

## **Drug Abuse In India In The Era Of 2000: A Historical Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

*Drug abuse has emerged as a significant public health challenge in India, particularly since the early 2000s. The rise in substance use is driven by multiple factors, including socioeconomic conditions, increased accessibility, and the influence of global drug markets. This paper aims to provide an in-depth analysis of drug abuse trends in India, exploring the increasing prevalence of narcotics like heroin, cannabis, and synthetic drugs. Special emphasis is placed on vulnerable demographics, including the youth, as well as the role of border states such as Punjab and Manipur in drug trafficking.*

*The paper further examines the multifaceted challenges faced in combating drug abuse, including social stigma, inadequate rehabilitation infrastructure, weak law enforcement mechanisms, and economic implications. Despite legal frameworks such as the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, enforcement loopholes and corruption hinder effective drug control. Additionally, the impact of prescription drug misuse and the rise of synthetic drugs through dark web marketplaces pose new challenges for law enforcement.*

*Various interventions, both governmental and non-governmental, have been implemented to address this crisis. Programs such as the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) and initiatives like "Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan" highlight the government's commitment to tackling drug abuse. Comparative case studies from countries such as the United States, Portugal, and Thailand offer insights into different policy approaches, including decriminalization and harm reduction strategies.*

*This paper argues for a balanced approach that integrates stringent law enforcement with rehabilitation, education, and public awareness campaigns. Leveraging technology, grassroots mobilization, and international cooperation will be crucial in addressing India's evolving drug abuse landscape. Ultimately, a multi-sectoral and evidence-based approach is needed to mitigate the devastating social and economic impact of substance abuse in the country.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Drug abuse has emerged as a critical public health and social issue in India, particularly since the early 2000s. The proliferation of narcotics, including heroin, cannabis, and synthetic drugs, has had far-reaching consequences on individuals, families, and society at large. India's geographical proximity to the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran) and the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand) has exacerbated drug trafficking, making illicit substances more accessible. The rising trend of substance abuse among youth, increased prescription drug misuse, and the advent of internet drug markets further complicate the situation.

The impact of drug abuse extends beyond health consequences, affecting social structures, economic productivity, and national security. Addiction contributes to crime, unemployment, and mental health disorders, straining public health systems and law enforcement agencies. Despite stringent laws like the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985, enforcement gaps, corruption, and societal stigma continue to hinder effective intervention.

This paper explores the evolving patterns of drug abuse in India, the challenges in combating the crisis, and the efforts made by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, a comparative analysis with international case studies will highlight best practices and potential solutions.

## **II. Trends In Drug Abuse In India**

### **1. Increasing Prevalence of Drug Use**

India has witnessed a sharp rise in drug abuse since the 2000s, with reports indicating an increase in the consumption of opioids, synthetic drugs, and prescription medications. The National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India (2019) highlighted that nearly 2.6 crore people in the country suffer from opioid dependence. Punjab, Haryana, and northeastern states have reported alarming levels of drug addiction, exacerbated by their proximity to international trafficking routes.

### **2. Regional Drug Trends**

- **Punjab and Haryana:** The use of heroin, smack, and pharmaceutical opioids has surged, affecting entire communities and contributing to crime rates.
- **Northeastern States:** Proximity to Myanmar has resulted in increased trafficking of methamphetamine and heroin.
- **Metropolitan Cities:** Rising cases of cocaine, LSD, and MDMA use among urban youth indicate a shift towards recreational drugs.

### **3. Impact on Youth and Vulnerable Populations**

The demographic most affected by drug abuse includes individuals between 15-35 years old. Peer pressure, unemployment, academic stress, and urbanization have contributed to this trend. Moreover, reports suggest that children in slums and street settings are increasingly becoming victims of substance abuse, with exposure to inhalants such as glue, paint thinners, and whiteners.

### **4. Role of Prescription Drug Abuse**

A worrying trend is the misuse of prescription drugs, such as painkillers and sedatives, which are easily accessible due to weak pharmaceutical regulations. Tramadol, codeine-based cough syrups, and benzodiazepines have become widely abused substances, particularly in states like West Bengal and Assam.

### **5. Online Drug Trade and Dark Web Marketplaces**

The emergence of online drug markets has facilitated easier access to illicit substances. Many users now procure drugs through encrypted platforms on the dark web, avoiding traditional law enforcement mechanisms.

### **6. Socioeconomic and Health Consequences**

The economic burden of drug addiction is estimated to be billions of rupees annually, affecting productivity and increasing healthcare costs. Health implications include increased cases of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B & C due to injectable drug use, and rising mental health disorders linked to addiction.

### **7. Government and Law Enforcement Response**

Despite stringent drug laws under the NDPS Act, enforcement challenges persist due to corruption, lack of training, and inadequate rehabilitation infrastructure. However, initiatives like NAPDDR and Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan have shown promise in addressing prevention and rehabilitation.

### **8. Case Studies: Domestic and International Comparisons**

- **India:** Punjab's de-addiction centres and community-based interventions in Manipur serve as models for other states.
- **Portugal:** Decriminalization and harm reduction strategies have effectively reduced drug-related deaths.
- **United States:** Policies tackling the opioid crisis, including prescription monitoring programs and naloxone distribution, offer valuable insights.

## **9. Future Directions**

To curb drug abuse, India needs stronger enforcement, community-based treatment programs, better mental health support, and international collaborations. The integration of technology, public awareness campaigns, and stricter pharmaceutical regulations will be crucial in addressing this growing menace.

## **III. Conclusion**

The problem of drug abuse in India has escalated over the years, evolving into a serious socio-economic and public health crisis. The country's proximity to major international drug trafficking routes, combined with internal socio-economic disparities, has led to a sharp rise in substance use disorders. The surge in opioid abuse, synthetic drug consumption, and prescription medication misuse has created complex challenges for law enforcement, healthcare providers, and policymakers. The increasing prevalence of drug addiction among young people and vulnerable populations highlights the urgency of comprehensive intervention strategies.

A well-rounded approach to combating drug abuse requires a combination of strict legal frameworks, effective law enforcement, enhanced rehabilitation facilities, and targeted awareness campaigns. While government initiatives such as the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) and the *Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan* have made strides in addressing the crisis, there is still a significant need for stronger enforcement mechanisms, greater community participation, and improved access to mental health care for recovering addicts.

International case studies, including Portugal's decriminalization model and the U.S. opioid crisis management strategies, offer valuable lessons that India can adapt to its unique context. By integrating international best practices with localized solutions, India can create a more sustainable and effective approach to reducing drug dependency.

Ultimately, addressing drug abuse requires a multi-sectoral approach involving law enforcement agencies, healthcare institutions, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. A proactive stance, coupled with consistent policy reforms and community engagement, is essential for mitigating the long-term impact of drug abuse in India. By fostering a society that prioritizes rehabilitation over punishment and prevention over reaction, India can work towards a future with reduced substance abuse and healthier communities.

## **References**

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