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Drug Abuse: Legal and Policy Measures

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ABSTRACT

Drugs are used for prevention and treatment of various diseases but show ill effects on the body and become dangerous when it is abused. Drug abuse is not only related to intake of illegal drugs but it also includes the intake of legal drugs. When a drug is consumed in such a way in which it should not it becomes drug abuse and slowly and steadily it takes a shape of drug addiction. Drug abuse or its addiction not only destroys the life of a person abusing it but also devastates the life of other people who are related to him and has the bad impact on society too. It leads to increment in violence, crime, social and other housing and financial problems. In order to decrease such ill effects on the society as a whole and also on the life of the individual, the government has taken some legal measures and designed some policies which would work in the direction of eliminating the drug abuse from the nation. Here we have discussed various provisions of the NDPS Act, 1985 and the PITNDPS Act, 1988 under the heading of legal provisions and schemes like central scheme of assistance for prevention of alcoholism and substance abuse, NAPDDR etc.

In this paper the author has made attempt to discuss about drug abuse and the measures taken by government for prevention of the same. Further the author has tried to give some suggestions to eradicate drug abuse from the nation.

INTRODUCTION

According to Chambers 21st century dictionary the literal meaning of drug is as-“any chemical substance, which when taken into the body or applied externally, has a specific effect on its functioning” secondly “it is any substance, especially which is abused, habitual or addictive and possession of which is illegal.” Simply it can be said that drugs are the kind of substance which when consumed leads to alteration in the functioning of the body either

physically or psychologically. On a general basis drugs can be classified into pharmaceutical drugs including brofin, aspirin etc. and recreational drugs including alcohol, nicotine, caffeine etc.

From the perspective of law drugs can be classified into two types viz., legal and illegal drugs. Legal drugs are the ones which can be legally sold, the doctors are legally authorized to prescribe them and people can purchase them, cigarettes, alcohol, painkillers are some of its examples. Illegal drugs are those which are illegal to sell, manufacture and consume; marijuana, heroin, cocaine opium etc. are its example.

When a person uses legal or illegal drug in such a way that it shouldn't be used, such usage is known as abusing of drug or simply, Drug Abuse. It is not relate to the use of illegal drugs only. The word 'drug abuse' is often confused with the word 'drug addiction'. Addiction happens when a person is not able to stop himself from consuming that substance even if he puts his life at risk.

Drug abuse is so much widespread not only in India but also across the globe. As estimated in 2022 around 284 million use drug worldwide "(The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s (World Drug Report 2022)" that it cannot be put to an end immediately and hence some steps has to be taken to control it as it is causing dangerous effects on the society. For the same the government has taken few legislative measures and had formed some policies. NDPS Act, 1985 and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of NDPS Act, 1988 are the major statute relating to drug in India. In 2014 the "Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment" had announced a policy for reduction of drug demand called "National Policy For Drug Demand Reduction", later National Action Plan For Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023) was formulated and under various other policies committees like "National Consultative Committee on De-addiction and Rehabilitation" for advising the government in framing policies, programs and taking legislative measures for the people affected by drug and alcohol abuse.

LEGAL MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO PREVENT DRUG ABUSE

The Indian Parliamnet has entacted few drug related laws, majorly, "Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985" and "Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988". Before these Acts came into picture the drug offences were governed by The Opium Act, 1857 and Dangerous Drugs Act, 1930. Besides these two Acts there were three other Acts providing few provisions that is Drug and Cosmetic Act, 1940 and The Medical and Toilet Preparation Act, 1953 and The Customer

Act 1952. These Acts were not sufficient enough to handle the drug related issues as they provided insufficient powers to various agencies like the revenue intelligence department, custom and excise etc. and due to it the problems remained unsolved and hence the two new statutes were brought into existence in 1985 and 1988.

The characteristic significance of the two Acts was that they provided ample amount of power to the implementing authorities like the police , the custom, central excise etc. of search, seizure and prosecution.

LEGAL PROVISIONS-

Of “Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985”

“Section 4- Central Government to take measures for preventing and combating abuse of and illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, etc.”:

According to this provision, the central government takes actions in order to avert the abuse and trafficking of drugs. They can take measures regarding obligation they had ade inder international conventions, “the identification, treatment, education, after care, rehabilitation and social re-integration of the addicts and check the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purpose.”

