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# **SUBSTANCE MISUSE, NDPS ACT OF 1985, AND EFFORTS IN MINIMISING DRUG DEMAND: A CONTEMPORARY REVIEW**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Substance abuse is a global epidemic that continues to present formidable obstacles, and India is no exception. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985 and initiatives to lower drug demand are highlighted in this abstract, which offers a current assessment of the state of substance abuse in India. The NDPS Act of 1985 was passed with the intention of stopping drug trafficking and usage, but this analysis highlights the ongoing problems caused by substance abuse, including its detrimental effects on social, economic, and health conditions. It also looks at the many approaches used in India to reduce drug demand, including programmes for harm reduction, treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation.

This study highlights the need of continuous efforts to successfully treat substance abuse by evaluating current changes and trends. It also emphasises the necessity for an all-encompassing and integrated strategy that incorporates social, legal, regulatory, and public health initiatives.

**Keywords:** Narcotics, NDPS, Psychotropic substances, Drugs

## INTRODUCTION

India, known for being the home of Lord Shiva, has a rich cultural history with unusual and somewhat mysterious religious practices. One of these customs is the use of bhang, a cannabis derivative, during holy occasions like Shivaratri. The Sanskrit word "soma," which means "intoxication," also refers to the narcotic qualities of some substances that are customarily employed in rituals; these substances are called "soma ras" in ancient literature. Furthermore, at rituals such as akha teej, opium is administered with the intention of strengthening family ties<sup>1</sup>. India, in contrast to Western countries, has a long-standing custom of combining some naturally occurring psychoactive drugs with religious celebrations. Therefore, while creating and enforcing drug laws across the nation, this cultural difference needs to be carefully taken into account.

But we also cannot ignore the growing problem of substance misuse, which is spreading across our country. A significant segment of our community suffers from drug addiction, which can result in many health issues like elevated death rates and psychological illnesses<sup>2</sup>. Substance misuse also has a substantial negative financial impact, resulting in increased costs for medical treatment, a drain on the country's resources, and decreased productivity. Additionally, it encourages a variety of social issues, such as the breakdown of families, which may lead to criminal activity<sup>3</sup>.

According to the World Health Organisation, the first synthetic medication, aspirin, was created in 1897, which signalled the beginning of an amazing period in drug research. Since then, pharmaceutical developments have advanced remarkably in a number of health fields, including illnesses, mental health, and various other medical issues. Today's market offers hundreds of medications intended to prevent, cure, diagnose, and lessen the effects of illnesses that were considered incurable just a few generations ago<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Molly Charles, Dave Bewley-Taylor, Amanda Neidpath (2005) Drug Policy In India: Compounding Harm Briefing paper ten. The Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Programme.

<sup>2</sup> Anil malhotra, Ashwin mohan (2000) National policies to meet the challenge of substance abuse: programmes and implementation. Indian Journal of Psychiatry 42 (4): 370-377.

<sup>3</sup> Times of India, Ahmedabad (2012) High court shows mercy to 73-year-old drug peddler.

<sup>4</sup> Islam MS, Medicines, Drugs and Pharmaceuticals, Basics of Pharmacy, Chapter – One, ABC of Pharmacy, Book · LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, October 2018, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328517046>, 6-7

Any chemical that works with the living organism and modifies physiological processes to increase or decrease is considered a drug. These drugs are used in the diagnosis, treatment, mitigation, and prevention of several illnesses. Tetracycline, amoxicillin, morphine, aspirin, and chlorpheniramine are a few examples.

On the other hand, narcotic medications work by blocking the Central Nervous System (CNS) in order to reduce pain, but they also cause narcosis and addiction. Heroin and morphine are two examples. Conversely, dangerous medicines are those that, when used repeatedly, promote the development of habits, dependency, and addiction. Morphine and barbiturates are two examples<sup>5</sup>.

## DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse is the use of a drug for reasons other than those for which it was designed or the excessive use of a substance. Substances that are misused often fall into a number of categories, such as prescription medicines like painkillers, illicit drugs like heroin and cannabis, and other medications like cough suppressants. Amphetamine, MDMA, Barbiturates, a group of drugs Cocaine, Methaqualone, as well as Opioids are among the substances that are frequently linked to drug misuse, criminal activity, and harm to one's physical, social, and mental health.

Instead of depending on certain diagnostic tests, diagnosing drug misuse or addiction requires obtaining detailed medical history, family history, and mental health information. Self-assessment exams and quizzes are frequently used by healthcare practitioners as screening instruments to examine people. Mental diseases including bipolar disorder, anxiety-related disorders, schizoaffective disorder, schizophrenia, and other psychotropic disorders can develop as a result of substance abuse and reliance<sup>6</sup>.

## NDPS ACT OF 1985

On November 14, 1985, the Narcotic substances and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985 went into force, outlawing the use of any narcotic substances in India. Nonetheless, the Act has a clause permitting the cultural non-medical consumption of beverages derived from cannabis leaves. The NDPS Act primarily forbids the production, distribution, ownership, and

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/medicines#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/medicines#tab=tab_1)

<sup>6</sup> Zaman M, Razzaq S, Hassan R, Qureshi J, Ijaz H, Hanif M, Chughtai FR, Drug abuse among the students, Pakistan Journal of Pharmaceutical Research, 2015; 01(01), 41-47

transit of narcotic drugs and substances, with the exception of a few approved uses in science and medicine. Its main goal is to reduce narcotic substance addiction in society, including that of opium, coca, cannabis, and other substances<sup>7</sup>.

