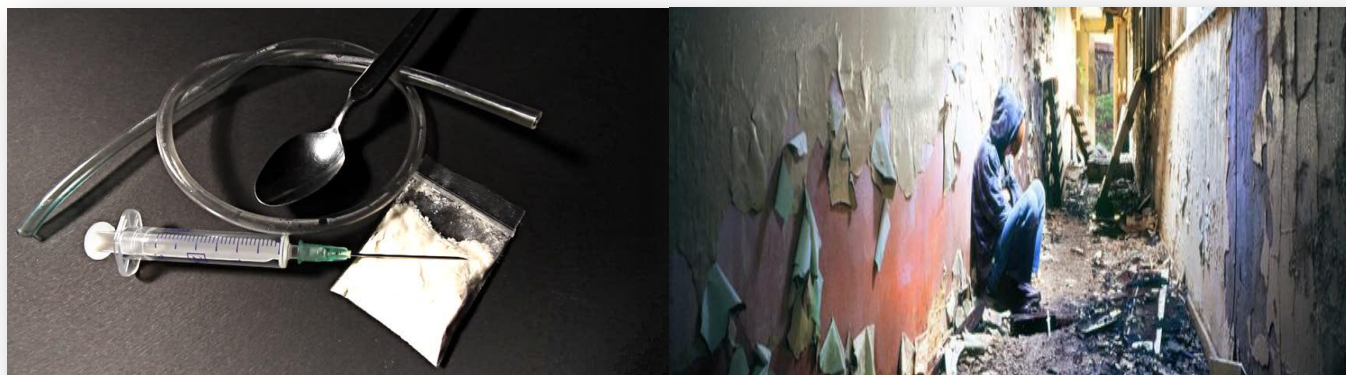


Drug Peddling

Causes, repercussions, challenges and probable solutions



Consumed by social media and its standards of what is in vogue and the desperate need to outshine using ill-gotten money, today's bewildered youth seeks refuge in the white poison. Oblivious of the catastrophe knocking on the door, he/she believes, drugs is the solution.

Drug peddling is the selling of recreational drugs. However, the scope of this crime is unfathomable. From being used in day-to-day crimes to being a major threat to a nation's security, drug pedaling is venomous to the global community's peace, law and order at large. In national context, India's vicinity to the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle paves way for the country's drug menace. The Golden triangle constitutes areas of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos while the Golden Crescent overlaps Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. These two areas are the source of the world's 90% illicitly produced opium. This leaves parts of South-West and South-East Asia including India vulnerable to drug trafficking.



Causes: Poverty, limited opportunities for education and employment, peer pressure, the need to let off steam and the drug subculture that exists in the country today, constitute the major causes for drug peddling. Lack of awareness regarding the legal and psychological consequences of drug peddling and consumption. Crimes related to drugs can be classified into three types: 1. Crime of Possession, 2. Crime under the influence of the drug and lastly 3. Organized crimes like money laundering by politically affluent people who support drug peddling. Even though the competent authorities dispense their duties with utmost sincerity, the influential tend to get away from the clutches of the authorities using the weak as scapegoats. This in turn leads to a social divide and the loss of faith of the people in the government and the concerned bodies. It must also be noticed that over years the governments have repeatedly claimed to address the predicaments put forth by the world drug problem in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in the recent memory in the 2019



Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. However, the data indicate that support has actually fallen over time, imperiling government commitment as well as regional co-operation and coordination. Development assistance dedicated to drug control fell by some 90% during 2000-2017.

Drug peddling is ultimately fueled by the economic principle of demand and supply in a world where there is a high demand for illicit substances that cannot be procured via legal means.