Section 5- Officers of Central Government:

Narcotics Commission is appointed by central government under this section and power of superintendence of cultivation of opium poppy and he shall execute all those functions which are endowed upon him by the central government.

“Section 6- The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Consultative Committee:”

The aforesaid committee was set up so as to advise the central government on the matters related to administration of this Act.

“Section 7- Officers of State Government:

The state government shall appoint an officer of such designation as it deems fit and such officer shall be subject to the direction and control of the concerned state government.”

Section 7A- National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse:

Under this provision, the Central Government establishes a national fund dedicated to the control of drug abuse. This fund is intended to finance activities and measures aimed at preventing and combating the illicit trafficking of such substances, as well as addressing related challenges, controlling the abuse of all such substances, treating, identifying and rehabilitating the addicts, preventing drug abuse and educating people about drug abuse.

Section 8- Prohibition of certain operations:

This section prohibits the cultivation of coca plant, opium poppy or cannabis plant. Further the person is prohibited from “producing, manufacturing, possessing, selling, purchasing, transporting, using, consuming, importing inter-State, exporting inter-State, importing into India, exporting from India or transshipping any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance” until such act is done for medical or scientific purposes.

“Section 12- Restrictions over external dealings in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances”:

This provision prohibits a person from engaging in any sort of trading or controlling.

With the motive of proper execution of this Act, provisions of penalties are also provided under chapter-iv (section 15-40).

“Section 15- Punishment for contravention in relation to poppy straw

Section 16- Punishment for contravention in relation to coca plant and coca leaves

Section 17- Punishment for contravention in relation to prepared opium.

Section 18- Punishment for contravention in relation to opium poppy and opium.

Section 19- Punishment for embezzlement of opium by cultivator

Section 20- Punishment for contravention in relation to cannabis plant and cannabis

Section 21- Punishment for contravention in relation to manufactured drugs and preparations

Section 27- Punishment for consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.”

Generally the punishments prescribed under this Act range from 10 years to 20 years of imprisonment and fine ranging from 1 lac to 2 lac.

Of Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of NDPS Act, 1988

Section 3-“power to make orders detaining certain persons”:

Under this section the central government or the state government or any officer of the two governments, if being satisfied that the person (Indian or foreigner) is engaging in illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances then such officer can detain such persons. Keeping in the mind, the fundamental right guaranteed under article 22, the reason of the detention should be communicated to the detainee within 5 days and in exceptional condition within 15 days.

There has been an amendment in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The bill is has been passed by Lok Sabha in 2021. Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Amendment Bill, 2021 seeks to provide a rehab and support to the victim, made more restrictions on trafficking of drugs. Also it seeks to decriminalize the custody of the person who has used drugs in a very limited quantity.

“Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Amendment Rules 2025”:

Under the rules of 2025, the prime amendment has been made to Form 4A and Form 5

“Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Rules” in order to ensure:

Accountability

Strict compliance

Enhancement in traceability of narcotic substances

Alignment between the “domestic procedures with international narcotics control standards”

These provisions came into effect on December 10, 2025.

The amended Form 4A incorporates

“Item description,

HSN Code,

CAS number,

GSTIN of importer.”

It also contains certain conditions for import, like:

The importation must be completed within a period of 180 days from the date on which the certificate is issued.

Specifications of entry at the port .

“Strict conformity with security, accounting, and reporting procedures under Rules 42—47.”

“For manufacturing formulations for export:

The submission of export details such as invoices, shipping bills etc. to the Narcotics Commissioner and Drugs Controller General of India. is mandatory.

Requirement of state-level transport permits.

Maintenance of separate accounts for imported drugs and manufactured formulations.”

The amended Form No. 5 for Export incorporates a documentation table of export which is updated and includes:

“Number of packages

Drug name and preparation details

Basic substance content

HSN Code

CAS number, and

GSTIN”

The National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill, 2025

As defined by Cambridge Dictionary, “Doping is an act of giving a person or animal drugs in order to make them perform better or worse in a competition”. The aforesaid Bill was first presented in Lok Sabha on July 23, 2025. The Bill amends the existing National Anti-Doping Act of 2022. The Act was introduced in light of International Convention against Doping in Sport (2005) by UNESCO. It establishes the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) to implement anti-doping rules. It also establishes the National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports to supervise activities of NADA and advise the central government on anti-doping regulations. The bill was passed on August 18, 2025.

