

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**Role of Women in Curbing Youth Unrest with Special Reference To North East India**

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**Abstract:**

Youth unrest has a direct link to substance abuse and the role of family. Unrest results due to failure at different levels-from personal to public. Increasing substance abuse is like drugs, alcohol etc. is related to increasing level of stress on an individual and as a result youth unrest is on the rise. Here women can play a positive role in curbing the menace.

**Keywords:** substance abuse, stress, unrest, menace.

**Introduction**

Plainly speaking youth is the period between childhood and adult age and the features associated with being young. The youth has two assets: brain and raw physical strength. But when the physical ability is employed in negative areas, it results in violence and subsequent unrest. When the brain which is intellectual ability has no opportunity for expression and it combines with brawn in negativity, one can

only imagine the extent of damage that will bring.

Youth unrest and violence is a reaction to the failure at different levels-personal level, family level, societal level, and also at the government level. Youth unrest can be categorized under two subheads-at the individual level and again among the groups. Individualistic traits which vary from person to person have an important role to play in this connection. Individual ego, anxiety, fear, hopes and aspirations as well as non fulfillment of the same may contribute to the unrest. Again friend circle's influence cannot be denied in the youth. Young people act in groups and do share a lot of time in groups which might be negative sometimes. Unhealthy competition among group members might prove fatal. Peer group pressure is always there and young boys and girls start smoking and drinking, partying late night etc. together in most of the cases. Surprisingly the guardians remain blissfully unaware. Here we can cite the example of the few students of Gurukul Grammar School where two of the boys were drowned in Brahmaputra on a Sunday. It

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was reported in the media that all the boys who went out there were drunk. When parents were contacted, they informed that all of them went out for preparing a project. Again recently a young girl tried to commit suicide as she was unable to cope with the pressure and punishment she was subjected to for not being able to converse in English.

**Objective**

The paper attempts to study the relation between growing youth unrest and the factors responsible for it.

**Reasons behind Youth Unrest**

One of the reasons for today's evil world of conflict and rampant decadence can be traced to the breakdown and disharmony in the fundamental husband-wife relationship and various issues associated with that relationship because the lives of the young ones revolve around their parents. With the breakdown of joint-families, children in their formative years do not get the emotional support in the crisis situation. Vigilance of the other family members are restricted nowadays. A problem only deepens with no support inside the family. The children are the greatest sufferer of the polluted family environment.

At the family, level parents do not have time for the children. Most of the time parents particularly working parents try to compensate their absence by showering

gifts lavishly. Love and care for the children is judged by the cost of the gift rather than sharing some quality time with the children. Few parents now get the time to share and enjoy the smaller joys and achievements of life. We are not saying that every parent is disinterested. But we are living in a world of cut throat competition where a 85% or 90% marks at X or XII level does not make parents happy. It puts immense pressure on the young boys/girls and sometimes the young ones are unable to cope with the pressure of high expectation and ambition of the parents. Discouraged and criticized for their apparent failure, many young men and women fall prey to different banned substances and thereby bringing an end to the life full of prospect and potentiality. Increasing use of drugs and banned substances by youths asserts this situation of unrest prevailing among youth.

Our society is to be blamed too. Values are no longer worshipped. Rather it is the rich and the powerful that are valued in the present society. Today's young generation is also under the impression that it is the money that matters. Qualities like honesty, integrity and morality are no longer counted in the unhealthy pursuit of being successful. The concept of easy money is creeping in our households as people are ready to go to any extent to become rich which again influences the young mind although negatively. The

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young people are confused and it contributes to the situation of unrest.

Again young educated men and women are frustrated for not getting their due recognition, jobs, purely on the basis of merit. Due to the prevailing corruption at all levels of the society the young people are bitter and they are losing faith in the present system. Against this backdrop, some sections of the youths are lured by different extremist organizations as they also try to cash on this situation.

Today's young generation is more aware than we were at that age. Rules and discipline are tough to enforce. Quarrels are inevitable and finding a solution to the problem starts with logical discussions and often ends with emotional showdowns. The model we grew up with –“I'M-YOUR-PARENT-THIS-IS-HOW-I-EXPECT- YOU-TO BEHAVE” just does not work anymore. Influence of the electronic media and Internet is also worth mentioning in this regard. Young people regularly visit different pornographic sites which influence their young and impressionable mind and they in turn get involved in different violent activities.

