



MONTHLY THEME

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KASHMIR RIGHTS FORUM CUSTODIANS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN KASHMIR

The Kashmir Rights Forum (KRF) is an informal, secular, apolitical and forward looking interactive platform highlighting human rights violations perpetuated against innocent Kashmiri population by terrorists either directly supported by separatists and their over ground workers or indirectly by sympathizers over last three decades as a result of proxy war initiated by Pakistan on our homeland.

KRF is dexterous, focused forum with overarching mission to mobilize expertise and public opinion to counter the organized attempt to violate human rights of common innocent Kashmiris of all generations by the nexus and tarnishing the image of government and security forces by certain section of media, intelligentsia and conflict entrepreneurs by flaring up allegations of human rights violations on them, thus diverting attention from the real perpetrators of these violations.

We, at KRF encourage response by likeminded or otherwise, people and organizations, on documents, articles & video content produced on multiple social media platforms by us to apprise all citizens of such violations. KRF will endeavor to expose the designs of the perpetrators by studying the past and present and producing the facts for public scrutiny as part of our research and highlight such events in present, earliest on occurrence.

Glimpses of Monthly Theme MAY 2022

Effects of the Kashmir conflict

- Over a decade and a half years of violence has left...
 - 10,000 to 75,000 orphans
 - 5,000 to 6,000 children disabled
 - an entire generation exposed to violence causing severe psychological and emotional scars

unemployment
 demand person resume workforce
 career fired find hired
 recruitment opportunity assistance money
 work unemployed jobless financial search
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 laborer social nonemployment businessman information unhappy
 insurance vacancy employee depression job worker
 economy interview problem help rate professional security
 underemployed hiring compensation no job
 dismissed wanted

DRUG ABUSE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON KASHMIRI SOCIETY

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DRUG ABUSE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON KASHMIRI SOCIETY

PREFACE

Kashmir had earlier been the hotbed for Pakistan's proxy war, debilitating the energies of the youth. There was a generation of people who fell prey to the despicable plan of terrorist-separatist-supporter nexus. Thousands of lives and their families were destroyed in result of such nefarious designs. Mother lost their beloved sons, women lost their better halves and fathers lost their old age supports. With increase in awareness amongst the youth and increase of mainstream nationalism sponsors of the menace managed to safeguard their interests through other channels, which is dangerous than ever before. As the infiltration of terrorists declined to minimum with the installation of the anti-obstacle system on the LoC, Pakistan changed its strategy to finance the terrorism through different routes of drug-trafficking and narco-terrorism. In the meanwhile, the youth of valley were lured to take drugs and thus generating the revenue for expansion of terrorism.

Narcotics consignment are channelized through Afghanistan via Pakistan with the active connivance of ISI and terrorist organizations. The LoC and the IB are being leveraged by hostile elements for vitiating peace and tranquility in India. Of late, these instances have seen acute spike in areas like Rajouri & Poonch. There have been several instances where huge amount of cash as well as contrabands have been confiscated. Such instances include recovery of

Now that the menace has spread its roots in the different areas of our valley, we are putting our efforts to educate the fellow Kashmiris to save their future investment - "youth" from the cult of drug addicts. In this compilation, we will be discussing the consequences of the substance abuse on the Kashmiri society in general and effect on the youth in particular. We shall also expose the designs

DRUGS

of the separatist nexus in misguiding the potential of youth of the valley of Kashmir. Apart from this, it comes upon the parents and the peers to keep an eye on their wards, also guiding them to avoid their fall prey to the menace. Kashmir Rights Forum is determined to put forth its efforts in eradication of the drug addiction in the valley. We reiterate our solemn faith in fighting the terrorism in all its forms, specially the narco terrorism.

DRUG ADDICTION

Drugs take you to hell, disguised as heaven. This statement defines the meaning of drugs accurately in one single line. What exactly are drugs? Drugs are, substances or a combination of chemical substances that can alter the state of your mind in the way that you cease to see the reality.

There is no fine line to draw a distinction between Drug abuse and Drug Addiction or when does drug abuse become drug addiction. Drug abuse can be thought of point along a continuum. Abnormal and inappropriate use of mind altering drugs when prescribed or over the counter is drug abuse however when it becomes drug addiction, it is not much clear because different people reach drug addiction at different stages. The scientific investigation is aimed at knowing the factors that contribute to this transitive period of drug abuse and drug addiction. Drug addiction, on the other hand, is defined as the continued compulsive use of drugs in spite of their adverse health, social and emotional consequences. Once a person becomes addicted to drugs he loses his control over drug use and often become isolated from family and the friends. They may also face difficulty at work and sometimes lead them to commit crimes and involve with Criminal Justice system. For addicted person, persistent use of drugs is the primary focus in life and once the drug stops the person will have cravings - intense and strong desire for the drugs.



