

## **RISING DRUG ADDICTION IN J & K: CAUSES, EFFECTS, AND WAY FORWARD**

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### **Abstract**

The Jammu and Kashmir state is one of the most important states across India, which has been gifted with innumerable blessings, and one of the precious blessings is the multitalented young and educated youth. Many multi-talented young and educated youth of the Jammu and Kashmir have earned name and fame in various fields all across the world. The young educated youth of Jammu and Kashmir have immense potential and talent and are a precious asset to the society.

However, for the last one two decades, there has been a sharp surge of social issues and evils in Jammu and Kashmir. The most burning social issues and evils facing the Jammu and Kashmir are drug abuse, suicides, domestic violence, acid attack, robbery, theft etc. Drug abuse issue is the most dangerous social issue and evil because it has consumed thousands of young educated youth and ruined thousands of families all across the state. Drug addiction is not just a health issue but also a socio economic and humanitarian crisis. Drug addiction is the mother of many evils in Jammu and Kashmir that demands immediate and comprehensive attention and action for the peaceful and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir.

**Key words:** Drug addiction, Humanitarian, Crisis, Awareness, Drug abuse, Zero tolerance, Soaring, Trafficking, Marital, and Disharmony.

### **Introduction**

Addiction is the habitual, psychological and psychological dependence on a substance or practice that is beyond voluntary control. A person habituated to a substance or practice especially on harmful one is called an addict. International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is observed every year on 26<sup>th</sup> June. The main aim of the day is to create awareness and educate people about the ill effects of drug abuse so that the world becomes free from the evil of drug abuse. Drug abusers population is fast increasing in Jammu and Kashmir. According to a report, more than 12 lakh young youth are involved in drug addiction in Jammu and Kashmir. It has left Punjab, Bihar and Gujarat

states back in drug addiction and figures at the top of the list of drug addiction states. Drug addiction is taking a heavy toll on families. It has increased the rate of suicides, domestic violence, acid attacks, robbery, theft, suicides, murder etc.

According to a recent shocking report by experts, addicts in Jammu and Kashmir have been using cheaper synthetic drugs, particularly heroin mixed with toxic chemicals that are more dangerous, poisonous and deadly, ruining their lives severely. The Jammu and Kashmir government has adopted a zero tolerance policy against drug peddlers and smugglers to save its youth from addiction but more strict laws and acts need to be enacted for moving towards the complete drug free Jammu and Kashmir.

The young and educated youth in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly age group 13-30 are falling prey to drug abuse substances like alcohol, cannabis, opium, hashish, ganga, brown sugar, heroin, correction fluid, marijuana, shoe polish, cocaine, opioid, painkillers and nicotine. Young children using opiates and injecting heroin have increased much in Jammu and Kashmir. Not only young educated males are involved in drug addiction but also the young educated females are involved. The Kashmir valley, so called by famous names for a long time like “paradise on the earth” and “Valley of Saints” has not remained the same due to the soaring graph of drug addicts.

### **Causes of Drug Addiction in Jammu & Kashmir**

The epidemic of drug addiction is not confined to urban areas but equally prevalent in rural areas as well. Drug addiction alters brain chemistry and leads to long-term health consequences. A good number of young and blooming youth in almost every village are involved in drug addiction directly or indirectly due to easy accessibility of drug abuse substances. Majority of citizens in the valley are in deep sleep, adding to the volcano that might explode any time and engulf all the citizens of the state. The youth once addicted to drugs find it very difficult to quit drugs and feel unstable in absence of drug abuse substances. They can pay more money or even take extreme steps to get their drugs for abuse. It has now become a major challenge for the government authorities, social activists, NGOs etc. to tackle the rising drug addiction.

Kashmir valley being the conflict-ridden zone and unavoidable circumstances and turmoil from many times have lured young educated youth towards drug addiction in order to beat their anxiety, depression and stress. This is not only the reason behind drug addiction, as there are other reasons that push and pull the young budding and multi-talented youth towards drug addiction. The reasons are rising unemployment, failure in exams, family conflicts, marital disharmony, and easy accessibility of drug abuse substances, the lingering impact of conflict, unfulfilled aspirations, corruption, financial problems at

home, too much pocket money, social isolation, parental neglect and rejection, mental disturbances, peer pressure, desire for more work, curiosity, excitement and adventures. It is a matter of great concern that the young youth, which are an asset of the society, are having drugs in their hands instead of books and pens. Some young youth feel no hesitation in taking drugs in broad daylight. It is pertinent to mention that young youth are taking drugs openly without any fear in Kashmir. It clearly shows the alarming situation of drug abuse in the Kashmir valley. Drug abuse in the state demands greater attention from all quarters.