**Situation of Unrest in the Context Of Northeast**

Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland are the eight states

of North Eastern region and the last four shares a common international border with Myanmar, the world's second largest opium producing country. It is pertinent here to note that a wide range of structural and environmental factors, including underdevelopment, unemployment, and westernization increased the vulnerability of the young people to drug use. Easy availability of drugs across the border, stress arising from socio-political unrest resulting in violent conflict and frustration born out of the lack of employment opportunities for the growing educated youth in the region are often considered as the major causes of drug abuse as a serious social disease. Growing sense of alienation from the heartland of India along with a deep sense of deprivation has added to the woe. Thus there is a direct link between youth unrest and drugs, HIV/AIDS, violent conflict, wide spread poverty, underdevelopment and large scale unemployment which make the situation of North eastern states a grim one.

For nearly five decades, Northeast India is facing insurgency and Govt. of India is primarily trying to combat insurgency through the employment of the army and the Para military forces. Poor governance and political insensitivity has deepened the crisis. Added to this, there is a heightened feeling of alienation which fuelled the demand for secession or for

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creation of new states to satisfy ethnic yearnings.

Over 2,300 people died due to drug overdose from 2107-2019 in India with the highest number of such fatalities recorded in the age group of 30-45 years. The 'Magnitude of Substance Abuse in India' report by AIIMS Delhi's National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre has established that there are roughly 63 lakh people in the country addicted to heroin and 25 lakh to pharmaceutical opioids. Another 50 lakh people are addicted to cannabis and 40 lakh to bhang. And when it comes to alcohol, which has roughly 5.7 crore people who have problems related to drinking while 2.9 crore who are dependent on it. The actual number of drug and alcohol user is much higher.

Loon Gangte, regional coordinator for South Asia at the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition, said employment opportunities must be provided after rehabilitation. "It needs to be ensured what happens after rehab rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is the easy path. After rehabilitation, about 80-90 per cent fall back into addiction so there needs to be a plan for it. The government should think beyond rehabilitation. Affected people must be provided employment too which will help.

Alcohol is the most commonly abused substance in all the states in India except Mizoram. Finding of different studies revealed that 80% of the Injected Drug Users in our society are introduced to drug use while they are below 20 years- a very critical stage in a person's life. Dependency on drug affects a person's physical and psycho-social aspects and often the person is unable or unwilling to engage in any productive work beyond what is required for procuring drugs. Most drug users belong to affluent families and are highly educated and also smart people. Thus it is a great loss to the society to which they belong who would have otherwise achieved better growth and development.

The unfortunate stigma and discrimination associated with Drug use, HIV/AIDS has caused this problem to increase in society. In the NE region the greater concern is related to more and more orphans and HIV infected children.

The state of Assam which has nearly 70% of the population of the NE falls under the category of highly vulnerable state. Assam has every possibility to explode with the epidemic in the near future as Guwahati, the gateway of the NE is also the biggest transit city, with a very large floating population that goes in and out of NE. Migrant workers, truckers and security personnel are categorized as "bridge population" and are much more

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vulnerable to HIV infection. Moreover Assam being a conservative society the stigma and discrimination around the issue of drug use, HIV and AIDS are still very high which is again making the situation very complex.

Human traffickers are turning to India's poverty ridden and insurgency wracked NE states in their search for young girls to work in the brothels of the big cities luring them in the name of job and comfort. Young girls and women from the poor, desperate families fall prey to these gangs who involve them in sex rackets. Girls from broken families, having lost one or both parents in the regions protracted ethnic conflicts, anti- insurgency operations, are the easy targets.

Poor governance, inept political handling and lack of development, corruption, unemployment, lack of industrialization have contributed in growing unrest and young boys and girls are increasingly lured by different militant outfits. Young and impressionable minds are targeted by the extremist organizations. But the ideological content of insurgent movements has withered and been replaced by its criminalization and needless violence.

