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Policy Perspectives Foundation (PPF) is a non-profit, apolitical think tank on matters of national interest. PPF's activities focus on complex and interconnected challenges to peace, stability and development in India in cognizance of the external dimension. PPF is committed to spreading awareness, building capacity and promoting resilience.

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Need for National Security Strategy Policy for India

— Gautam Sen

Some respected members of the strategic community in India have started showing their growing concern about the inability of the decision makers of military affairs to bring to fruition the establishment of Theatre Commands in the post Gen Bipin Rawat era. Such concerns, however, appear to be truism rather than being a product of a thorough and deep examination of relevant factors associated with the challenges of setting up 'Theatre Commands.'

The real reason, however, is that India does not have an official Defence Policy or National Security Strategy Policy (NSSP) document. This was acknowledged by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao nearly three decades back on the floor of the Parliament. He had, then, assured the House that in the absence of such a document, there were "Guidelines" which were strictly followed to safeguard India's national security issues. The Modi Government brought about change by creating the position of the CDS for the first time to bring about organisational, structural and operational modernization in the Indian Armed Forces by the operational fusion of the three Services without losing their individual



cultural and traditional preconditions aimed to maintain the unity of Command. This is aimed at creating National Capacity Building (NCB) that is operationally needed to deter India's adversaries across the international land borders, Indian air space and Indian Maritime domain. The charter of the first step to operationalize the modernization of the Indian Armed Forces fell on the shoulders of Gen Bipin Rawat as the first CDS. His untimely demise unfortunately disrupted the epistemology of the thought process to frame India's National Security Strategy Policy (NSSP) document and also the process of creating Theatre Commands to bring about a complete modernization of the Indian Armed Forces based on a consensus. In his innumerable speeches in various fora on National Security Perspectives, Gen. Bipin Rawat as the Chief of the Army Staff and later as the CDS, had stressed the need of basic epistemology as well as the requirements of NSSP.

As COAS, Gen. Rawat emphasised the importance of creating an official Government Document on "National Security Strategy Policy Making." Two of his speeches as COAS on "Nature of Future Wars and the Indian Army" at DEFCOM 2019 were published by the Centre For Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) with a commentary. He also highlighted the need of Jointness and the need to have a CDS - a post he held for the first time in the Indian Armed Forces. Gen Rawat had appointed a former Vice Chief to hold the COAS Chair of Excellence' to study in depth the necessity of having a National Security Strategy Policy (NSSP) document. The project lasted two years and the research output was published as a book. Hence, Gen Bipin Rawat as COAS or as the CDS had no doubt about the necessity and the priority to have the NSSP document for India.

Many media discussions and in the print media these days, it is common to come across contrarian views advocating the priority of Theatre Command over NSSP making documents. These views appear often without any evidence of requisite rigorous examination of both the issues - Theatre Command and the NSSP making document. In the interest of national security, views like NSSP "first" must essentially be examined with rigorous scientific research methodology along with empirical evidence available. Therefore, the advocates of prioritising the formulation of Theatre Commands as "first" may be putting the cart before the horse.

It is also essential to note a gradual change taking place in the way India thinks and deliberates on conventional strategic issues. Some years ago, there was hardly any discussion on the term 'National Security' except in the closeted chambers of think tanks often linked to the government. Now, it has become fashionable to write about the topic at the drop of a hat. In a democracy, it is important to adhere to a culture to respect contrarian views too. In the vibrant, if somewhat argumentative and noisy atmospherics, prevailing in Indian democracy, exercise of such freedom runs the risk of being misunderstood or of generating an avoidable controversy unless we accept the importance of one's right to agree or disagree without being disagreeable. It is with a great belief in this dictum, I ventured to write this piece and hope that the readers too would receive the few lines above and what I write below in the same spirit of contributing ideas to a healthy debate on the issue of national security.

Some years ago, the then military advisor to

the NSCS while speaking in Mumbai University (2012) placed his views on Nonalignment 2.0. Realistically, it can be said that Nonalignment as a policy is now dead and is hardly an option today in the context of the strategic landscape of geopolitics of the 21st Century. The advocacy by the mandarins of South Bloc who tried to resurrect the same failed as it did not provide the “capacity of deterrence” that India needs in the context of harsh ground realities of the 21st Century.

A realistic approach calls for acquisition of National Capacity Building (NCB) in the spheres of military, industrial, economic, infrastructural, political decision making, education, social health care, and economy including promoting growth in per capita income leading to increase in PPP. This will enable India to become self-sufficient and self-reliant. The NCB will empower India to acquire the capacity to simultaneously strategize the development of all the sectors enumerated above. Unless the political intent has an apolitical approach there will always be a deficit in our efforts to raise the NCB of our nation to transform it into a major power.

