

## **Re-visiting the Status of Youths, Drug Abuse and Governance in Manipur (1980-2015)**

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**ABSTRACT:** The paper shows how much the youth of Manipur have been affected by drug abuse that has failed themselves in upholding democratic and secular spirits through meaningful and successful participation in bringing good governance. The state is passing through a critical stage in combating drug abuse and illicit trafficking. Unless we do something quickly we shall have to suffer a steep downfall, an irreparable loss to the youth power. As such the paper also suggests the government to take a firm stand with unflinching political will against the menace of drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

**Keywords:** *Infecting Drug User (IDU); Nishabandis; COPDA; NCB; Good Governance; Manipur.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Youth, as defined in the Manipur State Youth Policy (2011), consists of people in the age group between 13-35 years. The number of youth in this age group is about 8, 83, 795(37%) out of the total population of 23, 88, 634 as per 2001 census (Manipur State Youth Policy, 2011). Prof. M.N. Karna\* in his report on "A sssessment of Drug Abuse, Drug Users and Drug Prevention Services in Imphal" (Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India, 1989) reported that the problem of Drug Abuse became a serious problem in the mid 1980's among the youths and some of the important causes responsible for the abuse were listed as curiosity, fashion, peer pressure, unemployment, poverty and of course easy availability of drugs-all of which could be understood within the framework of a transforming state which attained statehood in 1972. It was also pointed out by him that 93% of addicts are below the age of 30 years who all could be clubbed under the broad category of youths. E. Yaima Singh ,an educationist wrote "Drug Trafficking and Abuse among the youth have become so widespread in discussing it almost every house is discussing it almost every day... Many people, in their lust for quick and easy money have become drug peddlers overnight. Ask any panshop, cigarette stall or any such place, in all likelihood, one always gets what one wants in adequate quantity (E. Yaima Singh, 1985: 1).

**Methods and materials:** The data of the present article have been collected from available primary and secondary sources and also from field work interviews of informed and uninformed persons and intellectuals of the Imphal City. Most of the available published works on the subject matters have been consulted and analyzed critically.

### **II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Although a number of studies have already been carried out on the concerned subject, no comprehensive and serious research based study has come out till date. Despite continuous efforts on the part of the government agencies the drug menace continue to afflict a good number of youths in the states. Good government's alongwith people's efforts can hopefully arouse a popular consciousness and thereby plug the supply routes of drugs.

#### **Panic Situation in Manipur:**

It has been estimated that presently, there are about 40,000-50,000 drug addicts in Manipur of whom nearly half of them are Infecting Drug Users (IDU). Cases of drug abuse is fast rising in the state of Manipur with 12% of drugs addicts in the age group till 15 years, 31-32% in the age group of 16-25years and 55-88% in the age group of 25-35 years (Guideline for implementation of the Project Awareness and Education for Prevention of Drug Abuse and Alcoholism in Manipur: 4). In 2012 as many as 1173 were booked under National Drugs and Psychotropic Act,1985 and put under trials in different courts of the state (Chinglen Maisnam, 2013: 1-6).The menace of drug abuse was first brought to light only in the early 1980s. Manipur

became a fullfledged state in 1972 and this transformed the otherwise agrarian based economy to that of a "supply cum contract" dominated economy. The sudden infusion of central fund to built up the required physical and administrative infrastructure created a new class of local rich with agrarian roots. Two decades of Contractors raj had developed a new consumerist way of life which was comparable to that of the "chicken and whisky " culture that preceded the rise of Khalistan movement in Punjab (Moin Shakir) The emergence of the women vigilante group "Nishabandis" in the 1980s in the numerous mohallas of the valley reflected the gravity of the problem. The mass consumption of liquor went along with the use of various poppy based products like Heroin, Number-4, Kani, Bethedine etc. Due to the seriousness of the problem, medical practitioners, social scientists and police personnel who had been observing the developments for quite sometime began to investigate the problem of Drug abuse. Some of these studies provided interesting insights into the nature and extent of drug addiction among youths. Almost all investigations had been brought to light only during the early 1980s and most of the studies highlighted the social as well as the medico-legal aspects of the grave social malaise.

