

## DRUGABUSE IN THE STATE OF PUNJAB - A LINGERING CURSE

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### ABSTRACT

*Punjab - the land of five rivers known for its prosperity, fertility and entrepreneurship is facing a grave challenge today from the spread of drugs abuse. Punjab is also one of the major consumers of Drugs. After Nagaland, Punjab ranks second in the country for drug abuse. According to reports by UNDP, Indian Express and Tehelka, around 73.5% of Punjab's youth(boys & Girls) is addicted to drugs. Drug problem is not new, what is new is the type and variety of drugs being used and the way they are being used even by 14-year-olds. 62 per cent of the boys and girls in the age group of 19-24 years are exposed to drugs. Another alarming development is the spurt in the number of women addicts. College girls in Punjab towns particularly are caught in drug abuse, though the percentage of girl students is around 13-15. There is a whole new range of more dangerous and expensive drugs. The number of synthetic or prescription drug-dependent college-going students alone may well be way above 25 per cent and even close to 30 per cent. Over 3.3 lakh addicts were registered for treatment in various de-addiction centres across Punjab from June 15 to December 15, 2021 as part of the massive drive against drug abuse. National average of alcohol consumption is 26 per cent, it is as high as 46 per cent in Punjab. This could be endorsed by the facts that alcohol is a major source of the revenue of Govt. of Punjab with share of ₹88,41.4 Crore in the budget year 2023-24. Govt. of Punjab has target to collect 10000 Crore from the sale of liquor in the state with increase of 11.59 percent. According to Punjab government every 3rd male student in Punjab is hooked to substance abuse. The dangerous development which was noticed that four lakh people in Punjab are drug addicts and 26 per cent of them are also HIV Positive. The state of Punjab has emerged as 'The Gateway' of drug supply route to international market on world map. Approximately 355 packets of Heroine are exchanged in Punjab everyday. The figures are appalling. Currently, drugs worth 2000 crores are transiting the land of Punjab.*

*With a turnover of around \$500 billions, it is the third largest business in the world, next to petroleum and arms trade. There is strong nexus between the Punjab police, drug paddlers and political leaders and even the police officials and politician are beneficiaries of the drug trade, Punjab is on the brink of disaster. Religious and Social Sanctity, Cultural lineage, the emergence of the “golden triangle” & the “golden crescent” and Geo- Location of Punjab made it international gate way of drug supply, Colonial history, Narco-Terrorism and Narco-Politics of 1990 and 3P- Nexus( Police, Peddlers and Politician) made this problem and Lingering abuse of Punjabi society.*

**KEYWORDS:** Drug, Addicts , Alcohol, Drug abuse, Lingering abuse, heroine, Opiate, “golden triangle”, Geo- Location, gateway of drug and 3P- Nexus.

### DRUG ABUSE IN PUNJAB-AN OVERVIEW:

Punjab - the land of five rivers known for its prosperity, fertility and entrepreneurship is facing a grave challenge today from the spread of drugs abuse. The presence of the drug in Indian society, especially in Punjabi society, has Religious, Cultural and Social constructs. From the Religious perspective, there is an omnipresent tradition in almost all religions to offer drugs to deities. Social affiliation of drugs to masculinity in patriarchal Punjabi society has been allowed a firm footing to drug in the Punjab, and making it an almost accepted way of life. Celebrations of Cultural and Family festivals considered incomplete without serving drugs and alcohol. ‘Amalies’ as a comic character is a part of every plot of Punjabi literature, although looked down in folk literature. Under colonial rule, opium was grown here for export to China and was given to farm workers as an incentive to work faster. Due to geopolitical disturbances during the 1970s led to the declining popularity of **Balkans**, the traditional heroin transit route and the emergence of the “golden triangle” & the “golden crescent” of producing and smuggling areas of heroin i.e. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. As a result, the state of Punjab emerged as ‘The Gateway’ of drug supply route to international market on the world map.

