

Narcotic Trend in India- The Past, Present and Future

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Abstract

Drugs are a well-known and highly problematic issue of every society. The regional Drug Law

Enforcement agencies in India such as the Narcotics Control Bureau, Excise Department, State police, etc. play an important role in the seizure and reporting of drug trafficking incidents in India. The year-wise drug seizures done by these agencies are analyzed and published yearly by the national agency by name NCRB. These reports are a good source of data for analyzing contemporary issues in society. In the present study, the data published by NCRB from 1982 to 2022 is taken for analysis to find out the nature and extent of different categories of drug in India. The drugs that are more prone to abuse in India are studied based on its seizure by various enforcement agencies of India. The study is significant to predict future possible drug trends based on the present day scenario. It will provide guidelines for the policymakers and the law enforcement agencies for taking precautionary measures to combat against the upcoming danger with fullest strength.

Keywords:- Narcotic Drug, Trend, Trafficking, Seizure.

1. Introduction-

Drug abuse is the biggest sorrow of every society. It spoils both the health and wealth of the nation. The organized criminal gangs who are active in commission of many other criminal activities are in front in trafficking of drugs. The huge demand from the black market made it a

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lucrative commodity for the traffickers worldwide. Trafficking being an organized activity is very difficult for law enforcement agencies to detect and control it. The World Drug Report, 2022 revealed that around 284 million people use different types of drugs worldwide.¹ Due to its geographical position, India became the biggest victim of it which is a serious concern for Anti-Narcotic Enforcement Agencies worldwide.² Till 1980, most of the Indians including official agencies were not familiar even with heroin or other synthetic drugs. But followed with the first seizure of drug in the year 1981³ The number accelerated and rose to the level of serious concern in a few years. In India, there are 2,90,18,000 cannabis users, 1,86,44,000 Opioid users, 1,05,80,000 sedative users, 9,40,000 users of cocaine and 7,773,000 users of other synthetic drugs.⁴ India thus today is a transit route as well as the hub of drug abuse. Therefore it is an alarm call for the whole nation to take steps for eradication of drug abuse and its trafficking from India.

1.1 History of Drug in India-

Traditionally, Cannabis and opium have a long history of use for medicinal purposes in India. The drug history of India mainly revolves around these two drugs. Other derivatives of these drugs were introduced in India but they came very late in the 19th century. Both of these drugs are the plants primarily obtained from flowers, leaves, fruits, young twigs, and bark of the stem of the plant. In India, cannabis was grown wild throughout the Himalayan ranges and the adjoining plains from Kashmir

1 UNODC, World Drug Report (2022). United Nations publication https://www.unodc.org/res/wdr2022/MS/WDR22_Booklet_2.pdf (Last Accessed 23/12/2023).

2 Giri Raj Shah (1998). 2 Encyclopedia Of Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.

3 Shekhar Gupta, "India emerges as an important transit point for drug traffickers" India Today, Apr. 17, 2014 16:35 IST, available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/crime-stories/story/19840515-india-emerges-as-an-important-transit-point-for-drug-traffickers-803603-1984-05-14> (Last assessed 01/11/2023).

4 Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment PIB Delhi, Drug Addiction (9 Jul. 2022 4:19PM), available at: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1842697>(Last Accessed 17/12/2023).

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in the west to Assam in the east.⁵ Though the cannabis was grown wild, the practice of cultivation of cannabis as a cash crop was started for obtaining fibre and the drug out of it. As per a recent study conducted on microfossil data of cannabis sativa, it is suggested that cannabis had its origin in the north-eastern region of the Tibetan Plateau.⁶ Previously, it was believed that cannabis originated in Central Asia around 32 000 years ago and in Japan around 10 000 BCE.⁷ Opium is yet another drug with Asiatic origin. It was found to be first cultivated in 3400 BC in lower Mesopotamia (Southwest Asia).⁸ It was brought into India via the western coast by Arab Traders in the 9th century. The large market of Indian opium as a commodity of trade with nearby countries was identified by Britishers⁹ and they started to trade Indian opium with nearby countries like China. During the 16th century, poppy cultivation and its trade became a state monopoly and Indian opium became an important trade commodity in China and other Eastern countries.¹⁰ During the early 20th century new varieties of Opioid such as morphine, heroin, and codeine emerged in the drug market. Originated in Germany and synthesised from morphine, heroin became popular as a medicine in the drug market. But later on, it came out to be more dangerous as it was more addictive than morphine.