A drug to which a person becomes addict does not merely impair the person's cognitive skills and behavior but also permanently damage certain abilities depending on the amount of a dose. Experts believe that certain changes due to the addictions disappear shortly after drug use while certain anomalies remain permanent. One of the first changes in the brain that may occur in response to repeated drug abuse is tolerance. Tolerance develops when a person requires a higher amount of drug to reach that level of pleasure or a state of alteration of consciousness that he achieved previously through lower doses of drugs. In addition to this impairment of brain, drug addiction also makes people vulnerable to other health risks. For example, inhalant abusers are at higher risk of heart problems like disruption of heart rhythms. Often drug addicts consume and inject drugs in a group for better experience also put them at higher risk of contracting HIV virus due to contaminated needles used in a group. Also, there are higher incidences of Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C among drug addicts than the general population.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Drug abuse is the patterned and chronic use of a drug in which the person consumes the drug in amounts or by ways which are very hazardous and harmful for him and others. According to WHO "Substance abuse is persistent or sporadic drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice." The present paper is theoretical in nature and aims at high lighting the issues and challenges faced by youth involved in drug addiction in the Kashmir valley. An illegal drug can be defined as a substance that causes addiction, habituation, a marked change in consciousness, has limited or no medical use and is listed on one of the five schedules within the USC Controlled Substances Act.

^[1,2] These schedules include drugs such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, certain prescription drugs, and marijuana, among many others. Around 70 thousand people are drug addicts alone in the Kashmir division among them approximately 31% are women. As reported by Government Psychiatric Hospital Srinagar around 90% drug abusers belong to the age group of 17-35, of concern is, the youth who is particularly involved in drug addiction. It is widely believed by most people who have contributed to various kinds of social and political issues including drug addiction that the circumstances of the last two decades are to be blamed for the current state of affairs. A large number of youths who have been directly or indirectly affected by the narco terror nexus in the state have turned to drugs. But this is not the only reason behind this epidemic because there are other reasons as well, as reported by different studies that have been conducted in the state.

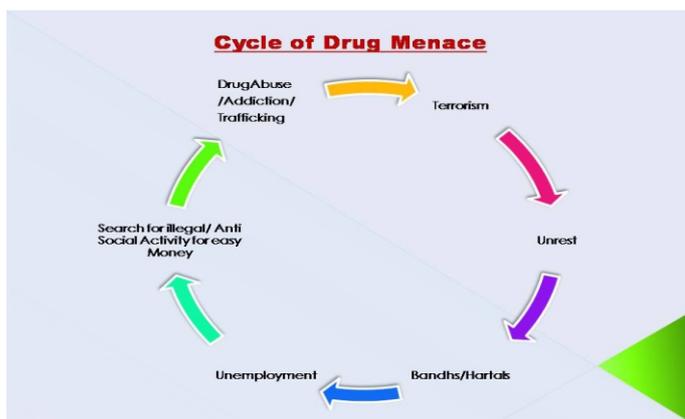
Loss of employment due to shutdowns in the past, psychosis due to the terrorism related incidents are also some of the possible reasons behind its spread. There are different measures taken by state government to eliminate this curb, including the J&K Police Department running a number of drug De-Addiction centers in the Kashmir valley.^[3]

As far as Kashmir is concerned with respect to substance abuse, which over the years has touched new grounds and has become an area of concern. Nail polish, ink remover, shoe polish and dozens of such abnormal things are used as the alternative addiction by the drug addicts especially belonging to young age group along with Charas that is being smoked in socially accepted and approved centres known as Mehfil-e-peer or Taqyas. Other substances at the disposal of addicts are Brown sugar, sniffers, codeine phosphate, prescription drugs like Alprax and many more. Apart from these substances, Jammu based trend for drug abuse is no different. In Jammu, petrol addiction has emerged a new area of concern since past couple of years which has dangerous consequences as it hits the brain directly and the person indulging in its abuse gets seizures (fits) and ultimately commits suicide or may die within a year. Other abused substances that are used in Jammu include sedatives and analgesics like Proxymon, boot polish, Corex, alcohol, along with thinner fluid that comes with typewriter whitener having hydrocarbons that is poured on the handkerchiefs and subsequently inhaled.^[4]



