



MENACE OF DRUG ADDICTION IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The menace of drug addiction has spread among the youth of India in a rapid way. Unfortunately, India is a happy hunting ground for drug peddlers. It is so because it is sandwiched between the so-called golden triangle and the golden crescent. The former area comprises of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos and the latter is covered by countries – Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. Drug addiction refers to the condition of being addicted to a particular drug, particularly narcotic drugs. These are generally illegal drugs that affect the mental set up of a person. Drug addiction is a social evil in India. It is the tragedy of our days that millions of youths, the future citizens of India, fall victims to the habit of taking drugs. It is a major health issue that affects an individual as well as nation as a whole. It is actually jeopardizing the future of our country. Irrespective of sufficient legal mechanism which exhaustively deals with drug abuse i.e. Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985, the conditions are getting worse to worst with every passing day. It is ironical that 2.8% of Indian people have already indulged in drug abuse because there is a defect in the effective implementation of the law. This is one of the reasons for the growth in drug abuse in the country. This research article is a study in the Indian perspective to find out the root causes for the growth of drug abuse and its impact on health of the addicts. The researchers would also try to provide some workable suggestions for the better implementation of the law to curb this menace.

INTRODUCTION

Drug Addiction is a very severe problem in the Indian region which is affecting all aspects of the society. It has received greater attention in recent times due to the proliferating magnitude of the problem and the changing trends in usage of drugs particularly in youth. Drugs have started breeding their own sub-culture, which has its own norms, values, behaviour and symbols. This problem deteriorates an individual's health and happiness of an individual, the family, the community and the society. Today, there is no part of the world that is free from the curse of drug trafficking and drug addiction. Drug Addiction is not confined to a single person or region. Its number could be varied and found in any age, gender, ethnicity, social class or religion. As a matter of fact, the tentacles of drug addiction have spread world widely covering every country in the world. There are various factors like peer pressure, masses high aspirations, unemployment and changing societal order are continuously enhancing this particular menace.¹

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Drug addiction has actually become one of the crucial social problems from last three decades. It is also said that India has become not only an important transit centre for drugs but the prevalence of drug use is also increasing at an alarming rate. Generally, drugs are meant to be used for the treatment of various ailments but these life saving drugs now have become life killing drugs and if they are used habitually by anyone then his body completely relies on them for its functioning. It is being pivotal to distinctive other economic, psychological and health problem which we can no longer afford to ignore. An unprecedented spurt in the development, drugs have started breeding their own sub-culture, which has its own norms, values, behaviour and symbols. This problem has serious implications for the health and happiness of an individual, the family, the community and the society at large.²

Drug Addiction is a universal problem. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s World Drug Report 2022 around 284 million people use drugs worldwide. This report also states that India is one of the world's single-largest opiate markets.

Alcohol, country liquor, opium, hashish and marijuana were freely available and used in India. Our sadhus and kings used these substances in hookahs to get high. But in those days, people used them in moderation and drug use was not a serious problem.

Drug Problem in India

The drug problem in India is a complex and multifaceted issue that poses a huge threat to the country's public health and social fabric. Drug addiction and abuse have been steadily increasing and the problem is compounded by factors such as stresses of modern life, family problems, poverty, unemployment and social unrest. Young people, especially students, often experiment with drugs under the misconceived perception of this being a symbol of high social status or to cope with stress and pressure and end up as drug addicts.³ Below are startling figures based on recent Government of India Figures:

1. Over 10% of the population suffers from psychiatric disorders including depression, neurosis and psychosis.
2. 15 people out of every 1000 are drug users.
3. Chronic alcohol addiction ranges from 25 out of 1000 people.
4. Psychiatric and De-addiction bed availability is a meager 20% of the required number. Thus, 80% of inpatient bed availability is unfulfilled across the country.

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¹ Dr. Jasleen Dua , "The Problem of Drug addiction in India: Its Consequences and Effective measures", *Journal of Drug Delivery and Therapeutics*, 2022; 12(1-s):159-163.

² Ambekar A, Rao R, and Agrawal A. India's National Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances policy, 2012: A 20th century document in the 21st century. *Int J Drug Policy*, 2013; 24: 374–375.

³ Gupta S, and Sagar R. National mental health programme-optimism and caution: A narrative review: *Indian J Psychol Med*, 2018; 40(6): 509–516.

What is Addiction?

Simply put, drug addiction occurs when its abuse affects a person's work and normal family life. It creates a ripple effect in the lives of the user and his immediate circle of family, friends, co-workers, neighbours and acquaintances. The abuse of the substance causes a tremendous personality change in the user and those who care about him. Drug addiction not only affects the addict but also the members of his family and friends.⁴

What the Government of India is doing?

The Indian Government has taken several measures for fighting the issue. In August 2020, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched 'Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan'(NMBA) in 272 most vulnerable districts of India to address the problem. The Department of Social Justice & Empowerment is the Nodal Department in the Government of India for Drug Demand Reduction.

