

From Tourist Attraction Center to the making of Drug Rehabilitation Center: An era of Drug Epidemic in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract—Drug addiction is a commonly and widely shared concern of the global community in contemporary realm. Unlike the conventional threats that were generally caused and curbed by the states as analyzed by classical theorists, modern issues and threats are generally non-conventional, mostly transnational and more devastating in nature, which makes a single nation-state insufficient and incapable to encounter with. To address these issues a consensus for global cooperation and global governance is developed among the nation-states that ultimately leads to belief in international organizations based on cooperation and collective actions. Drug addiction is one such non-conventional issue that seeks global cooperation and attention in order to launch a “global war on drugs.” While the global governments and international community are working to curb this menace, the overall rate of addiction has increased, particularly because of the involvement of technology in the dispersal of drugs intra- and extra-border. This paper solely focuses on the issue of drug addiction and its causes with special reference to a particular region, i.e., Jammu and Kashmir. It aims to highlight the seriousness of the issue and to create awareness on the same both at home and abroad, so that the essence of the phrase “Think globally, Act locally” could be realized. It also sheds light on the governmental and civil societies' actions and policies to address the issue.

Keywords: Addiction, narcoterrorism, drug abuse, poverty, unemployment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Jammu and Kashmir is a reflection of paradise on earth. It was known for its lush mountains, humming waterfalls, widespread attractive lakes, and clear-flowing rivers. Moreover, it is also famous for its hospitality; all these forced Mughal emperor Jahangir to say, “If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.”

Unfortunately, this replica of heaven now became worse than a hell for natives. Nowadays the global community is encountering multifaceted issues and threats ranging from the conventional or traditional to the modern or non-conventional. Every region of the globe has its own problems such as armed conflicts, security threats, civil and political uprisings, climate change, drug trafficking and addiction but interestingly, the region of Jammu and Kashmir is encountering all these issues simultaneously with many more additions like poverty, unemployment, political instability and terrorism.

The region of Jammu and Kashmir owing to its strategic location became a bone of contention right from the very beginning between two newly independent nations India and Pakistan, whereas the latter was carved out from the former by a bloody partition following the Mountbatten Plan. It joined the Indian union by an Instrument of Accession executed by Maharaja Hari Singh the then ruler of the state of Jammu and Kashmir that provides legitimacy to the Indian parliament for the legislation of Jammu and Kashmir specifically on the matters related to defense, external affairs, and communications on certain conditions that establish a special status provision in the Indian constitution. The region also grabs the attention of international politics in

April 1948 with the United Nations Security Council resolution 47 and with the escalation of three wars over the conflicted territory. From the 1980s onward, a period of further turbulence and upheavals began with the emergence of militant activities that became one of the greatest stresses for Indian forces. These insurgencies against Indian rule backed by Pakistan lead to several thousand casualties (civilians and combatants) and to the exodus of Hindus from the valley. Accordingly, the repressive actions of the armed forces also proved horrific for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and escalated the hatred towards Indian rule, which resulted in instability and militarization of the region.

Recently, these issues and challenges have been joined by a new challenge of drug addiction. Although it is a global problem and every nation is fighting with it whether the nation is developed, developing, or underdeveloped, its impact varies from nation to nation depending on its health system and aware citizens. Developed nations with good health systems and civilized populations can counter this issue smoothly as compared to the region of Jammu and Kashmir, which is backward, underdeveloped, and also lagging in terms of health infrastructure, where this craving leads to the ultimate destiny i.e. death. This addiction is a disorder that affects the mind of addicted person and leads to perpetual craving that traps him permanently with minimal chances of quitting.

