

OUR DEGRADING MORAL VALUES ARE LEADING US INTO DECEIT, ARROGANCE, HATRED AND FRUSTRATION.

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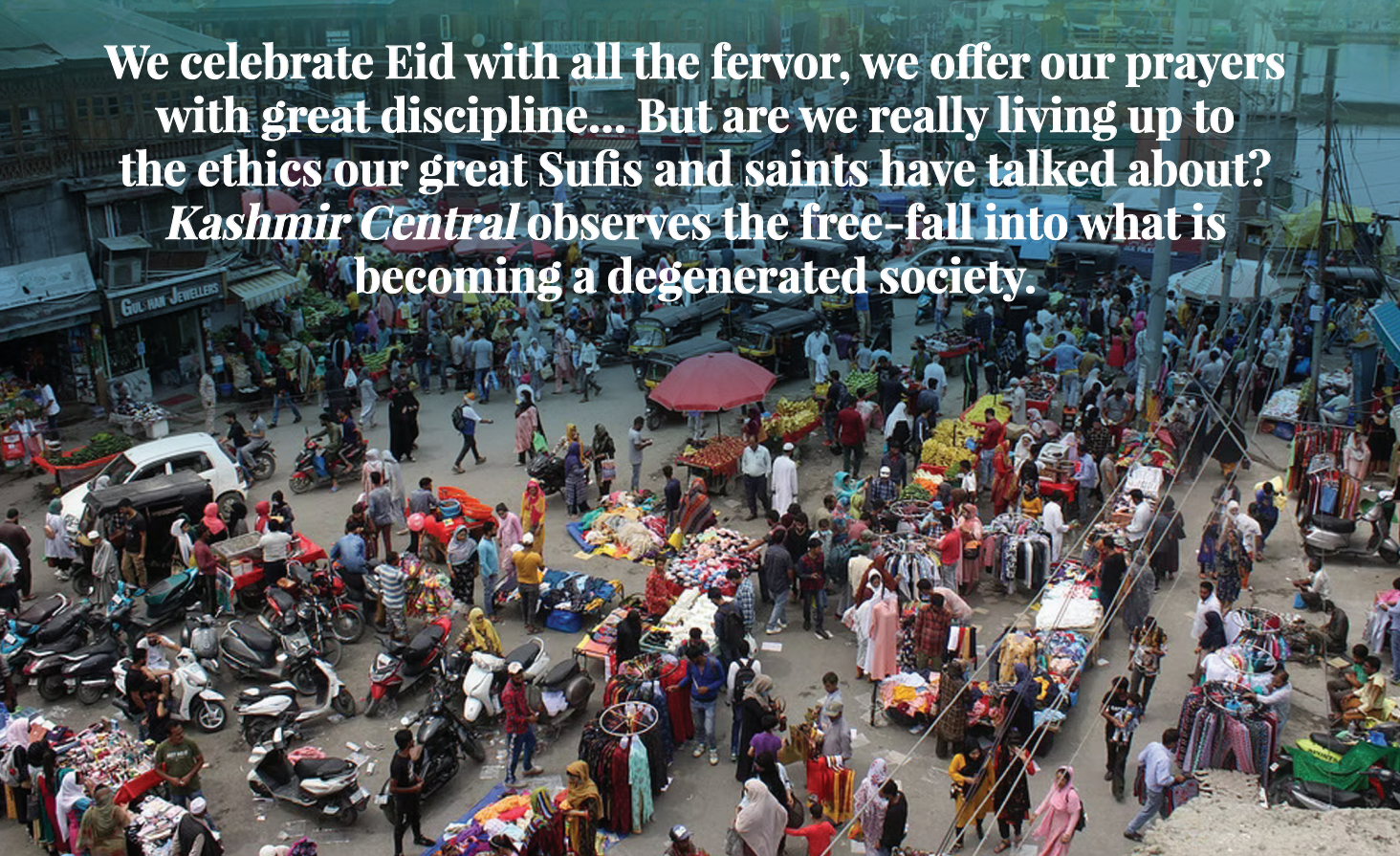
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# KASHMIR CENTRAL

# END *of* ETHICS?

We celebrate Eid with all the fervor, we offer our prayers with great discipline... But are we really living up to the ethics our great Sufis and saints have talked about? *Kashmir Central* observes the free-fall into what is becoming a degenerated society.