In so far as ‘Theaterisation’ is concerned, it begins at an operational level to ultimately form part of the national military strategy conceptualisation based on NSSP. This is achieved by the fusion of national interest, geopolitics, political perceptions, politico-economic considerations, capability, and political intent. It is, however, a dynamic process and not a static one. ‘The political leadership, therefore, ideally would berequired to put in place an on-going process of critical evaluation of the NCB of the nation in terms of economic, industrial, and infrastructural

robustness.’ This review is necessary to keep the momentum of national efforts to uplift the ability of the state to upgrade per capita income to augment GDP and GNP to quantify Purchase Power Parity (PPP). The NSSP, therefore, will be the confluence of all conceptualisation of national interest, political intent and quantifying empirically the benefits accruing from the NCB. Consequently, theatre-isation emerges as a mere a subset of National Security Strategy Policy (NSSP) wherein intents are defined empirically to safeguard national interests through a process of evaluating “Tail to Tooth” ratio. The only “confidential” part, therefore, is how to operationalise and which methods or pathways to be adopted.

India has been described as a noisy democracy with its own blend of opinions, sagacity, and ability to employ the retired manpower serving as sounding board for all decision makers in India. However, fresh thinking and critical observations are necessary from the younger generation of analysts, academics, and professionals. There is a feeling that the comfort level among the Government policy makers to involve human resources in our institutes of higher learning and research have remained rather hesitant. This is perhaps the reason why the Government supported think tanks are an extension of conformism and at times counterproductive to produce critical thinking.

It is in the nature of strategic methodology that the structure of Theatre Commands is one of the alternatives. Further, Theatre Command is also one of the strategic methods which needs to be evolved. It must also be understood that in the logic of sequencing the NSSP has to precede the creation of Theatre Command. In fact, each Theatre Command will need to be customised in terms of Strategic policy

enumerated in the NSSP. Hence, 'NSSP Making' has to be done " first." The author is of the opinion that the 'NSSP Making' document will meet the nation's requirement for capacity building, securing the strategic objectives and exploring and identifying alternative methods to achieve the same.

The author is an esteemed Professor of strategic studies and associated with various organisations and universities. He is Professor Emeritus with PPF.

Joshimath Sinking : A Wake Up Call for the Hilly Region

- KM Singh

The tragedy befalling the township of Joshimath this week is a cumulative effect of brazen apathy of the local government to heed to repeated warnings from environmentalists, geologists, experts and most importantly local people.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt, a well known environmentalist connected with the 'Chipko Movement', has lambasted the successive governments for failing to act on warnings on the lurking dangers in Joshimath submitted to the local government more than two decades ago. According to Bhatt, a study conducted by 12 scientific organisations, including the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) had reported that over 99 percent of the mapped area of Joshimath was landslide prone in various degrees.

Incidents of land sinking in Joshimath were noticed as early as 1970. One of the earliest reports highlighting the vulnerability of Joshimath dates back to 1976 when an 18 member committee chaired by MC Mishra warned that the town of Joshimath is

'geologically unstable' and suggested several restrictions and remedial measures.

The Mishra Committee was set up to probe the cause of landslides and sinking of Joshimath town. The report suggested a ban on heavy construction around Joshimath. This report revealed that Joshimath, located in an ancient landslide zone, was built on a loose unconsolidated surface with the material beneath being soil and debris. As a result, this area does not have a high load bearing capacity. This report cautioned against "unplanned development in this area and identified its natural vulnerabilities." It further mentioned that the dearth of adequate drainage facilities was also responsible for landslides in the region.

Ignoring this warning of the Mishra Committee report, a number of hydropower projects have been sanctioned in this region since then. These include the Vishnugad hydropower project in Joshimath-Tapovan region. Local people and activists in the region allege that a private agency which conducted the survey for this project failed to take cognisance of prevailing fragile geological conditions where tunnelling could disturb the local ecology in this mountainous region. In May 2010, two researchers from Garhwal University and Disaster Mitigation Management Centre published a well researched article in the journal 'Current Science' highlighting following three risks facing the Joshimath town:

** The government should not have overburdened the town through the tunnel alignment which was part of the hydropower project*

** Tunnelling process punctures the water bearing strata and causes harm in water gushing out and flooding the area.*

** Inability to understand the ecology and geology of the area before implementing large scale infrastructure projects such as hydropower projects and road construction are acts of negligence by authorities.*

Over the years Joshimath has become a gateway for a large number of pilgrims visiting Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib, besides providing passage to tourists going to Auli. According to a report in Indian Express 'experts believe unplanned construction, over-population, hydro power projects and obstruction of natural flow of water may have led to the present disaster in Joshimath.

Following the Kedarnath tragedy in 2013 a two Member Bench of Supreme Court had taken cognisance of ecological hazard caused due to hydropower projects in Uttarakhand. This led to stay on 24 proposed plants on the Alaknanda and Bhagirath river basins of Uttarakhand. An Expert's Panel chaired by environmentalist Ravi Chopra mentioned in its report in 2014 that there was a direct as well as indirect impact of hydropower projects in aggravation of floods of 2013. The Supreme Court directed the Union Government to outline a policy regarding hydropower projects, which is yet to come. Divergent views between three Union Ministries: Environment and Power on the one side and Water Resources on the other appears to have delayed the response.

