

On to plump his veins  
in his forearm



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

On a cold December Night, somewhere in the border areas of Punjab, Rajesh Gill, walks down a dirt path, then looks over his shoulder for police, seeing none, rolls up his right sleeve.

He's lean, short, and wiry. He then proceeds to making a fist to plump his veins in his forearm and then injects himself with an Afghan heroin compound mixed with water drawn from a public fountain. The moonlight is guiding his hand. After injecting himself, he then cracks the empty syringe in half and then disposes it in a nearby field, where other used needles lay scattered in the tall grass. " I feel so high when I shoot up," Gill tells, lighting a cigarette, his eyelids fluttering. " My voice changes, my head spins. The high right now is so strong, it feels like enough to last me 10 or 12 hours".

I was shocked when I saw this in a news column in 2014, when it was reported, with the matter hushed up even then. Yes! Welcome to the Heroin alley! India's 1. 2 billion population today finds itself between the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan) and the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos and Thailand). Both regions produce vast amounts of Heroin - Afghanistan itself accounts for nearly 75 per cent of the world's supply. This is due to a combination of situations such as political instability, widespread corruption, and the ideal mixture of climate, soil, and terrain to cultivate opium poppy, the plant from which the drug is made.

And heroin users appear to be growing across the country day by day, which is quite unreasonably alarming. Origins and what really does it Look Like and Its Aliases? Heroin as such isn't some drug that can make someone brag so easily. It's quite expensive, and quite difficult to produce. It was first

manufactured in 1898 by the Bayer pharmaceutical company in Germany and was marketed as a treatment for tuberculosis as well as a remedy for morphine addiction.

. Yes! Our very own smack was coming from Germany itself! The Kaiser's very own Kingdom of unified Prussia. During the 1850s, opium addiction was a very major problem in the USA, while the UK had two wars fought on Opium against China in the next two decades, with production of Opium happening in India itself. Basically, Opium was used by the British to bribe Chinese trade officials and the bureaucracy of the country for tea. Now, the solution for the American problem now was to provide addicts with a less potent and, very supposedly, a "non-addictive" substitute—morphine.

But Morphine was even worse. Now, with Opium already a trouble, and the problem with morphine on the rise, the solution came to be another so called non-addictive substitute (and the very hero of this story here)—heroin, which later on proved to be even better in getting people addicted from the previous two. Now heroin, in its purest form, heroin is fine white powder. But more often, it is found to be of rose grey, brown or black in color. Heroin is highly addictive and the withdrawal symptoms are extremely painful. The drug quickly breaks down the immune system, finally leaving one sickly, extremely thin and bony and then, ultimately, dead.

Street Names commonly used are Big H, Brown Sugar, H, Hell Dust, Horse, Junk, Nose Drops, Skag, Smack, Thunder, etc. Alarming Report Reports coming from surveys are shocking, and really alarming. According to the data of crime cases registered under the NDPS act, 46, 923 cases registered

are cases registered against drug related crimes. This isn't it. According to the Annual Report of 2015 of the Narcotics Control Bureau, The Heroin seizures in India depicted a decreasing trend during the years of 2007 to 2011.

However, during the subsequent years of 2012 to 2013, there is increasing trend of the seizures. In 2015, slight increasing trend in the quantity of Heroin seized in India has been noticed. Also, Punjab leads the states in the quantity of heroin seized, followed by Maharashtra. Only about 1416kgs of heroin was seized from 3931 cases. Significant seizures include the 9 seizures from Punjab, most of them from the border areas itself, near Khemkaran, Ferozpur and Khasa. The seizures also point out the lack of border infrastructure and adequate organization to stop this cross border menace.

Anyone if seeing this will be absolutely shocked to the brim. The issue really says all about the rise in Narco-Terrorism as well as cross border infiltrations as well. Udda Punjab? The problem is especially bad in Punjab, a relatively wealthy state of 28 million people in northwestern India. As everyone has already seen the movie, does anyone know what it portrays is actually true, even though it's just a fictional account? Everyone might have seen scenes at the start of the movie itself, young lads burning up a smack to inhale, putting syringes in their arm, buying it across borders. The sad story doesn't end very well itself.

This is the story of today's Punjab, in the shadows. Here Gill, 24, is among the estimated roughly 70 percent of young Punjabi men who man suffer from

a substance abuse problem, according to an October 2012 study published by the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, a think tank. Since then, the percentage has likely increased, according to several experts interviewed for this story. And like many of Gill's peers, Afghan heroin, smuggled across the nearby border with Pakistan, is the drug of choice. Not all that, the Doda or Phukki as it is known as traditionally here, has been a problem since a very long time and affects a wider circle than expected, except the rich kids and the rock stars. According to a survey by the Punjab Opioid Dependency Survey (PODS), conducted by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre, AIIMS claims that the largest concentration of consumers comes from economically weaker sections with limited education and employment. Also, it's not just Pakistan that is the Source of all this, cottage Industries are budding up across UP and Rajasthan as well supplying the drug.

Also, drugs are coming straight from the Golden Triangle, through Manipur, trafficked and sold by peddlers across the state. The Response Although the Punjab Government released a shorter version of the PODS report in 2016, the actual report is still confidential. The report has also criticized the government rehab program, saying that " There is a huge gap in the availability of treatment services for opioid dependent individuals – despite significant demand. This study indicates that while as many as 80% of opioid dependent individuals have tried to give-up, only about 35% have received any help. Evidence-based, effective treatment has been received by a miniscule proportion.

“ Admission to a de-addiction centre” – which appears to be the most focused-upon addiction-treatment strategy in the state” – is reported by just about 8% individuals in last year. If the treatment strategies remain focused on only a single modality of treatment (i. e. “ Admission to a de-addiction centre”), it will take about 10 years to provide a single episode of treatment to the entire opioid dependent population in the state.” The new government has still not yet been able enough to act on the issue since it has come to power. Instead of banning a movie showing the truth, why don't they focus on an issue that is going to take a long drawn war? Conclusion Even after so much increase, it must be noted that the people of Punjab haven't lost the fight. Of course, the war against this menace will be a long one, but anyhow it is us who have to win it, as soon as we can.

Its time, the people get to know of this menace soon, before it spreads across the entire nation even more rapidly than it has already in many states.