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**KASHMIR CENTRAL**



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# DITCH THIS CRASH COURSE!

It's a common thing to witness crashing of online money transaction sites during heavy festivity in the Valley. It's high time our infrastructural development and information technology (IT) took a leap.



**T**HE Eid-ul-Adha has been celebrated in Jammu and Kashmir with much fervour. The hustle and bustle in the market places started a week ahead. People have been busy buying things and also livestock for the customary slaughter. With everything going smoothly, the one issue that is very common during festivals is the crashing of the online money transaction sites of Jammu and Kashmir Bank. There were as many as 71 lakh withdrawal transactions made three days ahead of Eid and transfer transactions around Rs. 4,170 crore through Jammu & Kashmir Bank alone. Due to massive transactions, Jammu & Kashmir Bank's Mpay crashed intermittently. So did the other online transaction system of JK Bank, like UPI. Before Eid, mPay saw some 27.5 lakh successful transactions amounting to Rs 1,975 crore; through ATMs around 10.5 lakh successful transactions amounting to Rs 620 crore were made; through UPI, 29.10 lakh transactions amounting to 525 crore were made and JKB's PoS and e-commerce channels saw three lakh transactions amounting to 1,100 crore.

The Jammu & Kashmir Bank has been working since 1938, making it one of the oldest institutions in India and a lot of people are dependent on it and it is in the times of festivities that people require money to celebrate such occasions hassle free, but it has time and again been observed that the Jammu & Kashmir Bank's internet banking sites crash after massive transactions which is not the issue with other banks and this has proven to cause too much inconvenience to the people, who, at the time of making transactions, realise that their online transaction system is not working. India is treading to become 5 trillion economy by 2025 and the JK Bank needs to play its part in that goal; so, the infrastructural development and the development of Information Technology (IT) section is a must. With everything becoming technology based, this hiccup of crashing sites must be taken seriously.

**Bashir Assad**

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# Fall

by **Bashir Assad**

On the auspicious occasion of Eid, let us take an honest look at ourselves and admit that we have come far away from our good old virtues. We are free-falling into being a society of selfish, greedy, insensitive and degenerated souls. Is that us, in this land of our great Sufis and saints?



ON the auspicious occasion of Eid, I wish I am not judgemental and harsh.

However, on the basis of my observation, I must not hesitate in stating my version of truth. And the sad truth is – we are witnessing a moral and ethical degeneration, particularly among the people in Srinagar city.

We sense degrading moral values with absolutely no conscience, and resultantly, this has led to all kinds of deceit, arrogance, lying, bitterness, hatred and frustration.

Picture this: Despite knowing that hundreds and thousands of sheep and goat shall be sacrificed on the day of Eid-Ul-Bakr, people have been seen standing in long queues outside mutton and chicken shops just a day before Eid. I regret to say that people in the city of Srinagar seem to behave like carnivorous animals. Imagine them queuing up outside mutton and chicken shops and bakeries just a few hours before the time when hundreds and thousands of sheep and goat are sacrificed and every household receives mutton beyond their need and consumption - from relatives, neighbours and friends.

It's fine to observe an auspicious day like Eid with great religious fervour. But it is equally important to respect the humanity, bring a smile on the faces of our children and offer



hope and love to the elderly. It's important not to be irrational, illogical and inhuman while celebrating the festival. Eid is about virtues, and a virtuous society would certainly be rational and logical. A society devoid of virtues creates a fake culture. What about those thousands in the Srinagar city itself who can hardly make ends meet? I am appalled at what kind of society we have become.

