

DRUG FREE SOCIETY

The bright future of our country depends on the youth. If the young generation of the country starts going in the wrong path, then definitely their future goes into darkness. Now to make a drug free country, first of all the Government of India should take a great step. Along with banning the government, awareness should be spread to the people through various types of de-addiction centers and awareness should be spread through TV. The efforts made by the government are commendable, but it is very important for every citizen to spread awareness about this de-addiction in himself and the people around him and help under the government de-addiction campaign. Together we all can one day make the country a drug free country.

Uncharitable remarks by Obama

K.V. SEETHARAMAIAH
In an interview with CNN on Thursday, Barack Obama has cautioned India "if India does not protect the rights of ethnic minorities, there are chances of India being isolated. His uncharitable remarks on ethnic minorities are highly provocative. The Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has pointed out that during the tenure of Obama, six Muslim majority countries viz. Syria, Yemen, Saudi, Iraq and other Muslim countries had faced bombing by the US. The number of bombings has been put at 26000. Sitharaman has observed that 13 countries have conferred highest civilian awards on Modi. It is disquieting that Obama issued a statement that does not go well with India at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was talking about India in front of everyone. In fact the minorities in India are not denied of their rights. In the Hindu-dominated India, even Hindus are not being treated as first among equals. The concern shown by Obama reminds a fiction. In a house, there were mother, son, daughter-in-law and daughter. Two rotis were prepared. It had to be distributed among son, daughter-in-law and daughter. The mother advises the son and daughter-in-law to part with half of the rotis from their share in favour of daughter. Ex-USCIRF Chief has suggested that Obama should complement India. US official Moore has snubbed Obama for his comments on minorities treatment in India. Obama needs to be reminded of genocide of Uighurs and other Muslim groups by China. 77 per cent believe there is not a lot of discrimination in India. 98 per cent of Muslims are free to practice their religion. 90 per cent Indians believe it is important to respect all religions. Nearly half of Muslims believe after seven decades that the partition of the country strained the relations between Hindus and Muslims. The remarks of Obama are in poor light.

Large & Mid Cap Funds offer solution for Wealth Creation

BALWAN SINGH SAMBYAL

Investors should consider investments which offer risk-adjusted returns. If risk management, a key to successful investment, is well taken care of in the portfolio, the only outcome is long-term wealth creation. Diversification and asset allocation strategies play a vital role in risk mitigation and thus are helpful in keeping wealth creation journey on track.

Equity has an established history of generating significant wealth in the long run. For those who can't track stocks on a regular basis but desire to benefit from growth equity offers, investment through equity mutual funds is the best way to create goal-oriented wealth.

Large & Mid Cap Fund, one of the categories in the equity mutual fund segment, are capable of offering long-term financial solutions. These are open-ended schemes which invest in companies with large market capitalisation and those which are second in the ladder - the mid-sized companies.

Generally, investors go for large cap funds for stable returns. But it is equally true that seeking excessive stability in the portfolio often leads to missing out on the other growth opportunities present in the market. Large & Mid Cap funds with exposure to mid-cap stocks, which are comparatively riskier than large caps, tend to add the extra boost to your portfolio over the long run.

Since mid-caps are in the process of becoming large caps in years to come, the growth propositions are higher and so is the value creation. It is prudent to invest in such stocks early and be a part of their growth stories. This is very the large & midcap fund becomes very relevant.

Such a scheme allocates a minimum of 35% each in large cap and mid cap. Thus investors have a relatively stable portfolio due to exposure to large caps along with a growth-oriented strategy with allocation to midcaps. ICICI Prudential Large & Mid Cap Fund is one of the steady performers across market cycles, in this category. Investors who seek long-term growth potential and have an investment horizon of 5 years and above may consider this category scheme.

(The writer is Mutual Fund Distributor, J&K).

World Famed Valley of Flowers

G.L. KHAJURIA

"Thou art the luster in the moon and effulgence in the sun, thou art the taste in water and warmth in the flame; bereft of thou, the world would be devoid of substance (Panchastavi)". And the mother earth and all her manifestation of charming natural gifts like lush green forests of higher and lower strata intermingled with blooming flowers and with them the mother earth smiles. This is an unutterable truth and is the greatest strength-(Mahabharata).

