

# Fighting Drug Abuse



*Dr. Prachi Bagla\**

In recent times, drug consumption has become a major health hazard with serious impact on socio economic well-being of the country. It is a worldwide phenomenon with no country completely immune from it.

In India too, this curse has enormously gripped our people especially the youth. Frequent raids and quantities seized therein speak volumes about the magnitude of the menace. If there is such huge supply, there must be equal level of demand too. It is a major challenge now for the government, policy makers and health care providers.

## Introduction

### *What is drug abuse?*

Drug abuse, also called substance abuse, refers to the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain.

### *Who is consuming drugs?*

Drug consumption is rampant in all age groups in rural as well as urban communities. According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2018, the prevalence of drug abuse is higher among youngsters (in the age bracket 18-25) than among the older people. Researchers have found that the risk period for the initiation of drug use is adolescence (12-17 years) [1]. Men are more likely to abuse drugs than women [2]. Moreover, single people are more likely to abuse drugs than married individuals [3]. Surveys have found that the use of drugs is emerging in females, elderly people and among prisoners and street children [3,4].

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## Reasons of using drugs

Drugs are used by people for a variety of reasons. These may be

- Initiated just for pleasure or for recreational purposes
- To experiment
- Due to peer pressure for better acceptance in the group
- Curiosity especially among school children and young adults
- Due to environmental factors like lack of connection with the family or poor parenting
- Too much affluence
- Due to continued use of a prescription drug used for pain relief beyond the requirement.

## Symptoms of Drug Abuse

When someone starts using drugs or already addicted, body and mind produces certain signals which people in the immediate contact like parents, siblings, neighbours, domestic help, friends and educators should be able to notice. Some of the notable symptoms are:

- Neglected appearance and lack of hygiene
- Lethargic disposition and listlessness
- Poor concentration and memory
- Abnormal eyes (swollen, redness)
- Poor appetite and weight loss
- Incoherent speech ( when under influence)
- Isolation and reduced outdoor activities
- Frequent demand for money
- Missing out school/college/office
- Poor grades
- Irritable and aggressive behaviour
- Injection marks on body, syringes in the dustbin
- Skin infections
- Sleep disorders; etc.



## Treatment and harm reduction

For a user, a feeling that he/she has great self-control is a fallacy as drug takes over one's life very fast. Typically, there is an initial use, then more of it, and then more often.. to get the same degree of pleasurable sensation. Any attempt to stop one's own results in unbearable cravings and behavioural disorders called withdrawal symptoms.

Addicts usually know that they have harmed themselves enough by consuming drugs but most do not want to go for treatment on their own. It is the family that has to arrange treatment for the troubled.

Treatment takes place in Government and private hospitals using multiple approaches involving medication, counselling and rehabilitation. Before initiating the organised treatment program, the professionals - medical and therapists will be able to find which particular drug is in use (as all drugs do not produce the same symptoms). And after discerning the root cause of indulgence in drugs and based on the symptoms, an effective therapeutic strategy will be devised.

Thus, there will be:

- a. **Pharmacological treatment** using appropriate medication for suppressing the urge and to control withdrawal symptoms.
- b. **Therapies and much needed counselling** to reduce the risk of psychological setbacks.
- c. **Rehabilitation process** to re-establishes the patient in the society, workplace, school/college and to regain self-esteem and self-confidence. This is a major step in treatment process as the chances of relapses are very high in road to riddance and recovery.

## State Efforts to Combat Drugs

Central as well as state governments have taken steps consistently to address this complex menace with the ultimate aim to reduce supply and demand for illicit substances and harm reduction. In a nutshell:

- a. Government of India has made the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as the nodal ministry. An autonomous body under this ministry, National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) works as nodal Institute for training and research.

Besides, the National Centre for Drug Abuse Prevention (under aegis do NISD) provides its support to the government on various policy matters in the field.

Further, major support on war footing comes from various central and state level



agencies like Narcotics Control Bureau, Central Bureau of Narcotics, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, police and State Excise Officers.