The Act confers upon the Central Government the authority to constitute an Appellate Panel. Additionally, the National Board is mandated to establish: (i) a Disciplinary Panel to determine instances and consequences of rule violations, and (ii) an Appellate Panel to adjudicate appeals arising from decisions of the Disciplinary Panel. However, the Bill reassigns the power to constitute the Appellate Panel from the National Board to the Central Government.

Further, the Bill delineates “anti-doping rule violations” by specifying a range of prohibited acts. These include: (i) the presence of banned substances, or their metabolites or markers, in an athlete’s body; (ii) the use, attempted use, or possession of prohibited substances or methods; and (iii) “whereabouts failures,” which refer to the failure to provide accurate location information or to remain available for mandatory testing procedures.

Mandatory accreditation of testing laboratories”: The Act empowers the Central Government to recognise and accredit dope testing laboratories in India. The Bill further mandates that all such laboratories must obtain and continuously maintain accreditation from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

The Bill states that while reviewing the report regarding samples for testing, when NADA is of the opinion that there has been violation from the anti-doping rules; To check whether the adverse test result was actually caused by a deviation from World Anti-Doping Agency standards for laboratories, testing procedures, or investigations.

POLICY MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO PREVENT DRUG ABUSE

5.2 tons of opium was seized from India in 2020 which is fourth largest quantity in world in 2020 and 5.2 tons of morphine was seized in same year in India which is third largest quantity to be seized (World Drug Report, 2022).

The recreational use of prescription drugs and the ingredients thereof is continuously increasing in India (World Drug Report, 2021).

Hence there should be some policy measures which can help in curbing the substance abuse.

“Article 47 of the constitution: Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health -The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.”

Also, the United Nations had made three conventions regarding the prevention of drug abuse like “The single convention on narcotic drugs, 1961; convention on psychotropic substances, 1971 and convention against illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, 1988”. Article 38 of the first convention and article 20 of the second convention obligates the countries to take all possible measures for prevention of abuse of substances and asks for expeditors identification, treatment, education, after care, rehabilitation and social integration of people so involved.

These are two major reasons which impose responsibilities which on the government of India to take policy measures to curb the menace of drug abuse.

In 1985-86 scheme called “Central Sector Scheme for Assistance of prevention of alcoholism and substance (drugs) abuse” was launched by the government of India. Under this scheme financial assistance was provided to voluntary organizations for maintaining integrated rehabilitation centers for addicts. The functions like identification, treatment, counseling, rehabilitation shall be performed by these organizations.

Further the national institute of social defense is a body which works under the ministry of social justice and empowerment. This institute had established national center for drug abuse prevention (NCDAP) in 1998, it provided technical support to the government on the policies related to prevention of substance abuse. Also this worked training, research and documentation in the field of alcoholism and drug demand reduction.

In 2012 the government came up with a policy on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. This policy served as a guide to various governmental institutions, NGOs etc. to fight against the threat caused by drugs abuse. This policy included the conduction of national survey on drug abuse, training the doctors of governmental hospitals in de-addiction and setting up de-addiction facilities, designing rehabilitation and reintegration programs for the victims of drug abuse. Establishes treatment centers in private sectors and central government shall make standard regarding that.

“The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment” again came up with a new policy called National Action Plan For drug Demand Reduction(NAPDDR),according to this scheme the ministry has to work towards the prevention education, awareness generation, identification, counseling treatment and rehabilitation of drug dependents, capacity building of service providers through cumulative efforts of central government, state government and the NGOs. This action plan would work from 2018-2023. The objectives of NAPDDR are as follows:

Training for teachers for early identification of drug use and associated factors

Training courses regarding the awareness of drug use and associated health issues among peer educators, counselors etc.

Organizing workshops, seminars and interaction courses with people

Training programs for the representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the urban local bodies, paramilitary force, judicial officers etc. on drug abuse and prevention.

Training programs for service providers for all in government sectors, semi-government sectors and non- government sectors.

On the basis of report of Press Information Bureau of India dated 25 June 2025. In last five years, the government has tried to fight against the drug menace and has come up with the ‘whole of government approach’ and making the structural, institutional and informational reforms

“4-Tier NCORD (Narco-Coordination Centre) Mechanism: Coordination from Apex to District level across all stakeholders via a unified portal.

Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF): Dedicated teams led by senior police officers in each State/UT to implement NCORD decisions.

Joint Coordination Committee (JCC): Chaired by the NCB DG to monitor major drug seizures and investigations.

Empowered Border & Railway Forces: BSF (Border Security Force), Assam Rifles, SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal), Indian Coast Guard and RPF (Railway Protection Force) are authorized under the NDPS Act to carry out search, seizure and arrests in cases related to drug trafficking.”

“NCB-specific Expansion

Regional Offices: Increased from 3 to 7 (e.g., Amritsar, Guwahati, Chennai, Ahmedabad)

Zonal Offices: Expanded from 13 to 30, including new ones at Gorakhpur, Siliguri, Agartala, Itanagar, and Raipur.

Staff Strength: Added 536 posts raising sanctioned strength to 1,496.

Narco-Canine Pool: Nar-K9 units deployed in 10 zonal offices for enhanced detection.”*

The government has come up with a new scheme called NALSA (DAWN)- SCHEME, 2025 This scheme setup Drug Awareness and Wellness Navigation (DAWN) Units at the district level so as to identify endangered regions/areas and populations prone to drug abuse. It came up with a structured mechanism for legal aid and intervention. The scheme also states for conducting legal awareness and assistance programmes to aid victims and avert drug abuse. It provides for legal and social support to individuals and families affected by drugs.

It implemented the awareness programmes in schools, colleges and regions to: Educate students, parents, teachers, youth and community workers about the adverse effects of drug abuse and stigmatization.

It focused on inspiring and stimulating the children and youth to resist peer pressure which promotes drug abuse as display of comradeship or friendship; escapism from emotional distress and academic pressures through modes of drug abuse.

Secondly, the scheme places emphasis on raising awareness regarding:

MANAS- National Narcotics Helpline number 1933 and portal www.ncbmanas.gov.in for reporting drug related crimes - drug trafficking, illicit cultivation, or other related drug issues; Helpline number 14446 for rehabilitation and counseling to overcome drug addiction; and NALSA's Helpline Number 15100 for legal services assistance.

It centers to imbibe the Framework of “the NAPDDR (National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction), Scheme 2018-2025 of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in drug education programs.”

To cooperate for ““Joint Action Plan on Prevention of Drugs and Substance Abuse among Children and Illicit Trafficking” developed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in collaboration with Narcotic Control Bureau (NCB).”

NCB has launched Online E-pledge against drugs "Say Yes to Life, No to Drugs Pledge". This pledge can be taken at <http://pledge.mygov.in/fightagainstdrugabuse/>

It further directs to train, aware and educate the police, judiciary and legal aid providers through collaborative initiatives on the legal and rehabilitative aspects of drug abuse to ensure proper intervention and victim support. To Leverage mass media and digital platforms to disseminate factual, evidence-based information regarding: Drug abuse prevention and its consequences, Treatment and rehabilitation options, and Legal rights of victims and available legal services.

Another point which the scheme targets, is the rehabilitation and social integration of the victims. By maintaining a synchronization with drug de-addiction centers and rehabilitation institutions so as to ensure better facilities and adherence to the rights of the victims of drug abuse, to provide assistance in case of any reported breach of human rights rehabilitation standards. or 3.4.2. To advance for the economic reintegration of rehabilitated individuals by providing them access to: Skill development programmes for workforce integration; Job opportunities and entrepreneurship initiatives to support self-reliance and other such assistances.

CASE LAWS REGARDING DRUG ABUSE

BACHPAN BACHAO ANDOLAN V. UNION OF INDIA

The Court directed the Government to formulate and implement a comprehensive national policy aimed at addressing drug and substance abuse. It further mandated the establishment of de-addiction centres in each district and called for the conduct of a nationwide survey to develop a robust and systematic database on the prevalence of substance abuse among children across the country.

In the same proceedings, Senior Advocate H. S. Phoolka, appearing on behalf of the petitioner, Bachpan Bachao Andolan, submitted that the petition had been instituted with the objective of compelling the Union of India to adopt proactive and effective measures to mitigate the deleterious impact of drug abuse, with particular emphasis on the protection and welfare of children.

