

ANANTNAG TERROR ATTACK

The terrorist attack on a Police in South Kashmir on in which head constable Ashiq Hussain was martyred is an indication that terrorists are still lurking around and desperate to show their presence. The police were patrolling the Amarnath pilgrimage route when one terrorist opened fire on Husain from close range and the latter succumbed to injuries in the hospital. No doubt this was a cowardly act but it has thrown a serious challenge to the security forces. South Kashmir was once an epicenter of terrorism and social unrest. Today the region has many youth activists working on radicalized youth and on peace. Also the region is close to mountain ranges of Kishtwar Doda where some terrorists may still be hiding. However, the bigger challenge and the key to breaking the back of terrorists is how to smash the network of overground supporters of terrorists. Without this network of paid or simply motivated OWGs, terrorists cannot survive beyond a certain time. Police have rounded up a large number of OWGs and hopefully should find out who is behind the assassination of martyr Ashiq Hussain.

NEET LEAKAGE PROTEST

There is a good possibility of the government and the protesters coming to an agreement over the followup of the NEET paper leakage. Health minister JP Nadda has started talking to the leaders of the protesting students. He has also assured the media that government is ready to speak on all aspects of the investigation into the leakage that PM Narendra Modi has already termed as ‘grave sin’ against the youth. The government is bound to speak on major issued in Parliament when the session is going on. The vandalism and chaos that the vested interests, which seem to have hijacked the agitation must stop immediately. India will be run by an elected government and not by mobs.

A state caught in the regional crossfire

Bhopinder Singh

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) attack on an American military base in Jordan, which killed at least two US soldiers, triggered another cycle of retaliation between Washington and Tehran. Iranian military sites were subsequently targeted, while Jordanian forces reported intercepting additional Iranian missiles and drones. The episode suggested that Jordan, despite efforts to remain insulated from regional conflicts, was being drawn deeper into the widening confrontation between Iran and the United States.

This was not the first time Jordan found itself caught in the crossfire. In April 2024, during Iran’s first direct large-scale attack on Israel, the Jordanian Air Force intercepted and destroyed Iranian drones and missiles passing through its airspace towards Israel. Tehran viewed the action as assistance to Israel, reinforcing its suspicion of Amman’s strategic alignment.

Yet Iran’s historical hostility towards Jordan has been primarily strategic rather than ideological or sectarian. Jordan is targeted less because of its domestic character and more because of its geography, alliances and role in the regional security architecture. Positioned between Iran’s sphere of influence and Israel, closely aligned with the United States, and central to Western security arrangements, Jordan occupies a sensitive position in the Middle Eastern balance of power.

This alignment is notable given Jordan’s demographic complexity. An estimated 50-60 per cent of Jordan’s population is of Palestinian origin, including prominent figures such as Queen Rania, wife of King Abdullah II, whose family roots are Palestinian. Despite this demographic reality and widespread public sympathy for the Palestinian cause, the Jordanian state has continued to prioritise strategic ties with Washington and maintain a cautious security relationship with Israel.

The relationship between Jordan and



Iran has evolved through decades of shifting alliances, ideological competition and competing visions for the Middle East. Although the two countries have maintained diplomatic relations and experienced periods of limited engagement, their ties have largely been defined by mistrust, particularly since the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Before the revolution, relations were considerably warmer. Both Jordan and Iran were monarchies, i.e., the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Pahlavi monarchy of Iran. Both maintained close partnerships with Western powers (and even with Israel) during the Cold War. They shared concerns about revolutionary movements and regional instability, including the influence of Arab nationalist movements inspired by Gamal Abdel Nasser. GeographicReference

The Iranian Revolution fundamentally altered these equations. The establishment of the Islamic Republic transformed Iran from a traditional monarchy into an ideological state challenging Western influence and seeking greater regional sway. Tehran’s support for regional militant movements and opposition to US-aligned governments unsettled Arab monarchies, including Jordan.

Amman, dependent on Western security partnerships and moderate Arab alliances, became increasingly wary of Iran’s ambitions.

The Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 marked a further deterioration in relations. Jordan supported Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, providing economic and political assistance during its war with Iran. For Tehran, Jordan’s backing of Baghdad represented alignment with an opposing regional camp and reinforced its distrust of Amman.

Relations remained restrained in subsequent decades, but tensions intensified after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. The removal of Saddam Hussein allowed Iran to expand its influence among Iraq’s Shia political parties and armed groups. Jordan feared that Iranian influence was extending through Iraq into Syria and Lebanon, creating a continuous arc of political and military influence across the region.

In 2004, King Abdullah II warned of a potential “Shia crescent” stretching from Iran through Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The phrase reflected Jordanian concerns about Iran-backed networks following the collapse of Iraq’s Baathist regime. Critics argued that the concept overstated sectarian divisions, while support-

ers viewed it as an early recognition of Iran’s growing regional footprint.