Narco-terrorism after 2000, and the year 2007 gave big push and evident a 10-time increase in the recovery of heroin in Punjab, due to the geographical proximity of Punjab. Geo-location of Punjabi.e. is sharing international border with Pakistan, which is 550 km long making it lucrative for “Carriers”, which transport these drugs from the villages of Punjab to cities like Delhi, Pune etc. Approximately, 355 packets of heroin are exchanged in Punjab every day which exposes Punjabi youth to Narco-terrorism. After Nagaland, Punjab ranks second in the country for drug abuse. According to reports by UNDP and Indian Express around 73.5% of Punjab’s youth (boys & Girls) are addicted and Punjab is confronting with the problem of ‘Drug Abuse’.

### MEANING OF DRUG:

Drug connotes to the following five categories of Substances i.e.

- a) **Cannabis** products(charas, bhang, Sukha or ganja,)
- b) **Tobacco** (Gutka, Zarda, Cigarette, pouches etc)

- c) **Alcohol**(Whisky, Wine and Beer),
- d) **Medical Drugs** i.e. cough syrups, proxyvone, dormant 10, diazepam tablets, corex, phensydryl.
- e) **Synthetic Drugs** fall into two categories —
  - i) **opium** and its traditional contraband like poppy husk
  - ii) **opiates** are opium-based drugs such as heroin, smack, and brown sugar.

Which are used by humans to stimulate the brain to get “Kick” a feel-good state to produce pleasure.

### ADDICTION:

Drugs are substances, the use of which, affect the central nervous system of human beings and give a ‘kick’ a feel-good state of thoughts. As the brain gets stimulated, it develops the habit of ‘getting rewarded’. As a person yearns for pleasure repeatedly, he gets addicted. Addiction has four levels of maturation: Habituation, tolerance, physical dependence and psychological dependence.

- a) **Habituation:** The habit formation means a psychological dependence on the use of a drug because of the relief from tension and emotional discomfort that it affords. Habituation refers to regular use of drugs that do not entail physiological dependence.
- b) **Tolerance:** This is the initial stage of addiction where the body adapts to the quantum intake of drug substance sets by a person. It means a declining effect of the same dose of a drug, when it is administered repeatedly over a period of time. It is a situation in which a person increases doses of a drug in order to get the desired effect (Kick) known as Euphoria. Euphoria is the state of well-being, relaxation, happiness and pleasure created by the drug within the individual. It is expressed in terms of ‘hype’ and ‘kicks’. It is a common belief that without euphoria there would be no addiction since it is the condition the user wants to achieve again and again and sometimes constantly.
- c) **Physical Dependence:** This is a stage when the user’s body becomes totally dependent on the drug with its prolonged use and unable to perform in lack of the required dose of a drug.
- d) **Psychological Dependence:** This mainly refers to the last stage of addiction in which the addicted person gets mentally “hooked on” to the drug and feels a persistent craving for the drug.

### DRUG ADDICTION:

A drug addict has an overwhelming craving for the drug. Initially, the addict seeks the pleasure or Kick produced by the drug out of curiosity. This led to dependence on drug to seek relief from the pain and torment of not having the drug.

### CONSTRUCT OF DRUG ABUSE IN PUNJAB:

Punjab is also one of the major consumers of drugs. With time, the age-old traditional drug trade based on cannabis and opiates or opioids has been switched over to pharmaceutical opioid abuse buprenorphine, pentazocine and Dextro-propoxyphene and cough syrups like Corex and Benadryl which were much in demand before 2007, because addicts shifted to injecting formulations of pharmaceuticals to get opium-like qualities (hence called opioids) at cheaper rate.

After 2007, it was the transition from pharmaceutical to the lethal heroin or smack, and later synthetic drugs, that rang alarm bells. With more heroin (popularly known as chitta or white powder), being pushed into the state from across the border, assumed large proportions of the drug trade.

### THE PROBLEM OF DRUG ABUSE:

The menace of synthetic drugs continues to consume the state. Deadly drugs have made it into an organised crime, consuming lives, destroying families and damaging the image of a people and the state.

