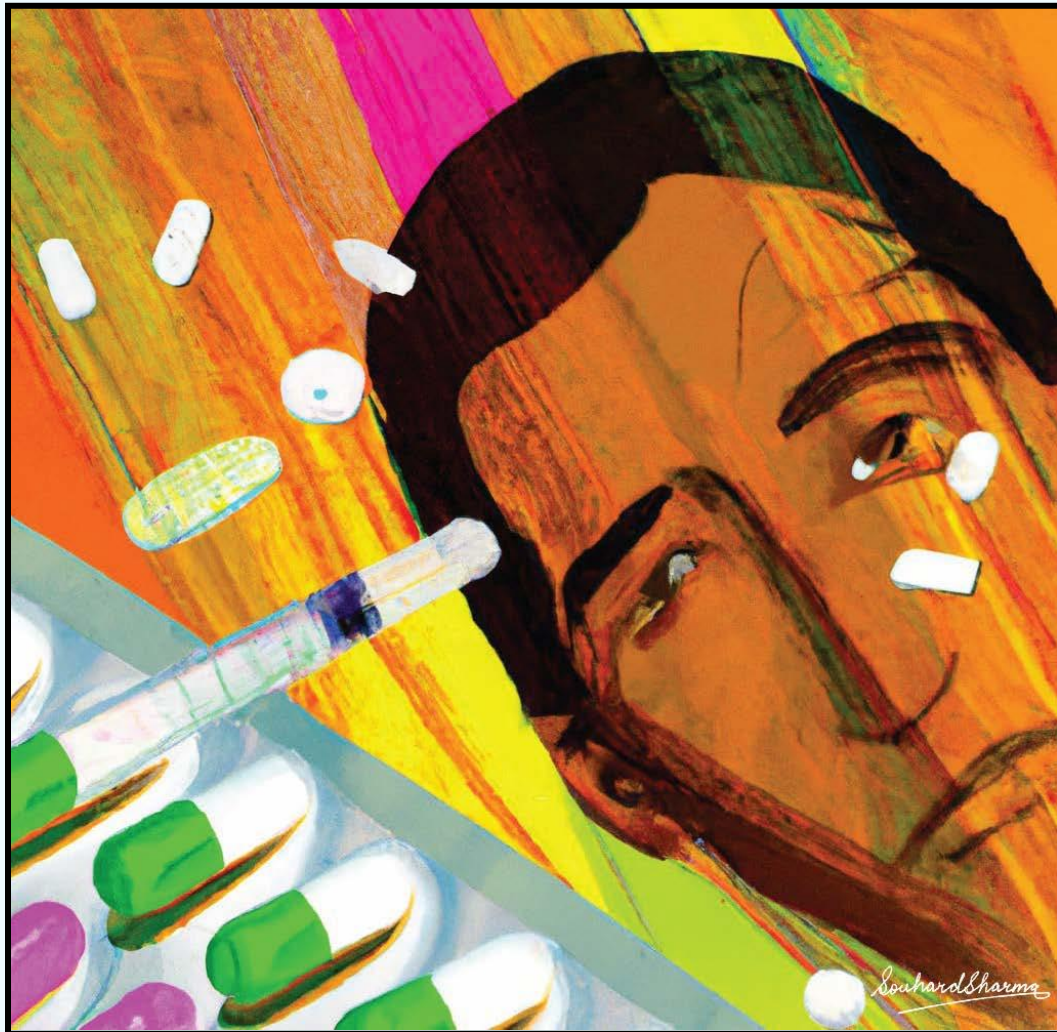


# Drugging Our Youth: The Deadly Dilemma of Drug Abuse in India



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## **Drugging Our Youth: The Deadly Dilemma of Drug Abuse in India**

*As the sun set on the bustling city, a young man named Raj sat alone in his cramped apartment, staring blankly at the wall. He was barely recognizable from the bright and ambitious college student he used to be. His once-handsome face was now gaunt and pale, his once-sparkling eyes dull and lifeless. Raj had always been a high achiever, but everything changed when he was introduced to drugs. As the years passed, Raj's drug abuse took a devastating toll on his health and relationships. He fell into a spiral of poverty and despair, unable to escape the grip of addiction. The causes and effects of drug abuse are complex, but we must address this devastating problem.*

Drug addiction is a growing problem in India, with more and more people falling prey to the destructive power of drugs daily. The causes of this addiction are complex and varied, ranging from a desire to escape from the pressures of daily life to the easy availability of drugs in many parts of the country. The effects of drug addiction are equally devastating, leaving a trail of broken lives and shattered families in its wake. India has the second-highest population of young people (10-24), making drug misuse among this demographic an increasing problem. With the emergence of a new generation of drug users, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of teenagers and young people experimenting with drugs in India in recent years. This trend is extremely concerning as the nation has a large young population. Drug abuse is a significant issue in India that affects the country's physical and mental health. Young people's drug misuse may cause problems in many areas of society, including their health and the economy. Crime, delinquency, accidents, and even spreading illnesses like HIV/AIDS and hepatitis may all rise. As a result, production may fall, unemployment may increase, and poverty may worsen. Along with these physical effects, drug abuse may cause significant mental health problems, including sadness, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts and actions. This essay will explore the causes and effects of drug addiction in India, and consider what can be done to combat this destructive epidemic.