**Peace Initiative by Women of Northeast**

It is in this context of changing realities and prevailing youth unrest that women have a key role to play. Solution to

this problem is not an easy task. Different women's organizations in the Northeastern states are playing a positive role in countering insurgency. The women of Manipur are highly politicized. Meira Paibi is women's association and one of the largest grass root human rights movement in the region, comprising virtually the entire adult Meitei female population in every Meitei town and village. It is a watchdog of civil rights violations at the community level, initiating and engaging in campaigns against rights violation such as arbitrary detention, cordon and search operations and torture committed by the security personnel of the govt. of India. However the Meitei women are little concerned with women's rights in and of themselves, and believe that they must "get general civil rights implemented first". Again who can forget the continuous battle fought by Irom Sharmila in Manipur against the excess committed by the armed forces? The Naga Mother's Association (NMA) is one of the best known women's organizations in Northeast India, working for peace issues. It was formed on 14 February 1984. The organization aims at upholding womanhood, human rights and human values. From its inception, the NMA has rendered valuable service for the cause of peace (Manchanda 2001). In October 1994, NMA formed a Peace Team to help wrest the deteriorating political situation amongst the various armed groups. With the slogan 'Shed No More Blood', the members of the

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NMA started a series of activities to bring peace—namely, they initiated dialogues with the armed groups as well as the state government; public rallies for peace were organized with religious leaders; and appeals were made to both parties to stop the killings that were going on. Like Manipur efforts by women continued in the field of peace building in Assam. Mention may be made of the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust, Anchalik Mahila Samitis and Sajagata Samiti. Some women's organizations have been active on specific issues of human rights violations, but they have not sustained their efforts. More consistent has been the Bodo Women's Justice Forum, founded in 1993, which has organized various meetings around the issues of peace and human rights.

Northeast Women Initiative for Peace is a network of women's organizations that are working for peace in this region of India to counter the level of militarization that has engulfed India's Northeast under the garb of insurgency and counter-insurgency. It is an initiative of the Manipur Women Gun Survivor's Network and was formed on 13 June 2009. NEIWIP brings together women from all over the Northeast states to strategize an action plan for building peace, providing justice and political rights in the region ruptured by years of conflict.

**Women's Role in General:**

In our Indian culture a mother is considered the first and the best teacher. A strong, sensible and understanding woman can create a healthy environment for her children to live in and for their proper grooming. A mother can instill values like honesty, caring and sharing among her children. Right kinds of values adopted in childhood go a long way in shaping the personality of the child.

A mother is generally very close to her children. So she is in a position to explain the dos and don'ts of life in a friendly manner. Terrorizing the child doesn't help. If the mother tries to win confidence of the children and vice versa, then half of the battle is won. Young boys and girls should be taught to live and grow in certain limitations. Abundance needs to be avoided because young ones should learn to value money or for that matter anything provided to them. In the process they will learn to be responsible towards their life, parents, family and society at large. But a mother needs to be careful in handling the emotional upheavals faced by her children which are a common situation in the lives of youth. Instead of giving sermon or ruling from the top, she more than the father needs to understand the emotional state of the young ones and think about restoring the emotional balance. Mother can teach the child to be independent to deal with the bigger challenges of life.



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Forceful parenting begets grudging respect. When freedom isn't forbidden fruit, children end up asking the opinion of the parents. The mother can take the role of a sibling and make friends with the children and their friends. Even a working mother can spend some quality time with the children. Mutual trust and respect is necessary like one mother said about her 30 years old son "our relationship has never been formal, but one of equals, of mutual respect". Mother can play the part of a patient listener.

The role of the lady teacher is also important in curbing youth unrest. A young girl student can communicate with a woman better than a male teacher. The student can share her problem and find a solution to it by talking freely with a lady teacher. The teacher with all her experience and sensitivity can work at a personal level in diffusing crisis. At the young age most of the unrest results from the inability to control anxiety, fear and above all emotion.

**Conclusion:**

On the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021, our honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for realizing the vision of a drugs-free India, noting that they bring darkness, destruction and devastations. He also said that addiction is neither cool nor a style statement. In the emerging realities of the Northeast the fight

against youth unrest cannot be won with threats. Rather the youths should be led to see reasons to be constructive. This can be done by empowering young people with functional skills that will make them economically self-reliant and able to contribute to the growth of the country. The youth are the greatest investment for a nation's sustainable growth. If the youth are usefully engaged and made aware they would not resort to violence as a solution to every disagreement. Ultimately it is the values instilled in the child, that matters and it can carry the child forward. Life is not always fair, so young boys/girls with the right kind of values would be in a position to handle failure as well as success in the true spirit.

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