

Punjab: A Dreadly State

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ABSTRACT

There was a time when earlier when one used to call out Punjab then rich heritage, culture, highly productive soil, five rivers and rich heritage were its suffixes. But now it is heroin, opium, unemployment, depression, opioid have become its prefixes. There are various reasons behind this change which have been discussed in this paper. Also, the facts and figures stating the deteriorating condition of the state is also discussed, followed by certain suggestions to be followed in order to save the land of five rivers from the epidemic of five causes, drugs, heroin, opium, unemployment and depression amongst the youths of the state.

Keywords: Punjab, Opium, Unemployment, Drugs, Narcotic control.

INTRODUCTION:

Currently, the major portion of population of Punjab 73.5% of Punjab's youth is addicted to drugs. A multi million drug nexus operating under the noses of the Border Security Force, The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, The Narcotics Control Bureau and the Intelligence Bureau, leaving them as mere by standers to Punjab's erosion. More than 29 crore alcohol bottles are consumed every year, which makes it one of the highest per capita consumers of alcohol in the world. The scenario in Punjab is worsening at such a rapid rate, that experts have already begun to put an expiry date to the state. According to the Narcotics Control Bureau's reports, 50% of drug-related cases in the country are from Punjab alone, a sign that the affliction has been allowed to gain a firm footing in the border state. There is a village, Maqboolpura near Amritsar, that is agonisingly called the 'Village of Widows' because practically every household there has lost a member to drugs. The severity of the problem can be attributed to Punjab's close proximity to the region covering Afganistan, Pakistan and Iran, all these happens to be the world's largest producers of opium. Everyday, drugs worth 2000 crores are transiting the land of Punjab while approximately 355 packets of Heroine are exchanged in Punjab. The reason is that Punjab is one of the major consumers of drugs which is far more cheaply available to the locals. According to reports by UNDP, Indian Express and Tehelka, around 73.5% of Punjab's youth is addicted to drugs which are sold at a price as low as Rs. 25 per dose. The major reason behind this increase of drug addicts is the high rate of unemployment and poverty which further which leads to a deprived psychological state is what leads them into the menace of drugs in cities like Jalandhar, Patiala, Bhatinda and Amritsar. Drugs are easily available at many illegal chemist shops without prescription making it more accessible to the youth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Scope of Research:

The research has been conducted in the various areas of Punjab in order to examine the true condition of the state. The deteriorating condition of the well flourished state has been discussed and the suggestions thereof has been made in order to improvise the same.

Source of Data:

The data has been collected from the secondary source including newspapers, magazines, data from National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) and internet. The facts and figures have been verified from various sources.

Nature of study:

The research is conducted on the increasing drug abuse and addiction in Punjab. The reason for choosing Punjab has been the alarming increase in the crime rate and reported drug addiction cases so found and reported from various areas of Punjab. The main focus of the study is to examine the number of drug addicted youths in Punjab.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

One of the most prosperous Indian state once considered was Punjab; the fertile land of the five rivers and nation's bread basket, which has now become the biggest drug addiction state. The nexus between terrorists and drug smugglers in Pakistan has come under a harsh spotlight after the Pathankot airbase attack. The state government had estimated way back in 2009 that two-thirds of all rural households in Punjab had at least one drug addict. Things have had become much worse. All sectors of society have been affected, including the ones least expected. The state was denoted with the word "prosperity" which has now become a time bomb which may explode at anytime. The main reason behind this is the free availability of drugs like heroin and opium and alcohol.

STATISTICS OF DRUG ABUSE IN PUNJAB:

As per a more refined term so used for drug addiction "drug dependence" has also pointed out to the need to take corrective actions and steps worldwide to stop the drug menace.

1. More than two thirds of the state's rural household ahs at least one drug addict.
2. On an average, more than 83 % of Punjab's youths are into drugs.
3. The youths in the age group of 15-25 years are more into drugs comprising of about 75% of the total population of Punjab.
4. Department of Social Security Development of Women and Children suggests that 67% of rural households have at least one drug addict in the family.
5. There is at least one death due to drugs overdose each week in the region.
6. Four out of ten men are addicted to drugs, and upto 50% of these are young farmers.
7. 15% of these are addicted to poppy husk (bhukki), 20% to synthetic drugs churned out by pharma companies in neighbouring state of Himachal Pradesh.
8. A new study by AIIMS has found that opium worth Rs7500 crore are consumed in Punjab every year with a massive share of heroin of Rs 6500 crore.
9. Based on a study by National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) at AIIMS, in a population of 2.77 crore, there are more than more than 1.23 lakh heroin dependent people. And the drug dependent people in Punjab are four times more than the global average.
10. Approximately, Rs 20 crore are spent on opium every year, Rs 1400 being spent every day.
11. Just before the Lok Sabha polls, drugs, liquor and other narcotics worth Rs 800 crore were seized by poll authorities.