- b. Drug laws have been enacted and enforced. National level de-addiction programs under National Action Plan of the nodal ministry and awareness campaigns are running for early detection, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts.
- c. Government of India made a national policy on narcotics and psychotropic substances in 2012 with the objective of listing norms for ministries, state governments, NGOs and other agencies involved in handling drug related issues.

### **Brief Overview of Drug Related Laws in India**

In India drug laws are governed by the following two Acts:

1. Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985 (NDPS Act) replacing Opium Act and Dangerous Drugs Act of 1930. This Act a list of over 200 controlled substances in their chemical name or their International non-proprietary name whose cultivation, production, manufacture, possession, sale, purchase, transport, storage, consumption or distribution is illegal except for medical/scientific purposes requiring licence from the appropriate authorities.

This Act has been amended three times till date. The latest amendment made in 2014 created a class of medicines required for pain relief, called Essential Narcotic Drugs on which power for legislation rests with the central Government.

2. Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1988 enacted to allow complete implementation and enforcement of NDPS Act 1985.

Besides these two relatively recent Acts, the Drugs, cosmetics Act of 1940 is still in force.

These Acts provide for severe punishment for contravention that includes a jail term and monetary fine based on whether quantity of the banned substance in usage/possession was 'small quantity' or 'commercial quantity' as per the provisions under the said Acts.

### **Torch bearers of Nasha Mukta Bharat**

This multi-headed 'Hydra' known as drug trafficking thrives & grows despite best of state, police and society's efforts.



THE HINDU  
**States**

Monday, March 17, 2025  
Delhi

## 37.87 kg of MDMA seized in Bengaluru; 2 foreigners held

At ₹75 crore, it's the highest value of drugs seized in Karnataka so far, say police; the two South African women arrested in the case had flown to the city frequently from Delhi to deliver drugs

The Hindu Bureau  
MANGALURU

**T**wo South African women were arrested and 37.87 kg of the synthetic narcotic drug MDMA, valued at ₹75 crore, was seized from them, the Mangaluru police announced on Sunday. The drug was brought on a domestic flight from Delhi to Bengaluru, they said.

This was the highest value of drugs seized by the Karnataka Police so far, said Mangaluru Commissioner of Police Anupam Agrawal.

Addressing presspersons on Sunday, he said the accused had been identified as Bamba Fanta, 31, alias Adonis Jabulle, of Agboville, a French-speaking town in South Africa, and Abigail Adonis, alias Ojjo Evans, 30, of Pretoria.

Mr. Agrawal said the arrests were made after investigation by the Central Crime Branch (CCB) of Mangaluru following the arrest of Hyder Ali, an alleged drug peddler, in 2024. He said 15 grams of MDMA was seized from him.

Based on the information from Mr. Ali, CCB officials arrested another drug peddler, Peter Ikedi Belonwu of Nigeria, in Bengaluru and recovered 6.24 kg of MDMA.

During the questioning of Mr. Belonwu, the CCB got information about South African women frequently flying from Delhi

**61 accounts 'promoting drug abuse' taken down**

The Hindu Bureau  
KASARGOD

In a crackdown on online content that promotes drug use, Excise and Cyber Police in Kerala have jointly removed 61 Instagram accounts allegedly spreading messages that glorified substance abuse.

The accounts were allegedly actively sharing videos featuring dialogues and background music from popular movies, subtly normalising or glorifying drug consumption. The cyber operations chief of Kerala Police, Ankit Ashokan, said a legal notice was issued to Instagram, leading to the removal of the accounts. "We take this matter seriously and have taken immediate action to address it. Legal notices have been issued to the relevant social media platforms, directing them to remove the Instagram profiles promoting drug use. These profiles have been made inaccessible in India. Additionally, stringent measures to prevent the spread of narcotic substance promotion has been implemented," he said.

"We will continue to monitor the situation and enforce legal action to prevent such activities."