Coca is yet another oldest, most potent, and most dangerous stimulant having a natural origin. It is said that about 3000 BC, ancient

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- 5 I. C. Chopra, R. N. Chopra (1957). "The Use of Cannabis Drugs in India" https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1957-01-01_1_page003.html.
 - 6 Mcpartland Jm (2018). "Cannabis Systematics at the Levels of the Family, Genus, And Species Cannabis" 3 Cannabinoid Res, 203-12 .
 - 7 Russo Eb, Jiang He, Li X et al. (2008). "Phytochemical and Genetic Analysis of Ancient Cannabis From Central Asia", 59 J Exp Bot., 4171-82
 - 8 Dea Museum, Opium Poppy, available at: [https://museum.dea.gov/exhibits/online-exhibits/cannabis-coca-and-poppy-natures-addictiveplants/opiumpoppy#:~:text=The %20earliest%20 reference%20to% 20opium,it%20on% 20to%20 the %20 Egyptians](https://museum.dea.gov/exhibits/online-exhibits/cannabis-coca-and-poppy-natures-addictiveplants/opiumpoppy#:~:text=The%20earliest%20reference%20to%20opium,it%20on%20the%20Egyptians) (Last Accessed 01/11/2023).
 - 9 https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1954-01-01_3_page002.html (Last Accessed 01/11/2023).
 - 10 Machado T.(1994). "Culture and Drug Abuse in Asian Settings, Research for Action" St John's Medical College Publications, Bangalore, India

Incas in the Andes chewed coca leaves to breathe to counter the effects of thin mountain air.¹¹ Cocaine was manufactured for the first time in the year 1859 by the German chemist Albert Niemann. However it was not popularized in the medical community till the 1880s.¹² In the 1970s, cocaine emerged as a fashionable drug for entertainers and businesspeople and from then it is termed as a rich man's drug.

1.2. Various Routes of Entry of Drugs in India-

A few years ago India was in the category of a 'not so important' country for the drug mafias worldwide. Its existence was just as a country situated between two gigantic sources of illicit trafficking i.e. the "Golden Triangle" and the "Golden Crescent". But with the Russian occupation of Afghanistan and Vietnamese presence in Cambodia, the flow of opium had been cut off at source both in the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan) and Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Thailand, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Vietnam). Due to the cutting of routes from Afghanistan, the only access from Pakistan to the West was through India via Delhi and Bombay. Bombay and Delhi then emerged as new centres for drug traffickers. India is a victim of drug trafficking rather than source or a transit. The geographical position of India made it a soft target of the drug market. India shares a territorial border with seven countries and coastline with two countries. Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu are the borderline states of India more prone to drug abuse.

1.2.1 The Sea Route-

India is surrounded by a huge coastline created by the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal, and the Arabian Sea. The Afghan drug was smuggled through the Arabian sea via its northwest coast. In the mid-1990s, the sea shore of Tamil Nadu was used as an important departure point for

11 "Cocaine A Short Story, The Truth About Cocaine", Drug Free World Foundation, available at: <https://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/cocaine/a-short-history.html> (Last Accessed 02/12/2023).

12 Ibid.

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smuggling of heroin to Sri Lanka.¹³The Indian ‘brown sugar’ was also transhipped through this coastal route to the markets of Europe and America.¹⁴ Along with Mumbai and Varanasi, Tuticorin and Kochi also emerged as top drug trafficking centres in the country.¹⁵ Mumbai was the major port of entry and exit of drugs on western coastline. It became the transit-hub for the heroin manufactured in Afghanistan and Pakistan to connect Karachi with the Western world. The heroin and brown sugar was mostly smuggled from Pakistan and Iran through the coastal route of Gujarat and Maharashtra in the western coastline.¹⁶

1.2.2. Indo-Pakistan Route-

The Golden Crescent is the moon shaped region of South Asia which is famous for its illicit opium production. Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan are the countries falling across the Golden Crescent. The states of Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat are the borderline states which share borders with these three countries. Heroin and hashish produced in this region was trafficked through these states into India via land route. The issue of drugs erupted in Punjab during the period of Khalistan movement and Sikh Militancy in 1980’s. The advantage of the instability and internal insurgency was taken by drug traffickers to flourish drug trade into India via Lahore-Fazilka-Bhatinda-Delhi route of Punjab.¹⁷

13 Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Government of India, Annual Report 2005-06, 35 (Ministry of Finance, New Delhi, 2006).

14 Government of India, Home Ministry, Annual Report 2006-07, available at: https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport_06_07.pdf (Last Accessed 10/12/2023).

15 “Kochi one of the top five drug-transit points in India”, The Indian Express, Kochi, Jan. 22, 2011 03:02 AM, available at: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2011/jan/22/kochi-one-of-top-5-drug-transit-points-in-india-221098.html> (Accessed on 01/11/2023).

16 J Dey, “Coastal smuggling gets rich again” Mid-Day, Mumbai, January 18, 2011 07:01 AM IST, available at: <https://www.mid-day.com/mumbai/mumbai-news/article/coastal-smuggling-gets-rich-again-109435> (Last Accessed on 01/11/2023).

17 Pushpita Das (2012). “Drug Trafficking in India: A Case for Border Security”, IDSA Occasional Paper No. 24 available at: <https://idsa.in/occasionalpapers/DrugTraffickinginIndia> (Last Accessed on 15/12/2023).

1.2.3. Indo- Myanmar route-

The Northeast region of India comprises eight states, the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. Sharing the border with the five countries Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar, this region is of great significance for the country. The spread of narcotics started in the north-eastern part of India in 1983 with Manipur as a major victim of drug abuse. Myanmar which is the world's second-largest producer of illicit opium, after Afghanistan and a member of the Golden Triangle group¹⁸ shares a 1,643-kilometer border with northeast India. Therefore the practice of smuggling of heroines through north-eastern states into India and the use of Indian Territory as a transit route for smuggling heroin to other countries such as the US and Europe became matters of serious concern.