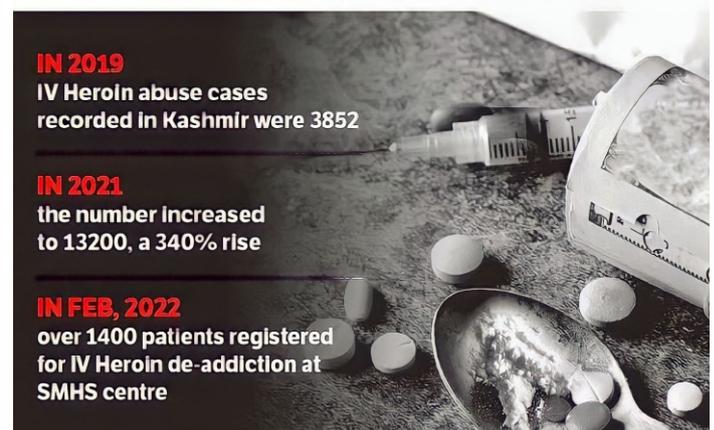
The disintegration of the moral fabric of the society has resulted in chaos and confusion whereby the social values are being ignored giving rise to a fractured society full of evils and deviances. Keeping in mind the fact that destiny of a nation depends upon its healthy, intelligent and upright youth, who are best known assets of a nation. The set back of this menace if not taken seriously would therefore be an alarming situation like cancer crippling. Apart from a person's academic career destruction, society at a large would fall a prey to their unruly illegal desires that lead them to commit various crimes including the terror related cases. So an urgent need arises to cover all the schools, colleges and universities with awareness programs against drug abuse and the consequences there upon.

Support for substance abuse or, drug abuse education, prevention and treatment must come from all sides including families, community groups, schools, policy makers, and health professionals. (There are 70,000 drug addicts in Kashmir division alone including 4,000 women. As per Government Psychiatric Disease Hospital (GPDH) statistics, 90% ab users belong to the age group of 17 to 35 years with a lifetime prevalence of drug addiction. The commonly abused drugs include nicotine, codeine phosphate, Charas followed by Herion, boot polish and the sniffers.) A distinguishing feature of majority for the addicts is a stealing habit to continue the desire for the abuse. From the literature, it has been noticed that the use of illicit drugs by individuals in particular the youth has possible psychological repercussions in the population and the same is an important public health issue. Alongside the trauma to the society caused by drug abuse, drug intake is found to be related with the occurrence of mental health disorders, in particular psychotic illnesses. Surveys based research has shown that narcotics & tranquilizers are the most consumed illicit drugs in the population.



DRUG ADDICTION IN KASHMIR

Jammu and Kashmir in last two decades has shown an increase of psychiatric illness and psychosocial disturbances. A number of psychiatric problems have emerged like Depression, OCD, PTSD, Drug Addiction, etc. As long as the problem of drug addiction in Kashmir is concerned it has observed that this conflict ridden region has tremendous rise in substance abusers over the past decade. United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) reported that around 70000 people are drug addicts in the Kashmir valley alone among which 4000 are females. Several studies conducted in the valley revealed that youth particularly between the age group of 17-30 are involved in this menace of drug addiction. Government Psychiatric Hospital, Srinagar the only mental health hospital in the valley in one of its report stated that most numbers of drug addiction cases belong to a very young generation. The director of Drug De-addiction center Srinagar Dr. Khan stated that "The trend of drug abuse is on the rise



among school children as they had registered many such cases, where students of Class IX to XII are involved with drugs. The common substance used by Drug Addicts in Kashmir are Cannabis, Brown Sugar, Heroine, SP tablets, Anxit, Alprax, Inhalants like Fevicol, SR solution, Thinner, Shoe Polish, Paint varnish and dirty socks are used as substances. The alarming rate of this menace in Kashmir leads the academicians and experts to comment that "We have lost one generation to bullets and we may lose another generation to drugs."^[5]

M M Naqshbandi in his paper "Drug addiction and youth of Kashmir" interviewed 270 young Kashmiri people between the age group of 16-30 in different districts of Kashmir. His findings revealed that Terror incidents and unemployment are the main reasons of drug addiction among the youth. Several studies had shown that 80% of drug addicts get this addiction before the age of 30 years. Another study conducted with related to awareness of drug addiction among college students in Kashmir valley shows that majority of students believe that people started to take drugs in the age group of 20-30. It further revealed that smoking often acts as a door way to drugs or at least a starting point. This study conducted by Bhat et al.^[4,6] further revealed that above 90% don't have any awareness regarding the drug de-addiction process and only 8% know about the drug de-addiction center in Srinagar, Kashmir. In another important study conducted by Mushtaq et al.^[7] reported that about 90% drug abusers are Poly Abusers. The poly abuser is one who takes two or more drugs at a given period of time, for example, a person who is taking cannabis also taking alcohol or Heroine or any other drug. They also reported that the period of initiation of the drug is between the ages of 11-20. Peer Pressure has been summated as the main reason of drug addiction with 78% drug addicts revealed that they have turned to drugs due to peer pressure while relief from negative or seeking pleasure is also reported as a cause of drug addiction.