## The Genesis of Substance Dependence in India's Next Generation

The National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre performed a study in 2019 and found that 6.3% of Indian kids aged 10-18 use illicit drugs. Adolescent drug usage is relatively common, with a 5.4% prevalence estimate in research published in *Indian Pediatrics* in 2020. The National Crime Records Bureau reported in 2017 that between 2015 and 2016, the number of drug-related offences committed by young adults aged 18 to 24 rose by 6.2%. According to research published by the WHO in 2020, about 20% of Indian teenagers were drug users, with alcohol being the most widely used substance. The root causes of drug abuse in India include:

- A. Peer pressure:** Young people's vulnerability to drug usage is exacerbated by social stress in India. This is especially true in urban areas and smaller communities where alcohol, marijuana, and other narcotics are readily available to the public. Peer pressure to experiment with drugs, whether as a sign of acceptability or simple curiosity, is a common phenomenon among adolescents striving for social acceptance. This may start a downward cycle of increasing experimentation and addiction. For instance, one research done in Mumbai found that approximately 60% of the kids assessed had been exposed to narcotics at some time. Twenty-two per cent of these people had used drugs at least once, and another nine per cent had done so more than once. Almost half of the youths surveyed in the research also said their peers had urged them to use drugs. It is impossible to emphasise peer pressure's role in encouraging drug usage among Indian youth.
- B. Stress and Anxiety:** The high levels of stress and anxiety experienced by many young people in India are significant contributors. Pressure to excel in school and the workforce at a young age is just one example of the many modern-day challenges Indians face. Many young individuals feel overwhelmed by stress and anxiety due to the cumulative effects of social expectations, family responsibilities, and other reasons. Some people who struggle with stress and anxiety resort to drug use as a coping mechanism. They could think drugs would help them forget their concerns and provide them with some much-needed R&R. This is a risky and erroneous strategy. Drugs could help temporarily, but they make the problems that are generating your stress and anxiety worse in the long run. To provide just one example, one research indicated that drug users among India's young adult population

who had previously experienced significant stress and anxiety were more likely to acquire depression and anxiety disorders. This exemplifies the vicious cycle that may result from using drugs to deal with negative emotions like stress and worry.

**C. Lack of awareness:** A lack of public knowledge and information exacerbates high drug misuse rates among India's youth. Unfortunately, many young people do not fully comprehend the gravity of drug misuse and its possible repercussions. In addition, young people are typically unable to make educated judgments regarding drug usage due to a lack of information. They can be unaware of the dangers of drugs or the warning signs of addiction. Because of this ignorance, people may find themselves in hazardous and fatal circumstances. Drugs like marijuana and hashish are readily accessible and inexpensive in India; therefore, many young people there are trying them out. At first glance, these drugs may not appear dangerous, but they may pose significant health risks, including addiction. Young people frequently fail to notice the warning symptoms of addiction in themselves or their companions because they lack information on the issue. Young people may feel ashamed or embarrassed to seek treatment, perpetuating the cycle of denial and concealment. In addition, young people may not know where to turn for assistance if they or someone they know has an addiction problem due to a lack of knowledge on drug usage. As a result, individuals may find it challenging to get the help they need to kick their drug habit for good and start living a more fulfilling, sober life.

**D. Easy availability:** The widespread availability of drugs in India may be attributed to several factors, and eliminating the problem would require resolving these fundamental causes. The prevalence of corruption and weak law enforcement facilitate the illicit importation and distribution of narcotics. Drug dealers in India can operate freely because of the country's long tradition of corruption. Compared to 180 other nations, India ranks 80th in corruption on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, indicating a very high degree of corruption. Corruption in the criminal justice system makes it harder to prosecute and punish individuals engaged in drug trafficking successfully. Second, both drug manufacturing and trafficking have increased in India as a direct result of the country's huge demand. The UN Office on Narcotics and Crime reports that India is a crucial production and transit hub for a wide range of illicit drugs, including

opium, heroin, and cannabis. Drugs are easily trafficked into the nation and supplied to customers because of the extensive coastline, weak borders, and high levels of corruption.