1.2.4. Indo Nepal Route-

Nepal a poorest country of the world¹⁹ is situated between India and China. Nepal is famous for production of high quality cannabis resin i.e. hashish which is regularly trafficked into India.²⁰ The entry of cannabis and hashish into India took place through the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Since this border is always open and there are no travel restrictions, the smuggling of drugs can take place through this border. The road networks are mostly preferred by traffickers to traffic bulky parcels of drugs through this border.²¹ The drug is not only entering into India from Nepal but is also going to Nepal via this route. Mostly heroin and other opioid based drugs are trafficked to Nepal from India.²²

18 Ron Gluckman, Where has all the opium gone?, <https://www.gluckman.com/BurmaBorder.html>, available at: (Last Accessed 15/12/2023).

19 "Nepal", South Asia Regional Profile, 15 Sep 2005, available at: https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south_Asia_Regional_Profile_Sept_2005/12_nepal.pdf (Last Accessed on 21/12/2023).

20 Ibid.

21 Parvez Iqbal Siddiqui, "Drug peddlers using common vehicles for smooth sailing" The Times of India, Lucknow, July 27, 2009 06:35 IST, available at: http://articles.timesofindia.com/2009-07-27/Lucknow/28191708_1_hashish-charas-ashu (Last Accessed on 01/11/2023).

22 Id. at 21.

2. Different Types of Drugs in India-

The term ‘narcotic’ in the legal sense is quite different in the medical context. As per Merriam Webster Dictionary “Narcotic drug” means a drug (such as codeine, methadone, or morphine) that in moderate doses dulls the senses, relieves pain, and induces profound sleep but if taken in excess it causes stupor, coma, or convulsions.²³ Legally speaking "Narcotic Drug" means coca leaf, cannabis (hemp), opium poppy straw and including all manufactured drugs.²⁴ As per its prevalence, drugs are classified in four categories i.e. cannabis-based drugs (Ganja, Hashish, Charas), Opioid based drugs (Opium, Morphine, Heroin), Coca based drug (cocaine) and Psychotropic substances (LSD, Amphetamine, Methaqualone, Ketamine, ATS, etc).

2.1. Cannabis-Based Drugs-

The largest drug abused worldwide is cannabis. Cannabis is the general term used to describe different types of drugs obtained from cannabis plants.²⁵ Initially cannabis derivatives such as Charas, Ganja, and Bhang were used on religious occasions by some communities. The custom of consuming bhang on occasion of Mahashivratri is still followed by some communities of India.²⁶ Ganja is one of the most widely abused drugs in India. Hashish is the separated resin, which has a long history of usage in countries such as Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Iran Morocco, and Lebanon.²⁷ Charas is a cannabis based preparation made from the resin of a living cannabis plant and is prepared manually by hands. Until the 1980s

23 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/narcotic#:~:text=%20laws,Medical%20Definition,causes%20stupor%2C%20coma%2C%20or%20convulsions> (Last Accessed on 01/11/2023).

24 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, Act No. 61 OF 1985, Sec. 2(xiv).

25 Giri Raj Shah (1998). 1 Encyclopedia Of Narcotic Drugs And Psychotropic Substances, 109, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.

26 I.C. Chopra, R. N. Chopra (1957). “The Use of the Cannabis Drugs in India”, available at: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1957-01-01_1_page003.html (Last Accessed 16/12/2023).

27 Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Hashish, available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashish> (Last Accessed 18/12/2023).

its use was not strictly prohibited but after the enactment of the NDPS Act it was banned for its use in India.

2.2. Cocaine- A Coca Derivative-

Coke or cocaine is a psychoactive alkaloid obtained from leaves of a coca plant. It is a white powder extracted from cocoa, which is termed as the king of drugs.²⁸ It is the third category of drug originated in America which was less likely to increase in India till 2020. But the number grew up shockingly in 2021. In 2021-22, seizures of cocaine increased by 3,479 percent from 8.667 kg to 310.21 kg.²⁹

2.3. Opioid based drugs-

The largest opiate market in South Asia is India. With close to an estimated 11 million opiate users in 2021, India accounted for nearly 90 percent of the estimated number of opiate users in South Asia.³⁰ Opium is allowed to be produced for use in the pharmaceutical industry in India. But still, it continues to be cultivated illegally in many parts, specifically in north-western part of the country. Opioid-based drugs include Opium, Poppy straw, Morphine, Heroin, Codeine, Fentanyl, Tramadol, etc. In recent years irrespective of opium production in India, most of the heroin found in South Asia appears to have originated from Afghanistan.³¹ According to NCRB Report 2021, the main trafficking route for heroin has traditionally been across the India-Pakistan border via the State of Punjab and the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The drug was trafficked to other parts of India.³²

28 Manu Aiyappa Kanthanda, "Cocaine use in Karnataka doubles in five years, Bengaluru new transit point" Times of India, Sept. 6 2020, 16.31 IST, available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/cocaine-use-in-state-doubles-in-5-yrs-bluru-new-transit-point/articleshow/77954524.cms> (Last assessed 04/12/2023).