Ravi Chopra, who was also the Chairperson of the Supreme Court panel on the 'Char Dham' all weather road project stated during a press conference organised by 'Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti' last week that a scientific paper 'Change in hydraulic properties of rock mass due to tunnelling' published in 2015 mentioned that repeated bursting and trapping of the

tunnel boring machine for construction of 12.1 kms tunnel from Helang to Tapovan in Uttarakhand had led to cracks in the area. This gives credence to the assertion being made by the environmentalists and local people that what has happened in Joshimath is as a result of the tunnelling exercise conducted by the NTPC. The project which also envisages a concrete barrage 15 kms upstream of Joshimath, has been drawing flak from the public for the crisis facing the town due to land subsidence.

Hyderabad based National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has recently released satellite images of Joshimath and a preliminary report on land subsidence which shows that the entire town may sink. Satellite images of Joshimath released by ISRO shows that the Himalayan town sank at a rapid pace of 5.4 cm in just 12 days triggered by a possible subsidence event in January this year. The satellite images show that the Joshimath-Auli road is also going to collapse due to the land subsidence. The findings in the preliminary report of ISRO are indeed frightening. *(Source: IANS; Jan 13, 2023)*

Following the alarm caused by sinking of Joshimath town, the Uttarakhand government has set up a seven-member panel comprising experts from IIT Roorkee, Geological Survey of India, National Institute of Hydrology, and the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology to conduct field survey in Joshimath. The expert panel's field assessment draft report after initial survey on Joshimath has pointed out that sediment-laden water, gushing out of an unknown underground source, might have caused arcuate-shaped erosion and cracks as deep as 1 metre in several areas.

Garhwal division is among India's most vulnerable regions. The Kedarnath floods

in 2013 and the Chamoli disaster in 2021 killing about 200 people in Joshimath's vicinity besides damaging two Hydel projects, foretell the devastation that the next Himalayan flood could wreak. Notwithstanding the fact that work on a number of highways and power projects sanctioned during the last decade are underway, there is an urgent need to review these projects to strike a judicious balance between development work and environmental concerns. This may dampen economic growth and job creation, but dangers of a huge ecological disaster are increasing. For administration in hilly regions, these are tough but necessary calls to make.

The Joshimath development should serve as a wake up call not only for the state of Uttarakhand, but also to all other states in the ecologically sensitive hilly region in north India.

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Egyptian President Al-Sisi's Visit to India

- Ghulam Rasool Dehlvi

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was invited as the chief guest on 26th January at India's Republic Day celebrations. This visit turned out to be a crucial historical occasion—the completion of 75 years of diplomatic relations between India and Egypt. A 120-member military contingent

from Egypt also took part in the celebrations.

Historically, India and the Arab Republic of Egypt have held deeply rooted relations, cultural exchanges, knowledge-sharing and diplomatic ties and increasing defence cooperation. Only three days after India's independence on August 15, 1947 formal relations were established between the two countries. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has rightly stated on Monday that mutual warmth and an age-old friendship between the two countries has strengthened during the recent past.

PM Modi invited President Al-Sisi as the Chief Guest for the Republic Day during India's G20 presidency this year. Remarkably, it has gone down well in the annals of history which has witnessed the bilateral civilizational, cultural, economic and diplomatic relations between India and Egypt. Both the countries have not only stood the test of time but have also been strengthened by the visit of President al-Sisi in India for the first time in 2015.

The Egyptian Ambassador in India has rightly pointed out that Modi-Sisi friendship and the anticipated better bilateral ties between Cairo and New Delhi will 'surpass' Nehru-Nasser. Notably, the strategic partnership between Egypt and India was more and less successful in the 1950s and 1960s. But even the closer relations between Jawaharlal Nehru and Gamal Abdel Nasser could not cause the Egyptian President to be the Republic Day chief guest in India. Now it is happening with Prime Minister Modi—for the first time—because of the personal bonding and the understanding that PM Modi shares with President Sisi. Thus, the Egyptian Envoy's optimistic remarks should be taken in a positive spirit. Clearly, this first-ever visit of the President of Egypt is an epoch-making opportunity to establish a

new era of the bilateral ties between the two oldest civilisations.

Among the countries that have world treasures of wonders at their foothills, India and Egypt come to the fore. On one hand, India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world with the Indus civilisation which flourished from about 2600 to 1900 BCE. The Indian civilisation which includes Harappa and Mohenjodaro, Dholavira, Kalibangan, Rakhigarhi, and Lothal in modern-day India. Author Namit Arora who recently wrote *Indians: A Brief History of A Civilization* takes us on an unforgettable journey of the Indian civilization through 5000 years of history – from the mysteries of Dholavira, Nagarjuna, the vision of Nalanda, the innovations of Vijayanagar to the discoveries of Abu Raihan Al-Beruni in his *Kitab al-Hind*. Thus, this brings alive the ancient, medieval and modern India that one can feel the centuries and millennia of Indian civilisation as the times pass by.

On the other hand, Egypt has a bright chapter of history, culture, arts and architecture as well as the seven most famous mummies including the incredible Mummies of the ancient Pharaohs of Egypt. Historical events and Qur'anic stories are hidden in the culture and history of Egypt – the battle of Prophet Moses (Hazrat Musa) and Pharaoh (Firaun), the drowning of Pharaoh's forces in the Nile River, and the beautiful stories of Hazrat Yusuf and Zuleikha. The statues of Abulhole, the architectural buildings in Alexandria such as the Mosque of Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi, St. Catherine's Cathedral, the civilization of the Nile River are still part of the curriculum of the world's universities. Most importantly, Egypt is the citadel of

of Islam's largest seminary in the world – Al-Azhar University popularly known in India as *Jamia al-Azhar* – which has enrolled a large number of ulema and graduates from Indian Madrasas for decades.