The enchanting and thrilling upper Bhyunder valley was brought into limelight far back in 1931 by Frank Symthe, member of the successful Kamet expedition who gave the name 'valley of flowers' and made it world famous. Frank Symthe was so enamored by its charming and enchanting valley that he visited it six years later, explored it extensively with utmost curiosity. As a consequence, therefore, he wrote a fascinating description in his famous travelogue- 'The Valley of flowers'. He also collected more than 250 varieties of seeds and plants for the botanical garden of Edinburgh.

The valley of Flowers lies between the main land of Alknanda and Dhuli Ganga, in the Zaskar ranges of Garhwal Himalayas. The river Pushpavati which flows through this valley has its source in the huge Tripta glacier which extends upto the most famous Ghori Parvat peak which is a flattish valley about 5kms long and 2 kms wide stretching East-West. The most convenient entrance to the

valley is from South Where Pushavati flows through a very deep gorge. Besides, two more routes preferred by the shepherds and trekkers branch off or offshoot from the valley. The one from the western side leading to Hanuman Chatti via kant khal pass and the other from the eastern side leading to Ghamsali village via Lakshman pass and both these places cover three days trekking distance from the valley itself.

The river Pushpavati is joined by river Lakshman Ganga which flows down from Hamkund lokpal lake at Gangharia whereafter it takes the name Bhyunder Ganga which joins Alaknanda at Govindghat.

Govindghat is situated on the main 'Rishikesh - Badrinath' Pilgrims route at the right bank of Alaknanda and is at an elevation a rounding 1800- 2000mits from Mean sea level(MSL). Around 278 kms road journey through the river one reaches Govindghat from Rishikesh - The foothill town which is as wall the main rail/motor head to the valley of flowers together with other enchanting and pilgrimage spots for the religious and tourists alike.

At Govindghat, the road leads to the Bhyunder valley which further branches off the main road. Gangharia, the last human outpost and the main base camp for the valley of flowers are the Hamkund Shrine. It is around 2-3 kms from Govindghat and can be trekked on foot or by ponies. This track runs along Bhyunder Ganga. One has to cross over through suspension bridge at Alknanda-

Govindghat. Ahead, one has to trek through a very deep gorge. Besides, two more routes preferred by the shepherds and trekkers branch off or offshoot from the valley. The one from the western side leading to Hanuman Chatti via kant khal pass and the other from the eastern side leading to Ghamsali village via Lakshman pass and both these places cover three days trekking distance from the valley itself.

The view around the vicinity of this spot has a disappointed introduction to the beauty of nature's bounty ahead. It is after a weary plodding around 3kms or so that the valley widens and one comes across some bewildering and breath-taking landscape. The gradient of river is very steep whereas the flow of water is fast. The fog generated by the churned water beating against perpendicular rocks and massive boulders is wafted far and wide riding on the breeze produced by the down rushing water of the river. Its cool touch mops the sweet beads and drains away the fatigue caused by the uphill journey.

On the right side, a water fall more than 150 meters high descend down the granite rock to meet Bhyunder Ganga. And all the time, one is passing through one of the most beautiful forests full of alpine intermingled with maple, walnut mulberry, elm, oak, bird-cherry, horse-chestnut, honeybea, Alder, rhododendron etc. The foaming river cascades its way till one cross over to the left bank, a little beyond the Bhyunder village. The route to Hathi Parvat and Ghori Parvat emanates from this village. The vegetation changes all of sudden. One is completely surrounded by tall centuries old massive trees of silver fir at Ghangharia.

Ghangharia, a hamlet having a Forest Rest House(FRH) Tourist Rest House(TRH) a

sacred shrine(Gurudwara) and few shops. This spot is located at an elevation arounding 3,200 meters from mean sea level (MSL) and beyond Ghangharia exist the unspoiled beauty of nature, the valley of Flowers which is barely 4-5 kms trek on foot or on pony. And from here onwards, Hemkund is hardly 4.5 to 5kms trek. Thence onwards, the valley of Flowers veers sharply to the left from the main trail which climbs steeply to the sacred and famous lake. Hamkund, situated at an altitude arounding 4,200 meters from mean sea level (MSL).