The action was initiated based on the efforts of M.V. Shilparaj, a cybercadet under the Union Home Department, along with Srinivas Pai, an engineer from Kanhangad. This move gained further traction when the Excise Intelligence Bureau launched a district-wide surveillance.

**Tackling drug menace:** Mangaluru Police Commissioner Anupam Agrawal with the CCB team that arrested two South African nationals for drug smuggling in Bengaluru. I.S. MANJUNATH

To Bengaluru to deliver MDMA to drug peddlers in Bengaluru.

The two women were reportedly lying down every fortnight. They would deliver drugs and fly back to Delhi within 24 hours.

"For the past six months, our CCB team was closely tracking the movement of the two South African women," the officer said. After a tip-off about the arrival of the accused in the early hours of March 14, a team reached the Bengaluru International Airport. Soon after landing at the airport, the two accused booked a taxi, to deliver MDMA.

The personnel followed the accused for nearly six hours. They raided a place at Neeladri Nagar in Electronics City and arrested the two women.

Apart from MDMA, the police seized four mobile phones, two trolley bags, two passports, and ₹18,460 in cash from them.

During the brief questioning, it came to light that in the past one year, the two women had travelled 37 times to Bengaluru and 22 times to Mumbai to deliver MDMA.

"We are yet to know how they managed to hoodwink security personnel at these major airports," the officer said, adding the police suspect the accused procured the MDMA from abroad or from places close to Delhi.

Mr. Agrawal said Ms. Fanta and Ms. Adonis were delivering MDMA for the past 18 months. Both used fake passports and visa.

Ms. Fanta, who is in the food cart business, came to India on a business visa in 2020 and continued to stay in Delhi. Ms. Adonis, who sold ready-made clothes in Delhi, had entered India in July 2016 on a medical visa, the police said.

As the accused were involved in inter-State operations, the city police would involve the Narcotics Control Bureau to get information about the accused and their associates.

Mr. Agrawal lauded the efforts of the CCB team led by Inspector K.M. Rafiq, in busting the major drug peddling racket. Sub-inspectors M.V. Sudeep, Shanappa Bhandardi, and Naredra, assistant sub-inspectors K.V. Mohan, Ram Poojary, Sheshappa, and Sujan Shetty were part of the team. An award will be announced for the team soon, Mr. Agrawal said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA  
NEWS TOI GAMES LIVE VIDEOS WORLD

**Diplomat's Son In 5-Member Syndicate: How Delhi Police, NCB Busted Drug Cartel After Weeks Of Reconnaissance**

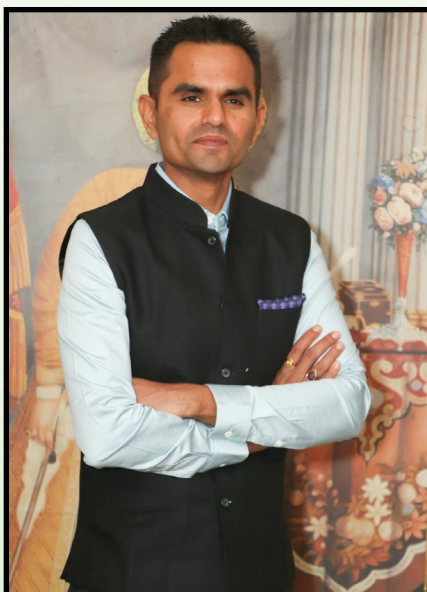
CITY | Raj Shekhar Jha | TNN | Apr 1, 2025, 09:34 IST

**NEW DELHI:** In a major blow to international narcotics trafficking, a joint operation by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the special cell of Delhi Police has dismantled a sophisticated drug cartel that was targeting young students in educational institutions. Five members of the syndicate, including an African diplomat's son, have been arrested and drugs worth several crores seized.

The cartel, with its tentacles spread across Africa and Asia, was peddling high-quality narcotics, including methamphetamine, heroin, MDMA and ecstasy pills. The accused, enrolled in private institutes in Delhi and other places and had been selling the narcotics to youngsters.