Broadly, as you look around, the life people live in Srinagar seems to have lost its deeper meaning. There is a clear urge, rather greed, to enjoy all the possible comforts of life; but practically, it's a society under stress where there is a race for ostentatiousness and unnecessary spending. In the process, it's the poor and the marginalised that actually suffer because they too feel the



pressure to match up. This has led to unimaginable crimes in the society. The truth is that in the process of all this faking, there are families where parents encourage immoral practices among their children to stay in the race. The rich have every



of moral conduct. People don't behave like beasts. In many ways, the well-off rural populace takes care of their poor neighbours and acquaintances. There is still an element of compassion there. The poor and the marginalised are secretly and in certain cases, publically, taken care of. The society is simple and hence no unnecessary spending. This is why the rural people are high on the happiness index than those living in the urban centres. The poor and the marginalised feel compelled to be fake in the cities. There is so much societal pressure that these sections will do anything



right to use their money in whatever way they like but at the same time, they have this moral responsibility not to make the lives of the ordinary miserable.

In rural Kashmir though, there is still some observance

and everything to live up to a lifestyle, no matter how fake. People pretend to be happy and stable when they are not. They hide their limitations and handicaps just to present a certain picture.

It's obnoxious that the very

same people, after spending so much on mutton, chicken and bakery, would make a hue and cry about economic downslide, recession, black-marketing so on and so forth.

The issues branching out from this fake culture are many. Like, how can we hide that in Srinagar city alone, there are thousands of women who can't seem to find a spouse merely because of poverty and poor economic conditions! They too pretend to be happy!

Then there are parents who are deliberately secretive about their sons who are into drugs. They won't face the facts and do something about it. Why? Because appearances matter more.

Truth, honesty, selflessness, love, respect, patience are the characteristics of a virtuous society that add value to our lives. Unfortunately, in an era of fakeness, these virtues have been replaced by deceit, hatred, selfishness. As the saying goes - One can live without wealth, but without being virtuous, one is a devil or an animal. And we are moving towards being pathetic. We have become greedy and it has certainly made criminals out of most of us. That is why, the kind of crimes which were earlier unheard of in the Kashmir Valley, are a thing of routine here.

Then we have a special species of religious clerics who, let me say it, are best described as brainless chickens and heartless beasts. Let me share an incident. This June 26, I visited a local mosque at Jawahar

Nagar to offer my afternoon prayers (Asar). While standing for the prayer, a man of around 45 years, fell unconscious and hit the ground. He was just behind the Imam. I was expecting that the Imam would try to finish the prayers quickly so that the man could be attended to. But that didn't happen. After the culmination of the prayers, some people immediately attended to the gentleman and luckily, he was

alive. But that's not the only part of the story. I noticed a tall man with long hair and beard, wearing a turban in a very Arabic manner. When that man fell, this man didn't even bother and was the first to leave the mosque without even enquiring about the poor man. He left as if nothing unusual had happened. My blood boiled seeing this coldness. After ascertaining that the man who had fallen unconscious, was out of danger,

I hurriedly came out of the mosque to chase this apparent religious cleric who had left the mosque in such selfishness. I found him standing right outside the mosque, attending to a phone call, which apparently was from a woman. I walked up to him and asked him why he hadn't bothered to even look towards the guy who had fallen unconscious during the prayers. Does it behave a person who gives sermons on







humanity and religion in mosques to leave so selfishly, only to attend to a phone call? What will become of this land of Sufis and saints when we, its people, have abandoned the path of righteousness, sensitivity and humanity? He looked blankly at me.

And I came away with no answers.





# THE VIRTUAL CLIFF

by **Faisal Akhoon**

**T**HE internet has certainly shrunk the world. Yes it has brought a revolution in the ease with which we are able to connect with others.

But it also has its monsters.

The internet and the obsession with social network are driving people, especially our youth, into dark tunnels of anxiety, sense of lack and depression. The situation in Kashmir, especially after years of turmoil, is hanging even more gingerly. We at KC explore the crisis.



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## THE BANE

▼  
The ease of its availability is causing psychological issues like anxiety and pseudo depression. Especially the young ones all over the globe, and equally in the Valley, are a clear victim. The information and excitement overload has taken hold over our youth's mental health and is creating psychological disturbances. There is this trend to be present virtually on all the possible social events. And along with it comes an increased anxiety or apprehension of missing events or experiences that others are perceived to be attending or having.