29 Ibid.

30 "Cocaine Started Coming Into India, Nirmala Sitharaman Warns Officers", NDTV, Dec. 05, 2022 4:26 pm, available at: <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/cocaine-coming-into-india-warns-nirmala-sitharaman-3579258> (Last Accessed 18/12/2023).

31 Ibid.

32 Narcotics Control Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Annual Report 2021, available at:

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2.4. Psychotropic Substances-

In addition to narcotic drugs, several synthetic drugs termed “Psychotropic Substances” have emerged in recent years. It includes depressants (Barbiturates) tranquilizers, stimulants (Amphetamines), and hallucinogens. Medically Psychotropic Substances are the substances that when taken in or administered into one's system affect mental processes like perception, consciousness, cognition, or mood and emotions.³³“Psychotropic Substances” are the substances, natural or synthetic, or any natural material or any salt or preparation which is included in the schedule attached to the NDPS Act, 1985.³⁴

2.5. Precursors-

To convert natural plant-based drugs into manufactured drugs one needs to use some chemicals called “precursors”. India is the largest manufacturer and exporter of essential chemicals such as acetic anhydride. Acetic Anhydride is used for the manufacture of other complex drugs. Acetic anhydride is the chemical precursor which is smuggled to Myanmar and other South Asian countries from India. The precursor chemicals produced by the Indian chemical industry such as acetic Anhydride, Ephedrine, Pseudo-ephedrine; Potassium permanganate etc. have huge demand in neighbouring countries.

3. The Narcotic Trend in India-

3.1. The Past Trend-

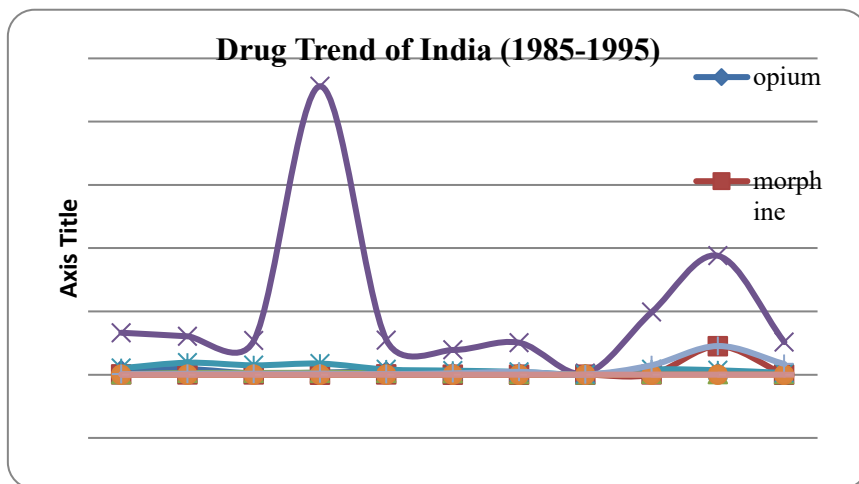
Drug seizure is an action taken by Law enforcement agencies against the act of drug abuse or trafficking. It indicates the bright side of Law enforcement but at the same time, it indicates the entry and prevalence of drugs.

https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport202122_24112022%5B1%5D.pdf (Last accessed 19/12/2023).

33 Drugs (Psychoactive), World Health Organisation, available at: https://www.who.int/health-topics/drugs-psychoactive#tab=tab_1 (Last accessed 19/12/2023).

34 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, Act No. 61 OF 1985, S. 2 (xxiii).

Figure 1- Drug Trend of India (1985-1995)³⁵



Based on the type of drug seized one can predict the drug trend of a country. As per the year-wise data of drugs seized from 1985 to 1995 shown in Figure 1, we can observe that Ganja is the most abused drug in India. Initially, it was abused in moderate quantities but in the year 1988, it rose to its peak. It may be due to the enactment of stringent drug legislation and the establishment of special Law Enforcement Agencies that the rate of seizure of ganja has risen high. But it dropped down again in the year 1989 and thereafter it showed a slow but continuous upward move. The seizure of other categories of drugs like cocaine, heroine, hashish, amphetamine was minimal during the period 1985 to 1995.

3.2. The Present Trend-

According to the UNODC World Drug Report, 2018, it is estimated that more than 3,10,00,000 people suffer from drug use disorders worldwide.³⁶ The Indian scenario is also not different. As per the National

35 Crime in India, National Crime Records Bureau, Government of India, available at: <https://ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india.html> (Last accessed 23/12/2023).

36 "Improving substance use prevention and treatment services for young people" INCN Report (2019), available at: <https://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/AR2019/An>

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Survey³⁷ conducted in 36 states and UTs of India, Alcohol is found to be commonly abused drug by the Indian population. In India, about 14.6% of the population (16 crore) is addicted to alcohol.³⁸ After Alcohol, Cannabis and Opioid are the commonly abused drugs in India. About 2.8% i.e. 3.1 crore population reported to have abused cannabis in the year 2018.³⁹ About 2.1% of the country's population i.e. 2.26 crore population uses opium and its derivatives such as heroin, morphine, etc. As per UNODC 2018 country-wise data of India, cannabis is the highly abused drug of India.