The Manipur state Branch of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) organized discussions on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1985 at Imphal under the banner of an expert group called 'Committee On Prevention of Drug Addiction (COPDA)' (E. Yaima Singh, 1985:1). It was attended by Government officials, teachers, social workers and representatives of voluntary organizations. Dr. Gyaneshwar Sharma talked of a survey which he along with Prof. Nimaichand Luwang conducted during February and December 1982 to make a statistical evaluation of the magnitude of drug abuse (E. Yaima Singh, 1985:1). Based on the information of 300 drug abusers (excluding alcohol and ganja), Sharma pointed out that the commonly used drugs were morphin, pethedine, sparing and diazepam which were used either in the form of injection or oral swallowing and 296 out of 300 abusers were school students.

Singh, A.K. et. al. (1995) conducted another survey in Manipur South District (A.K. Singh, S.G. Sharma, K.C Singh and N.T. Singh, 1985:11-14). By the end of 1983 and the beginning of 1984, a change in the choice of drug from morphine to heroin was observed by them. As many as 335 heroin abusers including 35 females were first identified by the volunteers of the Christian Guardian Association, teachers, Village Chiefs and some abusers themselves. The study indicated that most of them started taking drugs at the age of 11-12 years. Majority of them (60%) had used some kind of drugs or other intoxicants before coming to heroin but the rest were initiated directly to heroin. This significant study attributed this rapid spread of non-medical use of heroin to high permissiveness of the tribal society and easy availability of heroin. It pointed out that heroin was available in black market through the agents of drug pushers in small packets of 10-15 nigs costing Rs. 10 only. L. Jugeshwar Singh, a senior police officer in Manipur Government highlights the law and order dimension of drug addiction. According to him the stupefying drugs like morphine and heroine are easily available due to geographical closeness to Myanmar.

### **Towards combating Drug Abuse and Trafficking:**

Since the early 1980s a number of rectificatory measures were begun to be taken up by the law enforcing agencies of the state Government as well as many of the Non Governmental organizations to contain the situation. In 1984, the Govt, of Manipur invoked of the Dangerous Drug Act, 1930 and under Section 22 of the said Act all the Sub Divisional officers of the Revenue Department were authorised to issue warrant of arrest and search. The Government further authorised all police officers not below the rank of ASI, Excise Officers not below the rank of the rank of Inspector and Drug Inspectors of the Medical Department to exercise the powers of entry, search, seizure and arrest without warrant under section 23 of the said Act. The Government of Manipur further authorised all the excise officers not below the rank of Jamadar to exercise the power of entry, search and seizure and arrest without warrant under section 23 of the said Act. However, since 1985 after the enactment of the Narcotic, Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act 1985, the police have become quite active in this respect. The establishment of a "Narcotic Cell" further helped them in combating the situation effectively. Besides rounding up drug users, local newspapers were replete with information related with seizure of large quantities of contraband drugs during the 1980's and 1990's. The number of cases registered increased from 31 in 1983 to 59 in 1984 and the number of person arrested increased from 45 in 1983 to 75 in 1984 and the quantity of drug seized increased from 1007 grams in 1983 to 2087 grams in 1984.

In January, 1984, the Government of Manipur created a special Narcotic Cell with a sanctioned strength of 1 Inspector, 2 Sub-Inspectors, 2 ASI and 6 Constables in the Police Department. The Special Officer (Intelligence) was re-designed as S.P. Border Affairs to look into narcotic drug matters besides some other duties. The office of S.P. Borders Affairs was declared as an authority in respect of the offences punishable under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act 1985 having jurisdiction throughout the state of Manipur. Besides organizational arrangements, the Manipur Police Department has undertaken several measures to counter the problems of drug abuse and trafficking by directly attempting to curb the illicit trafficking drugs both within and across the Border and establishment of rehabilitation and reformatory centres. A number of de -

addiction centres i.e, Centre for Mental Hygiene, Airport Road, Manipur Rural Institute Society, Tera Bazar; Narcotic Anonymous, Imphal; and a number of other local clubs and organizations funded either by NACO or the Ministry of Social Welfare, Govt, of India have been actively engaged in providing regular counselling and medications to the patients across the state. Since 1988 the achievements of the Border Affairs Police authority have been quite pronounced for the first time. The Border Affairs launched a special drive against the illicit cultivation of Ganja in Manipur from July 1988 to November 1988. It was a joint drive which included officers of Border Affairs, CID, District Police and State Excise.