II. AN INSIGHT OF DRUG EPIDEMIC IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) report revealed that there are approximately seventy thousand (70000) people in Kashmir who are drug addicts out of these four thousand (4000) are females. It shows that every gender is under the threat of menace with varying degrees, not only males but females are also prone to addiction. As per the census of 2011 literacy rate of Jammu and Kashmir is 67.16 percent but it is not sure how much this percentage of the population is aware of the seriousness of the issue most of them are not because a report by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre at AIIMS had revealed that six Lakh people in Jammu and Kashmir are drug abusers and population of Jammu and Kashmir was 1.25 Crore (census 2011). According to official figures, of the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS) Srinagar, on an overage a premium rehab facility, receives at least 150 new drug addiction cases daily. Of these, typically 70 cases are follow-up while the others are new. 10 percent of the total cases reported daily are teenagers which mean 15 are teenagers out of 150. Out of these numbers the addiction rate among youth is very high. A study report by Rifat Khan conducted in 2008 revealed that 80% of the youth which includes both males and females in the age group of 16-25 years are addicted. 2023 BBC report by Aquib Javeed revealed that 8% population of region use some kind of illicit substance. Apart from illicit drugs Tobacco consumption is very common among all the strata of population. A report by Global Adult Tobacco Survey-2 (GATS-2) revealed that nearly 23.7% people in the region are tobacco users. It is also a fact that 90% of the youth is taking more than one drug at a given period; this activity is referred to as *polydrug* use by addiction experts. It involves consumption of variety of illicit substances notably cannabis and heroin with addition of opioids, sedative, inhalants, cocaine, hallucinations and many more. According to the article of *Desert hope treatment center* on polydrug issues, this poly-consumption act can lead to overdose. Overdose is also a result of mixing drugs, most of the users are not aware of the risk of mixing drugs, and they treated it as simple as drinking beer and smoking a cigarette. Drug mixing is not something that is done only by the consumers rather it is also done by dealers or suppliers without the knowledge of consumers to make their product effective and appealing. Mixing or cutting illicit drugs like Heroin and Cocaine with other powerful substances like Opioids can lead to death or extreme physical and psychological stress. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) report 2011 revealed that 56.3 percent of all the drug emergency rooms visited were the result of polydrug. This addiction epidemic pays way to another epidemic of Hepatitis-C and HIVs in the region due to sharing of syringes for intravenous drugs.

III. CAUSES OF ADDICTION

The word “causes” is written deliberately because there are many causes that lead to the addiction of drugs in the region and although these causes are not applicable universally in all regions. Within Jammu and Kashmir, the causes of addiction vary from region to region and person to person. Like the languages, dialects and culture of the region which differ from place to

place the causes of addiction also differ. Whatever the cause is but the result is same it ruins a happy family and the life of a person. However, the most common and vital causes and factors contributing to addiction of drug are mentioned as under:

III.I. POLITICAL CAUSE

Jammu and Kashmir is not only famous for its beauty but it often remains in news due to its political upheavals. In the ancient period according to Kalhana's Rajtarangini Kashmir was an independent region earlier and Gondana I was its first monarch. Later the region became part of India for the first time during the period of Mauryan King Ashoka the great. Succeeding the Maurya dynasty many dynasties and tribes like Kushan, Hun, Utpala, and Lohara. By this time the region was under the great influence of Buddhism and Hinduism but it was the 14th century when the region came under Muslim rule during the period of Sultan Sadrudin. From this point of time to the period of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb many Muslim sultans like Shah Mir, Zain Ul Abidin, and Yusuf Chak, ruled over the soil of Jammu and Kashmir. Mughals were succeeded by Afghans for 67 years (1753-1819) and Afghans by Sikhs who ruled for 27 years (1819-46).

In 1846 the treaty of Amritsar enabled Gulab Singh to be the full-fledged ruler of Jammu and Kashmir with suzerainty to East India Company and this Dogra rule lasted till 1925. The political history of Jammu and Kashmir is not ended here even though it took a new beginning with modern problems for modern society. In 1947 Maharaja Hari Singh signed the instrument of Accession that ceded Jammu and Kashmir to the dominion of India and granted article 370 which enables Jammu and Kashmir to have a state Flag, separate constitution, and autonomy of internal administration. From 1952 to October 2019 Jammu and Kashmir was governed in accordance with article 370 and treated with the status as a special state of India.

These changing regimes are not the cause of drug addiction rather the turbulence created by them is the real reason. Pakistan from the very beginning makes every possible effort to disturb peace in the region, the war of 1947 and 1965 are examples of Pakistan's approach toward Jammu and Kashmir. Terrorists also sponsored and motivated by Pakistan and ISI lead to huge turbulence in Jammu and Kashmir. These insurgencies from the militants and activists coupled with counter insurgencies and military actions by Indian forces left a chronic stress over the mind of masses. It changed the image of the region and life of its residents forever. As per official figures released in Jammu and Kashmir assembly 47000 people died out of these 7000 were police personnel and 20000 were militants till July 2009.

The abrogation of Article 370 and suspension of high-speed internet for almost 18 months increased the resentment among people and youth without any means of entertainment became more addicted to drugs. In order to reduce their dissatisfaction and attain mental peace youth ruin their physical health and social relations just for which government policies are equally responsible as the youth itself responsible. Putting thousands of innocent people behind the bars and over-deployed military created a situation of fear and threat for natives and many of them switched to substance abuse in order to forget the dreadful memories as well as their beloved ones who lost during insurgencies and post 370 lockdown. These substance abuse cases increased thrice after the abrogation of 370 owing to the suspension of every means of entertainment like internet, social gatherings, games, and sports. People of Jammu and Kashmir encountered with physical and mental stress in their daily lives owing to these insurgencies, political unrest and counter insurgencies operation by the Indian forces. In order to escape from the plight of insurgencies, these substance abusers found illicit drugs as an effective measure for a limited period of time. In a nutshell it can be concluded that post 1980s period provided a conducive environment for mushrooming of substance abuse.