Numerous measures have been and are being taken by administration to curb this menace and diminish this horrific picture of substance abuse.^[8] The J&K Police

took an initiative by conducting awareness programs in three districts of Kashmir Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag. These awareness programs led the J&K Police to establish drug de-addiction center at Police Control Room Srinagar [18]. According to the reports of Drug de-addiction numbers of patients seen in the OPD from February 2008 to December 2016. [19] Among the 15294 patients, 472 were diagnosed as alcohol abusers, 1359 as Opioid abusers, 7860 as cannabis abusers, 352 cocaine abusers, 1080 as benzodiazepines users, 460 volatile abusers and 3741 were poly drug abusers. The drug de-addiction center [20] is managed by a Clinical psychologist, Psychiatrists, de-addiction Social workers, Counselors, medical officers, and yoga trainer. The center admits a person for detoxification and rehabilitation only after his motivation and proper medical check-up. Usually, a patient is admitted for the period of 3 or 4 weeks. According to center's IPD report, a total number of 1332 patients were rehabilitated among which 90 were alcohol abusers, 235 opioid abusers, 275 cannabis abusers, 222 benzodiazepines abusers, 25 cocaine abusers, 165 volatile substance abusers and 330 patients were multiple abusers. The daily routine at the center for patients includes group sessions on weekends, morning sessions, recreational activities like singing, dancing, etc. evening sessions and detailed review of medical, psychological and social interventions. In the late evening, the medical round is conducted followed by supervised medication and the day ends with dinner. Two more drug de-addiction center were also working under the Police supervision on the same pattern in other two districts of Kashmir Valley viz. Drug De-addiction and rehabilitation center Baramulla and Anantnag. In addition to this J&K Police has also made efforts to stop the trafficking of drugs within the valley. With regarding to this J&K Police seized 2574 kg of Cannabis and its derivatives 11, 000 bottles and 17,000 tablets of psychotropic prescription drugs were seized in 2013 and in 2014, a total of 282 persons were arrested by J&K police under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act, 1985.

FACTORS LEADING TO DRUG ADDICTION IN KASHMIR

The phenomenon of drug abuse in Kashmir continues to be detrimental problem for the youths as well as for the society. The Kashmir valley which has been called as paradise on earth and Switzerland of Asia for its scenic beauty and tourists attraction has become a new place of drug trafficking and drug peddling activities. Drug abuse is complex in nature and is associated with a number of factors varying from society to society and culture to culture, but in Kashmir there multiple factors that have contributed to the menace of drug addiction among the youth. For instance, socio-economic factors such as unemployment, mass corruption, lack of industrial and infrastructural development, poverty, terrorism, youth unrest, social disintegration, rise of

individualism and value system, illegal production, easy availability, social disorganization, illiteracy and conflicts that are prevalent inside the valley such as political turbulence, violence, terror incidents, militancy, psychological conditions and other socio-environment factors etc. are responsible for the growing problem of drug abuse among the youth in Kashmir valley.

TERRORISM, BANDHS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL TURBULENCE

The terrorism in Kashmir which is a flash point between India and Pakistan as well as peak conflict zone of South Asia has adversely affected all aspects/sections of the society. For the last few decades the terrorism and socio-political turbulence has engulfed all the people of Kashmir which has badly curtailed the thinking of people. These are major factors are the lack of educational, social, cultural and economic development in Kashmir. The political turbulence and ongoing terror activities from time to time which is rooted since 1990 has been the most notable and foremost contributing factor in triggering an explosion in the spread of drug abuse. The lack of overall development has adversely affected the masses particularly the younger generation.

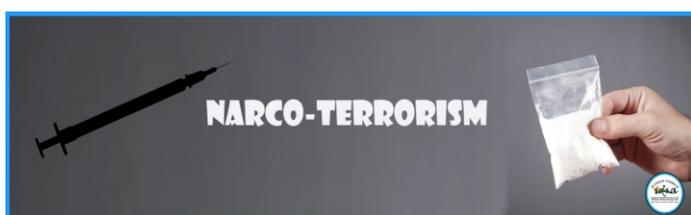
The prevailing situation in Kashmir society due to terrorism, socio-political turbulence, Bandhs, Hartals, stone pelting incidents and imposition of curfew has given birth to a number of new problems, such as unemployment, poverty, corruption, illiteracy, social disorganization and moral degeneration. Though other problems have seen a decline due to improvement in security scenario, however, menace of drug abuse particularly among the youths raises serious concerns. The long pending Kashmir issue has caused tragic/disastrous impact on the society and is responsible for socially, morally, physically, mentally, culturally, economically, religiously and politically degrading it.