Al-Azhar has continued to evolve and promote the moderate methodology [Manhaj Mu'tadil] in Islamic theology without interruption since 975 CE. Notably, several Sunni and Sufi-oriented Indian Madrasas have an affiliation to the Al-Azhar's educational programmes such as the 3-year courses in Usul al-Deen (genealogies of Islamic thought resources), Kulliya al-Shariah wal Qanun (faculty of jurisprudence and law) and Kulliya al-Dirasaat al-Islamia wal-Arabia (faculty of Islamic and Arabic studies). While this helps the ongoing process of cultural exchange and knowledge-sharing, it has also augured well for India's second largest majority – the Indian Muslims. It was perhaps Shaikh al-Azhar (the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, a prestigious official position in Egypt) who coined the term 'Muwatin' (meaning: equal citizens) for the religious minorities, and issued the fatwa that in Islam, minority communities must be treated fairly well and should not even be called 'minorities'. This is an eye-opener for us Indian Muslims too. Instead of floating the idea of Muslim 'minoritism' in India, we should rather strengthen the position of al-Azhar which regards every community as equal citizens (Muwatin).

Notably, Al-Azhar Academy runs the World Academy for Training Mosque Imams, Preachers and Fatwa Researchers and offers training programmes through a 3-month crash course to the ulema of various countries. The focal points of Al-Azhar in this course entitled, *Tarbiyat-ul-Aaiymma* (Training of Imams) include: preparing contemporary imams and muftis well equipped with the modern challenges,

“Information Revolution” and an Islamic Perspective on “Moderation” (Ei’tidal) and Wasatiyyah—avoidance of extremism in Islamic approaches.

Dr. Muhammad Ad-Duwini, President of the Al-Azhar Islamic Research Academy has clearly stated: “The courses came within the framework of Al-Azhar’s endeavour to enhance the proficiency of male and female preachers. Such courses would enable them to better deal with contemporary issues, as well as guide them on how to deal with Islamic legal texts, and apply them to people’s practical life in a manner that takes into account the variety of time, place, situation, custom, and people involved. Such a manner would also clarify the rules and principles of fatwa, and explain the principles of theology from a moderate Islamic perspective”.

Focus on moderation and countering extremism and takfirist ideologies has been the crux of the Al-Azhar’s course on the training of Imams, says Maulana Dr Zishan Ahmad Misbahi who recently attended the course in Cairo.

“Ulema and imams from around the world are provided with a precise training, efficiency and expertise in this crash course so they can be capable to tackle the modern issues in their social and cultural settings. There, they are anchored in a peaceful and moderate version of Islamic theology which helps them curb the intersect takfirism and promote the peaceful coexistence with people of other faiths. After the training at Al-Azhar, when they go back to their own countries, obviously they foster national integration, communal harmony, Muslim and non-Muslim relations based on humanity and nationality”.

Currently a faculty member and mentor at Jamia Arifia founded by Sheikh Abu Saeed Shah Ehsanullah Safawi, Sufi master and rector of Khanqah-e-Arifia in Allahabad (Prayagraj), Maulana Zishan Misbahi is now struggling to alleviate Muslim sectarian conflicts, especially in madrasa texts and theological discourses. With an expertise and training in the Muslim philosophy (ilm-al-Kalam), he is actively engaged in intellectual endeavours as Islamic theologian associated with the Sufi seminary in Syed Sarawan Allahabad, to counter Takfirism – excommunicating and declaring someone beyond the pale of Islam. He has recently authored a thought-provoking book in Urdu titled, “Mas’ala-e-Takfeer-o-Mutakallimin” (The issue of Takfeer and perspective of Scholastic Theologians). The book deals with the intricate and subtle issues of Takfirist ideologies in Islam and has been greatly helping in saving Indian Islam from clutches of the Takfirists. He also edits an annual journal on Sufism “Al-Ihsan” which promotes inclusivism among Muslim theologians of various sects through scholarly Sufism.

Inspired by Egypt’s al-Azhar and its vision of al-Manhaj al-Mo’tadil (moderate methodology), many more young Islamic scholars especially from the Sunni-Sufi tradition are trying to fight against the sectarian disunity in the Indian Muslim community particularly from a theological point of view. Many other Indian participants in the Al-Azhar course on training of Imams hold the similar views.

Today, the significance of India-Egypt relations lies more in the geostrategic partnership. Egypt is strategically located as a hub for trade routes between Europe, Africa, and Asia. Geopolitically, Egypt holds a vital role to deepen India’s ties with many other Arab nations as part of the renewed

Indian focus on West Asia. More to the point, Egypt accords paramount importance to multilateral forums that comprise developing countries, such as Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the G77 considering their contributions to south–south cooperation. In this backdrop, Egyptian President Al-Sisi's visit to India as the Chief Guest for the Republic Day during India's G20 presidency would be received reasonably well.