The ascent to the valley of Flowers is almost gradual till the valley narrows down into a deep gorge and the forest is compressed between narrow walls of rock. The awesome cliffs guarding this southern entrance of valley are almost rising to more than 1000 meters on either side which block the view of the valley.

The valley of Flowers is having a wide space. Beginning at an elevation of 3,500 meters, it gradually slopes down up like a winding corridor; to a little more than 3,700 meters till it meets the snout of the glacier. The valley is snow-bound from mid-November to mid-may during which period this area remains frozen and thereby it is impossible and desolate. But as soon as snow starts melting, the rains commence, and that is the miracle which has made this valley famous world over.

(The author is Former Dy. Conservator of Forest, J&K).

Medical courses beyond MBBS

VIJAY GARG

Russia is one of the most preferred destinations for MBBS abroad for students all around the globe. After all, Russia is a developed country, which has a lot of opportunities in both education and employment. Students, especially Indian medical students choose MBBS Russia, because of the certain advantages it provides in terms of education and job security.

MBBS is one of the top career choices in India. Students from different economic backgrounds aim to become doctors, and take science as their subject in the 12th class. Preparing for MBBS itself is a rigorous process. Getting into medical college in India is not easy for any of the students preparing for it. In India, the NEET exam is undertaken by the aspirants for securing admission in medical colleges. The students are required to have studied science with Physics, Chemistry and Biology in the 12th class. NEET is considered one of the toughest exams to crack in India. But students willingly take the exam, and also prepare rigorously for the exam. The main issue, however, has been the admission in the medical colleges. Even with the NEET qualification, one may not get into their preferred medical college and this really creates difficulty for the students. Similarly, the high cost of pursuing MBBS, which spans over 5 years, and costs lakhs of rupees, cannot be afforded by everyone. Therefore, the students in search of quality education opt for MBBS abroad. For these students, Russia becomes one of the top destinations for pursuing MBBS abroad.

However, there are students who often join MBBS due to peer pressure and there is obviously high risk of failures in the MBBS study as well as profession. A lot of people pursue preparation for a medical career after taking biology due to the lack of career options. However, that is not the reality at all. Apart from MBBS there are a plethora of courses related to medicine which are not MBBS, yet they are highly economic and also have good job options.

The issue with MBBS aspirants is that they never tend to look beyond being doctors, therefore there is always confusion and a lot of misconceptions, that really hinders the progress of the biology students.

Alternative Medicine: Apart from MBBS, there are a plethora of courses related to medicine that one may explore. One may have heard about a lot of various types of medicinal studies like homeopathy, Unani, Ayurveda and more recently gaining popularity, fields like Naturopathy. The courses for these are as follows: BAMS (Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery), BUMS (Bachelor of Unani Medicine and Surgery),

BHMS (Bachelor of Homeopathy and Surgery), BNYS (Bachelor of Naturopathy and Yoga Sciences).

There are different durations for all of these courses and these options are available in India and abroad. In India, the course duration of BAMS is of 4.5 years whereas for BUMS, BHMS, BNYS is of 5.5 years each and NEET qualification is required. NEET qualification is mandatory if one wants to pursue a career in these fields. These courses have been in existence for a long time now and gaining popularity over the years. These are all interesting fields of study and practice in the domain of alternative medicine. There are government as well as private institutions for that with decent affordable fees and a good work environment. One should not worry about employment because this field is open for all. Similarly, for research and other related studies, there are good grants and funding for that.

Pharmaceuticals: Pharmaceuticals are an underrated field related to medicine. The pandemic has made us realize the importance of these studies. Students interested in this field can pursue Bachelor of Pharmacy and other related courses like B. Pharm. (Hons.), B. Pharma. in Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Pharmaceutics, Pharmacognosy, Pharmacology and Ayurvedic. The duration of these courses are four years and the option of doing an integrated MBA in 5 years is also open.