For most people, the internet and the social media are an essential in their daily lives and this is only making them more miserable and stuck in staleness, doubts and insecurities. Looking at others

on social media and how they show off their possessions and the idea of a good and happy life, people are increasingly diving into envy, competition and a sense of lack. With such an urge for material joy and abundance, people are raging to fit in without being concerned about their mental health.

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## THE IMPACT

▼  
The 'fear of missing out' is very common in the younger generation ( 11 -24 years ) who are always bound to their smart phones as if they were a part of their body. There is this constant need to be one up on their peers, cousins, relatives, friends. A response to a notification is becoming extremely sacrosanct and if a person delays his/her response, it is accompanied by anxiety. Yes anxiety is a part and parcel of the phenomenon.

And equally common is the obsession with checking inboxes or statuses on varied apps and social platforms. The rechecking and refreshing by social media handlers intensifies anxiety and updates are obsessively awaited.

A study conducted by the University of Glasgow in Scotland has confirmed that the influence of social network can have a devastating effect on the psychological well-being of users. The study involved exploration of the repercussions of social media across thousands of school and college students in which psychological imprints were recorded. It reported that the consequences of overuse of social media among teenagers significantly point to them feeling societal pressure to be always available and updated. The study also lists low self-esteem, trouble with sleep, and anxiety among the students who were a part of the study.

## THE VICTIMS

Mansha, a student at Amar Singh College, Srinagar shares, “I wasn’t really aware of the psychological impact of the social media until recently. And now I know that there is this prevailing sense that there is more to life that you are missing out on. It is more like a feeling that others out there are leading a more meaningful life than you are, but even if you do get certain things that others have, your quest won’t stop. Perhaps this is something one needs to fix internally where you need to accept and appreciate what you are bestowed with and learn how to harvest it”.

The 21-year-old admits to feeling a constant pressure in keeping pace with the outer world, and sometimes she feels the need to talk about it to someone. “We generally don’t pay attention to these issues but they deserve talking about.

When you feel the constant need to do something like others, you risk losing your own identity. Saving oneself from this, calls for lots of inner work,” she adds. Thankfully, mental stress and psychological issues are being taken up more openly, and people are willing to talk and seek medical help.

Saika, a student of psychology, has been struggling with the fear of being left out and has been trying her best to cope but sometimes the anxiety gets very aggressive and she needs to opt for medication in order to calm herself. “Since I’m into psychology myself, I am aware of the issue and also about how grave it gets. Since it is my subject, I am more aware of the psychological patterns and so I am better equipped about its cautions and precautions. We might think of it as a ‘regular’ kind of anxiety which it is not. Since we in Kashmir are still waking up to the growing trends on social media, we are not yet aware of

the consequences. The situation needs to be addressed at its root level by using different strategies like guidance and proper counselling instead of turning to medicine which actually intensifies stress and anxiety”. She adds that psychological disorders are nothing to be ashamed of and one should learn to talk openly about them with one’s family and friends.

## THE CRISIS

A healthy set-up of a family is the most basic essential for the right development of individuals. But these days, thanks to technology and our lifestyles, neither parents nor children have time for each other. In such cases, children



have higher risks of becoming aggressive and stubborn. And this is when they start turning to their phones to cover up for the emotional lack. Dr Shuhaab, a psychiatrist, says: "People are becoming impatient and obsessed with their phones. Their day starts with messages on their phones, and checking the goings-on on social media instead of checking on those around them. Unfortunately, in Kashmir, where there have been several blockages in communication in the past years, youngsters are anyways brimming with anger and aggression and the isolation due to mobile phones just adds fuel to the crisis. And so lost are they in their own technological zone that if you ask them to spend time with their families, they get

irritated and aggressively go back to the virtual world and prefer this over actual human connection. The screen time of an individual has increased to 9-13 hours a day as described by recent statistics". He adds that parents play a vital role in the upbringing of an individual and the first step to save their children from such aggression, anxiety and intolerance is to mend and fill the gaps from them.