The severity of the problem is so high that the youths are even found selling their blood, beg on the streets, steal and are ready to kill someone to procure their daily dose of deadly drugs. Most of the drugs so traded in Punjab comes through Pakistan border , pumped in by smugglers allegedly aided by ISI. Furthermore, it is speculated that these drugs so traded are traded to other bigger cities like Delhi and Mumbai.

A study conducted in 2015 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoJSE) a nd government of India to find out the number of opioid (any drugs taken through injections)/ drug dependent individuals in Punjab. A survey was also conducted by the Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM) and a team of researchers from the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), AIIMS, New Delhi in association with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Punjab. The survey was conducted in ten districts, Bathinda, Ferozpur, Jallandhar, Kapurthala, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Patiala, Sangria, Moga and Tarn Taran.

It was found that:

1. There are more than 2,32,856 drug users in Punjab.
2. 89% of the drug addicts are educated and literate.
3. 83% of the drug addicts in Punjab have jobs.
4. 99% of the drug addicts (almost all) the drug addicts are male.
5. 56%, i.e. more than half of the drug addicts are from villages.
6. Heroin (chitta) is found to be the most common drug as 53% of the drug addicts are into its consumption.

7. On an average, Rs 1400 is spent on heroin every day, Rs 340 on opium and Rs 265 per day is spent on pharmaceutical opiod.

REASONS BEHIND DRUG EPIDEMIC IN PUNJAB:

The main reason behind the drug epidemic is unemployment in youths which leaves them without any productive work to do even after so much of qualifications and degrees in their hands. Economic expectations which are not fetching the youths the results so frustrating and thus indulging them in drug menace. Most of the heroin passes from the areas of Punjab which makes it easier for the youth to get it through their transit route for drugs. Steady supply from across the borders since it became the biggest market for heroin smuggling when China and Japan cracked down in 2007., that year 10 times increase in the recovery of heroin was seen in Punjab. India was sandwiched between the “golden triangle” of drugs comprising of Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand and the “Golden Crescent” of Iran , Afganistan and Pakistan where opium was produced and smuggled. These drugs have not only been killing people in Punjab but also have been destroying families and image of the state at the same time. There has been a sharp increase in the rate of HIV infections in the state recording at 26% whereas it is found at 9% nationwide.

Why Punjab?

Studies have shown some strange aspects of Punjab's drug addiction problem. It states that the state has a pre dominant rural context and the users are relatively affluent, unlike in the rest of the country and the drugs so used are mainly injectable as associated with the urban settings. The influx of migrants, unemployment of educated rural youth, culture of aspiration and expectations swerves depression into the youth thus leading them into drugs. The failure of Punjab's industrial sector to absorb the increasing number of employable youth from taking up certain jobs and is forcing the educated youths to take up farming jobs which adds up to their level of frustration, boredom and laziness. The clash between unemployment and the culture of aspiration among many affluent young men in rural Punjab is also the centre of the problem. The economic, political, geographic and social factors are also patronizing the poisonous business. In order to swing votes, drugs and alcohol is distributed freely which indeed is a very shameful act. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act 1985 is not implemented to control drug abuse. There is a dire need that the government should intervene in this area and use lobbying, pressure groups and advocacy forums in order to place drug abuse on the agenda.

Steps To Be Taken:

1. More and more drug awareness programs should be launched.
2. More job opportunities should be created so that the youth does not stay free and uses their skills and degrees in productive activities.
3. The government should intake best health care services at affordable costs.
4. Children should be made aware about the strategies and their rights to escape being victimized.
5. More congenial atmosphere should be provided in the family in order to make sure that the youths does not fall into depression and lands up into drugs etc.
6. Strict laws should be made and yet implemented against the drug menace.
7. NDPS Act should be altered to break the criminal – politics nexus by putting a complete ban on drugs.
8. The government must focus on creation of employment opportunities, infrastructure for recreational activities and sports.
9. Police personnel must be trained in a specialized manner in order to deal with drug detection and investigations.
10. The BSF and Punjab Police should maintain a healthy relation and must share all the information whatever data is available with them regarding past crime patterns, investigation records etc. it is a joint effort which can be fruitful only with joint efforts
11. Proper follow up of drug related cases must be there both by BSF and Punjab police.
12. As a pilot project, the new Punjab government should create border police stations per border district for investigating border crimes alone; it is likely to lead to more conviction of smugglers and better synergy among various agencies.

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