## **PUNISHMENT**

The Act defines two types of offences in relation to the associated punishments. First of all, anybody caught using narcotics or substances like heroin, cocaine, or morphine might be sentenced to a strict one-year jail sentence, a fine of up to Rs. 20,000, or both. Second, violators who use other narcotics face a maximum six-month jail sentence, a fine of up to Rs. 10,000, or both<sup>8</sup>.

## **HOW DRUGS ARE MISUSED?**

Depending on the drug's properties, there are several ways to abuse it: smoking, sniffing, ingesting it orally, or administering it via injection (parenteral route) with a syringe and needle. Certain drugs can be delivered in more than one method; heroin, for instance, can be injected or smoked. However, compared to smoking or ingesting drugs orally, injecting narcotics is typically seen to be more dangerous.

## **EFFECT OF DRUGS**

Abuse-related side effects might include a variety of feelings, such as drowsiness, excitement, hallucinations, and tranquilization. By increasing the central nervous system's (CNS) activity and making the user feel more energised and active, stimulants produce pleasure. As demonstrated by sedatives like opium and opiates, they cause sleep, lower activity levels, and a sense of relaxation. Hallucinogens, such as LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), cause hallucinations that change the user's understanding, thoughts, and emotions. By reducing tension and anxiety without putting the user to sleep, tranquilisers ease the user's nerves.

## **NATIONAL DRUG DEMAND MINIMISING PLAN**

Drug and substance misuse is a serious problem in our country, especially because it is

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<sup>7</sup> Sharma S, Kapil Kumar, Singh G, An Overview on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985, Journal of Forensic Sciences & Criminal Investigation, 2017; 4(3)

<sup>8</sup> <https://dor.gov.in/narcoticdrugpsychotropic/punishment-offences>, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India

becoming more and more common among younger people. Drug addiction has a negative influence on a person's family, the general public, and their own health. Sustained use of drugs can develop in drug dependency, which can lead to a variety of health problems, including cardiovascular disease, neuropsychiatric disorders, and an increased risk of accidents, suicide, and aggressive behaviour. Consequently, it is critical to acknowledge drug usage as a complex issue with psycho-social-medical ramifications.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current analysis of substance abuse, the 1985 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and initiatives to lower drug demand highlight the complexity of India's drug abuse issue. The NDPS Act of 1985 established a legislative framework to tackle drug trafficking and abuse; nonetheless, there are still obstacles in tackling the intricacies of substance abuse, encompassing its effects on law enforcement, public health, and social welfare.

A variety of tactics, such as harm reduction programmes, treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation, have been used in the fight against drug demand. However, a number of issues, including as stigma, restricted access to services for treatment and recovery, and the introduction of novel psychoactive drugs, have made these efforts less successful.

Going forward, a thorough and coordinated strategy is required to address the underlying causes of substance abuse, bolster law enforcement's efforts to dismantle drug trafficking organisations, and improve the availability of evidence-based support and treatment services. More cooperation between civil society groups, government agencies, and foreign partners is also necessary to successfully address the problems caused by substance abuse and advance health and wellbeing in Indian society.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

- **Enhance Prevention Programmes:** To raise awareness about the dangers of substance abuse and encourage healthy lives, fund extensive prevention programmes aimed at vulnerable populations, communities, and schools.
- **Increase financing and Resources for Substance misuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres:** Substance misuse treatment and rehabilitation centres, including outpatient

programmes, counselling, and support groups, should get more financing. Make sure these services are inexpensive, available, and considerate of cultural differences.

- **Adopt Harm Reduction Measures:** To lessen the detrimental effects of substance abuse on one's health and slow the spread of infectious illnesses, implement harm reduction programmes include opioid substitution treatment, needle exchange programmes, and overdose prevention techniques.
- **Boost Law Enforcement:** Increased efforts should be made to destroy covert labs, prosecute drug producers and distributors, and disrupt drug trafficking networks. Give law enforcement organisations the tools and training they need to successfully tackle drug-related offences.
- **Encourage Community Involvement:** To create locally driven responses to substance abuse, cultivate alliances with civil society groups, grassroots projects, and local communities. Give local communities the tools they need to address the fundamental social and economic issues that fuel drug misuse.
- **Enhance Data Gathering and Monitoring:** To get a deeper understanding of the frequency, trends, and trends of drug abuse in India, provide resources to research and data gathering initiatives. When developing policies, designing programmes, and allocating resources, take evidence-based research into consideration.
- **Boost International Cooperation:** Increase cooperation in the fight against global drug trafficking networks, intelligence sharing, and combined enforcement actions with neighbouring nations and international partners. Encourage regional campaigns and agreements designed to combat world drug trafficking.
- **Address Socioeconomic Factors:** Through focused interventions as well as social welfare initiatives, address the underlying socioeconomic causes of drug abuse, such as unemployment, poverty, and social inequity. Encourage social participation, education, and the economy to help people in recovery from substance misuse.
- **Boost Public Awareness & Education:** Start public education campaigns to inform people about the dangers of substance abuse, the significance of getting assistance for addiction, and the resources for support and treatment that are available. Encourage the

de-stigmatization of drug use problems and foster candid communication among neighbours.

- **Examine and Update Laws:** To make sure the NDPS Act of 1985 is still applicable and useful in addressing new issues relating to drug addiction and trafficking, it should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Examine changes that would toughen regulatory control over medicines and restricted drugs, increase the severity of punishments for drug-related offences, and increase access to rehabilitation and medical care.