It was 'Maqboolpura – Village of Windows' a congested colony in Amritsar, where in three years 30 householders were died, who had fallen in prey of addiction substances. (The Tribune, 1999)

Although, Drug problem is not new, what is new is the type and variety of drugs being used and the way they are being used even by 14-year-olds. There is a whole new range of more dangerous and expensive drugs. Over 3.3 lakh addicts were registered for treatment in various de-addiction centres across Punjab from June 15 to December 15, 2021 as part of the massive special drive against drug abuse. The drug menace in Punjab portrays the seriousness of the problem in the state which affected the youth.

In the recent times, Punjab has witnessed a tremendous rise in substance abuse. Around 26 per cent of Punjab's population is entrapped by drug use. Punjab's drug addiction rate is highest after Manipur where 28 per cent of the population is drug addicted.

The analysis of the data as shown in the Tab1. reveals that Children are most vulnerable to drug addiction and 15 percent children at present initiate to take drug at the age below 14 year.

Strata of Population	Percentage of drug addicts
Children Below 14 year	15%
Girls	13-15 %
College	25-30 %
Youth boys and girls( 19-24)	62%
Adults	73%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>26 %</b>

Source: Various Survey reports and News and News articles of leading regional and national news papers

62 per cent of the boys and girls in the age group of 19-24 years are exposed to drugs. Another alarming development is the spurt in the number of women addicts. College girls in Punjab towns particularly are caught in drug abuse, though the percentage of girl students as around 13-15%, but it indicated definite growth in the number of girls taking drugs. Girls preferred cough syrups to other deadly forms of intoxicants in vogue (Mann, Mohan Singh). The number of synthetic or prescription drug-dependent college-going students alone may well be way above 25 per cent and even close to 30 per cent. Punjab is on the brink of disaster. (Sareen, Himanshu)

The finding of the study highlight a most serious concern that average drug initiation age is 14-16 years now, which was 22-25 years 10 years ago whereas around 30-40 percent are youngsters aged between 16 and 30 years are substance abusers in the state. According to the Punjab government, every 3rd male student in Punjab is

hooked to substance abuse (IndianExpress,2022). The dangerous development was noticed that four lakh people in Punjab are drug addicts and 26 per cent of them are also HIV Positive.

The analysis of the data shown in Tab2 depicts that 30 per cent of the Population of the state uses tobacco products like Gutka, cigarettes, pan & pouches. The perusal of the various survey reports highlighted that tobacco products are too common in both sexes that it has become a daily life habit of 30 percent

**Tab2: Showing types of drugs and percentage of consumption by strata of population**

Type of Drug	Percentage of population consuming
Tobacco	21.3%
Alcohol	41.8%
Cannabis	34.8%
Medical	15-22
Synthetic Drug: Opium & Opiates	20-22
Heroin	20.8%

Source: Various Survey reports and News and News articles of leading regional and national news papers

Population and out of this 30 percent population 5 percent was exposed to T.B., Cancer and related diseases. According to experts, drug addiction has become almost endemic to Punjab. The worst affected areas are Amritsar, Tarantarn, Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Gurdaspur.

The analysis of the date reveals that the national average for alcohol consumption is 26 per cent, it is as high as 46 per cent in Punjab. This could be endorsed by the facts that alcohol is a major source of the revenue of govt. of Punjab in the budget of 2022-23 the for year 2023-24 is projected to be ₹88, 41.4 Crore. Govt. of Punjab has target to collect 10000 Crore from the sale of liquor in 2024-25 the state with increase of 11.59 percent. This is very horrible fact that Govt. of that state which is facing serious challenge of drug abuse keep its stake on the sale of liquor for earning money.

The consumption of Synthetic Drug (opium & opiates) such as poppy husk, heroin and smack in Punjab is three times the national average, Sharma(2008). The introduction of synthetic drugs and intravenous drug use leading to HIV/AIDS has added a new dimension to the problem. The perusal of the data shows that 20-22 per cent of state's youth is hooked to synthetic drugs and 15-20 per cent to alcohol. That one out of five of Punjab's youth may be abusing drugs should send the alarm bells ringing (Singh, Ranvinder).