The World data shown in Table 1 reveals that India ranks at the top in prevalence of cannabis drug abuse. India stands at second position worldwide in the prevalence of heroin. As per the UNODC Drug Report from 2017-2021, cannabis in the form of plants and herbs is continued as a major drug of abuse in India. Heroin, an Opioid preparation comes next to cannabis in the pattern of drug seizures in India. Benzodiazepine, a tranquilizer that is used as a medicine for muscle relaxation and lowering anxiety is also seen to be abused in India. Likewise, some pharmaceutical Opioids were found to be abused by Indian people in recent years. Amphetamines including methamphetamines were showing a gradual increasing trend in the world market and India is also not an exception to it. Cocaine was the least abused drug of India in recent years.

nual_Report_Chapters/AR2019_Chapter_I_EN.pdf (Last Accessed 19/12/2023).

37 Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Government of India, National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, "Magnitude of substance use in India" Feb. 2019, available at: <https://socialjustice.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Survey%20Report.pdf>

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

Table 1- Ranking of India in different drugs (2020 -2021)⁴⁰

Region	Country	Year	Drug Types	Rank
Asia	India	2020	Amphetamines (amphetamine/methamphetamine)	7
Asia	India	2020	Benzodiazepines	3
Asia	India	2020	Cannabis herb (marijuana)	1
Asia	India	2020	Codeine	8
Asia	India	2020	Heroin	2
Asia	India	2020	Non-medical use of pharmaceutical Opioid	4
Asia	India	2020	Opium	6
Asia	India	2020	Other pharmaceutical Opioid	10
Asia	India	2020	Other sedatives and tranquilizers	5
Asia	India	2020	Tramadol	9

In India, the cases related to narcotic drugs have been increasing since the last decade. The graph of the cases remained continuously rising and showed an upward move in the last few years. Noticeably the growth of drug seizures in the past two years is a matter of grave concern.

40 UNODC, World Drug Report 2023, United Nations publication (2023), available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2023.html> (Last Accessed 16/12/2023).

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Figure 2- NDPS cases reported in India⁴¹

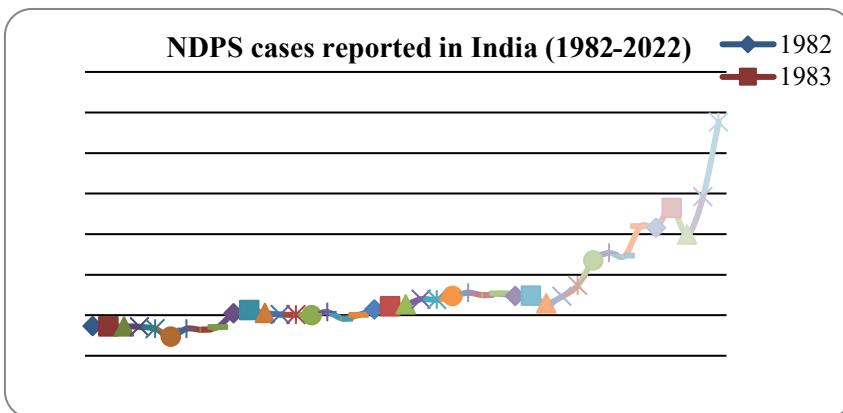
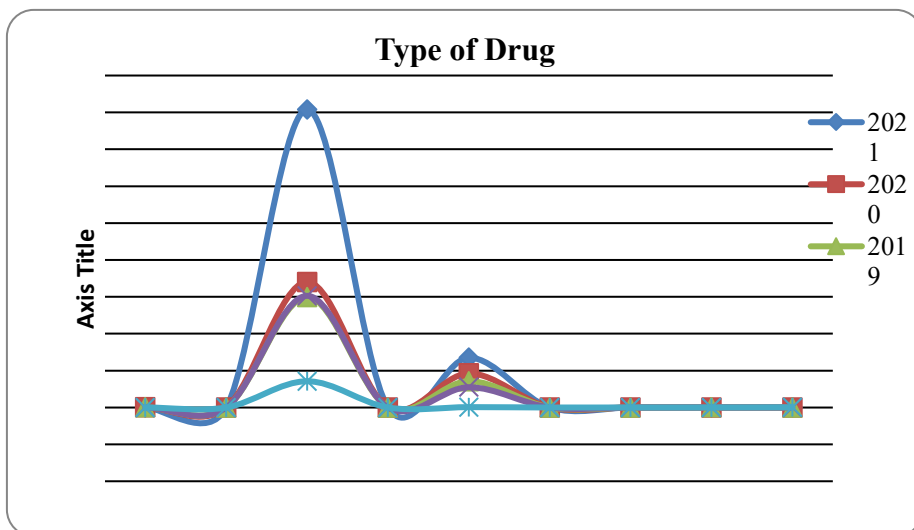