## The Ruinous Consequences of Drug Addiction

Addiction to drugs may have terrible impacts on India's young. Both these factors' physical and mental consequences may have devastating consequences, including the developing chronic diseases, criminal behaviour, drug abuse, and even death. Drug addiction is a significant cause of negative behaviour in many young people nowadays. They withdraw from society, losing the ability to keep friends and a career. As with other aspects of drug misuse, the financial costs increase quickly. Often, young individuals spend all their money on drugs, leaving them without enough to cover their fundamental needs. It may make people susceptible to poverty, homelessness, and exploitation. In addition, rehabilitation is expensive and seldom produces the desired benefits. Additionally, young people's potential might be squandered through drug usage. Their inability to concentrate and retain information due to drug use might negatively impact their academic performance and professional prospects. Abuse of drugs may prevent young people from getting the education they need to achieve a brighter future. Young people in India may experience a wide range of adverse outcomes due to drug misuse. Nausea, exhaustion, headaches, and stomach discomfort are some physical symptoms that may result from drug abuse. The use of illegal drugs may have devastating effects on a person's health, including physical and mental decay and even death. There are also mental consequences. Anxiety, sadness, and other mood disorders have all been linked to drug usage. It also affects one's capacity to think clearly and make good choices.

- A. Health Problems:** Drug addiction among Indian youth may have severe and long-term health implications. Addiction, a chronic and relapsing brain disorder characterised by obsessive drug seeking and use, is one of the most severe health concerns connected with drug consumption. Drug misuse may also develop into physical dependency, which causes withdrawal symptoms when the user stops taking the drug. Other health issues related to drug misuse among Indian youth include:

1. Cognitive impairment: Many medicines, notably stimulants and opioids, may damage the brain's capacity to operate correctly, resulting in memory, concentration, and decision-making issues.
2. Mental health difficulties: Substance misuse may aggravate or even create mental health disorders, including sadness, anxiety, and psychosis.
3. Physical health issues: Drug addiction may result in various physical health issues, including organ damage, infections, and overdose. Injecting medications, for example, increases the risk of developing blood-borne diseases such as HIV and hepatitis.
4. Dangerous behaviours: Young people who use drugs are more prone to participate in risky behaviours, such as intoxicated driving, which may result in accidents and injuries.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), substance misuse contributes significantly to India's illness and injury burden. In 2017, it was projected that drug addiction accounted for around 4% of the overall illness burden in the nation, with cigarettes and alcohol accounting for the bulk of this burden.

**B. Social Problems:** Drug usage among young people in India may have severe societal ramifications. One of the most serious social consequences of drug usage is the pressure on relationships with friends and family. Drug misuse may cause disagreements and communication breakdowns, wreaking havoc on these vital relationships. Drug misuse may also negatively influence a person's performance at school or work, resulting in absenteeism and poor academic or professional performance. This may have a long-term impact on an individual's chances and possibilities. Drug usage may also exacerbate societal issues such as crime and violence. According to studies, individuals who misuse drugs are more prone to participate in criminal behaviour, especially while under the influence of narcotics. This may lead to an upsurge in crime and violence in drug-affected neighbourhoods. According to the National Survey on the Extent, Pattern, and Trends of Drug Abuse in India (2019), cannabis, opiates, and prescription medications are the most widely used substances among young people in India. The poll also discovered that drug

addiction is more prevalent among young people who are jobless or have a poor level of education.

**C. Economic Problems:** Drug usage among India's youth may have serious economic ramifications for the person and society. The expense of treatment and rehabilitation is one of drug usage's most significant financial consequences. Many young individuals who take drugs will need counselling to help them break their addiction, which may be expensive and not covered by insurance. Drug misuse may also cause job and productivity issues. Individuals who take drugs may struggle to get and keep jobs, resulting in financial difficulties and poverty. This might have long-term financial ramifications for the person and their family. Drug misuse may also have far-reaching economic consequences for society. For example, the cost of crime and the criminal justice system may be high in drug-affected neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the expense of addressing the health effects of drug usage may place a strain on the healthcare system. According to research published in the *Journal of Addiction Research & Therapy* (2017), the economic consequences of drug usage in India are estimated to be 1.5% of the country's GDP (GDP). This covers direct expenses like treatment and rehabilitation and indirect costs like lost productivity and the cost of crime and the criminal justice system. Other variables, in addition to the direct and indirect economic implications of drug use, might contribute to the negative economic impact of drug abuse. Drug use, for example, may often lead to other dangerous behaviours, such as reckless driving or unprotected sex, which can result in accidents or health difficulties that need expensive medical care. Drug usage may also result in legal issues, such as arrests and imprisonment, which can result in legal bills and other associated expenditures. The long-term economic implications of drug abuse may be significant since addicts may have trouble succeeding in their employment or establishing financial security. This may lead to a cycle of poverty and make it harder to break away from the harmful impacts of drug use. Furthermore, drug use may negatively influence a region's or country's economy. For example, the expense of treating and rehabilitating people with drug-related health difficulties may burden the healthcare system, affecting the availability and quality of treatment for everyone. Crime and the criminal justice

system may also be more expensive in places with high drug abuse rates, diverting resources and financing away from other critical social needs.