These long pending issues and ignorance of civil development authorities has made the youth more violent. The gross violation of human rights by terrorists, mass innocent civilian killing, injuries, mass humiliation, harassment has compelled them to indulge in many anti-social activities including drug addiction and drug trafficking. The terrorists committed atrocities in Kashmir has destabilized the cultural, political, economic and social structure of the society and has put large pressure on the youths forcing them to indulge in drug trafficking activities. The continuity of conflict in the valley has left the entire population of Kashmiri particularly the youths broken, crushed, discouraged as well as disheartened and has forced them towards the menace of drug addiction. It was revealed that youth of Kashmir who were born and brought up during the past 20-25 years of the conflict are now falling prey to the menace of drug addiction. For past few decades every individual, family and community in Kashmir region has been engulfed in the terrorism inferno. All these negative social aspects and developments have contributed to moral-cum social tragedy in the conservative society of Kashmir. The wide

in groups, low education level of parents, underprivileged situations etc. contributes to the development risk factors of drug abusers among the younger generations. The influence of local and peer groups as well as parental drug abuse behavior are the most consistent and important factors associated with youth drug abuse behavior. Besides these, the geographical location of Jammu and Kashmir State with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Punjab borders makes the transit/supply of drugs easily possible across the state. The easy availability as well as accessibility of drugs is another major reason that has contributed to the growing menace of drug abuse among youths in Kashmir valley. When the accessibility, production and distribution of illicit drugs become easily available, the youth becomes more vulnerable to risk of drug and are lured easily. In many parts of the south and north Kashmir, the production of drugs such as, Charas, Banga, opium and poppy are easily cultivated in the fields like other normal crops which had increased the menace of drug abuse among youth, Many children and young people in Kashmir are involved in the illegal drug trafficking and drug trade activities and have turned it into their primary sources of income which gradually allows them to indulge in the addiction of the same, moreover, joining the gangs of drug peddlers they become an integral part of gang violence and other anti-social activities.

ROLE OF PAKISTAN BEHIND THE NARCO-TERRORISM IN VALLEY

In the past few years there has been a phenomenal increase in narco-trafficking and consumption in India, particularly in Kashmir valley. What was earlier a largely metropolitan habit is fast catching up in tier two cities of India. In Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) a pre-existing chronic issue of drug abuse has now acquired epidemic proportions, with growing use of locally available drugs. Heroin usage and trafficking has serious ramifications for terrorism in J&K Narco-terrorism is not a new phenomenon. It is a known fact that Pakistani elements have always provided separatists with funding



acquired from narcotics trade. That Pakistani security establishment sells heroin to pay for the country's covert military operations which was admitted by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a 1994 interview to The Washington Post. Till now, this pattern was isolated to parts of the north east and Punjab. Recent encounters and searches by security forces in J&K exposed terrorists. The pattern however has undergone a change and now directly being sent across the

Line of control. On Aug 02, 2022 Border Security Force (BSF) killed three Pakistani terrorists who were carrying 36 of kg heroin worth over Rs 180 crore in the international market, along with arms and ammunition in Samba district. This was the fourth such bid foiled by BSF in 2022. Around the same time, J&K police arrested two terrorists with contraband worth Rs 18 crore in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

Calling attention to the drug menace in J&K, Director General of Police Dilbagh Singh was seen quoting that it is a new and deadlier challenge because narcotics provide oxygen to terrorism. In an earlier statement he had said, "Pakistan repeating the same dirty game that they played in Punjab, first giving arms training and later spoiling the youth with drugs." Sedulous investigation into suspicious payments like those made by the J&K Affecters Relief Trust (JKART), a front organisation set up by Hizbul Mujahideen, which has transferred Rs 80 crores through hawala over a span of many years to fund terrorist activities in the state, has made hawala transactions if not unfeasible but more exacting.

Law enforcement agencies in Kashmir are unanimous in their conclusion that for the purposes of drug trafficking is terrorist financing, Pakistan-based terrorist groups are now resorting to sending in narcotics into the region. One kilogram of heroin originating in Afghanistan, coming via Pakistan costs approximately Rs 5 lakh in South Asia and fetches nearly Rs 5 crore in the international market. A portion of the drugs coming from Pakistan is sold in Kashmir, and the rest is transported into other parts of India. An examination of the heroin seizures in what were mostly operations against terrorists leaves little doubt that Narco-terror is now an established practice in Kashmir. In 2020, nearly 36.08 kg of pure heroin was recovered from different parts of the valley. Through 2021, the size of the consignments has gone up dramatically. In April 2021, within a week, security forces recovered two heroin consignments each of approximate value Rs 50 crore, while foiling infiltration bids along the Kupwara sector. In October 2021, the Army recovered around 30 kgs of drugs in the Uri sector, specifically Baramulla district. The bags containing the contraband had Pakistani markings. Heroin seized from Handwara in June 2020 was found to be connected with funding of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Composite seizures of drugs and arms by security forces in J&K indicates a well established nexus between drug traffickers and terrorists. The 3,000 kg consignment of heroin worth Rs 21,000 crore caught in Gujarat's Mundra Port in September 2021, has shocked the security establishment. This kind of narcotics push is not possible without systematic state support to drug syndicates by Pakistan. Since the August 2021 takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban there has been a 37% increase in the illicit cultivation of the opium crop and narcotics prices have tripled. Despite this, in

south Kashmir drugs are sold in bulk and at cheap rates to attract peddlers, letting them earn more than the Pakistani entities who bring in the substance.