Figure 3- Year wise Drug seizures in India 2017-2021 based on type of Drug⁴²



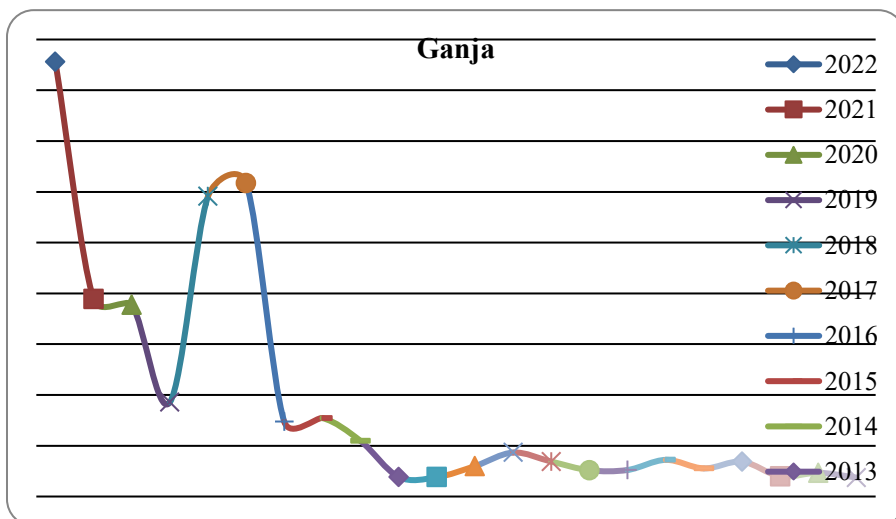
41 National crime Records Bureau, Crime in India (1982-2022), available at: <https://ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-all-previous-publications.html> (Last Accessed 22/12/2023).

42 UNODC, Supra 45.

The Indian drug trend showed a gradual upward trend indicating exponential growth in cases under the NDPS Act. During the period 2017-2021 Cannabis and opioid continued to be the most abused drugs in India (Figure 3).

3.2.1. Cannabis based drug trend-

Figure 4- Seizure of Ganja (2001-2022)⁴³



As per UNODC Report 2020-21 statistics (See Table 1), India is at the top in cannabis abuse. The seizure of cannabis increased three times in the year 2021 than in the year 2020. Among all cannabis-based drugs Ganja has shown a bulky increase since 2016 till date. During 2019-20, cannabis seizures were reduced. But after the end of the lockdown, it again rose with a sharp upward move. Hashish, a derivative of cannabis that had grown in the year 2001, gradually reduced to a minimum. And the present scenario is that hashish is among the least seized drugs in India. The 1980's trend of smoking hashish by filling into cigarettes had declined highly bringing it down to the minimum.

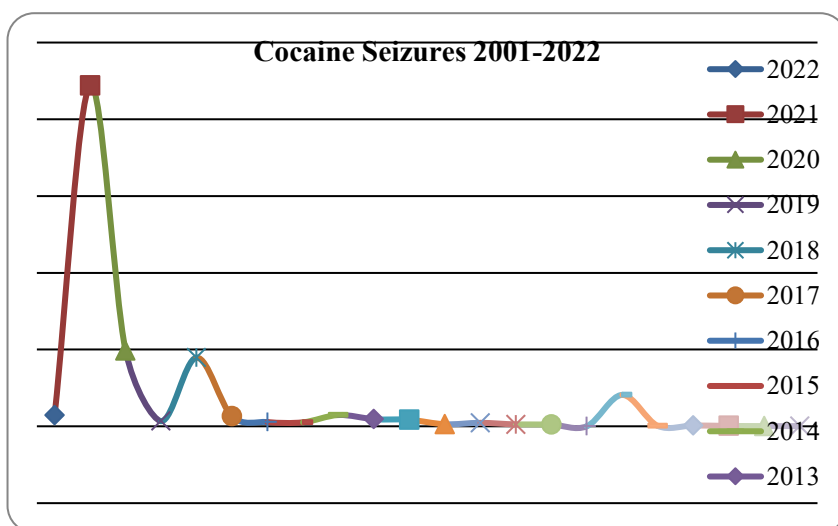
43 National crime Records Bureau, Crime in India (2001-2022), available at: <https://ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-all-previous-publications.html> (Last Accessed 22/12/2023).