Dr Burhan Showkat, a Kashmiri psychiatrist working in New Delhi, defines issues as mental condition that people battle daily within themselves. She suggests tips to overcome them: Self care, building self confidence, being logical, mind practices, sympathetic & empathetic approach, not to compete with anyone, living

and enjoying every moment, facing problems head on, minimising screen time, setting boundaries for oneself and spending quality time with loved ones. These can break this vicious pattern due to the internet.

Meanwhile, it is also important to understand that everyone has a different history and different destination: no one can achieve everything. Also, what you see virtually is not always true. Appearances can be fake. Accepting your life and its blessings and being grateful for what you have are the way to move forward towards peace and joy.



# DIGITALLY FIT, ARE YOU?

14  
KASHMIR CENTRAL | 02 JUL 2023

by **Waheed Jeelani**

While we observe the spike in dependence on the digital in this day and age, it becomes equally crucial to work our way around it so that we steer clear of its ill-effects. We discuss such initiatives - governmental, societal and individual.



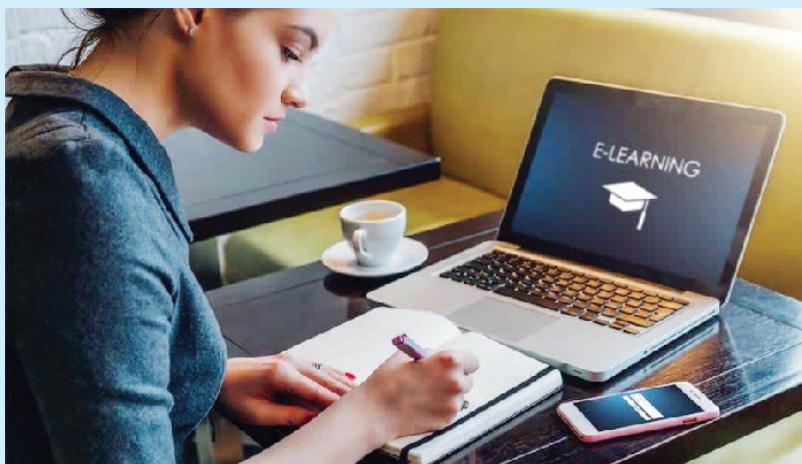
▼  
**I**N today's hyper-connected world, wherein technology and social media have become ubiquitous, our digital lives have a profound impact on our mental well-being.

The situation is no different in the picturesque region of Jammu and Kashmir, where the pervasive influence of technology intertwines with the unique socio-political landscape. By way of this piece, we endeavour to delve into the multifaceted effects of technology and social media on mental health, emphasising the importance of digital well-being. We also explore initiatives taken by the Government of India, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, to tackle these challenges and promote a healthier digital ecosystem.

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## MENTAL HEALTH ON THE EDGE

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The digital revolution has undeniably brought numerous benefits, but it has also presented unprecedented challenges to our mental well-being. In Jammu and Kashmir, where the youth form a significant proportion of the population, the influence of technology and social media on mental health cannot be overlooked. Constant connectivity and the pressure to maintain an idealised online persona have led to increased feelings of anxiety, depression,



and loneliness among the youth.

Social media platforms, designed to keep users engaged, often foster comparison and self-esteem issues. The trend of seeking validation through likes, comments, and followers can intensify feelings of inadequacy and contribute to a negative self-image. The incessant exposure to curated, filtered lives of others can create a distorted sense of reality, fuelling unrealistic expectations and a perpetual fear of missing out.

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## DIGITAL WELL-BEING: THE DIRE NEED

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Recognising the urgency of the situation, the concept of digital well-being has emerged as a crucial aspect of mental health in this age. Digital well-being encompasses strategies and practices that enable individuals to have a healthy relationship with technology while preserving their mental and emotional well-being.