III.II. SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CAUSES

Religion is a source of morality and peace that enables us to become obedient and virtuous human and also teaches us the lesson of right and wrong. In this way, many religions condemn and forbid the use of drugs and other addictive substances. Islam unanimously condemns and prohibits alcohol consumption. However, Hindu and Christian scholars have contested views about alcohol some of them treated it as a sin while others linked it with God and regarded alcohol as a gift of God. The fifth precept of Buddhism frequently suggests refraining from intoxicating drinks. On the other hand, consumption of these drugs is allowed for medical purposes.

Unlike alcohol these illicit substances have different types so the unanimous categorization and definition is not possible, some of them are found their place in religion. In Hinduism cannabis is associated with Lord Shiva and people consume Bhang which contains cannabis flowers on Holi and Maha Shivratri in order to show their devotion to Lord Shiva. In Islam, some scholars believed that cannabis is Haram (forbidden) by associating it with the prophet's Hadith on alcohol while others argued that there is no specific provision for cannabis in Islam and considered it permissible. In a nutshell, it is forbidden but on the other hand, it is allowed for medical use. However Sufi movement in Islam promoted the use of cannabis among followers. Kashmir also known as city of saints accommodate lot of shrines and people have strong belief and sentiment for these holy shrines. The annual functions at shrines are celebrated whole night while consuming cannabis and singing qawwalis and Ghazals. In this way, religions and religious rites promote the consumption of drugs linking them with spirituality and pave way for addiction.

Society and friends also force a person to become an addict. Tahira Sidiq and her associates mentioned in their research paper that 50.5% of males and 53.5% of females in the Pulwama district believed that cause of addiction is bad company. Peer pressure along with insufficient or perverted religious knowledge pays way for intoxication to some extent. In most of the studies it is found that teens get in touch with this substance abuse mostly with smoking through their friends as a mean of enjoyment and latter prone to its addiction. Several other studies shows that sometimes addiction can be a result of curiosity. As human nature is perpetually excited for new findings which positively can gift us innovations and researches but sometimes this affects negatively, like curiosity to taste and know the result of these illicit substances can led to their addiction as well.

1. GEOGRAPHICAL CAUSES

In the northern part of India Jammu and Kashmir lies in the Himalayan region, the vast area is mountainous which includes Himalayan foothills, the Pir Panjal range, and several passes. The region is also home to several valleys and rivers that are the determinants of its beauty but this beauty has a dark side also. The strategic location of Jammu and Kashmir enables drug trafficking syndicate and Pakistan sponsored terrorists to carryout smuggling of drugs, weapons and money. The golden crescent is one of the most visible supply chain route for Jammu and Kashmir which holds almost monopoly over opium and heroin production during its climax in 2007. Jammu and Kashmir shares 1222 Km border with Pakistan through which numerous problems inflow into the region, narcoterrorism is one the most serious and challenging among them for J&K and India as well.

NARCOTERRORISM NEXUS

The geopolitical location of Jammu and Kashmir provides a fertile landscape to carrying out narcoterrorism activities. The close nexus between terrorist groups and drug traffickers emerged as a novel threat which seeks modern and innovative solution to counter. Recently worldwide trend has emerged that terrorist and drug traffickers are coordinating with each other to facilitate their operations and enables them to accomplish goals. Terrorist collaborate with drug trafficking syndicate and earn money in order to finance their operations, buy new weapons and recruit new fighters. It is evident in the findings of N.S. Jamwal that 15 percent of money generated through narcotic trade was used to fuel insurgencies and political unrest during 1980s-90s in Jammu and Kashmir. On the other hand, drug syndicate align with terrorist groups to seek protection and logistic support in order to assert their coercive and influential control over the drug market. In case of Jammu and Kashmir this state sponsored terrorism allied with drug trafficking syndicate helps Pakistan to realize its goal in region by disturbing social, economic and political life. This collaboration is manifested in the routes and tactics adopted by terrorist and drug trafficking syndicate. Both use modern tools and technologies to operate, use of ariel drones and unmanned ariel vehicles (UAV) is most common in recent times, using these novel technologies they facilitate cross border smuggling of weapons and drugs and ensure their supply chains. Times of India reported that Indian forces shot down 119 drones in 2023 alone and sights 400-500 such drones near Line of control carrying illicit activities. Moreover, terrorists and drug trafficking syndicate use same routes most of the times to push money, weapons and illicit substances. It has been seen in number of cases that there is a close nexus between terrorist and drug syndicate. Like in November 2018 Indian army seized 21kg heroin along with weapons in Chamb