The Government has set up several de-addiction centers and rehabilitation facilities across the country to help individuals recover from drug addiction. These centers provide counseling, medical treatment, and support to those struggling with drug addiction .But these facilities are grossly inadequate and riddled with poor infrastructure and corruption. There are several other centers across the country which provide similar services to drug addicts. All these centers play a crucial role in helping individuals recover from drug addiction and prevent relapses⁵.

What a Drug Addict should do?

Due to the fear of social stigma and legal repercussions, many drug users are afraid to seek help. The addict should:

1. First accept that s/he is an addict and be ready to come out of it.
2. Seek professional help: Should then seek help from a psychologist, psychiatrist, a drug rehabilitation center, or a support group. Professional help is necessary to overcome drug addiction. A professional can provide you with the necessary guidance, support, and treatment to recover from drug addiction.
3. Follow a treatment plan: A treatment plan may include detoxification, counseling, therapy, and medication. It is essential to follow the treatment plan as prescribed by the professional to achieve the best results. It may also be necessary to spend some time in a rehabilitation centre.
4. Make lifestyle changes: Making lifestyle changes suggested by your counsellors such as practicing healthy habits, exercise, and eating a nutritious diet can help in the recovery process. Avoid triggers and situations that can lead to drug use.

⁴ Ray R, Dhawan A, and Chopra A. Addiction research centres and the nurturing of creativity: National drug dependence treatment centre, India—a profile. *Addiction*, 2013; 108: 1705–1710.

⁵ Ray R, and Chopra A. Monitoring of substance abuse in India – Initiatives & experiences. *Indian J Med Res*, 2012; 135: 806–808.

5. Join a support group: Join a support group such as Alcoholics Anonymous which will help you connect with people who have similar experiences and struggles. A support group will provide you with the necessary emotional support and motivation to overcome drug addiction.

6. Stay committed: Recovery from drug addiction is a long-term process and requires commitment and effort. It is essential to stay committed to the treatment plan and make necessary changes to maintain sobriety.⁶

CONSEQUENCES OF DRUG ADDICTION

Drug Addiction is a form of disease and as such it can pose a series of negative consequences on one's emotional well being, physical health and even on family life also. The impacts of drugs could be unpredictable, even opposite to what is expected and each form of addiction poses its own series of risks. There are four main categories under which drugs impact one's life.

1. **Physical consequences:** Physical impacts of drug addiction vary by drug but are usually seen in all systems of body. Drug Addiction changes the way the brain functions and the way the body feels pleasure. These effects of addiction are because the drug repeatedly floods the brain with the chemicals dopamine and serotonin which effect on the entire body of the person. Physiological effects that cause due to drug consumption are irregular breathing, increase in heart rate and blood pressure, heart disease, arthritis and lung disease.

(i) *Physical Injuries:* When a person is under the influence of drugs, he can do those things which he normally do not do. He is more likely to experience physical injury or get involved in any accident. Sometime a person can also commit suicide or murder.

(ii) *Internal Damage:* Usage of some types of drugs can also damage one's internal organs such as liver, stomach and throat. To exemplify, a whitener used by students are also used as a drug. If they are inhaled for a long time then it can damage sense organs and also harm the parts of the brain that control memory and attention.

(iii) *Risk of Infectious Diseases:* Sharing of needles while injecting drug in the body can put a person at major risk for getting diseases like Hepatitis C, B as well as HIV. These diseases are spread through the transmission of body fluids like blood.

Other Physical Effects of Drug Addiction include:

Heart rate irregularities, heart attack or heart failure

Respiratory Problems like lung Cancer, Emphysema and breathing problems

Damage of kidney and liver

Changes in appetite, temperature and sleeping patterns

⁶ Dr. Binoy Gupta, Drug Addiction in India February 28, 2023 by Psychology India Magazine <https://psychology.net.in/drug-addiction-in-india/>

Nausea and Abdominal pain

A weakened immune system and increasing the risk of infection

2. Psychological Consequences: The psychological impacts of drug can alter ones mood. It can create stress or mental illness. Drugs can also create many behavioural problems like aggressiveness, impaired judgement, mood swings, anxiety and even memory loss. It also surges the likelihood of violent behaviour. It is not surprising to say that those who are drug addicts also manifest patterns of deviant behaviour by which social norms are also being easily disregarded by them.

(i) *Stress:* It is true that using certain drugs help a person to relax and forget his pain and problem. However, its long term use can have a large impact on the way ones brain works and also lead to increase in anxiety and stress level.

(ii) *Depression:* An individual can also feel low and depressed because of a drug usage. People mainly intake some drugs to handle their depression but they do not know that these drugs can worsen their condition in long run.

(iii) *Mental Illness:* Numerous scientists acknowledge the fact that there is a connection between the usage of a drug and mental illness. A continuous use of some drugs for a time interval can create mental problems such as schizophrenia etc.