## **Eradicating the Plague of Drug Addiction in Indian Adolescents**

- A. Raising Awareness and Education:** Increased knowledge and education about the consequences of substance misuse is one possible solution to the issue of drug usage among young people in India. This might include creating comprehensive drug education programmes in schools and giving parents and other community members information and services. There is evidence that education and prevention initiatives may reduce adolescent drug use. For example, research published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that participation in a school-based drug education programme was related to a substantial decrease in drug use among high school students. These programmes may educate young people on coping skills and alternative methods to cope with stress and other obstacles, in addition to offering information on the hazards and consequences of drug use. This is especially crucial when tackling the underlying reasons for drug misuse, such as social isolation and poverty. These programs are effective in countries such as the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom.
- B. Make Mental Health Services More Accessible:** Increased access to mental health treatments is another possible solution to the issue of drug usage among young people in India. Substance misuse is often associated with mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, and trauma, and treating these underlying issues may be crucial in assisting people in overcoming addiction. Investing in the training and development of mental health professionals such as psychologists and social workers is one strategy to enhance access to mental health care. This might include initiatives such as mental health professional scholarships and training programmes, as well as attempts to expand the number of mental health clinics and other services accessible to the public. In addition to offering treatment for those who are addicted, mental health services may be an essential resource for avoiding drug misuse in the first place. For example, mental health services may assist young people in dealing with stress and other obstacles in a healthy manner, lowering the chance of resorting to drugs as a coping method. This approach has been



successful in countries such as Canada, which has a well-established mental health care system that provides universal access to services.

- C. Harsher penalties:** Another possible solution to the issue of young people abusing drugs in India is to impose harsh punishments on drug sellers. This might include increased law enforcement operations to target drug trafficking and distribution and stricter sanctions for those convicted of these crimes. There is evidence that harsh sanctions for drug sellers may help reduce drug usage. For example, research published in the journal *Addiction* showed that nations with stiffer punishments for drug violations had lower drug usage rates than those with more lenient sanctions. While raising drug dealer punishments alone may not be enough to cure the problem of drug usage, it may be an essential component of a complete strategy for tackling this issue. We can assist in minimising the incidence of substance misuse and its harmful repercussions by making it more difficult for young people to get drugs. This approach has been successful in countries such as Singapore, which has some of the strictest drug laws in the world and a relatively low prevalence of drug abuse.
- D. Support for individuals struggling with addiction:** This could include access to treatment and rehabilitation programs and support for those in recovery, such as peer support groups and aftercare programs. This approach has been successful in countries such as Sweden, which has a well-established treatment and support system for individuals struggling with addiction.
- E. Addressing the root causes of drug abuse:** It is essential to address the underlying factors that contribute to it, such as social isolation, poverty, and lack of access to education and support. This could involve providing young people access to education and employment opportunities and addressing social and economic inequalities. This approach has been successful in countries such as Finland, which has implemented several initiatives to address the root causes of drug abuse and reduce the prevalence of substance abuse among its youth.
- F. Promoting a culture of prevention:** This could involve public education campaigns, media campaigns, and other efforts to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse and promote healthy behaviours and alternatives to drug use. This approach has been

successful in countries such as Portugal, which has implemented several initiatives to promote a culture of prevention and reduce the prevalence of drug abuse among its youth.

Drug addiction is a devastating scourge devouring India, leaving behind a path of broken lives and devastated families. Drug addiction in India has several reasons, ranging from peer pressure and stress to easy availability and a desire to escape the stresses of everyday life. Drug addiction has equally terrible implications for physical and mental health and a detrimental influence on society and the economy. To break the cycle of addiction and establish a better future for India, we must take action to tackle this devastating epidemic and seek to address the core causes of drug misuse. Drug addiction, like a dangerous tumour, can grow and swallow everything in its path; yet, with understanding and action, we can cut it out and heal the wounds it has inflicted on our society. It is time for India to unify, take firm and decisive action against drug addiction, and help people like Raj battling it on their path to recovery and a better future.

<i>In India, drug addiction does rage, A plague upon our youth and age. From poverty and desperation To the lure of false elation, The causes of this deadly vice Are varied and not so nice. But though the reasons may be diverse,</i>	<i>The effects of drug abuse are cursed. Families torn and lives destroyed, Hopelessness and despair deployed. Yet still the addicts seek their fix, Unaware of the pain and mix. But hope does remain, for those who seek</i>	<i>A way to break this deadly streak. With help and support from friends and kin, Addiction can be overcome, and win. So let us strive to end this curse, And save our youth from a fate worse.</i>
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