area of Akhnoor. Similarly in June 2021 J&K police seized heroin consignment valuing 45 crore rupees and arrested 10 individuals and recovered grenades, pistols and magazines. Many more similar instances reported where drug and weapons recovered by security forces. It shows that this close nexus between terrorist and drug trafficking syndicate align their interest with each other and provide a common ground for their operations. Some incident revealing nexus between narcotics and terrorist are mentioned below.

Date	Summary of operation
November 2018	A joint operation conducted by Indian forces in Chamb area of Akhnoor sector led to seizure of 21kg heroin and subsequently some weapons like Ak-56, pistols and 15 grenades along with other explosive were recovered.
May 2021	J&K police seized 8 kg heroin and arrested a terrorist associate in Kupwara district.
June 2021	J&K police recovered 10 grenades, 4 pistols, 4 magazines and 20 rounds, all were Chinese manufactured and arrested 10 individuals responsible for heroin consignment of 45 crores INR.
June 2023	44 kg heroin and some weapons were recovered by J&K police and eight individuals were arrested in Rajouri-Poonch region.
June 2024	In a joint operation J&K police along with intelligence agencies busted a narcoterrorism racket in karnah sector of Kupwara district.
August 2024	In a surprise checking 10 kg Ganja valued 12 Lakh INR along with pistol recovered from a train in Jammu.

As per official figures released by J&K police total 26 narcoterrorism case collectively registered in both Jammu-Kashmir region (2022-23) in which 49 persons were arrested and several recoveries were made like (approximately) 278.8 kg heroin, 23 AK-47, 40 magazines, 22 pistols with some other explosives (IEDs and grenades). Interestingly, most of these cases were registered in Kupwara and Rajouri-Poonch area.

EASE OF ACCESS

out of all possible causes of substance abuse, easy access and availability the most vital one. Despite being a source of terrorism Pakistan is also a supplier of illicit drug in Jammu and Kashmir. Poonch, Rajouri, Uri and Kupwara prominently provide a safe inflow for illicit substances, weapons and terrorist form Pakistan. Owing to their hilly terrain and dense forest these regions didn't only provide a safe passage but also enables terrorist to make their hideouts in these regions. According to Times of India (TOI) report, Jammu and Kashmir police have seized 185 kg of Heroin worth almost Rs 360 crore, besides 500 kg of cannabis and 2500kg of poppy in two years only (2019-21). Drugs market is the third most flourishing market in the world after the weapons and petroleum market. This smuggling of illicit drugs makes them easily available everywhere, especially in Jammu and Kashmir. Not only adults but school students are also targeted by ISI to run their drug racket. On 15 December 2022, a class 10th girl was detained and 400 gm of narcotic powder was recovered from her. The narcoterrorism

nexus explained above also contribute to this easy availability of illicit substances everywhere in the region. Moreover, with the advent of technology not only the border barriers for cross border trafficking are undermined but also it sophisticated the demand and supply mechanism. Using communication technology narcotics syndicate not only deliver these drugs rather they also communicate about the actions and movements of security forces. This communication enables narcoterrorism syndicate and their associates to act and plan in accordance with the shared information. Overground workers (OGWs) and handlers stay in perpetual contact with terrorist and narcotics syndicate on other side of border. Information about the movement of security forces and routes for smuggling of these illicit substances are shared by these OGWs. In a nutshell, narcoterrorism nexus with the help of technology and OGWs contributes to the spread of this menace like an epidemic.

2. ECONOMIC CAUSES

As the J.S Mill idea of “Economic man” suggested that humans are economic beings and all their actions are motivated by money. This approach can be applied to understand the role of economy as an agent of substance abuse in the region, both as a factor for consumption as well as its dispersal. National multidimensional poverty index (MPI) report released by NITI Ayog on 24 November 2021 revealed that 12.58 percent of total population of Jammu and Kashmir is poor. Report further revealed that 25.9 percent population is deprived of nutrition. The economy of the region on a large scale is based on trade that was on the death bed after the abrogation of article 370 for about two years. According to Kashmir chamber of commerce and industry KCCI economy of Kashmir suffered with loss of Rs 17,878 crore in just 4 months after the August 5 decision of India government. The issue is far more serious on the ground level than in official records. With addition of economic stress over people of Jammu and Kashmir when they are already encountering with insurgencies, political unrest and coercive action of law enforcement agencies drug abuse appears as a common solution for all their problems apparently. It provides an escape from suffering for a limited period of time on the expenses of their health, money and social life. Its craving and urge of people to escape from their harsh realities lead to its consumption again and again until they became addictive or a regular substance abuser. Not only on the consumer side, unemployment and poverty pays way to recruitment of drug peddler and smuggler on a large scale. In most of the cases related to narcoterrorism economy as factor of recruitment and consumption always play its crucial role. From production to consumption economic interests influence every determinant of this demand and supply chain.