Biotechnology: This field is quite multidisciplinary and has been attracting students for a long time. This field includes several disciplines like Genetic Engineering, Environment Technology, Molecular & Cellular Engineering, Industrial Microbiology, Bioinformatics etc. This course is taught as B. Tech in Biotechnology in various engineering colleges in India. These courses are also profitable in terms of employment.

Veterinary and Animal Sciences: The specialist doctors for animals is also an option one can explore, this field expands from genetics and breeding to gynecology, pathology, animal nutrition, microbiology, physiology, medicine, wildlife studies, etc. and requires NEET qualification. A Bachelors in Veterinary Sciences is the right course to pursue. In the era of pandemics and the expanding arena of research regarding different species, this field is best for not only animal welfare but for research as well.

Bio-physics: Utilizing mathematics and computer modelling, this stream applies the principles of physics to biology. From molecular level to cell population level, biophysics has a wide reach. Its aim is to provide an understanding of the ways in which living organisms behave. It includes research in areas such as neuroscience, pharmacology, physiology, structural biology,

biochemistry, and medicine.

A B.Sc. in Biophysics has, aside from the education sector (such as professors and teachers) and research-based industries, a variety of options. As a scientist, one can specialize in nutritional biophysics, medical biophysics, chemical biophysics or applied biophysics.

Forensic Sciences: Forensic sciences have been around for a long time. Used in police and criminal investigation, and a lot of other research areas require specialists for this thing and therefore it is a viable career option for the students with biology in 12th class. It provides good opportunities for research and work in police and other such departments and has a good pay as well.

Paramedical Sciences: A paramedical course is a type of medical training that focuses on a certain employment position. These are highly specialized courses that educate students for real-world medical scenarios. The importance of paramedical courses has been recognized due to the medical field's requirement for qualified paramedics.

Compared to a traditional MBBS degree, paramedicine is one of the most cost-effective and time-efficient ways to enter the medical industry. It is a career-oriented education with a wide range of job options. A three- to four-year undergraduate program in paramedical sciences would provide a lot of employment opportunities in the medical field.

The different courses required for paramedical sciences include Bachelors of Radiation Technology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Dialysis Therapy, Medical Lab Technology, Optometry, X-Ray Technology, Nuclear Medicine Technology, Operation Theatre Technology, Medical Record Technology, Medical Imaging Technology, Anesthesia Technology, etc.

Hospital and Healthcare Management: A master's degree in hospital management or a master's degree in healthcare management is currently one of the most in-demand degrees. The program normally lasts four years. Graduates of these programs may not directly contribute to patient treatment, but they are heavily involved in monitoring the healthcare process in large medical organizations. With their engagement, communication between various departments in hospitals is usually more coordinated and more efficient.

These are some of the options available after NEET and 12th that the students may look at for a better future while being in touch with the medical profession in different ways.

(the writer is Retired Principal Educational Columnist Malout Punjab).

Falling into the ABYSS : The harrowing journey of drug addiction

SHONIMA MALHOTRA

Every year 15th of August India celebrates Independence Day to mark its freedom from British rule but I wonder are we free in the true sense of the term. Absolutely not. Undoubtedly, we have attained liberty from external constraints we are yet way back to unshackle ourselves from varied internal problems confronting our society, commonly termed as social problems.

The result is that though on one hand, we are heading towards progress and development, for e.g., in the technological front we have come miles ahead but on the other hand, our society is going towards deterioration as a result of these social problems. These problems are increasing at such an alarming rate that they can no longer be neglected; rather these have become a matter of great concern for the common man as well as for the administration.

As a result, different initiatives have been taken by different departments of the government to deal effectively with these societal issues such as Cyber Awareness Campaign, Drug Free India Campaign - just to name a few.

One of the dominant problems being perceived in our society in the present scenario is the problem of 'Drug Addiction'. Drug addiction has become a grave situation in the present times. In fact, it is emerging as a serious matter in our country, particularly among the youngsters resulting in the hazardous consequences not just for the person consuming drugs, but for the family

and society at large.

Drug addiction is a harrowing journey that can lead individuals down a dark path, often characterized by pain, desperation, and a loss of control. This journey often begins as a search for an escape from reality. Whether it is through substance abuse or self-medication individuals find solace in the temporary relief that drugs provide. Once addiction takes root, the journey becomes treacherous, gradually leading to the descent of the individuals into the deadly abyss.

