

## **Drug Abuse and Addiction in India: Causes, Social impacts and Remedial Measures**

**Savya Sanchi \***

Addiction is more often now defined by the continuing, compulsive nature of the drug use despite physical and/or psychological harm to the user and society and includes both licit and illicit drugs, and the term "substance abuse" is now frequently used because of the broad range of substances (including alcohol and inhalants) that can fit the addictive profile. Psychological dependence is the subjective feeling that the user needs the drug to maintain a feeling of well-being; physical dependence is characterized by tolerance (the need for increasingly larger doses in order to achieve the initial effect) and withdrawal symptoms when the user is abstinent.

Just as a diversity set of personality traits (for example, introverts, extraverts, type A, obsessive-compulsive, and so on) exists, drug users vary according to their general approach or orientation, frequency of use, and the amount of the drugs they consume. Some are occasional or moderate users, while others display much stronger attachment to drug use. In fact, some display such obsessive-compulsive behavior that they cannot let a morning, afternoon, and evening pass without using drugs. Such variability in the frequency and extent of usage has been classified by some researchers as fitting into three basic patterns.

### **Causes of Drug Abuse**

Recent studies sponsored by the Union Government also have established that peer pressure and curiosity are the main factor behind drug abuse in country. After the curiosity is satisfied, a person may either never take drug again or keep on repeatedly using it, as drug-taking is usually a pleasant experience. A number of factors are responsible for individual decision-making at this stage. The most crucial factor, however, is whether drugs are easily available or not for ongoing use. According to Paula Fuqua, it is true that a person who has already become dependent on drugs will go anywhere in search of drugs but "these people are exceptions rather than a rule." For most of the other people, according to him, drug abuse is "an occasional sort of thing, a take-it-or-leave-it phenomenon" and "if the drugs are readily available they will use them or experiment with them; if not, they will not".

As the drug law enforcement is quite poor, illicit drugs remain easily available throughout the country. In addition, the legitimate channels for supply of psychotropic substances for medical purposes are also fast becoming a major source of unrestricted illicit supply of these drugs to the existing as well the potential drug abusers. The chemists and druggists are under a legal obligation, by virtue of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, to sell prescription drugs only to the person holding valid prescriptions. Due to the lax control over these chemists and druggists, such drugs are illegally sold by them at a premium to the addicts.

As long as the illicit drugs are easily available, more and more people will have the opportunity of experimenting with such drugs, and adding to the number of existing drug abusers.

### **Role of parents**

It has been observed by researchers that unregulated use of sleeping pills, tranquilizers, weight-reducing drugs and alcohol by the parents often promotes drug abuse by the children. Richard Barrymore observes:

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\* **Research Scholar B.H.U. NET (Sociology)**

"Over a third of middle-aged women and many young mothers were taking tranquilizers two or three times a day because they felt nervous or irritable usually due to tension from underlying boredom at home or unhappiness in their marriage. Youngsters feel similar pressure and emotional reactions. It is very natural that they too should feel they can resort to a boost or a sleeper to smooth out their moods, rather than to have to sweat these out naturally".

In fact, we are too liberal in the use of drugs- legal or illegal. As rightly pointed out by Paul Fuqua, we take "drugs to put us to sleep, to get us up, to prevent pregnancies, to induce pregnancies, to sharpen our wits, to dull our nerves, to stop our headaches, to regulate our bowels, to cure our diseases, to clear our sinuses, and to do just about anything else with our bodies that can be imagined". Obviously, this is not a healthy attitude for children to learn and mimic.

Due to the prevailing socio-economic condition in the country, an average Indian family gets so engrossed in meeting the materialistic needs that there is hardly any emphasis on understanding the children and fulfilling their genuine desires. This necessarily results in the children getting neglected and frustrated. Such children are highly susceptible to the abuse of drugs.

### **Status of Drugs in India**

According to official data from the ministry of social justice and empowerment, India has an estimated 3.4 million drug abuse victims. This number excludes alcoholics, who figure at around 11 million in the country.

India is highly vulnerable because it is sandwiched between two infamous drug routes and poppy growing areas, namely the 'Golden Crescent' on the northwest and 'Golden Triangle' on the northeast, where drugs are easily available.