### **Effects of Drug Addiction**

Drug addiction causes serious consequences anxiety, depression, psychosis, damage to vital organs like liver and kidneys, paranoia, shakes or tremors, bloodshot eyes, insomnia, increased risk of HIV and jaundice, impotence, chromosomal abnormalities, defective offspring etc. It affects social, personal and professional relationships as well. It increases crimes, suicide rates, accidents, domestic violence, acid attacks, thefts, dacoits, burglary, trafficking, divorce, murder, and attacks on public in the society. For the past many years, drug addiction has increased the burden on law enforcing agencies and the judicial system in Jammu and Kashmir. There are thousands of families in Jammu and Kashmir who want their addicted children free treatment and medicines for saving their lives but certain things prevent them from saving them, particularly social stigma and poverty.

People have to unite irrespective sex, caste, religion, region to defeat drug abuse in the society before the situation goes out of our hands and control. If concerned authorities' and civilised citizens fail to control it at the present alarming pace, the time will come very soon when it becomes very difficult for people to venture out of their homes and accordingly crimes, suicide rates, accidents, domestic violence, acid attacks, thefts, dacoits, burglary, trafficking, divorce, murder, attacks on public will increase more in the society.

### **Ways to control Drug addiction**

Right direction, counselling and guidance among all young youth by experts, teachers, doctors and psychosocial counsellors' can channelize their energy and can defeat negativity. Drug addicts need to be counselled and treated with love and affection instead of harassing, neglecting and looking down upon them. Teachers can also play a pivotal role in controlling drug abuse. They can conduct awareness programmes, debates, discussions, workshops in schools and communities and can also counsel and educate youth about deadly effects of drug abuse. Supervision of children and their behavioural watch and check by parents can bring derailed and drug indulged youth on the right track. The Jammu and Kashmir police are doing great and appreciable job by arresting not

only drug peddlers under NDPS Act but attaching their property for drug free Jammu and Kashmir. A day hardly passes in Jammu and Kashmir when people do not hear about the seizure of huge quantities of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances from the arrest of youth by the Jammu and Kashmir police. The recent seizure of 8 kilograms of heroin from two traffickers by the Jammu and Kashmir Police in Qamarwari Srinagar sent a shocking wave among residents. The Jammu and Kashmir police is always committed to a zero tolerance policy against narcotics and pledged to continue their war against the growing menace of drug addiction. However, the police alone cannot completely wipe out the drug addiction in the state. The fight against drug addiction requires collective responsibility and a multipronged approach involving not only the government but also civil society, NGOs', religious leaders, teachers and the community at large. The government must take proactive measures to engage youth in productive activities, provide better education, create skill development programs, offer employment opportunities, and launch awareness campaigns for the welfare of the youth. Civil society organizations and families also have a crucial role to play in preventing drug abuse and supporting affected individuals. The introduction of a recent private members bill by the MLA Fayaz Ahmad Mir of Peoples Democratic Party for seeking complete ban on advertisement, sale, consumption, and manufacture of alcohol beverages across the state is a great initiative. The bill, if passed, will bring a lot of relief to lakhs of families in Jammu and Kashmir and will prevent most crimes in Jammu and Kashmir. By working together, Jammu and Kashmir can effectively tackle this growing issue and build a more secure and prosperous future for its people. The people must report and inform the police about the drug peddlers or those involved in drug activities. The investigation and prosecution agencies must prepare strong cases against drug peddlers who are hell bent on destruction of young youth in Jammu and Kashmir. Weak cases always lead to early acquittal of peddlers and place them in the same situation as before so strong cases, strict enforcement of laws, proper rehabilitation of victims and massive awareness generation can play an important role in tackling drug addiction effectively. Jammu and Kashmir had already lost one generation to bullets. Now it is time for all the people to fight against drug addiction sooner the better, otherwise the situation will go out of our hands and we will lose one more generation to drugs that come in a tiny packet of white powder and injectables'. Massive crackdowns and stringent punishments for drug peddlers and alcohol smugglers, establishment of more drug de-addiction and rehabilitation centres, Strengthening of existing laws against drug abuse and enacting more laws that are more stringent to deal drug smugglers and peddlers' can curb the drug abuse in the state. Promoting the sports culture ecosystem in the state can act as a catalyst as it can catalyse positive change. Strengthening of sports infrastructure facilities for the youth of the state at international standard can not only stay away youth from drugs but can also identify, nurture and train

our youth as best sports persons for national and international level competitions as well.

## Conclusion

Drug addiction is consuming young youth in Jammu and Kashmir and is taking a heavy toll on families. It has increased crimes as witnessed in Jammu and Kashmir for the last one decade. It is the responsibility and duty of civil society, NGOs, social activists, religious speakers, mental health professionals, and educational institutions and conscious citizens to join hands together with the concerned government agencies and fight vigorously against soaring drug abuse for a better, peaceful and prosperous drug free Jammu and Kashmir because involvement of people can make a lot of difference!

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