In Jammu and Kashmir, where the impact of conflict and socio-political tensions is already significant, fostering

digital well-being becomes even more vital. It involves raising awareness about the potential dangers of excessive screen time, cyber-bullying, and online harassment. Additionally, it encompasses cultivating critical digital literacy skills to discern between reliable information and misinformation, thus mitigating the negative impact of fake news and propaganda.

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## INITIATIVES BY OUR GOVERNMENT

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Acknowledging the importance of mental health in the digital age, the Government of India, in collaboration with the administration of Jammu and Kashmir, has implemented several initiatives to address challenges and promote digital well-being.

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## DIGITAL LITERACY CAMPAIGNS

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The government has launched comprehensive digital literacy campaigns aimed at educating individuals, particularly the



youth, about responsible digital citizenship, online safety, and the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between offline and online activities. These campaigns employ a multi-pronged approach, utilising social media platforms, local community centres, and educational institutions to disseminate information and foster digital literacy.

### SUPPORT HELPLINES AND COUNSELLING SERVICES:

Recognising the need for accessible mental health support, the government has established helplines and counselling services in Jammu and Kashmir. These services provide anonymous and confidential support to individuals grappling with mental health issues exacerbated by technology or social media. Trained professionals offer guidance,

counselling and crisis intervention, thereby bridging the gap between technology and mental health services.

### COLLABORATION WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

The government has collaborated with educational institutions in Jammu and Kashmir to incorporate digital well-being into their curriculum. By integrating mental health awareness, digital literacy, and strategies for maintaining a healthy online presence into the educational framework, students are empowered with the necessary tools to navigate the digital landscape responsibly.

In addition to the initiatives taken by the government, community engagement plays a vital role in promoting digital well-being in Jammu and Kashmir. Local organisations, NGOs, and community centres

can organise workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns focussed on mental health and responsible technology use. These initiatives can provide a safe space for individuals to share their experiences, concerns, and coping strategies. By fostering a sense of community and support, these efforts can empower individuals to navigate the digital landscape more confidently and seek help when needed. Furthermore, collaboration with mental health professionals, researchers, and technology experts can facilitate the development of evidence-based interventions and policies tailored to the specific needs of Jammu and Kashmir. By working together, the government, communities, and individuals can create a holistic approach to digital well-being and ensure a healthier future for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.



## STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING A HEALTHY DIGITAL BALANCE

While government initiatives are instrumental, individuals themselves must adopt strategies to foster digital well-being. Here are some key strategies for maintaining a healthy digital balance:

**Digital Detox:** Disconnecting from technology and social media periodically allows individuals to rejuvenate and re-establish a healthier relationship with the digital world. Engaging in offline activities, spending time in nature, and cultivating hobbies can help promote mental well-being.

**Mindful use of technology:** Practising mindful use of technology involves setting boundaries, such as designating specific times for checking

social media, limiting screen time, and refraining from excessive comparison and self-judgment while engaging online.

**Building digital resilience:** Developing digital resilience involves building a strong sense of self-worth and self-awareness, understanding that online personas are often curated, and cultivating a critical perspective towards online content.

**Nurturing offline connections:** Prioritising face-to-face interactions and nurturing relationships in the physical world can help counter the isolation and loneliness that can result from excessive reliance on digital communication.

## ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE:

In promoting digital well-being in Jammu and Kashmir, it is also essential to address

the digital divide that exists within the region. While technology can have positive effects on mental health, such as providing access to online mental health resources and support networks, it is crucial to ensure equitable access to these resources. Efforts should be made to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, as well as address disparities in internet connectivity and access to digital devices. By prioritising digital inclusion and providing equal opportunities for all individuals to engage in the digital world, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that promotes mental well-being for the entire population of Jammu and Kashmir.

As technology continues to evolve, the impact on mental health in Jammu and Kashmir must be addressed with urgency and compassion. By recognising the importance of digital well-being and implementing initiatives that promote responsible technology use, the government is taking significant steps toward nurturing a healthier digital environment. However, it is essential for individuals to proactively adopt strategies for maintaining a healthy digital balance, thereby safeguarding their mental well-being in the digital age. Together, through collective efforts, we can foster a digital landscape that promotes connection, well-being, and resilience in Jammu and Kashmir and beyond.