Ghulam Rasool Dehlvi is an Indo-Islamic scholar and a Delhi-based writer on Sufism and Islamic affairs. He has written extensively on Islamic issues in the contemporary changing world and speaks at various forums on socio-economic, religio-political, and moral teachings in Islam.

The Vortex of Drug Trafficking and Abuse in India

- Vaishali Basu Sharma

Recall the widely circulated video of a young woman standing in the middle of a road clearly appearing to be in a stupor, unable to stand straight or even take a step. That video shot in Amritsar, Punjab in September 2022 shocked police and public and has served as a wake up call to the extent of drug abuse in the country.

Days after that another video of a man in a similar state began to make the rounds. While Punjab has made national headlines when it comes to the extent of drug addiction, similar revelations about drug abuse come from other parts of the country. From Kerala and Telangana several cases involving engineering students found in possession of psychedelic LSD stamps (d-lysergic acid

diethylamide soaked paper punched into small individual squares, known as blotters/stamps) have come to light. In Haryana's Sirsa district a man, believed to be in his early 20s, lay dead, still seated on his motorcycle, with a syringe sticking out of his right arm. The Northeast is no stranger to heroin usage. It was at one point the region with the one of the highest number of HIV positive cases mainly because of intravenous drug use. Today narcotics availability in the north east has taken on epidemic proportions because of the huge amounts of drugs that are being processed in labs along Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland's border areas.

Sea Routes, Overland and Drones:

Daily seizures by law enforcement in the border areas indicates that cross-border drug-smuggling has increased many fold not only because of record production in Afghanistan but also an escalating involvement of criminal groups within the country. In early January, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) came across just such an intricate nexus involving Pakistan-based criminal syndicates, manufacturers in Afghanistan, local traffickers and gangsters operating processing units in Ludhiana in Punjab and Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh. With over a dozen arrests made, law enforcement is still uncovering the extent of this illicit drug. A 300 kg heroin haul from the Shaheen Bagh area of Delhi in April last year apparently had linkages with these processing units in Muzaffarnagar. Some of the processing units in Punjab were found to be run by Afghan nationals.

Cross border drug smuggling both overland and via sea routes has become a leading threat for law enforcement that has national and social security ramifications. Criminal syndicates in Pakistan arrange for the

Other traditional means of import continue to be used. For instance, in late 2002 Kochi-based Yumito Foods was found to be importing methamphetamine (ice) and cocaine in two known cases worth Rs 502 crore and Rs 1,476 crore, in containers carrying imported fruit.

Golden Triangle has expanded into the "Golden Pentagon":

Myanmar is responsible for more than half of the world's heroin supply, and the bulk of the heroin processing labs are located near the Indo-Myanmar border. This is because the essential precursor chemicals for processing poppy acetic anhydride, ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, potassium permanganate, etc are produced and exported from India. The availability of poppy from the Golden Triangle via Myanmar and precursor chemicals in India, have made the border areas in Manipur and Mizoram a massive heroin processing area. Cartels then send the narcotics to Imphal, Aizawl, Kohima, Silchar or Dimapur, from where they are dispatched further into India for consumption and export to European and Middle Eastern markets. The previously infamous Golden triangle has expanded into the "Golden Pentagon" with the induction of Vietnam-Cambodia and Nagaland-Manipur in Northeast India.

Getting Hooked through Ganja onto Harder Drugs:

In southern India, Andhra Pradesh is the main source of ganja, a derivative of the cannabis plant (known by many names – ganja, marijuana, weed, pot, charas, hashish) supply, and tribal youth are being lured into its peddling in the state. Smugglers from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and other States are running their trade by

establishing contacts with the local ganja cultivators From the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) region and areas in Visakhapatnam and East Godavari district. The seizure of 1,300 kg of cannabis, worth about Rs 2.8 crore in October 2022, that was being transported from Telangana to Madhya Pradesh, gives a perspective into the scale of drug menace in India. The easy availability of ganja, the fact that it establishing contacts with the local ganja cultivators From the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) region and areas in Visakhapatnam and East Godavari district. The seizure of 1,300 kg of cannabis, worth about Rs 2.8 crore in October 2022, that was being transported from Telangana to Madhya Pradesh, gives a perspective into the scale of drug menace in India. The easy availability of ganja, the fact that it has a socio-religious association in India, and has traditionally been categorised as a soft drug with lesser associated health risks than hard drugs, such as ecstasy and cocaine, means that it was not as strictly regulated. But the easy availability of ganja through a network of suppliers and online links, means that students and youth in the state are getting hooked onto cannabis derivatives, and thereafter progress to more potent narcotic and synthetic substances. Bengaluru and Goa are the major hubs from where synthetic drugs are being sourced.

Rave parties where drugs like LSD, heroin, cocaine have become popular in cosmopolitan cities. But it is a common assumption that the use of such stimulants and opioids is confined only to the rave parties in cosmopolitan cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi-NCR. Another established trend related to the profiles of the addicts who were either from the lower end of the social strata who habituated to low-end, cheap drugs such as ganja, Fortwin painkiller injections, cough syrups, inhalers like ink whiteners, paints, etc or from the upper end of society addicted to the expensive synthetic stuff like cocaine,

MDMA and meth. But arrests and drug busts have indicated that both these assumptions and trends are now questionable. In tier II cities across the country the usage and peddling of both plant based and synthetic drugs is on the rise. A drug bust by police at a private resort in Rushikonda, Andhra Pradesh, unearthed exotic narcotics such as MDMA (commonly known as Ecstasy), LSD and crystal meth. Kerala police registered 24,701 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act till November 2022, as against 5,695 cases booked in 2021, which shows a jump of 333 per cent.