IV. RESPONSE FROM AUTHORITIES

Drug addiction is considered as a global threat and global consensus has been developed to save the humanity from this epidemic. Not only as a threat drug abuse is also defined as a disease by WHO in 1956. According to an estimate by UN 64 million people are suffering from drug abuse disorder and only one man in every seven can go through proper treatment. While the condition of women is worse, standing one in every eighteen to receive treatment which make the issue of disorder more complex by adding the issue of disparity among patients. Keeping in view these developments UN experts call to end “global war on drugs” and persuaded to take issue as a disorder instead of crime. In our country especially in Jammu and Kashmir depending on optimistic and gentle approach is not enough rather state has to exercise its coercive apparatus, because the issue is forged deliberately to achieve malicious ends by Pakistan and other organized crime groups. According to NCRB data an upward shift has been seen in total number of registered cases over the years in Jammu and Kashmir. In 2020 registered number of cases were 289, while in the subsequent years 2021 and 2022 number raise to 357 and 394 respectively.

year	No. of cases
2020	289
2021	357

2022	394
Total	1040

Source: NCRB

While intelligence agencies, armed forces and other enforcement agencies are continuously working to curb the issue. Replying to a query union minister Nityanand Rai (minister of state for home affairs) informed that around 66959 kg drugs were seized under Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act within 3 years in Jammu and Kashmir. The information is presented in the following table.

Years	Opium based drugs	Cannabis based drugs	Psychotropic based drugs	Medicinal Preparations	Others
2020	26111.483 kg	1001.316 kg	247 kg	40890.11 liters	1.554 kg
2021	19930.958 kg	2066.401 kg	8.65 kg	76.387 liters	76.387 kg
2022	15326.701 kg	1631.939 kg	11.169 kg	956.1 liters	184.4 kg
Total	61369.142 kg	4699.956	266.819 kg	41922.597 liters	262.341 kg

Source: Minister of state affairs

In order to counter menace of substance abuse Government of India launch series of programs and campaigns. A two-way approach is adopted by authorities to control the drug epidemic, firstly, by strengthening the intelligence and security system to bust the narcotic syndicate and to suppress the supply chain mechanism. Secondly by launching awareness campaigns to highlight the problem in the region. Under Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) 91.5 lakh people reached out in all the district of Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, several rehabilitation and deaddiction centres were established by authorities to provide treatment, counselling, motivation and awareness to the victims of substance abuse like Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for Addicts (IRCA), Community based Peer Led Intervention (CPLI), Outreach and Drop In Centres (ODICs), and District De-addiction Centres (DDACs). Further government also maintain a toll-free helpline number (14446) to extend support and assistance to help seekers.

V. CONCLUSION

With a subsequent rise in drug addiction cases Jammu and Kashmir is one of the badly affected region. While there were several reasons for addiction simultaneously there are other reasons which hamper the de-addiction process. Social stigma for substance abuser did not allow them to quit addiction and to take proper treatment. Moreover, inadequate infrastructure and awareness also act as barrier to de-addiction. Since the issue is global and undermines the territorial borders, it demands global

cooperation and cross border coordination to deal with. Proper education and awareness should be provided to substance abusers and government should compel educational institutions to highlight the risk of issue on daily basis. Since educational institutions are vital for socialization so, their curriculum and daily routine should be designed in a way which contribute to awareness campaign and encourage the de-addiction process. Social stigma should be removed and substance abusers should be treated as patients not as criminals. We should apply “hate the sin not sinner” approach to deal with drug addicts and save them from this threat. State agencies, civil society and NGOs should collaborate and share knowledge and information beneficial for countering the issue. Proper counselling and assistance should be given at rehabilitation centers. State agencies should improve their intelligence network and efforts to breakdown the supply chain. There should be speedy trail and harsh punishment mechanism for drug peddlers and strong action should be taken against them. Religious leaders should come forward and highlight the threat by using religious teachings. Moreover, security forces should use technology to counter narcoterrorism network and Anti Drones technology should be installed along line of control.

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