"The seizure exemplifies the agencies' commitment to successfully dismantle drug networks. To fight against drug trafficking, we seek support from the citizens. Any person can share information related to sale of narcotics by calling on MANAS- national narcotics helpline toll free number 1933," said an official.

In each such success, the police does find out the loopholes in the system from entry of the drugs and their couriers, their modus operandi in breaking large consignments and supplying it to the last link on the streets, the money trail, the trail in foreign nations, the people involved in both the smuggling and distribution of drugs and the creators of platforms on social media.



But yet this menace is growing as are the customers and herein lies the challenge for each reader to become a soldier in this fight by sensitising their environment about this menace, by participating in society's efforts, by encouraging the diseased to undergo rehabilitation and to keep a sharp eye on illicit trade.

After this brief commentary on drug related issues, expert views of Mr Sameer Wankhede, are presented on various facets of drug abuse prevailing in India.

Mr Wankhede, currently with Indian Revenue Service, has worked as zonal director of the Narcotics Control Bureau till 2021 for about 15 years in Intelligence, Anti-



smuggling and Anti-drugs departments. During this span, as a veteran warrior of war against drugs, he had been tough on suppliers as well as the users. He had seized more than 17000 kg narcotics through raids, intelligence operations and undercover investigations along with his team.

Excerpts from telephonic conversation with Mr. Wankhede:

- **Drug abuse has always been a challenge. What Changes do you observe in our times in terms of (a) prevalence and (b) nature of drugs in use?**

Drug issue is a global problem in today's time. If we talk about our country, the challenge is not related to any specific age group or any particular strata of society. It is here across the spectrum in various industries, private sector, public sector, in schools & colleges, and all classes of people, which is a dangerous trend.

Regarding nature of drugs, till about two decades ago, drugs in popular use were charas, ganja and to some extent heroin at some point of time. But now there is a plethora of new drugs like cocaine, methadone, amphetamine etc. that are harming our youngsters. Unfortunately, some of these are easily available over the counter in medical drug stores too.

- **How are these changes making it difficult to address the problem of drug abuse?**

Traditionally, fight against drugs had been through efficient policing, information generation, prevention and action against people involved.

There are now two problems that have posed a major challenge in the fight against drugs in recent times. One is narco-terrorism whereby huge quantities of drugs are being aggressively pushed into our country from across the borders. Quantities seized by our coastal guards and Navy clearly indicate that our system has to fight enemy operating from other countries.

Another challenge is that since anonymity is the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) in this trade, gangsters and drug suppliers/manufacturers use dark web and crypto currency for payment over which there are hardly any regulatory controls like Know Your Customer (KYC).

- **Why has drug abuse increased in recent times especially with the juveniles?**

Narco-terrorism has a role to play in increased use of drugs as dangerous substances are available easily to vulnerable youngsters. Importantly, the glorification of use of drugs like cocaine, hukkas, and liquor drinking on various platforms through their series and on social media is attracting the gullible minds of youngsters towards drugs.



Another reason is peer pressure. Following their desire to be accepted in the so-called elite circles, school & college students try to follow their practices and start consuming drugs like them.

Further, many youngsters live with a false notion that consuming drugs is cool and it is uncool if they stay away from drugs.

- **How do you rate disparity in educational standards at school & college levels and economic disparity as factors contributing to drug menace?**

Both factors are relevant as both introduce peer pressure and create a desire for acceptance in the popular groups. Both cause a cultural shock and may give a complex to the students with a humble background. They start behaving like them, adopt their vices and eventually fall in the trap.

- **Do you think that the focus of policies should majorly be on demand reduction?**

There should be a consolidated and holistic approach to handle drug menace wherein there should be simultaneous attack on both demand as well as supply side. Consumers of drugs are not considered criminals per se. So after they face the laws for consuming drugs, the focus has to be on their rehabilitation.