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3.2.2. Cocaine based drug trend-

Cocaine, the most abused drug belonging to the Coca family, was the least seized drug of India. But shockingly, from 2019 to 2021, its widespread presence is observed on the seizure scale of India (See Figure 6). As per NCRB, Mumbai became the cocaine capital of India in 2021. The first quarter of the year 2023 had seen a number of cocaine seizures from Mumbai airport which indicates the emerging flow of cocaine in Indian drug markets.⁴⁴

Figure 6- Cocaine seizure in India 2001-2022⁴⁵



3.3.3. Opium based drug trend-

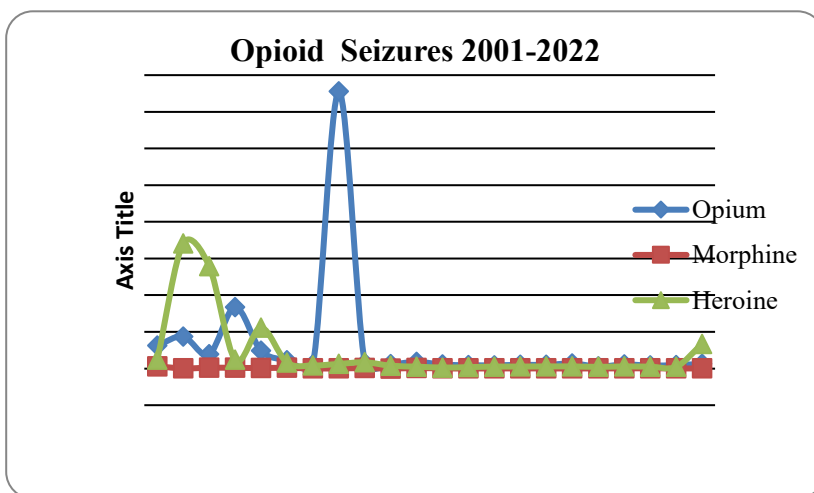
Opium based drugs such as raw opium, morphine, heroine, poppy husk are the mainly seized drugs in India. Opium showed a huge increase during 2015, whereas seizure of heroin was found in 2020-21. Among opiates, opium had shown upward growth in 2014-15, which dropped down in 2016 (See Figure 7). Other Opioids like morphine and poppy husk had shown moderate increase and decrease trends during the last

44 National crime Records Bureau, Crime in India (2001-2022), available at: <https://ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-all-previous-publications.html> (Last Accessed 22/12/2023).

45 Ibid.

decade. But in the last two years morphine again gained the ground with large scale seizures in the year 2021-22. Morphine was a slow-moving opiate till 2021, and suddenly showed a sharp rise in 2022. The seizure of heroin increased in the year 2020, which dropped down in the year 2021. The period of 2019 to 2021 emerged as a period of growth of opium derivatives in the drug history of India.

Figure 7- Opium based drug seizure in India 2001-2022⁴⁶



3.3.4. Psychotropic substances drug trend-

Psychotropic substances which are also termed Synthetic drugs have captured the drug market of India in the last decade.⁴⁷ According to the UNODC 2023 Drug Report, the Amphetamine manufactured in Afghanistan is trafficked to both India and Sri Lanka. Most of the users of methamphetamine were found in the western part of the country. ATS is highest in eastern states which are close to Myanmar.⁴⁸ The seizure of

46 National crime Records Bureau, Crime in India (2001-2022), available at: <https://ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-all-previous-publications.html> (Last Accessed 22/12/2023).

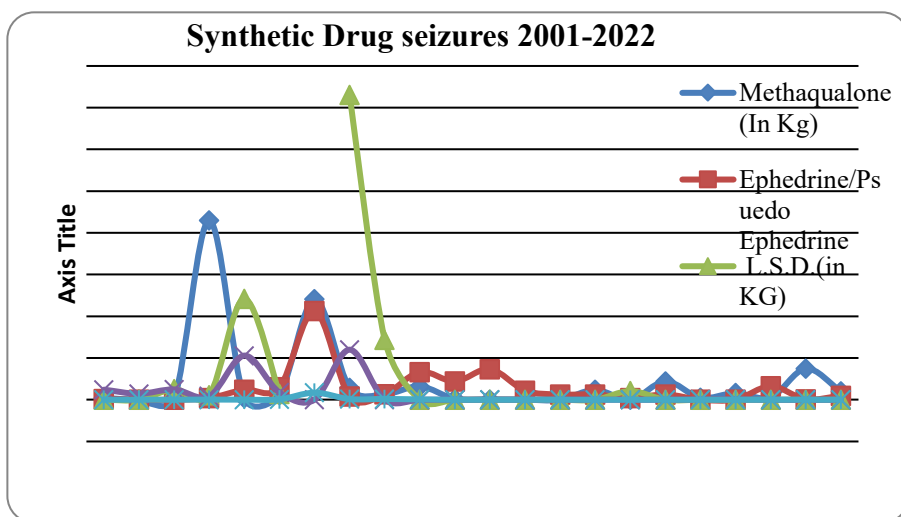
47 UNODC, "THE SYNTHETIC DRUG PHENOMENON", World Drug Report 2023, United Nations publication (2023), available at: https://www.unodc.org/res/WDR-2023/WDR23_B3_CH1_Synthetic_drugs.pdf (Last Assessed 17/12/2023).

48 <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2023.html>

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psychotropic substances was seen to have increased from 2014 with the growth of LSD. Methaqualone and Ephedrine both are consistently showing their existence and growth in the drug market among synthetic drugs (See Figure 8). The period from 2014 to 2019 was the period of growth of amphetamine seizures in India. Methamphetamine is the new player of the drug market. It is the most powerful and highly demanded synthetic drug which shows a quick and intense feeling of pleasure than other drugs. The future drug market is moving towards synthetic drugs and amphetamines can be highly abused drugs in upcoming years.