### **FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LINGERING STATUS OF DRUG ABUSE IN THE SOCIETY:**

The reasons for the lingering status of drug abuse in society are not quite surprising. Drug abuse is a complex phenomenon, which has various social, cultural, biological, geographical, geopolitical and economic aspects. The details of major factors responsible for a lingering status of drug abuse in society are as below:

### 1. Religious Sanctity to Drugs:

The major reason for the omnipresent presence of the drug in Indian society, especially in Punjabi society, is its Religious sanctity. There is a general belief among the followers that they can receive blessings from the deities by offering drugs i.e. Alcohol, Bhang, Sukha and Ganjato their deities. After religious rituals of the offering, these drugs are distributed to the followers as offerings of deities. Cannabis products, often called Charas, Bhang, Ganja and Alcohol have attained some amount of religious sanctity because of their association with different deities of various religions.

### 2. Social Sanctity to Drugs in Patriarchal Society:

In patriarchal Punjabi society, there is Social Sanctity to drugs. Drug use, primarily the intake of opium, has been considered healthy for male power and fertility. Use of drugs is considered as sign of masculinity.

This social sanctity is one of the major reasons behind the firm footing to drugs in the Punjab. The use of drugs has become almost an accepted way of life.

### 3. Cultural lineage to Drugs:

In Punjabi culture, the celebration of family functions and Cultural festivals is considered incomplete if drugs such as alcohol are not served by the host. 'Amalies'- the drug addict is a part of every plot of Punjabi folk literature and **folklore** -as a comic character. although looked down in.

### 4. Colonial Rule and Drug:

Under colonial rule, opium was grown here for export to China and was given to farm workers as an incentive to work longer hours at faster speed. This local availability of drug result in drug addiction among farmers and farm workers.

### 5. Green Revolution and Drugs:

The use of drugs increased in Punjab with the advent of the Green Revolution after 1967. Intense Farming increased the farmers and labour work to manifold, but supply of work force is limited. To get their work done by this limited workforce induced the farmers to put their worker on **Cannabis** drugs. This has increased the demand of poppy husk and opium manifold, since it served like machine oil.

### 6. International Border State as a Factor:

Sharing the border with Pakistan, which is 550 km long making it lucrative for "Carriers", which transport these drugs from the villages of Punjab to high-consumption cities like Delhi, Pune etc. Moreover, the emergence of the "golden triangle" & the "golden crescent" of producing and smuggling areas of heroin i.e. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, made Punjab, the first transit point of drugs smuggled to India from Pakistan and Afghanistan. As a result, the state of Punjab emerged as 'The Gateway' of the drug supply route to the international market on the world map. The heavy flow of heroin through this unfenced border with Pakistan was noticed in the 1980s

## 7. Geo- Location of Punjab:

1970s witnessed important developments in the international drug trade that particularly affected Punjab.

- a) First, the emergence of the “**golden triangle**” & the “**golden crescent**” of producing and smuggling areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran-a big threat for India as a whole and the geographically proximate Punjab in particular.
- b) Secondly, geopolitical disturbances during the 1970s led to the declining popularity of the traditional heroin transit route, through the **Balkans** and placed India on the map as a drug transit and consumption route especially affecting India’s north-western states that shared a border with Pakistan (including Punjab which shares a 550 km long border with Pakistan).

## 8. Narco-Terrorism and Narco-Politics:

During the long phase of terrorism i.e. 1980s to 1995(many believe that from 1990s onwards), Punjab became a victim of ‘narco-terrorism’ and ‘narco-politics’.Narco-terrorism’s big push came after 2000, and the year 2007 evident a 10-time increase in the recovery of heroin in Punjab, when China and Japan cracked down on heroin smuggling and India emerged as one of the biggest drug markets. The “**Carriers**”,who are transporting these drugs from the villages of Punjab,to other major drug-consuming cities like Delhi, Pune etc, are earning plenty of Money out of it. Approximately 355 packets of heroin are exchanged in Punjab every day. The figures are appalling. Currently, drugs worth 2000 crores are transiting the land of Punjab. With a turnover of around \$500 billion, it is the third largest business in the world, next to the petroleum and arms trade.