# THE SECOND BATTLE

18

KASHMIR CENTRAL | 02 JUL 2023

While our government and the security forces have managed to contain insurgency, there is an equally dangerous threat looming over J&K - that of narcotic infiltration, thanks to our neighbours yet again. We take a deep look into the menace and attempt varied steps to contain it.

by **Mareaya Fayaz**

▼

**I**N Jammu and Kashmir, terrorism supported by Pakistan, has never been lower, three years after Articles 370 and 35A were repealed. Security forces have worked hard to prevent terror activities in the UT and have dismantled 146 terrorist modules that the Pakistani intelligence services had developed in 2022. As a result, Pakistan's 30-year plan to instill a culture of violence in the Valley with the support of an opportunistic and inbred political class, is failing.

Resultantly, Pakistan has turned to selling narcotics, to degenerate the youth of J&K, because, after all, it is getting harder to infiltrate with weaponry and





terrorists.

Narcotics have lately been referred to as 'the biggest challenge' J&K faces. They are Pakistan's new tool for financing terrorism in the Valley.

Pakistan has continuously provided financial and strategic assistance to insurgency in the Kashmir Valley by infiltrating weapons and militants, training them, and promoting a culture of violence that had numerous negative effects on the society.

The centuries-old socio-economic and socio-cultural fabric of J&K was devastated by terrorists supported by Pakistan. The fatalities, widespread Pandit emigration and rising unemployment undermined the composite way of life and raised levels of boredom, sadness, and worry among the general populace. The drug policy now serves two aims for Islamabad while an increasing number of Kashmiris give up terrorism and the culture of violence. One, to undermine the foundation of societal cohesion, and two, to support terrorists in the Valley.

### THE HARD TRUTH

According to a research recently conducted by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, 1.2 percent of people in Punjab use opioids as compared to 2.5 percent in Kashmir. The survey reveals that the daily expenditures on pharmaceuticals in the Valley amount to crores of rupees. Every month, one drug user

in India spends more than Rs 88,000. The Valley's long-standing informal social control and disciplinary systems enacted by village elders, have nearly completely collapsed, which is a crucial factor in this dangerous situation. This ancient system of social control has been rendered useless by Pakistan's insidious assault on the Valley's cultural foundation. The elders of villages have also frequently collaborated with Pakistan's wicked plans by remaining silent and supporting the social decay.

Meanwhile, there are those that continue to fight the onslaught from the other side of the Border.

### THE POLICE AND ITS WAR AGAINST DRUGS

Jammu and Kashmir's security forces are renowned for their counter-terrorism efforts. They have effectively worked together with the local government to obstruct Pakistan's plans and those of its allies in the Valley. As the insurgency supported by Pakistan has subsided, the security services have turned their attention to the dealers of narcotics. The police registered 1,021 crimes in 2022 under the Narcotic Drugs Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and detained 1,700 drug dealers, including 138 infamous dealers. At the same time, massive amounts of illegal substances were recovered by the security forces, including 4.355 tonnes

# DRUGS



of poppy straw, 1.567 tonnes of fukki, 13 kgs of brown sugar, 56 kgs of heroin, and 212 kgs of charas.

The police raided a drug operation in Pakistan in December 2022, and detained 17 people, including five police officers and some political activists. Investigations found that in three months, more than five kgs of drugs worth Rs 5 crore were smuggled out of Pakistan. The Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan, a Ministry Of Social Justice And Empowerment project to end drug addiction in 272 districts across India, has also been initiated by the local government. Large-scale awareness campaigns have been carried out by this programme in communities, institutions, and universities.

Recently a sizeable shipment of drugs was found in the Sopore neighbourhood of the Baramulla district of north Kashmir by the Jammu and Kashmir police. The drugs were being shipped to the Valley from Delhi, Punjab, and other states. In the Uri region of the Baramulla district in north Kashmir, the police claimed to have discovered drugs worth Rs 25 crore in October last year.