COURT ON ITS OWN MOTION V. STATE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

The court directed the government of Himachal Pradesh to follow the footsteps of government of India in curbing the menace caused by drug abuse. The court in the 3rd para of its judgment mentioned the participation of panchayati raj institute and local bodies to prevent the illicit cultivation of various substances as general people didn't know about the ill-effect of the cultivation and they even didn't know that this is illegal. The judgment also discussed about the legal service institution considering that they can contribute in curbing the menace. The petitioner was closed with direction to the secretary (Home) to government of Himachal Pradesh to follow government of India. Further the court hopes that suggestion made by amicus curiae would bring necessary amendment in the Drug and Cosmetic Act. The amicus curiae in the present case was senior advocate Mr. Satyen Vaidya. The case was held by J. Mr. Sandeep Sharma and Sanjay Karol.

DURAND DIDIER V. CHIEF SECRETARY

The supreme court in this case considered the threat to the society due to the increasing influence of drug trafficking and drug abuse also in the para 4th of the judgment at page 1971 the court observed-

“with the deep concern, we may point out that the organized activity of underworld and the clandestine smuggling of narcotics drugs and psychotropic substance into this country and illegal trafficking in such drugs and substances have led to drug addiction among a sizable section of public particularly the students of both sexes and the menace has assumed serious and alarming proportion in recent years. Because in order to effectively control and eradicate this proliferating and bombing devastating menace, causing deleterious effects and deadly input as society as a whole, the parliament in its wisdom, has made effective provisions by introducing the Act 81 of 1985 specifying mandatory minimum implementation of imprisonment and fine. As we now reject the plea of defense holding that the penal provisions of section 27(a) has no role to play as the prohibited drugs and substances processed by appellant were far in excess of the quantity mentioned in column 3 of table under the notification the sentence of ten years of rigorous imprisonment and fine of Rs. 1,00,000 with default clause as modified by high court does no call for interference.”

JYOTI RANI V. STATE OF PUNJAB

The court gave its observation regarding drug trafficking and said that it has ruined the life of youth. The petitioner supplied drug to the youth and had indulging a very hateful task, the court further added that strong actions should be taken against such acts and no leniency should be shown otherwise it would send it would send a wrong signal to the society.

UNION OF INDIA v. NAMDEO ASHRUBA NAKADE 9

The order of Andhra Pradesh High Court to grant bail in a case involving 731.075 kg of ganja was overturned by the Hon'ble Supreme Court commenting that the High Court overlooked the strict conditions for bail under Section 37 of the NDPS Act. The Apex Court further highlighted the increasing drug menace in India is a serious public health issue threatening the nation's youth, often linked to terrorism financing. The Court stressed that users should be rehabilitated into productive and encouraging citizens rather than merely being denounced.

KILLO SUBBARAO v. STATE OF ANDHRA PRADESH¹⁰,

The Court granted bail to the petitioner under Sections 20(b)(ii)(C) and 25, read with Section 8(c) of the NDPS Act, observing that the statutory definition of “ganja” does not encompass seeds and leaves. In arriving at its decision, the Court also took cognisance of procedural

deficiencies on the part of the prosecution in adhering to the requirements prescribed under the NDPS Act, which militated in favour of the grant of bail.

SHIV SINGH MEENA v. STATE OF RAJASTHAN¹¹,

“The Court allowed bail under Sections 8 and 21 of the NDPS Act”. Elucidating on the matter the court counted community service under the Bhartiye Nayay Sanhita and Bhartiye Nargrik Suraksha Sanhita as a reformative measure. The Bench imposed a condition directing the accused to contribute two hours daily to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiative for two months.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of above discussion, it is suggested to the parents that the precaution starts from home and this is a fact that law and law enforcing agencies come into the picture when the person is already abusing the drugs. So before the law enforcing agencies should come into the picture, NGOs, and schools in general and the parents in particular, should counsel their children and should keep a check on the company of their children. In today's scenario every single person has access to internet so the people can be aware through social media. For adults involved in abusing drugs should be made to attend some motivational sessions organized by various institutions. Also the government should focus on two things firstly, why people are consuming drugs and secondly from where the drugs are being available to them. Further, our government had taken various measures in curbing the drug abuse and its trafficking as drugs are the social evil which can slowly engulf the whole society. But it should be kept in mind that “everything begins from within” so in order to reduce the drug consumption, the people should introspect themselves which would be done with help of family.

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