The first phase of the special drive was launched in July 1988 mainly in the East and North Eastern part of Imphal valley in which over 15 lakhs Ganja plants were destroyed and 63 persons were arrested. The second phase was launched in Thoubal District and in the hill Districts of Chandel and Senapati in August 1988 and over 3, 45, 000 Ganja plants were uprooted and destroyed. The third phase of the drive was launched in Ukhrul District in November 1988. The team destroyed over 1,04,179 Ganja plants valued at about 2.5 crores in the local market and about Rs. 7.5 crores at places like Kolkata, Varanasi and Mumbai where the Manipur Ganja is in great demand.

During the same year, the Border Affairs Police seized 196 kg of Ganja, 1.6 Kg of Heroine powder and 140 cases were registered and 167 persons arrested. There was a sudden increase in the FIR cases in 1988 which was perhaps due to the special drive conducted by the Border Affairs people. The Border Affairs through the Police Head Quarters Imphal was in touch with the Narcotic Control Bureau and the Central excise for the provision of equipments to the Police Forensic Science laboratory, Pangei to establish a mini drug testing laboratory at Imphal. During 2011-12, the NCB destroyed 3028.55 acres of poppy plantations in the state including Manipur. In the same year, the NCB had dismantled 2 illicit heroin, manufacturing laboratories. Along with it 68Kg. Morphine, 9Kg. opium were also seized.

Of late there have been a number of reports regarding the seizure of huge quantities of Pseudoephedrine in Manipur worth around 300-400 crores during 2012-2013. The Assam Rifles (AR) personnel and NCB, Imphal intercepted 6 persons at Chandel and seized 3,89,600 pseudoephedrine tablets used normally in the manufacture of heroin on 1 March, 2012 (Chinglen Maisnam, 2013:1-6). Again, on 12, h of the same month 14,13,000 tablets bound for Myanmar were seized by the personnel of the aforesaid forces (Chinglen Maisnam, 2013:1-6). Yet again on 30 March of the same year the NCB with logistic support from a local NGO (Anjuman) raided and dismantled a heroin production unit at Lilong (Chinglen Maisnam, 2013:1-6). In July, 2013, the Telegraph reported that around 56.21 kg. of opium, 14.566 of heroin and 6808 Kg of ganja were recovered from Manipur (The Telegraph, 2013).

### **Endless Issue and Governance**

Huyen Lanpao (Huyen Lanpao, 2013) and Poknapham (Poknapham, 2013) on the basis of an extensive report published in *Teheka* (vol. 10, Issue. 12, dt. 23 March, 13) reported the intricate dynamics of how in the last 30/40 years, the tribals of the four hill districts of Manipur i.e, Ukhrul, Chandel, Tamenglong and Churachandpur compelled by acute economic hardships resorted to large scale farming of opium and ganja on the jhum lands alternately. According to the official data, in 2009-10 poppy was cultivated in as many as 904 acres (Chinglen Maisnam, 2013:1-6). Where as ganja was harvested in January/February, opium was planted only after February. The price of ganja which normally was around 250/- per Kg. in the local market go upto Rs.1000/- at Dimapur and Rs. 5000/- at New Delhi. It was argued that a minimum of Rs. 230 crores annum was clandestinely smuggled out of the state. Production and illegal trade of these narcotic products thus constituted one of the important source of sustenance for the hill people. What is very disturbing however is the involvement of a good number of security personnel including some big officers in the process of drug-trafficking thereby putting the entire effort of the Narcotic cell and State police to ponder and reassess the entire strategy of combating drug trafficking in the State. Kalyan Mukherjee in an interesting paper, "The poppy is also a flower (The Illustrated Weekly of India) follows the heroin trail in the Northeast mainly Manipur scene. His analysis attempts to link Imphal situation with that of the international heroin trail. The narcotic finds an increasingly receptive market among the disillusioned youth of the troubled state. Highlighting the mechanism of drug trafficking on international borders, Mukherjee writes the Moreh-Tamu axis is always under the surveillance of the Border Security Force' and indeed has emerged as an important route for international drug trafficking.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Drug Abuse, illicit trafficking, involvement of government machineries and security personnels in the process have become an endless issue in the state of Manipur. Eventhough, efforts are made to combat the problem, as the above description shows us, the issue is still prevailing in this part of the country. Weakness of the governance on the same is also very clear. In this regard, the youths of the state have to come forward to do something for the cause. The issue of drug abuse and illicit trafficking can be solved only when we have good governance in which our youths need to exercise their moral, educational and social responsibilities.

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