Pulwama and Shopian are at the epicenters of Kashmir's Narco-terror racket. Along with Srinagar, these areas have a relatively higher income than the rest of Kashmir, and are easier to target by peddlers. There is evidence to the effect that the enduring conflict situation has impacted the psychological health of a vast number of Kashmiris. Almost 45% of Kashmir's adult population (1.8 million) is suffering from some form of mental distress. Psychological problems often remain undetected and do not figure in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The symptoms of depression are beginning to manifest themselves in growing use of drugs as a way to cope with mental health issues. In December 2021, Greater Kashmir reported that nearly 80% of drug users are in fact abusing heroin through needles. "It is one of the costliest drugs and just devastates not just the one abusing it but his family and the entire social fabric," says Dr Yasir Hussain Rather who heads the Drug De Addiction Centre at SMHS Hospital.

Frequent curfews after the abrogation of Article 370 and thereafter the COVID-19 induced lockdowns combined to create a menacing drug abuse situation in the state that is being exploited to the hilt by Narco traffickers. Since the halt of trade via the LoC in 2019, Narco-trade has become the preferred means to finance terrorism and unrest in Kashmir. Narco-terrorism has plausibly grown in the Kashmir valley because Pakistan-backed terror operatives have an existing network of over ground workers in border areas who have been acting as couriers of arms/ammunition and fake Indian currency notes. India's borders have always been vulnerable to narcotics for trans-shipment and Growing domestic consumption and easy access to narcotics is exposing the youth of Kashmir to a dangerous mix of drug addiction and violent extremism. Along with counter-terrorism J&K also needs a viable counter-narcotics policy, which is not subdued by the former. The cost of Narco terrorism can be very high unless it is addressed along with security angle, at the societal level. Also this is eye opener for these who called themselves freedom fighters, that for Pakistan it is just business production and distribution network and achievement of National agenda, where their life does not matter at all and they will either become victim of Drug or drug abuse.

A patient, whose main suppliers were a male and a female peddler operating out of Batwara area in Srinagar, offers an insight into how the drug menace spread in Srinagar "Initially we used to get drugs from Sangam area, which is around 35 km from my home. Now, it is easily available in Pampore and other areas close to Srinagar. I have seen how the drug network spread. A peddler can sell 25 packets a day, earning upwards of Rs 25,000" He says. In villages, the rate is Rs 1,000, in Srinagar it is 1,800-2,000, and outside

Kashmir, it sells for Rs 4,500. It is an industry and everyone is profiting from it, the patient said. The increase in drug consumption might be a direct result of increased pilferage on Kashmiri drug routes, according to a government official. It is our understanding that suddenly pilferage along the route increased, which resulted in the formation of these drug conduits. Most of the drugs come from Tangdhar region and pass through parts of north, central and south Kashmir. Most drug consumption was noticed along the route, with Sopore, Srinagar and Anantnag most affected. This is an alarming situation which need immediate attention of the authorities.

Increasing Poppy Cultivation and Surge in Drug Dependence Cases - A Case Study :

A dense crop of poppy over a large area of land near the Chandigam High School in south Kashmir's Pulwama had left teachers worried. They feared that the crops, which lie only a few yards away from the school, could draw teenage students towards drug abuse. Authorities destroyed poppy over hundreds of acres of land in Kashmir, but there are still vast areas covered with the banned crop. A systematic effort by the state's excise department to eradicate the crop began on 13 May 2022, and in the ongoing harvesting season, authorities had destroyed poppy crops over around 1,427 Kanals in southern Kashmir, 520 Kanals in northern Kashmir and 780 Kanals in central Kashmir. But large parts of land have remained untouched. Farmers sell dried poppy to drug dealers in the neighboring state of Punjab, who travel to Kashmir to buy it from them. The cultivation of poppy has increased in the area. It could turn their youth towards the drugs. The addiction can be fought better if all cases are reported at the hospitals. But this does not happen, due to the stigma associated with substance abuse. The involvement of elders from the community could help in control of the drug menace. The cultivation of the crop has been going on openly. Factors that contribute to the rise of drug dependence are the increasing school dropout rate and the mounting stress levels due to the ongoing prolonged armed conflict. Farmers sell dried opium powder through truck drivers to dealers from outside the state. The contact points are roadside eateries. Local residents quote that poppy is grown once a year, and the seeds are sown towards the end of autumn. The crop is harvested towards the end of May. Across southern Kashmir, poppy is grown on plots near the roadside as well as on patches of land that lie amid almond and apple orchards. Local residents said that farmers have begun growing it as it fetches more money. and fields do not need to be regularly irrigated.