For decades Himachal's Kullu valley has been infamous for its world-class 'Malana Cream' charas; but today youth in the state are reeling under the influence of 'chitta' a potent form of hashish, being brought in primarily from neighbouring Punjab. In Kashmir the traditionally socially sanctioned ganja, first gave way to an opioid epidemic necessitated by way of militancy induced trauma relief and today has progressed into usage of hard drugs like heroin.

From Addict to Peddler:

Police in several states detected that the trend of addicts turning to peddling was common, with a majority of them being engineering graduates who used social media and the dark web browsers extensively to sell drugs. These peddlers maintain e-brochures in their fictitious social media accounts, offering a plethora of drugs ranging from MDMA, LSD to ganja. Technically adept, these students or young professionals who have turned to peddling then convert Indian money which they receive via online bank transactions or UPI apps into cryptocurrencies and transfer the

payments to the main supplier. Investigations into the alarming rise of drug peddling and abuse in Kerala, found that orders placed on the dark web were being delivered from diverse destinations such as the Netherlands, Poland, the U.S., and Qatar.

More startling is that the bulk of users and dealers being booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS) are between the ages of 18-22 years. In fact the average age at which youngsters are introduced to drugs keeps falling. Within this statistic another striking aspect is the increasing presence of women among those booked for substance peddling and abuse. With enforcement taking a backseat during the Covid-19 pandemic, the magnitude of synthetic drugs being trafficked and consumed within India has increased manifold since 2020 because the movement of drugs continued unabated even during the lockdown. As the government intensified a crackdown on non-medical use of opioids like morphine, fentanyl, tramadol and other psychoactive substances, the usage of amphetamines, MDMA, heroin, and cocaine increased. In 2021 for the first time deaths by suicide attributed to drug abuse and addiction breached the 10,000 mark. According to NCB data currently there are around 10 crore people in the country who are addicted to various narcotics substances.

Impact of Substance Abuse on Society:

There are several related issues with drug and trafficking and its abuse. It is a complex problem that meshes with socio-economic milieu to increase a person's vulnerability to substance abuse. Rising drug abuse has a direct impact on the economic and social health of the nation. Increasing drug usage will eventually begin to manifest in terms of rising crime rates, gang related violence and higher risk of developing infectious diseases such as HIV, hepatitis C and other blood-

-borne infections. There is a taboo associated with drug abuse which makes addicts and their families wary of accessing treatment facilities.

As it dismissed the anticipatory bail plea of a drug peddler, a bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, summed up the real danger from the rising number of youths in India getting addicted to drugs and peddling, "This country has one of the largest numbers of youths, a factor to power economic growth, but an overwhelming majority of addicts are amongst these youths, which has resulted in an increase of crime and violence."

While the use of psychoactive substances has been prevalent in India for centuries, the infusion of new narcotics substances, the pattern of their use and implications for public health had not been well-documented until recently, making it difficult to formulate effective policies to address this growing problem. The only nationwide study on drug abuse was the National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India, conducted between 2017-2018. But much has changed in the past few years. If the volume of methamphetamine, heroin, charas and hashish that is being seized is taken as a point of reference for the contraband being caught pro rata, the sheer magnitude of narcotics being trafficked into India is overwhelming.

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Gender Bias at Workplace: Beyond the Wage Gap

- Archana Sharma

*"Not everything that is faced can be changed.
But nothing can be changed until it is faced."*

- James Baldwin

Gender discrimination has many faces. Some are more commonly known and seen, like unequal pay and sexual harassment, and then there are others which have equal, if not worse effects for women. These include disproportionate performance reviews, leading to less promotions and eventually missing out on senior management positions, otherwise known as the glass ceiling effect. Other examples include less supportive superiors, judgemental behaviour towards women who dress a certain way, outspoken females and even married or pregnant women. Such overt forms of biases, particularly ones that need adherence to the norms of a patriarchal society, have historically hindered women's growth in the professional sphere.

There are many studies which quantify gender-based discrimination and the unequal treatment of men and women in the workplace, by highlighting the pay gap. But this inequality goes beyond the monetary aspects. And though there have been reports highlighting sexual harassment in companies, there is not much evidence or research regarding other forms of gender bias in India. But there is still a lot which can be inferred from the available data.

Data Magnified

Higher education and qualifications usually lead to more economic opportunities, but when it comes to the female workforce, gender discrimination tends to negate those positives as well. According to the "India Discrimination Report 2022" by Oxfam India,

discrimination, due to societal and employers' prejudices, is believed to be the main cause for the low rates of participation of women in the labour force. It says that though discrimination in access to employment has decreased over the decade, the personal endowments, or the educational qualifications of women, have little to no impact on their job prospects.

