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ABOUT US

WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

PUNJAB'S YOUTH IN PERIL: THE RISING TIDE OF DRUG ABUSE AND ITS SOCIETAL IMPACT"

AUTHORED BY - *ADV. BHUMI TANDON

1. INTRODUCTION

In an interview conducted by the Hindustan Times correspondent with Kumkum Dasgupta, Chandigarh-based food and trade policy analyst 'Devinder Sharma' unpacks 'Punjab's drug problem is a symptom of a deeper malaise' happened to reveal that the easy availability of drugs has certainly played a substantial role in the drug addiction of Punjab. But the point being missed is that the drug menace in the state is a symptom of a deeper malaise that has afflicted Punjab for several decades, the cumulative impact visible now with alcohol and drug abuse becoming too pronounced. They unfold the situation in the following words:

"It all began with agriculture turning unremunerative. Over the past few decades, worsening agrarian distress coupled with growing unemployment had led to frustration among the youth. Once the seat of Green Revolution, Punjab's agriculture has been deteriorating, Fragmentation of land holdings, and the breakdown of joint family structures that acted as a social cushion had added to the decline in farm incomes turning agriculture into a loss- making proposition. With employment opportunities outside agriculture limited, this prompted many farmers to sell off a major chunk of their meagre land holdings to ensure that their children are sent abroad, legally or illegally, in search of jobs. Further, many popular Punjabi singers glorifying alcohol and drug use, in lot many ways alcohol and drug abuse became the easy means to overcome frustration.¹

So, the rampant drug and alcohol problem in the state is a symptom of a deeper depression.

Drug addiction is an imperative issue in almost all societies and has spread its wings in every nook and crevice of the world. Any drug, be it natural or manufactured pharmaceutically, can have inimical imputation in the way it is consumed by an individual.

*Research Scholar, Panjab University Regional Centre, Ludhiana.

¹ Interview with Kumkum das Gupta and Devinder Sharma, Hindustan times, July 17, 2016.

The drugs may be misused in several ways, like consumption of multiple drugs in wrong combination, overconsumption or overdose of a specific drug, consuming drugs sporadically in absence of medical supervision, consuming illegal drugs which are banned for their consecutive side effects.

About 190 million people of the world consume one drug or another.² Illicit drug abuse not only affects the health and lives of individuals but also the political, social and cultural foundation of the country. Never before in the history of mankind has the abuse of drugs been such a threat to the quality of life as it is today. However, use of drugs for various purposes is not new to any country. But it has received greater attention in recent times due to the increasing magnitude of the problem and the changing trends in the usage of drugs. In the past, the substances in use were not as dangerous as they are today.³ The advent of far more hazardous drugs like heroin, Lysergic Acid, Diethylamide, Amphetamine and methaqualone on the scene and also the growing incidence of drug abuse even amongst school-going children and adolescents has brought the problem into focus throughout the world.⁴ With around 100 million substance addicts in the country, India has seen a 70 percent rise in narcotic consumption in the past eight years.⁵

Punjab is one of the most prosperous state of India. It is known as Nation's Bread Basket.⁶ The fact that it is surrounded by the Golden Crescent (This space overlaps three nations, Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, whose mountainous peripheries define the crescent), Charas and hashish producing Himachal Pradesh, and Opium and Poppy husk producing areas of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. As per the statistics, nearly 90% of Heroin available in the world is produced in Afghanistan and it is also the leading producer of Hashish (UN Drug Report).⁷ Thus the 553 KM long border of Punjab with Pakistan makes it prone to Golden Crescent's drug supply. This approximately to major drug producing areas makes it one of the most geographical favorable locations in India. Drugs such as heroin, smack, charas, opium,

² What is behind Rise in India's Drug Abuse? , *available at*: <https://www.fairplanet.org/editors-pick/what-is-behind-the-rise-in-drug-abuse-in-indias-youth/> (Last visited on Jan 4, 2024).

³ Ibid

⁴ The 'Drug Menace' in Punjab: Causes, Consequences and Policy Challenges , *available at*: http://giss.org/jsps_vol_28/03-sumandeep_kaur.pdf (Last visited on January 04, 2024)

⁵ Study on Drug Abuse in Punjab, *available at* : https://www.worldresearchlibrary.org/up_proc/pdf/2009-15433169227-10.pdf (Last visited on January 04, 2024)

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Bhuwan Sharma, Anjali Arora et al., "Drug abuse: Uncovering the burden in rural Punjab" 6(3) National Library of Medicine 558-562 (2017).

pills are being routed to other parts of India or the world through this state only.