Figure 8- Seizure of synthetic drug 2001-2022⁴⁹



3.3.5. Precursors-

The growth of precursor chemicals is shocking in India during 2001-2010. It had been seen that the Indian chemical industry was the source of supply of precursors to other countries during this period. The neighbouring country like Pakistan produces a very limited amount of precursor chemicals in their country.⁵⁰ So the Indian precursor chemical

49 National crime Records Bureau, Crime in India (2001-2022), available at: <https://ncrb.gov.in/crime-in-india-all-previous-publications.html> (Last Accessed 20/12/2023).

50 https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/h60_pakistan.pdf (Last Assessed 16/11/2023)

can be used by such countries having limited supply of precursors of their own.

4. The Future Drug Trend in India-

4.1 Movement for legalization of cannabis-

By considering medicinal properties of marijuana, when many countries like Canada, Malta, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, and Uruguay legalized recreational use of marijuana in their countries for India it is a situation of dilemma. The drug seizure data related to India indicates that Cannabis is the highly abused drug in India. The most notorious among all the cannabis derivatives is the Ganja. Cannabis is the biggest knave which kept India among the top abuse prone countries of the world. Since the past few years, so as to reduce the heavy load of cannabis consumption cases in courts there is a huge demand for legalisation of cannabis in India. The legalisation of marijuana thus will determine the future trend of narcotics in India.

4.2 Emergence of new synthetic drugs-

Previously Opium was the second most abused drug of India. But the country-wide increase in seizure of synthetic drugs in the past few years, foretelling the upcoming move of drug markets of India towards synthetic drugs like methamphetamine. This move of India is not surprising, as the whole world drug market is showing a similar move in recent years. Therefore, Law Enforcement Agencies must keep an eye on the trafficking of synthetic drugs in coming days.

4.3 Growth of precursor chemicals-

India has the fastest growing and diversified industrial network in Asia. The continuing growth brings it to the position of the sixth largest chemical producing industry of the world.⁵¹ The chemical industry is

51 Vinod Nair, "Indian Chemical Industry- A Growing force and its prospects" Livemint, Sep. 24 2023, 04:53 PM, available at: [https://www.livemint.com/market/stock-market-news/indian-chemical-industry-a-growing-force-and-its-prospects11695551490833.html#:~:text=It%20has%20attained%20the%20status,%24290%2D310%20billion%20by%202027\(Last accessed 22/12/2023\).](https://www.livemint.com/market/stock-market-news/indian-chemical-industry-a-growing-force-and-its-prospects11695551490833.html#:~:text=It%20has%20attained%20the%20status,%24290%2D310%20billion%20by%202027(Last%20accessed%2022/12/2023).)

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playing a significant role in the export of chemicals to other Asiatic countries of the region. These chemical industries and laboratories are on the soft targets of the world drug networks. The industries that are primarily involved in licit supply of drugs are thus at high risk in the coming future which urge for strict and immediate actions against the perpetrators. But the lacunas prevailing in the legal and regulatory framework of the country pose continual threat before the enforcement agencies of India.

4.4 The secret neighbouring enemies-

Identification of the source country is the foremost step towards control of drugs from any jurisdiction. The neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan are the historical traffickers of drugs for India. Traditionally, heroin was trafficked from Afghanistan and Pakistan into India. India was used as a transit route by these countries to smuggle drugs to other European countries. But recently this trend of South Asian countries has shifted from heroin to amphetamines. In the last decade, the eastern states of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland emerged as new sources of precursors for neighbouring countries. The country of Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia thus some other secret enemies of India in the drug scenario. The stringent security measure to prevent smuggling of drugs via these borders is thus needed to be implemented.

4.5. Change in mode of smuggling-

Due to advancement of technology and transportation, the old methods of transport of drugs via roads in containers were replaced with the use of the Dark Web. The drug peddlers now are using dark web networks to contact the further links. The AI assisted drones that are non-recognizable and small in size were also started to be used for delivery of drugs in recent years. The high end security measures on border areas diverted the traffic from land to the coastline. The sea routes are now largely used for smuggling of drugs into India. This changed trend of trafficking demands collaborative and intensified action by Drug Enforcement agencies worldwide.

5. Conclusion-

Drug Trend is the most comprehensive and published source of estimation and statistics on the global drug problem at present. It is useful to denote where we stand on the issue of drug abuse. It also helps to find out the issues of more concern in the future. When we look at the present drug trend, it is crystal clear that drugs are the never ending and ever increasing phenomenon of the world. It changes its pattern as per the societal modifications. The criminals are more susceptible to change and it is the normal tendency of a human being. The drug network is also not an exception to it. At present dark web assisted smuggling, entry of new categories of drugs, financial crisis and lucrative offers from traffickers and lacunas in regulatory framework are major challenges before the Indian government. Policy review and equipping implementation agencies with advanced technology is the need of the hour now. The prohibitions on precursor chemicals also need to be strengthened. The total control of precursors can help reduce the production of narcotic drugs, which in turn helps in the control of drug abuse and trafficking.