This can be further seen in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for females. LFPR shows the population percentage of the labour force or the active workforce. As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) in India, female LFPR is much worse than that of men. The LFPR in urban areas stood at 73.4% for males but only 21.7% for females, in the July to September quarter PLFS. This was a slight improvement from a year ago. The 2020-21 annual PLFS showed that the all-India female LFPR had increased by 2.3% in 2021 to 25.1%. But this is still a massive decline from the 42.7% rate of 2004-05.

These statistics are important because they help us understand the depth of the issue. The low female LFPR is not just about losing or non-utilising the productive potential of our country. When women participate in the workforce, they are not just increasing their household incomes, but more importantly, by working outside of their homes, these women are helping weaken the societal constraints – Representation Matters!

This works in tandem with another issue of qualified women unwilling to join the workforce due to family responsibilities and the need to conform to social norms. According to a report, published last

year, less than one in five women in India are in the workforce, and what's worse, is that out of the five, four are not only not working but not even looking for work. Add to this the fact that for women, "household constraints trump financial need" while searching for jobs.

Not Just Covid

It can be argued that recent figures may not show the best picture due to Covid lockdowns and exits from the workplace, but it is believed that such exits were temporary. In 2019, the female LFPR in India fell to 20.3%, according to World Bank estimates. These estimates further show that India has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in the world, with less than a third of the women working or actively looking for a job.

Implicit Bias

One of the main reasons for the discrimination at the workplace is the presence of an implicit bias. Unconscious biases, or implicit biases, are attitudes that are held subconsciously and affect the way individuals feel and think about others around them. In fact, many researchers even say that the true measures of gender bias are much worse than noted in studies because people tend to answer survey questions in a manner that will be viewed favourably by others. Researchers call it the social desirability bias, and it often results in people giving responses they believe are politically correct instead of revealing how they truly feel.

There are many studies which have confirmed that invisible barriers are holding women back, more than sexism itself. There are countless survey-based studies worldwide which included India in the respondent's pool – all of them reported a few common examples of implicit biases. From the beginning of the hiring process to the very language being used to describe male and female candidates, such implicit biases are

always at play. If the job description suggests a demanding role or travelling, then the implied requirement for the role is 24*7 availability and capacity for a lot of travel. The implicit gender bias in such a situation makes this a pro-male position as they have fewer domestic obligations and are usually in a better position to travel given short notice. And once hired, it only gets worse. Everyone has to learn the “acceptable behaviours” and company values when joining an organisation but for women this can be even more challenging due to the norms of a “masculine workplace”. For example, corporate offices expect their employees to work beyond the regular 9-5, but most women have household chores and responsibilities as well and trying to do such “double duty” of both home and office can take a massive toll on anybody. While not an outright discriminatory practice, implied expectations such as these adversely affect women’s appraisals and promotions.

Another example of implicit bias is present in the very terminology used to describe male and female employees. Research found that adjectives such as ‘emotional’, ‘sensitive’, ‘affectionate’ and ‘friendly’ are used to describe women, while ‘ambitious’, ‘self-confident’, ‘tough’ and ‘aggressive’ are used for men. Conversely, words like “ambitious” and “aggressive” imply negative connotations for women as they are viewed as difficult or not being a team player.

Patriarchy at Play

Traditional Indian women are supposed to be subservient and submissive. But if a woman has to succeed in a masculine workplace, she has to deny her gender. She has to be willing to distance herself from “traditional femininity and domestic

duties”. This not only makes women lose their identity as they try to “fit in” with the male colleagues, by cracking sexist jokes or partaking in the “not like other girls” narrative but also adds to the already existing gender bias by creating a divide between women themselves.

Another major problem, prevalent in patriarchal societies is how women are taken less seriously in leadership roles. This situation becomes worse when it is the women leaders themselves not supporting other women. The Gender Social Norms Index report by the UNDP revealed that majority of all men and women hold some sort of bias against women. And there are a lot of reports on various online forums where women have complained of harsher treatment by their female counterparts, bordering on bullying and at times, even worse. One reason for such situations is the belief of “me vs her” based on the lack of opportunities for women at mid to senior management levels. Another is about maintaining their image among the male co-workers. But the worst is when women are penalised for supporting other women.

There has been a lot of progress made towards gender equality but discrimination still persists. This is especially seen in organisational structures and practices that favour men. And while there are laws and policies in place to deal with explicit or conscious prejudices, tackling biases that one is not even aware of, could be rather challenging. What’s worse is that many studies show gender bias to still persist in fields that have a good representation of women. In fact, in a lot of situations, it is the very people who think that biases no longer exist, are the ones who might be implicitly perpetuating them. And so, efforts aimed at only increasing the number of women in the workforce, may not solve the problem of

gender inequality.

Proper Policies with Enabling Environment

Though, almost all corporate organisations have inclusive and pro-women policies in place, the point to note is that creating such policies is comparatively easy, proper implementation is the more difficult task. Take for example a policy providing flexible working hours for women. This could however backfire, as women making use of this very policy can be labelled as "not interested in their career or that work is not a priority for them". Such policy implementation, without proper sensitisation, can also impact female employees, their appraisals, promotions and eventually their overall career growth.