According to Punjab Government survey, and as per an affidavit filed by the Government of Punjab and Haryana High Court, 66 per cent of the school-going students in the state consume gutkha or tobacco, every third male and every tenth female student has taken drugs on one pretext or the other and seven out of 10 college-going student's abuse one or the other drug. Punjab alone accounts for roughly over one fifth of the total recoveries of heroin in the country.⁸ The drug traffickers use the cities of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Patiala as well as Chandigarh to smuggle the narcotic substances through Punjab. This region's growing teenage substance misuse problem is partly due to complex interplay of socioeconomic variables, cultural influences and structural issues. The past few decades have seen substantial changes to Punjab's socioeconomic environment. The state, whose economy had historically been based on agriculture, saw a boom in industrialization and urbanization, which changed social dynamics and lifestyle. These alterations have unintentionally affected the younger generation's susceptibilities, putting them in the path of many difficulties, such as drug misuse.

Youth is particularly vulnerable to drug usage due to number of variables, including unemployment, economic inequality, and pressure to live up to social standards. Punjab youth's opinions toward drug usage are significantly shaped by cultural factors as well. A complicated atmosphere where traditional values may collide with contemporary perspectives has been formed by the state's rich cultural past and the impact of popular media. For the purpose of creating successful treatments and preventative measures, it is essential to comprehend how these cultural components interact with the socioeconomic environment.⁹ Youth is more susceptible to drug usage due to factors including broken homes, a lack of parental supervision, and the transmission of substance abuse practices between generations.¹⁰ Even while schools are meant to be places of learning and development, they are not impervious to the forces that encourage young people to consume drugs. Peer pressure, easy availability to drugs, and a lack of proper preventative education all create an atmosphere in which young people are more

⁸ Supra note 6

⁹ Social Change and Modernity, available at: <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft6000078s;chunk.id=0;doc.view=print> (Last visited on January 4, 2024).

¹⁰ The Development of Delinquency, The National Academies Press, available at: <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/9747/chapter/5> (Last visited on January 4, 2024).

likely to give in to the allure of experimenting. Comprehending the school environment and its function in either promoting or alleviating drug misuse is essential for developing focused solutions.¹¹

1.1 STATUS OF PUNJAB AND DRUGS

The province of Punjab, which was once known as the Golden Bird of India, at present is passing through the terrible phase of drug abuse and drug trafficking which has caused misery to the youth and their families. Not only has it spoiled family relations, but also has affected the economy of this once highly prosperous state and shattered the lives of several innocent people. It has caused family disputes, broken 27 marriages, debt, loss of lives and has also caused deleterious diseases like HIV/AIDS due to the needles used in injecting intravenous drugs. Drug menace is a national problem but the statistics show that for the last 5 decades, Punjab has consistently topped the charts. The problem of drug abuse is serious in Punjab and it is evident from the fact that Punjab is the only state to commission a drug abuse study. With the increase in the number of drug abuse incidences, the crime rate also swelled significantly. In Punjab the menace of drugs in the region has led the youth towards a vulnerable condition, consequently leading the people and agencies in drastic trouble.

The economic prosperity of the state has been endemically affected by the smuggling and prevalent drug addiction among the youth of Punjab. As reported by Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) department, an average of 7,524 instances of crimes were reported in Punjab between 2004 and 2005, second only to Uttar Pradesh. In 2014 there was a hike of 50 percent in the percentage of crimes related to drug abuse, which was 4 times more than Maharashtra with only 12.4 percent.

1.2 RECENT INITIATIVES BY PUNJAB GOVERNMENT

Drug abuse has become a serious problem in Punjab for the past few years. It is affecting the social, economic, and psychological dimensions of human life. The Government of Punjab has been trying to put in place an immediate effective strategy in order to nail this growing menace of Drug Addiction. This includes awareness camps and various programmes for those who have fallen prey to this evil. In recent years some more initiatives have been taken by the

¹¹ Tamika, C B Zapolski, et al., "Family and Peer Influences on Substance Attitudes and Use among Juvenile Justice Involved Youth" 28 Journal of child and family studies 447–56 (2019).

