

Tobacco- a social perspective

Dr Vivek Shetty

Enough has been said about the deadly effects of tobacco on an individual's health, and little is to be gained by reiterating them. Everyone knows that tobacco causes a host of health issues, even those citing their chain-smoking elderly neighbour who still enjoys the best of health. They know, or suspect at least, that the consequences of such life-long dedication are forthcoming in some form; it's just a matter of when. The evidence is overwhelming, and there is scant need to debate the point. Let us, instead, examine the effects of diligent tobacco use on one's family. There are many folds. Aside from the obvious risks of exposure to secondary smoke, there are financial and emotional implications that are worth bringing up.

A question worth asking— is there a worse human being than one exposing his child to tobacco fumes at home? It can be argued there are few acts more heinous than causing wilful harm to an innocent infant whose well-being is supposed to be one's exclusive domain. Yet, how many otherwise reasonable human beings think nothing of committing such a deed. The deadly smoke that hangs in the air for days has at least seventy chemicals known to be carcinogenic to the human body, in addition to having detrimental effects on the cardiovascular system and lungs. Children's growing bodies are especially sensitive to these toxins. Often, it isn't a lack of knowledge but callous disregard for others that result in such behaviour.

Another aspect worth discussing is the financial burden on the family as well as society in general. The money spent on tobacco-related health issues has been well documented. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has estimated that loss to society as a result of sickness and death due to tobacco usage is to the tune of over a thousand crore rupees annually. Tobacco-related diseases tend to occur at an age when there are a lot of responsibilities on a person's shoulders. Often, it might strike down a family's only breadwinner, creating destitute orphans. Hence there is some merit to the argument that the revenue of a tobacco company ought to be counted as a loss to society.

Also, a smoker spends up to a few thousand rupees a month on cigarettes. Besides the necessities of life, that money could be better spent on much more meaningful things, such as a treat for the child, a meal, an outing, or even a vacation. Such a course of action could not only help bond with the family but also save the person's life. Need there even be a discussion on the effects of death and disease on the family? A failing heart, clogged lungs, an amputated limb, and a disfigured face do not contribute to a fulfilling life and a happy family. These cause irreversible psychological scarring and social stigma. And these are mostly avoidable. All it requires is a bit of self-control and fortitude. To conclude, tobacco is a curse to the family and society. The sooner we eliminate it, the better for us as a species.

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