The government undertakes remedial measures like Integrated Rehabilitation Centre for Addicts (IRCA) that provides counseling, treatment and rehabilitation services to drug abuse victims. But the numbers of IRCAs are very low.

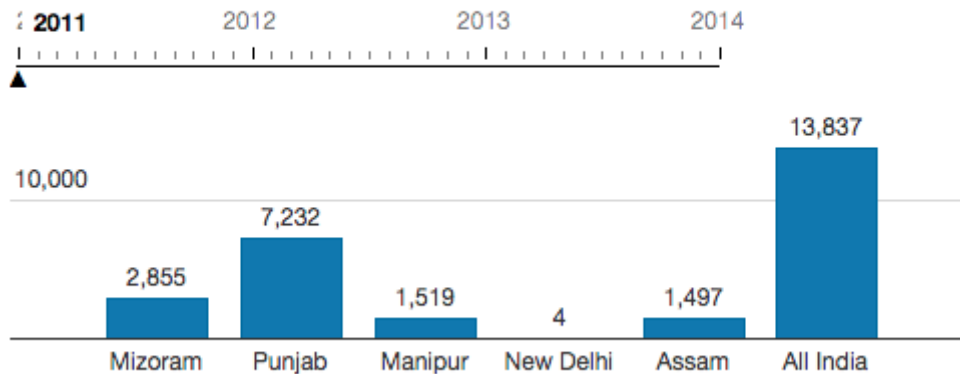
Even though there are 3.4 million drug abuse victims, the government has only 401 rehabilitation centers functioning at present. That is an average of overwhelming 8,478 victims per IRCA.

Out of these 3.4 million drug abuse victims, a mere 0.3 million have registered themselves in these de-addiction centers, which is just 10% of the total figure.

And of the 0.3 million registered members about 0.15 million (50%) are from Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram, New Delhi, Manipur and Assam.

If calculated using 'per capita drug victims' then most of the northeastern states get lined-up on the top of the table as home to drug abusers.

## Top 5 States, Drugs Seized (In Tonnes)



### India's Youth – on Drugs

In Punjab the numbers are ridiculous nearly 75% of its youth are severely addicted to drugs that are 3 out of every 4 children.

Mumbai, Hyderabad and other cities around the country are quickly gaining a reputation for their drug usage; and the population in each of these cities continues to grow.

Delhi is filled with rehab centers trying to keep up with the flow of addicts. Over 500 centers across our country work together to nurse addicts back into healthy productive lifestyles but addiction is becoming too much for India.

The menace of drugs and alcohol has woven itself deep into the fabric of our society. As its effects reach towards our youth, India's future generation will have to compete with drugs like cannabis, alcohol and tobacco.

More Indian youngsters struggle with addiction than ever before. Peer pressure, adolescent immaturity and irresponsible parenting is the three-headed monster luring our children towards addiction and a life of suffering and regret.

### Preventing Addiction

Although often neglected, we need to give special attention to our young community who have never abused drugs.

The old saying, "Preventing addiction is more effective than curing it," may seem idealistic, but it demonstrates a mindset that Indians need to adopt. While many programmes aim at presenting alternatives to addicts, we need to remember the community that has never abused drugs.

Creating healthy and attractive alternatives to drug abuse can curb the number of first time users. The United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention recently came out with a handbook to help communities prevent drug abuse. Some basic prevention ideas include:

1. **Promotion of Health:** The community needs to promote healthy lifestyles through personal and cultural practices. By setting an example of health you will discourage damaging and dangerous lifestyles.
2. **Focus on people and encouragement of social interaction:** Promoting social interaction between old and young can only be done in a social environment. Create this environment through organized activities that all ages can partake in.

3. **Local involvement of young people and respect for cultural values:** The activities you chose should focus on young people. Be sure to respect cultural traditions of the community.
4. **Encouragement of positive alternatives:** Develop these alternatives with cultural values in mind, and understanding what appeals to the younger generation.
5. **Long-term perspective:** Don't be discouraged if results aren't immediate. Preventing drug use takes time keeping a long-term perspective is important.
6. **Community development:** Focus on developing the fundamentals of your community. Education, health and social services, housing, sanitation, and income-generating activities are important ideas to focus in on.

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