothers who have an addiction problem to drugs should not be allowed to have legal rights to their children and should have their children in child protective services. Most people view these mothers as unfit and harmful to the children's safety. On the other hand mothers who are addicted to crack and other drugs depend on motherhood to rehabilitate and find a cure to their addiction. Mothers who are addicted view hope in their lives because their children give them a purpose to get better. However, once the children are taken away from the mothers many times the addiction becomes worse and more intense. The emotional attachment to their children helps them overcome the attachment to the drugs. This paper briefly analyses the pros and cons of allowing the addicted mothers to keep their children under their custody.

## Mothering through Addiction: Pros and Cons

Polansky et al (2006) have conducted a comprehensive study to know more about the consequences of mothering through addiction. They used mothers in a public residential treatment program for drug addiction as the subjects. They found that

- All of the mothers reported becoming aware that they had been repeating their mothers' parenting practices
- The mothers also reported that they were now considering their children's feelings.
- The mothers reported more positive feelings about being a mother and about their children.
- The positive responses of mothers suggest that parenting groups based on attachment theory may provide a supportive function for mothers with addictions and may increase their maternal sensitivity (Polansky et al, p.115)

The above study clearly shows that, no mother wants to avoid their intimacy towards their children. They are aware of the importance of a mother –child relationship. They know very well that a mother's care is necessary for the better development of a child. They also know that children perceive their parents as role models and they will try to imitate them when they grow up. No scientific studies have ever proved any benefits associated with the consumption of alcohol or drug use. In fact all the studies are pointing towards the negative impacts of alcoholism and drug addiction. Yet a substantial volume of people are addicted to alcohol or drug. In short, the addicted mothers know the consequences of their bad habits better than anybody else. At the same time, they are unable to control their bad behaviors because of the addiction or some other reasons.

According to psychologist, Timothy B. Baker of the University of Wisconsin, "addiction occurs in the environment, not in the liver, genes or synapses" (Bower) Most of the addicted mothers are trying a drug or consuming alcohol because of the influence of her friends, marital happiness, etc. They are not starting these habits deliberately. Mothers who are addicted to alcohol or drug may quiet often use it in front of their children. In such cases, the children will get the motivation for drinking or drug use from the home itself. Children of binge drinking mothers may feel that nothing wrong with drinking since they witness their mothers doing it quiet regularly. Under such circumstances, the children of addicted mothers will also take shelter in alcoholism or drug use. It is the duty of the government to ensure that all the children in the country are developing in a positive manner. In other words, government cannot keep a blind eye towards, the issue of improper development of the future generation under the control of their mothers. It is a fact that the parents are the legal and moral custodians of their children. At the same time, it is the duty of the parents to assist the children in their development in a positive manner. No governments can allow the development of antisocial elements in the society. Children of addicted mothers may become antisocial elements and hence nobody can blame the government if they decide to take the children away from the addicted mother for the better development of the children.

In another study conducted among, some heroin using mothers, found that "the wellbeing of children is endangered because the routine activities associated with drug use conflict with the maternal role. Innovative effective interventions are needed to support children who live with drug using mothers and to strengthen the role of motherhood" (VULNERABILITY AND RISK AMONG MOTHERS WHO USE HEROIN AND LIVE WITH THEIR CHILDREN, p.2).

Children during their developing stages are badly in need of motherly care. In fact motherly care

can make or break a child. Many studies have shown that the aggressive behavior is more among children who got less parental care. Under such circumstances, in order to keep the future of the children intact, they should be separated from their mother, if the mother is an addicted one.

“Alcohol causes aggression directly by anesthetizing the center of the brain that normally prevents aggressive responding. Alcohol facilitates aggression indirectly by causing certain cognitive, physiological, and emotional changes that increase the probability of aggression” (Bushman & Cooper, p.342) It is difficult for an addicted mother to control her emotions. Even for silly things, an addicted mother may respond aggressively which may often create violence either in the family or in the society. Nobody can guarantee the safety of a child if the mother happens to be an addicted one. There are many cases, in which the addicted mothers killed their children under the influence of alcohol or drug. Addiction can destroy the consciousness of the mothers temporarily and they may not have any control over their activities during such periods.

Heroin-exposed children weighed less and were shorter than those in the comparison groups; 14% had a head circumference below the third percentile. Heroin-exposed children were rated by parents as less well adjusted than control children and they differed significantly in perceptual measures and on subtests of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities and McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities relating to the process of organization. These findings suggest that chronic intrauterine exposure to heroin may affect growth and behavior as well as perceptual and learning processes in preschool children (Wilson et al, 1978)

Proper schooling is necessary for the development of the children. Addicted mothers may not take give much seriousness to the studies of their children. Sometimes they may not even

prepare the food and the children may not get the right food at the right time. Children of addicted mothers often undergo harassment from the society. Thus addiction of mothers can destroy the developments of the children both physically and mentally. No civilized society can leave such children under the darkness. The children have nothing to do with addiction of their mothers.

There are many arguments against separating addicted mothers from their children. “An intervention for improving the parenting of women with addictions suggests that interventions drawing from attachment theory may also have the potential for helping women with addictions with their parenting” (Polansky et al, p.126). “Attachment has been defined as a consistent emotional bond that an individual experiences toward significant others such as family, friends, and other important people in his or her life. It is considered an important factor in psychosocial wellbeing” (Rosa et al, p.380). In the absence of children, the chances of mothers becoming mental patients are more. Even while taking the drug or alcohol, the addicted mothers may keep a feeling that her children will look after her in case of an emergency. If the children were taken away from the addicted mothers, they feel lonely and develop mental problems. In the case of a widow, the above issue will become more prominent. Many of the addicted mothers have desperations in their lives. Most of them are continuing their life only because of their attachment towards their children. If the government forcefully takes the children of addicted mothers away, the addicted mothers may undergo psychological problems.

Even though, the addicted mothers may have strong attachment towards their children, the case is different in the case of attachments between addicted mother and addicted daughter. Rosa et al (2010) have after a sociological study concluded that “substance abusing mothers with an abusing daughter may have fewer attachments between them. They also concluded that the

attachments between an addicted mother and addicted daughter may have no relationships with the age of mother, nativity of mother, as well as mother/daughter age of alcohol and illicit drug use onset (Rosa et al, p.388). In short, if substance abuse or addiction is common among mothers and their daughters, they may not keep much intimacy between them.

## Conclusions

Mothering through addiction is a controversial topic. Whether children of addicted mothers should be separated from the mother or not is an issue which involves serious ethical considerations. The life with an addicted mother may always be risky for the children. At the same time separating the children from addicted mother may create more emotional distress and psychological problems to the mother. The government and the society definitely have a commitment towards the addicted mother and their children. Addiction in any form is not an accepted behaviour and the children of the addicted mother may have more chances to become antisocial elements.

In short, government and the society should take necessary steps to avoid addiction rather than separating the children from the addicted mothers. Addiction problems of the mothers should be treated in the company of the children itself. At the same time, social workers should keep a close eye on the children of addicted mothers in order to prevent them from becoming antisocial elements.

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