

Drug addiction

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Manifest Pedagogy

Drug addiction as an issue should be covered from 3 different perspective for holistic coverage.

1. Drug issue as a social problem
2. Drug addiction and role of government
3. Drug chains and impact on internal security

The Act being highly in news can be a possible question in both prelims and mains.

In news

Prevalence of drug addiction in Punjab

Placing it in syllabus

1. Problems in Indian society (not explicitly mentioned in the syllabus)
2. Indian Polity and Governance – Health
3. Internal Security

Static dimensions

1. Definition of drug addiction
2. Extent of the problem in India
3. NDPS Act, 1985

Current dimensions

1. Specific focus – Punjab and North Eastern states

Content

Drug addiction is defined by the existence of both psychological dependence and physical dependence on at least one illicit substance, according to PubMed Health.

Extent of the problem in India

In a National Survey conducted by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, for the year 2000-2001 (report published in 2004), it was estimated that about 732 lakh persons in India were users of alcohol and drugs. Of these 87 lakh used Cannabis, 20 lakh used opiates and 625 lakh were users of Alcohol.

Specific focus- Punjab and North east

Punjab and golden crescent

A recent **study** by the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, – says that in Punjab, almost 4.1 million people have been found to have used a substance (licit or illicit) at least once in their lifetime. Among the lifetime users, four million were men and around 0.1 million women. The problem is further compounded by having international linkages. The best example being the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle.

Licit substances consist of alcohol and tobacco, while illicit substances include opioids, cannabinoids, inhalants, stimulants, and sedatives.

The **Golden Crescent** is the name given to one of Asia's two principal areas of illicit opium production (with the other being the Golden Triangle), located at the crossroads of Central, South, and Western Asia. This space overlaps three nations, Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, whose mountainous peripheries define the crescent

North east and golden triangle

- Traditionally, the Golden Triangle is a region between the borders of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand; a famous region for its opium production.
- According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) latest *Southeast Asia `Opium Survey 2013*, opium cultivation in the Golden Triangle went up in 2013 propelled by a 13 per cent growth in Myanmar
- A decade ago, the **Golden Triangle supplied half the world's heroin**, but drug barons backed by ethnic militias in Myanmar have turned to trafficking massive quantities of amphetamines and methamphetamines – “which can be produced cheaply in small, hidden laboratories, without the need for acres of exposed land” and these narcotics now dominate the Myanmar part of the Triangle.
- Insurgencies in Myanmar have been funded by narcotics trafficking. Cease-fires with the civilian government of Myanmar have left rebel groups free to continue their manufacturing and smuggling without interference. Since insurgencies based on purely ethnic issues are on the way out, **high profits and access to the lucrative Thai and foreign markets now drive narcotics production and trafficking.**



What needs to be done?

Drug addiction being a social problem and also a law and order issue, having international linkages needs a two pronged strategy :

1. Strong Acts and policies to deter peddlers complemented by International Cooperation
2. Sensitization and rehabilitation of drug victims

India already has **The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic**

Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 (in a bid to criminalize the cultivation, possession of narcotic drugs) but it needs to be strengthened further.

It is necessary to understand that this Act has evolved over the years, and has been amended thrice (1988, 2001 and 2014) which has changed its scope and direction.

The Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act was passed in 1988 and was brought in to ensure full implementation and enforcement of the NDPS act.

The NDPS Act contains 5 Chapters, with each chapter dealing with a certain subject with respect to the statute.

- It introduces and **defines the various narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances**, and finally highlights that the Central government has the power to omit or add other substances to the list under the NDPS Act.
- It also highlights the relevant Authorities and Officers that have been created under the NDPS Act. It sets the guidelines for the Central government to appoint a **Narcotics Commissioner**, to **set up a Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Consultative Committee** and to fund a **National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse**.
- It lays out the **Prohibition, Control and Regulation of the previously mentioned substances**. It prevents the cultivation or production of the coca plant, opium poppy or any cannabis plant by anybody, while reserving these rights with both the Central and State governments if they wish to do so, by creating rules later. Furthermore, all Inter-State and International smuggling of such substances have been prohibited. It also looks at the regulation on other controlled substance that can be used to create narcotic drugs and also has clauses which illustrate cases under which opium poppy, coca plant, and cannabis plant can be legally cultivated.

- Under Offences and Penalties, it describes the **punishment** duration for various possible crimes that can be tried under this Act, such as possession of such substances, for commercial or recreational use, cultivation or preparation of such substances and smuggling of such substances.
- Finally, it looks at the Procedure of how the cases are to be dealt with, and also **set the guidelines for the officers empowered under this Act.**

1. Criticism & Amendments of NDPS act

Over the years, this Act has been criticized as a hasty piece of legislation that had been introduced under pressure and pointed key flaws in its functioning.

- Since **there is no clear definition of what is to be done with naturally found plants like cannabis**, people have been able to get away legally for consuming bhang, because even that isn't mentioned in the Act.
- Furthermore, the Act has been criticised for **not giving the necessary leeway to the medical usage of these substances**, a change that was finally made in 2014. The 2014 amendment created a list of 'essential narcotic drugs'.
- As mentioned before, since States have been given the power to allow the cultivation of narcotic substances, Uttarakhand has moved towards legalizing marijuana. However, farmers will only grow this for industrial purposes, generally to makes fibres, and not for recreational purposes.
- Moreover the Uttarakhand government has also been accused of coming down hard on drug users and handing out similar punishments, as if they were drug suppliers. While there definitely are some flaws that can be worked on, the statute has had an impact on modern Indian society and is very important to any debate regarding drugs

The Act should be complemented by Sensitization of the effects of drug use and also rehabilitation of drug abusers.

- Drug and Alcohol abuse has become a major concern in India. **The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, is the nodal Ministry for drug demand reduction.**
- It coordinates and monitors all aspects of drug abuse prevention which include assessment of the extent of the problem, preventive action, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts, dissemination of information and public awareness.
- **The Ministry provides community-based services for the identification, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts through voluntary organizations.**
- **Approach and Strategy of the Ministry**-The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment recognizes drug abuse as a psycho-socio-medical problem, which can be best handled by adoption of a family/community-based approach by active involvement of NGOs/CBOs. The strategy for demand reduction is three pronged with the following:
 - **Awareness building and educating people** about ill effects of drug abuse.
 - **Community based intervention for motivational counseling**, identification, treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts, and
 - **Training of volunteers/service providers** and other stakeholders with a view to build up a committed and skilled cadre.

Test yourself: Mould your thoughts

Briefly outline the features of NDPS Act, 1985. Do you think the Act adequately addresses drug addiction as a social problem