

# Opium Cultivation in India

April 8, 2021

## Legal cultivation of opium In India

- Legal cultivation of opium for medicinal purposes is carried out in India, only in selected areas, under free licensing conditions.
- India is the world's largest manufacturer of legal opium for the pharmaceutical industry according to the CIA World Factbook.
- India is one among 12 countries in the world where legal cultivation for medical use is permissible within the ambit of the United Nations, Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961.
- In India legal cultivation is done primarily in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- Despite producing poppy for opium production India depends heavily on imports to meet the need of Poppy seed for edible purposes and domestic Codeine demand for medical purposes (more than 30% by imports).
- Opium is heavily imported from its top producing nations like Afghanistan. There is also an account of Opium black marketing in India.

## History cultivation of opium In India

- The cultivation of poppy in India for Opium production started during the British Raj. It constituted 15% of revenue of British Raj from Colonial India.
- The legalized cultivation and management of produce under strict government control continued in India even post independence.
- The NDPS act empowers the Central Government to permit and regulate cultivation of opium poppy for medical and scientific purposes.
- Presently, the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN), is

responsible for overall supervision of cultivation as per provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

- The Government of India notifies the tracts where opium cultivation can be licensed as well as the General Conditions for issuance of license every year.

### **Opium poppy**

- Scientific name *Papaver somniferum*.
- Flowering plant of the family Papaveraceae, native to Turkey.
- The opium poppy is an annual plant and can reach about 1–5 metres (3–16 feet) tall.
- It has lobed or toothed silver-green foliage and bears blue-purple or white flowers some 13 cm (5 inches) wide.
- Plant is the source of opium gum which contains several indispensable alkaloids such as Morphine, codeine and Thebaine.
- Morphine is the best analgesic in the world.
- In case of extreme and excruciating pain such as that of terminally ill cancer patients, nothing alleviates the suffering except morphine.
- Codeine is commonly used in the manufacture of cough syrups