PRE-EMPTIVE STEPS TAKEN BY THE ADMINISTRATION

Raids Conducted by the NIA : The National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted raids at many places in north Kashmir's Baramulla and Kupwara district in connection with Narco-terror funding module after several drug hauls. Multiple raids were carried out in various villages of Baramulla district and at least four houses and a residential government quarter were searched for many hours. NIA sleuths also conducted raids at the government residential quarter in Baramulla where Haleema is residing due to security threats and is guarded by Central forces. The house of Tariq Ahmad (ex Sarpanch) who was arrested last year by police in a drug peddling case was also searched by NIA. The NIA sleuths were accompanied by Central Armed Police Force and J&K Police personnel. The raids had carried out in connection with the investigations of recent haul of Drugs and Weapons in North Kashmir and names had surfaced during the interrogation of the arrested.

Filing of Charge Sheet Against Hizbul Mujahideen : The NIA had earlier filed a charge sheet against 10 people, including slain Hizbul Mujahideen commander Riyaz Ahmed Naikoo, for their alleged involvement in smuggling heroin into the country and channelizing its proceeds to Pakistan and terrorists based in Jammu and Kashmir. The 14,000-page charge sheet was filed before a special NIA court in Mohali under relevant sections of the IPC, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Indian Passports Act. The investigation also unearthed the conspiracy hatched by the Pakistan-based HM commanders and their associates, and terrorist gangs in Punjab to support and augment the terror infrastructure of HM in India by raising money through drug smuggling/drug peddling, the NIA spokesperson said. Of these, money proceeds of five consignments were partly sent back to Pakistan through hawala operators while a substantial portion was channelized to HM terrorists in Kashmir through a network of over ground workers (OGW's) and other associates, the NIA official said. So far, Rs 98.5 lakh, eight vehicles and three kg of heroin have been seized from the accused and investments worth several crores of rupees have been identified.

Eradication of Poppy Crops by the ETO : Excise Taxation Officer (ETO), Mohammad Altaf Rather, however, said that the department has launched a drive to destroy the poppy crop across Kashmir. Tractors were used to dig the fields in which the crop has been grown and destroyed it in several areas. In Shopian, we destroyed poppy crops sown over 500 Kanals of continuous land and also removed it from another 150 Kanals in Chadoora.

MEASURES REQUIRED TO FULLY ERADICATE THE MENACE

Stringent checking of vehicles (especially heavy vehicles) on the border and interstate routes. Also the deployment of an adequate number of security personnel for the intended purpose. Establishing steady numbers of rehabilitation centers for the addicts; employment of ample doctors nurses and counselors (for the revitalization of the psychological health of the victims) at those centers. Most importantly, funding them in generous amounts and donations that could keep up the quality of good work.

Generating helpline numbers that could be easily accessed by the victims and their families.

Speedy and effective curbing of the cultivation of poppy seeds along with banning the land in which they're grown for a temporary period of time until the crop is completely destroyed. (But also taking care of the economic interests of the cultivators, mostly poor farmers, they should get alternative cultivating lands or otherwise means of economic support for sustainability.

Post-conflict healthcare services should be introduced and strengthened on a priority basis. This will prevent young people in J&K from turning to drugs as a large number of them have started using them as a coping mechanism in a conflict situation.

Social stigma regarding both mental health and drug addiction has to be addressed and eradicated in order to secure the cooperation of the local communities in combating the crisis. Some town and village communities are already up to the task. These spontaneous efforts must be encouraged, rewarded and coordinated with the official and trained medical workers' struggle against the crisis in order to have a larger impact.



WHAT DO SURVIVORS SAY?

Jammu and Kashmir has become a hub of drugs. In 2021 it revealed that Jammu Kashmir has about 600,000 people involved in drug-related issues which are approximately 4.6 per cent of the population of the Union Territory and 90 per cent of these drug users are in the age group of 17-33 years. In recent years, the number of drug abusers increased by many folds in the UT. Additionally, a change was witnessed in the pattern of drugs used. Illicit drugs like heroin, cocaine, and brown sugar are available in the drug market. 90 percent of the patients enrolling in drug de-addiction centers are taking heroin. "The number is increasing, as per officials of de-addiction centers around 40-50 patients every day, turn up with various kinds of addiction which is very dangerous. Most of them are using illicit drugs like heroin and brown sugar and that too via injections and get infections like Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B and also HIV.