Other Physical Effects of Drug Addiction include⁷:

Wild mood swings, paranoia and violence

Hallucinations and Confusion

Desire to engage in risky behaviour

Decrease in pleasure in everyday life

3. Economic Consequences: Economic effects of drug addiction are harmful in the form of the health of the country, affecting families, communities and people of all ages. It also affect on the nation's ability to respond to the economic challenge in the future.

(i) *Financial Loss:* The cost of an addiction not only affects the sufferer but can also encompass family, friends and society as a whole. There are the costs of policing, drug addiction help lines, support groups and rehab clinics.

(ii) *Impact on Productivity:* A further cost of drug addiction is the loss in productivity that can occur when drug users are under the influence of drugs. While in treatment or when incarcerated, drug addicts may be unable to participate in work that emerges economic loss.

⁷ Retrieved from <https://www.gatewayfoundation.org/about-gateway-foundation/faqs/effects-of-drug-abuse/#:~:text=Consequences%20of%20addiction%20on%20the%20body%20may%20include%3A&text=Heart%20conditions%20ranging%20from%20abnormal,in%20appetite%20and%20weight%20loss>, visited on April 12, 2023

(iii) *Diversion of the Economic Resources*: Scarcity of economic and natural resources is also one of the most basic economic problems. It is known to all that we have limited resources for which we have to compete with others to entail them. In such kind of scenario when we are running short of resources, the problem of drug addiction requires the economy to dedicate its valuable resources to the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of the addicts.

4. Social Consequences: The effects of substance abuse can be felt on many levels on the society. Marriage relationships, home life, education, employment, personality and so on. Some drugs can even a person's body and brain or mood in ways that last long after the person has stopped taking drugs may be even permanently.

(i) *Impact on familial relationships*: Under the influence of addiction, family members sometimes experience feelings of abandonment, restlessness, fear, resentment, anxiety, humiliation or guilt. Family members often neglect or deduct relations with substance exploiter.

(ii) *Impact on marital relationship*: The person who is addicted may change with an easy personality which appears in mood swings, violent explosions, secrecy and other forms of extreme behaviour. This creates difficulty for a partner to deal with and is even worse if there are children involved. It is both distressing and confusing for children to see one parent exhibit signs of their addiction.

(iii) *Domestic Problem*: Domestic Violence is a crime that is committed behind closed doors in the privacy of the family. Persons who are not abusers may be affected by this problem that also involves child abuse, sexual abusing, economic violence and HIV infection.

Battle Against Drug Abuse in India – Recent Developments⁸

1. Government will roll out its Action Plan for 2020-21 known as **Nasha Mukh Bharat**.
2. The Focus of the plan will be to build treatment and drug de-addiction facilities in 272 districts identified as vulnerable based on access to drugs and prevalence of substance abuse.
3. The Action plan will be steered by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. (MSJE).
4. Among the 272 Vulnerable districts identified Uttar Pradesh has 33 vulnerable districts, Punjab (18 districts), Delhi (11 districts), Gujarat (8 districts) and Maharashtra (Pune, Mumbai, Nashik, Nagpur).

Nasha Mukh Bharat Action Plan 2020-21 – Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

The main components and 3 pronged strategies of Nasha Mukh Bharat are given below.

Nasha Mukh Bharat will focus on 3 pronged strategies, which are listed below.

1. Treatment through the Health Departments.
2. Outreach/Awareness by Social Justice
3. Narcotics Bureau

Nasha Mukh Bharat – Main Components of the Action Plan 2020-21

1. Awareness generation programs in University Campuses Higher Education institutions, and schools.

⁸ Retrieved from <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/drug-abuse/>, visited on March 12, 2024

2. Building capacity for service providers
3. Focus on Treatment facilities in Hospital Settings.
4. Identification of dependent population and community outreach.

Conclusion

The epidemic of drug use and associated adverse health consequences pose a formidable public health problem. It is widely acknowledged that drug abuse is a community problem, and that it is multi-dimensional. Thus, a combined and coordinated strategy involving different sectors of the community is needed in order to effectively address drug prevention and intervention. Based on the findings from the study, an action plan that incorporates multiple intervention strategies (community based drug prevention, community outreach, peer intervention, drug treatment) targeting multiple behaviors (poly drug use, pharmaceutical drug use, injection related risk behavior, sexual risk behavior, overdose) at multiple levels (street level, family, community, schools, workplace, institutions, non formal institutions) involving multiple sectors (policy, law enforcement, treatment professionals, drug users) has been proposed. The process of rapid assessment has laid the foundation for community based action through initial consultations with stakeholders and affected communities. These findings have to be used to advocate necessary policy changes⁹

⁹ Rapid assessment survey of drug abuse in India, ministry of social justice and empowerment, govt of India
<https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/RAS.pdf>.