Drug is usually defined as a substance which has physiological and mental effects on the body of the individual consuming it. At the initial stage an individual may start consuming drugs owing to reasons like curiosity/experimentation, prescription by a doctor, peer pressure etc.

This is followed by the stage of drug abuse i.e., misuse of drugs. With the passage of time the tolerance of one's body towards drug usage increases and hence starts the proliferation of the dose of drug consumption. Gradually, comes the stage of drug dependence and this state of drug dependence finally culminates into the state of drug addiction. This state is a critical situation because it is extremely difficult for an individual to revert back from here to a normal life.

There are multiple varied reasons responsible for drug addiction which may be broadly categorised into three categories : Physiological causes (genetic reasons, relief of pain and stress, to gain increased

physical strength and energy and to induce sleep);Psychological causes (Curiosity/Experimentation, boredom, negligence of parents, depression, poor self-esteem, to escape from pressures and conflicts of life) and Social causes (financial burdens and difficulties, socio-civilization culture, for being acceptable to friends, high level competition, urge to join high society, low cost and easy access to drugs, peer group influence, poor criminal justice system).

The symptoms of drug addiction can again be divided into three major categories: Physical symptoms which include surge to use drugs regularly and large intake of drugs, not maintaining personal hygiene, headaches, feeling tired, weight changes, loss of appetite, sleep disorders, bloodshot eyes, paleness, irritated skins; Psychological Symptoms such as intense craving for the drugs regularly, mental health problems, mood swings, irritability, being argumentative, inability to deal with stress, thought blocking, loss of rationalizing power; Behavioural Symptoms including secretive behaviour, withdrawal from loved ones, loss of interest in hobbies, absenteeism from school and job, poor academic and job performance, spending excessive money on purchase of drugs.

Drug addiction has a detrimental effect on individuals and various institutions of society. It not only leads to tragic dependence of its consumers on them causing their physical, mental and moral decline but also to depletion of their potentiality.

To add further it even results in the damage of human relations, wastage of huge amount of money on drugs and enhancement of criminal activities for procurement and sale of drugs. So, it cannot be denied that this is a major problem which needs to be dealt with utmost seriousness.

There are various treatment measures for drug abuse and drug addiction including Psychotherapy that develops healthier behaviours and thinking patterns, CBT that builds coping skills and provides positive reinforcement, medication to ease withdrawal symptoms, hospitalization, support of various groups like family, peer group, teachers etc. Besides, many rehabilitation centres have also been established for the support of drug abusers and drug addicts.

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (India) has been enacted to deal legally with this problem. In addition to this, World No Tobacco Day and International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking are celebrated every year on 31st May and 26th June respectively to generate awareness regarding this problem.

In spite of all these available treatment and rehabilitation measures, each day the percentage of drug abusers and drug addicts is accelerating.

The present situation is a clear indication that certainly our future is in dismay. But if concentrated upon appropriately, the individuals, their families and other institutions of the society can be saved from destruction.

Drug abusers and addicts need to be made aware that drug consumption is no way to flaunt style. Rather, getting in the claws of death can ruin their precious lives because it is easy to get into this whirlpool but extremely difficult, at times, impossible to get out of it.

Despite having ample money, lacking the health to enjoy that money makes that money useless. So, instead of getting distracted by the life-threatening drugs they should learn to cope with craving for drugs in healthy ways, remove addictive substances from their homes, pick a clear and specific goal, understand relapses may happen and they are not a failure.

Simply being desirous of 'Drug Free India' would not suffice. It is high time we all shake hands and fight against this problem unitedly and contribute our parts to make 'Drug Free India Campaign' victorious in its aim of making India Drug Free. No doubt, it is hard to make such people understand, but as aptly said, "Where there is a will, there is a way.

"Drug consumers need to be oriented on the issue of drug addiction. They need to be realised that 'Drugs cost you more than just money. Drugs would change you to someone you would never want to be. So, Stop and say no to drugs.'

Let's take a pledge to overcome addiction of any form that may impact our lives as normal.

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