- **How does drug addiction affect the future of the addicts, society at large and the country as a whole?**

Drug consumption ruins health of the user. When we buy a mobile, we keep it under cover to protect the phone. Taking the clue, we should maintain the sanctity of the temple of the body by not pumping foreign substances and synthetic chemicals into it.

Wellbeing of the society suffers if its people are consuming drugs as drug consumption makes the user unemployable or his/ her work output declines if already employed.

Further, drug consumers do not understand and appreciate the macro level ramification that money spent on drugs threatens the nation's security and her wellbeing. Thus, when the hard earned money of their parents goes in the hands of anti-India forces operating from across the borders, this money is used for purchase of illegal arms, illegal real estate, attacking our army base and much more along with destroying our future generations in the long run. So, it is not just our money, our body, our choice- it is actually letting our money be used against us only.

- **What connection do you find between drug consumption and petty crimes like theft?**

Why petty crimes alone? While drug users may have to resort to stealing money and jewellery etc. from home, drug consumption may lead to very dangerous crimes



too under the influence of drugs. For instance, when posted in Maharashtra, I came across addicts in their rehabilitation process, who used methadone which had resulted in nefarious and violent sex related crimes. So use of drugs may turn the user into a hard core criminal too.

• **Do you think there is a need for new laws with more stringent provisions?**

Anti-drug laws are already stringent with gradation of penalties under different sections of the relevant Acts. For instance, if contravention involves commercial quantity, there is a provision of rigorous imprisonment upto 20 years with monetary fine upto 2 lakhs.

To handle drug related problems effectively, a comprehensive and collaborative attack involving both strict law enforcement as well as awareness among masses with equal force is needed.

• **How can the network increase due to the nexus between the suppliers and addicts to hook more be broken?**

There is a vicious circle which starts with consumption. Peddlers target young school & college children who manage initially with money from their parents. After sometime when they find that drugs are very expensive, the peddlers ask addicts created by them to supply drugs to others and to become 'mules' and in barter they are given drugs. Thus, the gullible child may become a courier of drugs and a partner in crime against mankind.

To stop this, there is a need to identify children consuming drugs. Parents of such children, usually in the denial mode thinking it is a taboo, should send their wards to the rehabilitation centre to enable them to systematically come out of the trap.

• **What new roles do you perceive for the educators and employers to contain drug abuse?**

There should be awareness sessions and talks against drug abuse in schools & colleges. Besides, the academic curriculum of school & colleges should include chapters on fall out of drug consumption.

At the workplace, there should be committee to handle drug related issues on the same lines as Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) against sexual harassment.

In order to protect the nation, tolerance for drug related crimes should be shunned. Further, anything noticed by the welfare associations, school & college administration should be reported to the police by dialling 112.



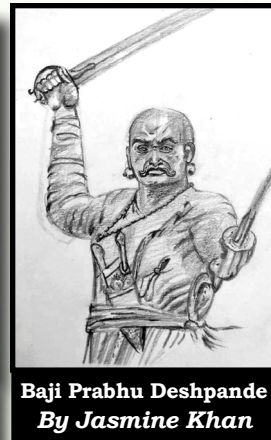
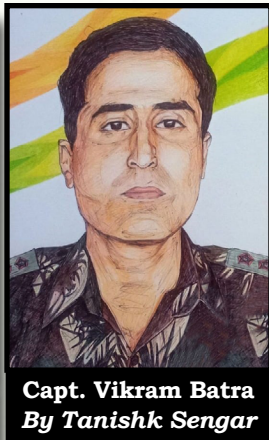
If nothing seems to be working then central agencies in the domain can be contacted with personal meetings with the senior IPS officers at the level of additional commissioner.

• **What message would you like to give to our youth on the use of drugs?**

Our honourable Prime Minister has time and again spoken very stringently against drug abuse and has initiated Nasha Mukh Abhiyan all over the country. To add my first message to the youth is **Say no to drugs and yes to life.**

Secondly, stop idolising fake heroes. In order to have a robust & strong nation and for growth & development, idolise the real heroes like Chhatrapati Shivaji, Hon'ble B.R. Ambedkar, Tanaji Malusare, Baji Prabhu Deshpande, Captain Vikram Batra, Captain Anuj Nayyar etc.