Moving to the **repercussions**, threat to national security is the most expected outcome of drug peddling .India is the 7th worst affected country by terrorism. Various anti-social and anti-India organizations like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam(LTTE), The National Socialist Council



of Nagaland,Lashkar-e-Toiba and other naxal groups are often indulged in the production and sale of opium thereby generating funds for themselves via the illicit sale of drugs. The drug syndicates end up financing extremist groups and help them accomplish their malefic intentions. In addition to this, the ease of availability of drugs makes the young and the adolescent



vulnerable to substance abuse and thereby crimes under the influence of drugs . Punjab recorded 38.5 per cent crime rate (per lakh population), highest in the country in cases registered under Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act 1985 in 2019, as per latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report on “Crime in India” . As many as 11,536 cases

under NDPS Act were registered in Punjab in 2019. Out of these 5,609 were registered for possession of drugs for personal use or consumption and 5,927 for possession of drugs for trafficking.



Now, what are the various challenges that the anti-drug campaign will/has been facing? To begin with, lack of political will. The issue of drugs, its supply network and consumption has always been a point of talk in the political galleries and nothing more than that. Various state governments have been treating this issue as a perennial election fodder and have been gaining public offices providing no solution to the drugs problem. 8.5 lakh people are estimated to take drugs by injecting it, 1 juvenile dies in every 10 days because of drug overdose according to the National Crime Records Bureau .Even after knowing all this, many members of various parties are involved in drug trading themselves which results in a fractured and corrupt political system. The second challenge is the easily available drugs in the form of cough syrups, whitener



inks and so on. These may not be as potent as synthetic drugs like Ecstasy, Heroine or LSD but because of their ease of availability and cost-efficiency from the point of view of an addict must not be ignored. Once the habit of taking drugs is formed, the addict ends up committing crimes in order to satiate his/her need of the drugs. The next challenge is the dark web. The dark web is the World Wide Web content that exists on dark nets,

overlay networks that use the Internet but require specific software, configurations, or authorization to access. Through the dark web, private commuter networks can communicate and conduct business anonymously without divulging identifying information, like location. The anonymity provided by dark web is a perfect breeding ground for crime. Also known as the silk route, the dark web facilitates the selling and buying of drugs via the internet making it difficult for the officials to trace. An example of the same: The Mumbai Police Crime Branch arrested two accused who were allegedly part of a well-organized drug trafficking ring, where cannabis of superior quality (hydro weed) was ordered through the dark web and sold to college students in Bandra and nearby areas. The duo was found to be in possession of 225 grams of hydro weed, worth 5.37 lakh Rupees. They were arrested and charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The modus operandi: “The accused surfed the dark web using TOR, a browser that grants anonymity to the user and is favoured by dark web surfers. After they made contact with drug dealers, the conversation moved to Wickr Me, an app with end-to-end encryption, which makes messages exchanged on the platform close to impossible to track,” according to the officer in charge. This exposes the numerous loopholes in our system where we still have a lot to catch up with. Lack of rehab centers is another major problem that needs to be taken care of.

Lastly, the **probable solutions** to the drugs issue. First, the methods or procedures to deal with illicit drug supply, their usage must be institutionalized in order to ensure that we do not compromise in this combat against drugs. Second, the intensification of punishment under the Illegal Drugs Control Act: The punishment under NDPS and other laws must be commensurate with the quantity of contraband/product recovered. Smugglers, suppliers and members of drug networks/syndicates must be awarded enhanced punishments. Third, the focus must be on tracing the source of the supply of drugs and a dedicated unit must be made since drug peddling and trafficking is a specialized task. Fourth, better coordination and sharing of intelligence among enforcement agencies must be fostered. Fifth, establishment of rehabilitation centers for the affected must be done in a district wise manner so that de-stigmatization of the drug addict can happen. Rehabilitation and post care counseling can save many lives. And at last, creating awareness among the citizens. In order to protect our youth, anti drug educational material must be made a part of the curriculum. (Example :)



In the end, drug peddling is a crime, which affects not only an individual but has ramifications across societies. It has the potential to destroy an entire generation. Therefore, it is the collective responsibility of every fragment of society to help enforcement agencies of the government to root out this menace. Jai Hind!

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