

Drug Abuse

Drug abuse not only causes immense human distress but also is an important factor leading to crimes and violence all over the globe. Drug abuse and trafficking has become so rampant that almost every part of the globe is seemingly affected it. It is stark reality that a sizeable number of drug addicts throughout the world are in a miserable plight. The world statistics on the drugs/substance abuse present an appalling picture. Broad estimates show that that about 190 million people throughout the globe are involved in the abuse of one substance or other. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, by the year 2020 mental and substance use disorders will surpass all physical diseases as a major cause of disability worldwide. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report, 2013 estimates that between 167 -315 million people aged 15–64 used illicit drugs at least once in the past year. Around 2 lakh people continue to die every single year due to illicit drugs.

Recent surveys and studies present a very grim situation with reference to substance use in India. Some evidence suggests that there is an increasing use of illicit drugs and reported numbers point to over 3 million drug addicts in India. However, the World Health Organization does note that there is significant difficulty in estimating drug usage and addiction rates in the country due to poor bureaucratic processes and census reporting. Cannabis, heroin, opium, hashish and Indian-produced pharmaceutical drugs are the most commonly used drugs in India. According to some experts, cannabis products, often called charas, bhang, or ganja, are abused throughout the country because it has attained some amount of religious sanctity because of its association with some Hindu deities. Drug addiction is a major problem for many families, communities and law enforcement. Massive numbers of addicts are left to be treated by the families as financial costs, available services and lack of appropriate care challenge the country. This is not only the case for drug addicts.

The incidence of drug abuse among children and adolescents is higher than the general population. This is notably because youth is a time for experimentation and identity forming. In developed countries drug abuse among youth is generally associated with particular youth subcultures and lifestyles. This causes an acceptance by members of the subcultures of drugs and their use. In Asia figures of drug abuse are hard to find but after cannabis, Amphetamine-type Stimulants (ATS) are the most commonly uses amongst children and youth. There have been various studies carried out in the region regarding drug abuse. A 1996 study of eight cities in seven provinces of China showed that over a half of heroin abusers are below 25 years of age. A school survey conducted in 1999 among students aged 12 to 21 years, in Vientiane, reported 4.8 per cent lifetime abuse for ATS. The menace of drugs and alcohol has entrenched itself deep into the fabric of our society. As its effects reach towards the youth, India's future generation will have to compete with drugs like cannabis, alcohol and tobacco. More youngsters in India are currently struggling with addiction than ever before. Peer pressure, adolescent immaturity and irresponsible parenting are major factors that are luring children towards addiction and a life of suffering and regret.

The problem of drug addiction in India has assumed serious proportions for want of sensitization programmes about drug abuse in schools or for children out of school. Besides, there is no effective drug abuse policy in the country. There is also a high incidence of charging children under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. There is absence of adequate health centers that can deal with child drug abuse problems, especially in the rural areas. Apart from calling upon the government to share its part of the responsibility in ridding the country from the growing menace of drug abuse, the people at the community level also need to promote healthy lifestyles, promoting social interaction between old and young, inculcating amongst the youth respect for cultural traditions of the community, encouraging development of positive alternatives with cultural values and cooperating with voluntary organizations engaged in the rehabilitation of drug addicts. Let's make India a drug-free society.

— BK