The drug addicts who are being treated at the Government De-Addiction centre in Srinagar admitted that drugs are easily available across the Kashmir Valley. Once they get addicted to these substances, they go to any extent to take more. One such story is of Showkat Ahmad Sheikh, a labourer by profession, Showkat was about to sell his baby as he was falling short of money to get the drugs. He even took the advance payment to sell his own baby for money so that he could get some drugs. Victim confessed that drugs used to be cheaper, however now they have become expensive. He had been on drugs for past three years. He used to work as a labourer would spend all his money on drugs. During that period his wife was pregnant, when she delivered the baby in the hospital, he tried selling his own child to make money to get drugs. He confessed that he had lost all his mind under the influence of drugs and was ready to go to any extreme without even thinking twice. He now regrets his decision of choosing drugs. The biggest problem is the easy availability of these illicit drugs across the UT. The drug abusers have confessed, from cocaine to heroin to brown sugar, everything is available over a phone call. This menace has also led to an increase in crime rate in some areas.

At Srinagar, a 26-year-old man, dressed in a casual blue T-shirt and faded jeans, is taking a walk in the lobby of the drug de-addiction centre at the Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital. He doesn't exhibit any overt signs of addiction, until one looks at his arm, where scars tell a tale of long-term heroin usage. "Around three to four years ago, I started sniffing heroin, also called 'chasing. During that time, I also took brown sugar and cannabis. But each passing day, wanted something stronger, and within six months, I was directly injecting heroin into my blood through needles," he says. The man, who does not wish to be identified beyond stating his profession as a

MEASURES REQUIRED TO FULLY ERADICATE THE MENACE

driver, admits that he ended up spending Rs 1.8 Lakh on his addictions, while a friend of his sold his car to buy drugs.

CONCLUSION

Along with terrorism, Drug addiction has now become the principal threat to the society of Jammu and Kashmir. If the aforementioned discussion of the crisis has shown anything, it is that there is no concrete way to counter it. The range of actors involved in exacerbating the crisis is so massive that strict vigilance on the border areas will not be nearly enough to put an end to the problem. As the network has multiple tentacles of multiple natures, there should be a multi-pronged way of addressing the same which includes political, social, psychological and diplomatic solutions as well as the standard vigilance. All this, however, will only provide a short-term respite as the real challenge will be to eliminate or at least curb the need among the region's youth for drugs. This can only be done by prioritizing mental health in the social environment in general and the medical facilities in particular. Moreover, the youth must be provided stable educational and employment opportunities and a secure living environment as the lack of these elements are the major factors in increasing number of Kashmir's young people turning to narcotics as a way of escape from the grim reality that awaits them. The epidemic of drug addiction is not only a case-specific to J&K but one that is seriously damaging our nation as a whole. Authorities both at UT and the Centre should treat the phenomenon as a national crisis if any real positive change is to be made. This way the youth of Kashmir can be saved from the various crimes that have left a scar on the past of the valley.

Most of the studies have suggested that prevalence and pattern of drug abuse is quite alarming particularly among the youth populations in Kashmir region. Thus, one may conclude from this that menace of drug abuse among the youths can be explained and understood only on the basis of a comprehensive approach rather than as a single factor approach. The problem of drug abuse among the youth in Kashmir has been growing rapidly and is a matter of serious concern which destroys all the plans of those who are addicted to it. Having a society where the youth, who are capable of doing anything possible for the betterment of the society, are a prey to the drug abuse is a blot upon the society, a stigma upon the community as well as for the nation which cannot curb its youth from getting destroyed. Therefore, the widespread drug abuse in Kashmir region has become a growing threat to entire the humanity which affects not only the individuals who use it but it affects their families, community and society at large. The youth who take drugs in order to seek instant remedies to their socio

economic problems, environmental conditions as well as psychological depression, stress, frustration, trauma and tension are in reality putting themselves in the same state which they try to avoid and take refuge by taking drug substances. They should remember that drug abuse makes them physically, mentally, morally, economically, emotionally, culturally and socially handicapped. Hence the menace of drug abuse has to be tackled effectively and the drug addicts are to be persuaded to give up their deadly habits. Prevention, treatment and rehabilitation all require a positive and life-affirming campaign to cope the menace of substance abuse. Besides, it is the responsibility of every family, NGO's, religious leaders, civil society, local agencies, youth forums, awareness of policy makers, law enforcement agencies, police, judiciary and other stakeholders to curb this menace and prevent them from becoming the victims of this menace and bring them back into the mainstream of the social life. Many have tried their hands to earn money in a labour-free way, hence giving an impetus of their ill mentality. Such cases should be dealt with stringent laws to avoid more cases in future. The responsibility for the same falls on the shoulders of the peer groups, who can guide them to the right path through their difficulties to make sure none falls into the gorge of the drug addiction or its illegal trafficking as well as families to have close watch on their children which can be instrumental in reducing such cases.

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