The Syrian civil war after 2011 further sharpened these differences. Iran became a principal supporter of Bashar al-Assad’s government, providing military, financial and political backing. Jordan, sharing a border with Syria, became increasingly concerned about instability, Iranian-aligned militias near its territory and cross-border trafficking networks. These concerns strengthened Jordan’s reliance on security cooperation with Western and Arab partners.

Despite these tensions, Jordan and Iran have avoided a complete diplomatic rupture. Both understand the risks of direct confrontation and have maintained channels of communication. Jordan’s principal concerns today revolve around Iranian-backed armed groups, cross-border insecurity and the wider competition between Iran and US-aligned states for influence in the Middle East. GeographicReference

For Iran, Jordan represents a state closely integrated into the American-led regional security system and linked to Israel through a peace treaty. For Jordan, Iran is not an existential military threat in the conventional sense, but its expanding regional influence represents a challenge to Jordan’s security calculations.

The history of Jordan-Iran relations, therefore, reflects a wider pattern in Middle Eastern politics: cooperation when interests converge, but rivalry when competing visions of regional order collide.

From the relatively cordial relationship of the pre-1979 era to today’s strategic tensions, the dispute has been shaped less by direct hostility between the two peoples and more by the broader contest for influence, security and political dominance that has defined the modern Middle East. In this context, Jordan’s involvement in the current Iran-US confrontation is not an unexpected development, but the latest chapter in a long-running geopolitical struggle.

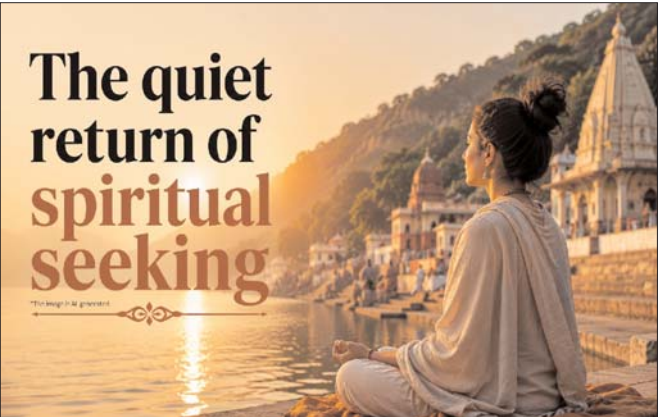
THE QUIET RETURN OF SPIRITUAL SEEKING

Sitender Sehrawat

Mankind seeks what lies at its core, but mostly looks elsewhere—in things, material goods and trends. But there’s a shift happening now. View it from the surface and it makes no sense. Look deeper and it does. The shift is in how we seek connection, peace and meaning. The spiritual seeking, the longing to meet yourself, your creator and something beyond, is not confined to spiritual centres. People are losing trust in the endless cycle of quick fixes, wellness gadgets and self-optimisation frameworks. They’re asking fundamentally different questions about what they actually crave, not what the market tells them they should want. For many, the search is led by genuine longing from within. But it will shift; what is natural and authentic eventually endures. Spirituality

For decades, the self-help, personal development and wellness industry promised that better outcomes were just three steps, four weeks or one purchase away.

Meditation apps that fit into lunch breaks. Productivity systems that promised to unlock peace and clarity. Weekend transformation programmes that promised enlight-



enment in condensed form. The promise was always the same: optimise yourself relentlessly and you’ll feel better. Solve yourself through discipline and framework, and happiness will follow as a reward. Of course, it didn’t work. Or rather, it worked just enough to feel like your fault when it failed.

The recurring subscriptions and retreat visits were the subtle ask beneath it all. The goalpost always moved. Better sleep didn’t solve loneliness. More productivity didn’t generate actual meaning. Workplace loneliness became the leading cause of people leaving their jobs because belonging is in-

herently embedded in us. People pushed forward, hoping the next thing would work; then came AI, restoring false hope and pushing them further into the cycle. Optimisation left people sharper but profoundly emptier, more efficient at being hollow.

What’s emerging now is structurally different. People aren’t abandoning the search for depth; they’re abandoning the illusion that depth arrives through applications and 30-day challenges. They’re discovering that real transformation requires time, years sometimes. It comes from deep layers of being, not through spiritual programmes promising mystical self-upgrades that inevitably spiral back down. Real change happens in silence, not through constant content consumption. Real stillness cannot be rushed, manufactured or optimised. It is experienced directly, from your own search

within.

This is why people who have tried everything are now seeking actual timeless traditions—practices that have survived across centuries, not repackaged versions marketed for quick results. Why they’re spending time in silence without measuring progress. Why they’re drawn to spaces where nothing is being sold, nothing optimised, nothing measured for engagement. The entire economy of attention is exhausting itself. In India and globally, a growing category has learned to distrust “Enlightenment in 7 days” promises. They can smell the difference between genuine teaching and selling. Between authentic transmission and therapeutic rebranding. They know when they’re being offered actual depth versus another consumable designed for the market. Cultural literacy is returning. Economics

What they’re seeking is not faster results, but spaces where depth unfolds at its own pace. The return isn’t to spirituality as a concept; it’s to slowness as a fundamental mode of being. Across India and globally, people are quietly stepping away from the optimisation treadmill, not to find a better version of themselves, but to return to themselves.