The administration then intends to stop selling drugs and seize the real estate of those involved in drug trafficking in order to cut off funding for insurgency activities beyond 2019, obtained through narco-terrorism. Sadly, due to social indifference, the breakdown of Kashmir's conventional



social control systems, and the silence of older residents, the civil society, and village-level committees, this project has struggled to function. Even the local political parties have criticised this idea and have said nothing about it. The Kashmiri society needs to have an internal discussion and look closely at Pakistan's methods for inciting unrest, particularly through narco-terrorism. In order to let the youth participate meaningfully in the flurry of development initiatives launched by the national and Union Territory authorities in the wake of Article 370's repeal, Kashmir's elders and religious leaders - through mosques - need to join the fight against narcotics. In order to rid Kashmir of drug terrorism and the violence-instigating culture imposed by Pakistan, the government should also launch and facilitate public-private partnerships involving the local police, military, paramilitary, and citizen bodies. Also, Kashmir's traditional

and institutional social control systems need to be brought together. There has been no response from within, to the security agencies' continuous appeal to the Kashmiris to join them in their campaigns to stop Pakistan's plans of keeping the terror pot simmering and destroying the youth through narcotics. This is especially true of the police.

## SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR THE ADDICTS

▼  
Kashmir was referred to as 'Peer Vaer' (a place of apostles and rishis). Drug abuse was viewed as a serious sin, and dealers were frequently regarded with suspicion. People didn't sympathise with them at all. But the overall picture has altered. Now, the production, trafficking, and consumption of drugs have stealthily crept into practically every settlement in Kashmir, no matter how big or tiny. People take pride in growing charas and

poppy.

In addition to men, women and children are a big issue of concern when it comes to drug addiction and illegal trafficking. The need for the society to awaken so as to combat this threat is urgent.

People need support to go through crisis when it arises. They must express their emotions to those close to them. If their parents, teachers, and elders are unable to take them seriously or show any compassion, they will progressively fall into drug addiction. Many people won't become drug addicts if the society were to ensure prompt intervention, especially if they are key figures like parents, teachers and elders. Parents are accountable for their children, after all.

Additionally, the society plays a significant influence in the rehabilitation process. Drug addicts require social and moral assistance during relapse or recidivism in addition to medical care, which society can effectively give.

Our society needs to go



through a process of mending on many levels, including family, neighbourhood, schools, mosques, and institutions that are ingrained in and thrive within the society, in order to protect our children from threats like drug-addiction.

The role of law enforcement authorities, even if it comes later, is equally crucial. We require a strict and ongoing programme of awareness and education. The chain can be broken with the help of expert psychiatrists and counsellors working at school level. Drug abuse should be opposed in all forms; yet, drug users need care

during treatment and when they relapse. Our culture should not coldly banish addicts.

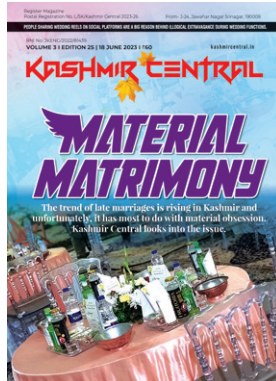
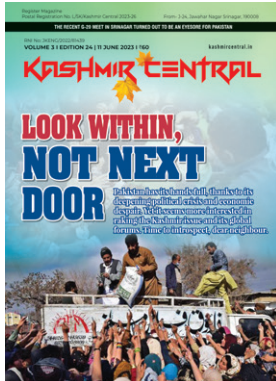
Yaqeen Sikander, clinical psychologist and research scholar, says; "Kashmir has a growing and thriving youth population which is a blessing but when avenues are limited and youth find themselves without jobs, it can lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms like drugs. It is unfortunate that our curriculum doesn't emphasise mental health and we are not taught psychological first-aid at schools which can help us tackle the problem of addiction from a young age. I also believe that because of social media, there is an unbelievable constant comparison going on and youth compare themselves to that standard and look for shortcuts in life. We need to emphasise a sense of purpose and overall meaning to tackle drug-addiction. More jobs, avenues and safe spaces for young people especially men are very important".



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