Government of Punjab in order to combat drug addiction and drug trafficking.

1.2.1 Special Task Force

The Government of Punjab vide its notification 15/35/17/5H5/1666 of 14.4.2017, constituted a special task force (STF) headed by Additional DGP Rank officer to combat trafficking/smuggling of drugs in the state and to tackle the severity of the problem. The Buddy¹² Programme was launched as a pilot programme in the Tarn Taran district where students from class 6 onwards were made aware of the problem and consequences of drug addiction.

1.2.2 CADA Comprehensive Action Against Drug Abuse

The Government also introduced Comprehensive Action against Drug Abuse (CADA) which basically centers around three strategies to control drug abuse namely Enforcement, De-addiction & Rehabilitation, and Prevention.

1. **Enforcement:** Enforcement involves taking stringent action against the civil servants and police officials who are found to be hand in glove with drug traffickers. In addition to that, it also involves tracing the entire drug supply chain through proper investigation. It calls for seizure, attachment/forfeiture of illegally acquired properties by drug smugglers under the NDPS Act, 1985.
2. **De-addiction & Rehabilitation:** De-addiction & Rehabilitation strategy involves providing effective de-addiction services at the grass-root level to the patients. It focuses on an outpatient treatment model in order to enable the patient to continue with his normal life during the de-addiction process.
3. **Prevention:** It focuses on the generation of mass movement among the public and to launch campaigns against the use of drugs. It focuses on de-addiction facilities at the doorstep.

1.2.3 'Hope Initiative' By CM Bhagwant Mann

Punjab govt starts mission 'Hope Initiative' to make state completely drug free.¹³ Punjab,

¹² Buddy Programme 2019 available at : <https://govtmohindracollege.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2019-2020-Buddy-program-Report-Govt.-Mohindra-College.pdf> (Last visited on January 04, 2024).

¹³ Punjab govt starts mission 'Hope Initiative' to make state completely drug-free *available at* : <https://newsonair.gov.in/News?title=Punjab-govt-starts-mission-%E2%80%98Hope-Initiative%E2%80%99-to-make-state-completely-drug-free&id=469686#:~:text=1%3A25PM,Punjab%20govt%20starts%20mission%20'Hope%20Initiative'%20to,make%20state%20completely%20drug%20free&text=In%20Punjab%2C%20efforts%20to%20make,this%20regard%20from%20Amritsar%20yesterday> (Last visited on January 04, 2024)

efforts to make the state completely drug-free are going at different levels. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, is set to unveil a big action plan aimed at eradicating the drug menace in the state. With a resolute commitment of creating a 'drug-free Punjab' by August 15, 2024, the state administration has entrusted the Amritsar police with a critical initiative. The state government started the mission 'Hope Initiative' in this regard in the month of October 2023. The Ardaas for the success of this mission was performed in the premises of Sri Harmandir Sahib. Thousands of youths from across the state participated in Ardaas at Sri Harmandir Sahib to make the state completely drug-free. They were wearing yellow turbans, patkas and dupattas, prayed to the almighty to give strength to them for fulfilling this sacred mission aimed at wiping out the curse of drugs from this border State.

This anti-drug 'Hope Initiative' has been embarked with a three-fold strategy of Pray, Pledge, and Play which is first of its kind mass movement against drugs to break the backbone of this menace.

1.3 CONCLUSION

This extensive analysis has aimed to contribute to the existing knowledge base and inform future efforts in addressing this critical societal concern. Justice needs to be delivered but just delivering decisions based on repetitive legal criteria without sound approach of current circumstances will only hide the real problem and it might get decades to reach the real issues. Reforms in penology, health care, and various other legal aspects are needed from time to time. Laws like NDPS Act are also a result of huge labour and patience that goes in understanding the scenario of drugs culture among youth in society, and prevailing problem of drugs trafficking and the menace of drugs that is gripping the society at large but we need amendments as per situation and also precise understanding of the letters of law. Sound interpretation of laws creates a difference in the attitude of authorities. Many laws at present related to mental health and drugs and crime control need sound provisions but that accuracy and viability of sound provisions depend upon the understanding of the judiciary. Law makers can make the laws only but their sound application is a different aspect that needs effective control of judiciary from time to time. But, the essential fabric of society i.e., the youth is in difficult situation.