## 9. LPG Era and Missing of Social and Family Support:

Under the influence of the LPG Era, there is a change in the family structure of Indian society and Punjab was no exception to this phenomenon. The disintegration of the old joint family system, absence of parental love and care in modern families where both parents are working, decline of old religious and moral values,the processes of industrialization, urbanization and migration have led to the loosening of the traditional methods of social control rendering an individual vulnerable to the stresses and strains of modern life, which lead to a rise in the number of drug addicts who take drugs to escape hard realities of life.

## 10. Drugs Act as Sexual Vitality Enhancers:

There is a deep-rooted perception that drugs act as sexual vitality enhancers. Experts explain it in terms of the deep-rooted cultures of consumption of drugs to show manhood and to get the benefit of the alleged aphrodisiac quality of drugs for masculinity.

## 11. Peer Pressure and Easy Availability of Drug:

The major factor behind youths’ initiation into drugs at a low age is peer pressure and Intimacy of adolescents with drug peddlers plays a major role for their indulgence in drug abuse. People of Punjab serves alcohol and opium during Family functions and ceremonies and adolescent Imitate of family members and start using drugs at early age.Easy availability of both synthetic and prescription drugs on local village chemists or quack as well as

in the black market. Punjab's geographical proximity as a 'Gateway of the International Drug Market' and closeness to border add the fuel to situation.

## 12. Industrial Failure and Unemployed Youth;

Research studies also point to the failure of Punjab's industrial sector to absorb the increasing number of employable youth from rural areas, and the cultural attributes that inhibit educated youth from taking up certain jobs, especially in the farm sector (Ross Bell). Rampant unemployment amongst the youth owing to illiteracy and poverty which leads to a deprived psychological state is what leads them into the menace of drugs in cities like Jalandhar, Patiala, Bathinda and Amritsar.

## 13. Glamorous projection of Drug in media and entertainment industry:

Strong curiosity toward drug use due to it among adolescents, their urge to escape from reality, to forget their anxiety and Low self-worth become the major reason for drug addiction in youth.

## 14. Nexus of Police, Paddles and Politicians:

Due to the strong nexus between the Punjab police, drug paddlers and political leaders, there's a perception in Punjab that the politicians of all hues and even the police are beneficiaries of the drug trade, and are part of the problem. (Sharma, Shashi Kant, Ex-DGP)

## CONCLUSION:

Drug problem is not new in Indian Society, what is new is the type and variety of drugs being used and the way they are being used even by 14-year-olds. 62 per cent of the boys and girls in the age group of 19-24 years are exposed to drugs. There is a whole new range of more dangerous and expensive drugs. The number of synthetic or prescription drug-dependent college-going students alone may well be way above 25 per cent and even close to 30 per cent. National average of alcohol consumption is 26 per cent, it is as high as 46 per cent in Punjab. According to Punjab government every 3rd male student in Punjab is hooked to substance abuse. The dangerous development which was noticed that four lakh people in Punjab are drug addicts and 26 per cent of them are also HIV Positive. The state of Punjab has emerged as 'The Gateway' of drug supply route to international market on world map. There is strong nexus between the Punjab police, drug paddlers and political leaders and even the police officials and politician are beneficiaries of the drug trade, Punjab is on the brink of disaster. Religious and Social Sanctity, Cultural lineage, the emergence of the "golden triangle" & the "golden crescent" and Geo-Location of Punjab made it international gate way of drug supply, Colonial history, Narco-Terrorism and Narco-Politics of 1990 and 3P- Nexus (Police, Peddlers and Politician) made this problem and Lingering abuse of Punjabi society.

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