### Summing Up



Drug abuse in India is at an alarming state. It is affecting not only the individual involved but also his/her family, society and the country at large [2]. The Government of India has made notable progress in drug usage through a focus on supply reduction. There has been an impressive institutional/regulatory set up, strict law enforcement and provision of punitive measures for non-compliance. However, to make our country 'Nasha Mukh Bharat' there is a need to aggressively attack from both demand as well as supply side. Here comes the role of parents, siblings, educators, friends, employers, colleagues, NGOs and prominent personalities to act more proactively. There should be constant hammering on war footing since early in life of their wards/pupils to make them understand the implications of indulging in drugs as a user or as a supplier. To avoid falling in the trap children should resist peer pressure, aping their so-called role models from corrupt media and glamour world, confide and share with parents with full faith in their wisdom and experience of life. Further, they should choose their friends carefully, read good literature and involve themselves in outdoor activities,

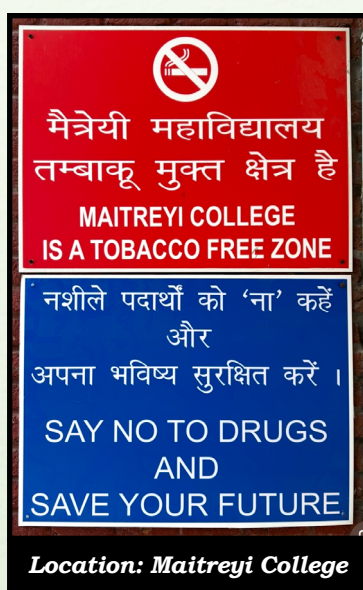
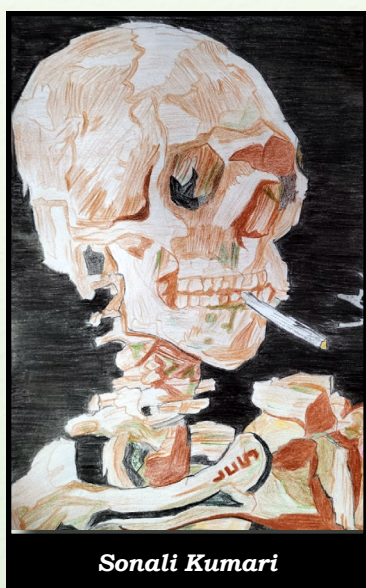


meditation & yoga. Parents should keep an eye over their wards to check their company and use of the internet. Educators should watch out for any performance/behavioural deterioration. There should be counsellors in the institution to deal with anxiety and trouble with the students.

At the community level, awareness programs, symposia and talks can be held at the ground levels by NGOs, health care providers, panchayat heads, social media, social workers and religious heads so that children and susceptible people make healthy choices in their lives. Treatment available can also be propagated through community efforts.

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Heena Garg



Atharva Gupta

### Comment

***Drugs; The journey into darkness and destruction; Drugs are one vice that is easy to pick and perhaps, most difficult to kick.***

***It works on human body and mind under 3 D factors, darkness, depression and destruction, the junkie does not live life like normal humans, they live from fix to fix and become slaves in their own mind; The addict can cross any limit, hurt anyone who comes in their way for next fix..***

***Leaving addiction is extremely difficult and the addict should not be condemned but should be motivated to try and kick the habit.***

***Politics about it is just passing wind, drug supply will stay as long as corruption stay in our system.***

***One lady constable in Punjab has been arrested with drug, she has amassed lots of money; when the guardian of society becomes a supplier, and there is no hope in hell to eradicate this problem.***

***Can corruption be controlled in India? I don't have any hope at all, it runs in our system, like blood runs in the body.***



Major Gurdeep Singh Samra

**Drugs are nothing, but, one way ticket to hell**