There are no easy or short term solutions to the problem of gender bias and discriminatory attitudes. But apart from educating people about such implicit biases, steps like steering away from gender defined roles, speaking against such bias and not taking the easy way out, would empower women and make way for an unbiased workforce in the future.

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Women and Environment: Women as Victims and Women as Actors

- Simran

Environment comes from the French word 'environmer' which means surround. Environment is the sum total of water, air and land, interrelationships among themselves and also with human

beings, other living organisms, and property. On the other hand, Women were considered as a weaker sex from ancient times all over the world, women are predominantly responsible for management and conservation of resources for their families. . Whether it be exploring the world's water resources or protecting the forest resources, fearless women are leading the charge. Bringing in the arguments of Ecofeminists to depict the relation between environment and women, I'd like to say that, there are important connections between the domination and oppression of women and the domination and exploitation of nature. In patriarchal thought, women are identified as being closer to nature and men as being closer to culture. Nature is seen as inferior to culture; hence, women are seen as inferior to men. Because the domination of women and the domination of nature have occurred together, women have a particular stake in ending the domination of nature, "in healing the alienated human and non-human nature." The feminist movement and the environmental movement both stand for egalitarian, non-hierarchical systems. They thus have a good deal in common and need to work together to evolve a common perspective, theory, and practice.

A lot of studies on women and the environment have shown that women are very close to nature and they are significant actors in natural resource management and they are major contributors to environmental rehabilitation and conservation. Natural resource depletion and environmental degradation has direct consequences for women's time, income, health and social support system. The knowledge of women regarding the forest produce which have high herbal and medicinal value gained through long experience is disappearing with deforestation. Unconscious and ruthless exploitation of natural resources, which resulted in environmental degradation, has a

direct impact on women. About two to three million people in the forest and tribal belts of India earn their livelihood by carrying fuel load on their head and of these, 90 percent are women. The year-round collection of minor forest products and herbs have traditionally provided extra income, valuable nutrition and medical support. As women operate in a labour intensive and non-monetized economy, they have become victims of profiteers, middlemen and also the men in their families. Recent studies revealed that women are the direct victims of such environmental degradation, pollution etc.

Noted Environmentalist Vandana Shiva notes that violence against women and against nature are linked not just ideologically but also materially. For instance, Third World women are dependent on nature "for drawing sustenance for themselves, their families, their societies." The destruction of nature thus becomes the destruction of women's sources for "staying alive."

At the same time, in the course of their everyday interactions with nature, women acquire a special knowledge of species varieties and the processes of natural regeneration. They could thus be seen as both victims of the destruction of nature and as repositories of knowledge about nature, in ways distinct from the men of their class. Women and female children are the ones most adversely affected by environmental degradation. The reasons for this are primarily threefold. First, there is a pre-existing gender division of labour. It is women in poor peasant and tribal households who do much of the gathering and fetching from the forests, village commons, rivers, and wells. Second, there are systematic gender differences in the distribution of subsistence resources (including food and

health care) Third, there are significant inequalities in women's and men's access to the most critical productive resource in rural economies, agricultural land, and associated production technology.

But should we see people in general and women in particular solely as victims of environmental degradation? The answer would be a straight no. Women play a very important role in the conservation of the environment. There have been many instances when women have come forward as a lead actor to protest in order to protect the same.

Several leading environmental movements in India have been led by women. The environmental movement of the Bishnoi began with the royal order of Maharaja Abhay Singh to cut off Khejri trees, worshipped by Bishnois, for construction of the fortress. The villagers, under the leadership of Amrita Devi, protested against the order as she hugged the tree, as a new form of dissent. Amrita Devi and her three daughters were beheaded, disobeying royal order. Just before her martyrdom, Amrita Devi declared, "If a tree is saved even at the cost of one's head, it's worth". The Chipko movement was started in 1973 at Garhwal division of Uttar Pradesh specially Chamoli District. The protest movement was organised by Chandi Prasad Bhatt, who aired the slogan of "ecology is a permanent economy." The movement was led by Sunderlal Bahuguna, Bachhi Devi, Gauri Devi and women of the Garhwali area saved trees by embracing them.

The Silent Valley Movement was against the decision of Kerala Government to construct a dam for hydroelectric power project in the Silent Valley forest, a biodiversity hotspot. The Malayalam poet and environmentalist, Sugatha Kumari was the prominent leader in this movement. Despite the offer of employment and development in the area,

people, especially women opposed the hydro electricity project. As a result the project was cancelled by personal interventions of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1980 and Silent Valley was declared as a National Park in 1984.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) is an environmental movement against the building of a number of dams along the Narmada River funded by the World Bank. The NBA, which was led by Medha Patkar, Baba Amte, and Arundhati Roy had turned into the International protest, gaining support from NGOs all around the globe. With strong protest from the NBA, the World Bank withdrew the project in 1993, but the case continued in the Supreme Court.

Even after being so active in several fields women were kept away from the powers of decision making. Their unequal access to education and so-called lack of decision-making authority at all levels has lowered their position in the society. As a result, it has had adverse effects on income, nutrition, health, social support networks and domestic knowledge. Practically being close to nature, women are always able to realise environmental issues better. Since women are the prospective users of the facilities, it is necessary to consider their views in planning to save the environment and

implementing projects for the same.

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