India’s obesity challenge among adults: A call for action

M Srinivas | Neha Bakshi

India’s nutrition journey is undergoing a profound transition. While the country continues to make progress in reducing undernutrition and improving food security, a new challenge is rapidly emerging, which is obesity. The changing food environment, increased availability of calorie-dense foods and inadequate physical activity have contributed to the rising obesity burden.

The NFHS-6 report highlights the magnitude of this emerging challenge. The prevalence of overweight/obesity among adults aged 15-49 years has increased among women from 24 per cent to 30.7 per cent and among men from 22.9 per cent to 27.3 per cent since NFHS-5. These trends indicate the need for a critical rethinking of India’s approach to nutrition, health and lifestyle in the coming decades.

As per the World Health Organization, overweight/obesity is the excessive deposition of fat in our body to an extent that it starts limiting our everyday activities and overall health. Body Mass Index (BMI) is used for assessing

overweight/obesity. A person with a BMI >25 kg/m² is classified as overweight/obese. This increasing weight is not just a number; it puts individuals at serious risk of developing lifestyle-related diseases like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and others.

Rising trend of obesity: NFHS-5 to NFHS-6

India has seen this rise in overweight/obesity in previous surveys as well, but the pace at which the number has increased in the latest NFHS-6 data is concerning. According to NFHS-3 (2005-06), 12.6 per cent of women and 9.3 per cent of men were reported to be overweight/obese. Now, the figures in NFHS-6 (2023-24) stand at 30.7 per cent for women and 27.3 per cent for men. Thus, in two decades, the prevalence rate has approximately doubled among women and tripled among men. Even traditionally leaner states have shown rapid progress towards obesity; for example, Rajasthan went from 12.9 per cent (NFHS-5) to 20.3 per cent (NFHS-6).

A nationwide surge in overweight/obesity



The survey depicted that 32 and 28 states and UTs have shown an increasing trend in overweight/obesity among women and men, respectively, since NFHS-5. The highest burden of obesity is borne by the southern parts of the country. Among women, prevalence was highest in Puducherry (51.3 per cent), Lakshadweep (50.1 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (47.9 per cent), Sikkim (47.5 per cent), Kerala (46.7 per cent) and Goa (45.1 per cent). For men, the rising burden was reported in the states/UTs of Chandigarh (48.5 per cent), Puducherry (45.9 per cent), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (46.1 per cent), Goa (43.6 per cent) and Andhra Pradesh (41.5 per

cent). In contrast, the lowest prevalence among women was reported in Meghalaya (13.8 per cent), Jharkhand (16.9 per cent), Nagaland (17.2 per cent), Assam (19.6 per cent) and Bihar (19.8 per cent). Among men, Meghalaya (15.6 per cent), Chhattisgarh (16.1 per cent), Jharkhand (16.8 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (17.6 per cent) and Rajasthan (19.3 per cent) recorded the lowest prevalence. Obesity

The urban-rural picture

NFHS-6 shows that overweight/obesity, which was once a concern limited to city dwellers, is now becoming a rising issue in rural areas across the country. The NFHS-6 data has shown a rise in overweight and obesity in urban and rural ar-

reas among women and men. It could be because of the increased penetration of high-fat, salt, and Sugar foods at cheaper prices in both urban and rural areas.

Efforts of the Govt in tackling obesity Understanding the magnitude of the issue, both the Central Government and different state governments have initiated various programmes to promote a healthy lifestyle. The Eat Right India initiative, launched by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), promotes healthy, safe and sustainable food practices. The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD) also focuses on mass screening, early diagnosis and behaviour change. The Fit India Movement and Khelo India initiative are nationwide movements to promote an active lifestyle among schoolchildren and youth, while the Ministry of Ayush promotes yoga and other traditional healthy practices.

Recognising obesity as an emerging public health challenge, the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, addressed the nation on the auspicious occasion of Independence Day in 2025 from the Red Fort. He called for a movement towards a

healthy life and for every family to take up the ‘10 per cent less oil’ promise as a way of life to prevent obesity.

Way forward

The programmes and initiatives by the government show its commitment towards curbing obesity; the NFHS-6 data highlights the need to further strengthen existing efforts for prevention. There is an urgent need to improve the food environment by reducing the availability and aggressive marketing of junk foods, while promoting access to healthy foods and clear nutrition labelling. Physical activity should be promoted through schools, workplaces, community spaces and active urban and rural planning.

It is high time for us to understand the depth of the rising problem of obesity. There is a need to consciously incorporate a healthy way of living by adopting practices such as monitoring our weight status and waist circumference, eating a balanced diet, regularly engaging in daily physical activity, practising mindful eating, avoiding high-fat, salt and sugar foods, and consulting a medical professional if suffering from other comorbidities like diabetes, hypertension, etc. Obesity