1.1 Background of Study

“Drugs are a waste of time they destroy your memory and self respect and everything that goes along with your self esteem-‘KURT COBAIN’

Like in many other nations, the problem of psychoactive substance abuse has been quite substantive in India for decades and it continues to pose threat to the individual well-being and the root of the society as well even in the recent times. Among the various substances of addiction, abuse of the drugs like cannabis, opium, heroin, cocaine, synthetic drugs, pharmaceutical drugs and inhalants remains most pronounced among the various categories of substance abuse in various parts of the country (Narcotics Control Bureau 2009). Besides these, the trend of alcohol consumption also has remained widespread for many centuries in India and thus substance abuse and dependence has become more of a public health crisis with also adverse consequences for social and economic aspects of the country. The precarious phenomenon of drug abuse has engulfed a significant proportion of population irrespective of their socio-economic status and their cultures. The perils of drug abuse exist for all age groups as the nation also suffers from a great amount of its young and adolescent population falling prey to it. The spread of this problem in the nation can be assessed from the fact that household expenditure on alcohol varies between 3% and 45% of their incomes (WHO Countries Profile, 2004). A United Nations study reports that illicit drug use remains highly existent in the age bracket of 15-64 years in India particularly to opiates originating in South East Asia and South West Asia (World Drug Report 2015).

The picture of instances of drug addiction and abuse varies across states. Some examples emerge from states like Punjab and Madhya Pradesh, in which the phenomenon of drug abuse has remained rampant from historic times. In fact, it has been asserted that 67% households in Punjab and 42% in Madhya Pradesh have at least one drug addict with major supplies of these illicit drugs coming from the states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (Delhi Policy Group, 2014). Among the various causes identified for such a widespread use of drugs in Punjab range from relatively affluent class background from agriculture, impact of unemployment and the culture of consumption, aspiration and modernity associated with injectable drugs (Chadha, 2011). North eastern states have also exhibited a somewhat homogenous picture of drug
and alcohol addiction. All north eastern states have a great number of people addicted to alcohol with Mizoram remaining an exception. The prevalence of cannabis and opium use on the other hand remains only confined to the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Among other drugs, the substance use of pharmaceutical drugs also remains widespread in the state of Assam (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime 2003).

Apart from this, various states remain the centers of supply of these illicit drugs. North eastern states with lack of other economic activities have depicted this trend at large in the illicit production and cultivation of cannabis and opium. Opium poppy on the other hand is cultivated in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh with an aim to sell these in indigenous markets and for exports (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime 2003).

With Madhya Pradesh being the center of cultivation of these illicit drugs, very few studies have concentrated themselves to consumption aspect of these drugs in order to examine the pattern of drug abuse among the residents of Madhya Pradesh. (Ghulam et al. 1996) conducted an epidemiological study in the various districts of urban population in the state of Madhya Pradesh and confirmed the widespread existence of the instances of drug abuse in the state based on the research tools of household survey and drug abuse Perforoma. The study concluded that consumption profile of various drugs varied in the survey population with alcohol topping the charts followed by tobacco, cannabis, painkillers, opium and tranquilizers among the category of dependent users. The study confirms that the most vulnerable group to these substance addiction were the survey population in the age group of 20-29 for various reasons ranging from curiosity, social acceptance, fatigue, physical illness, psychological stress and peer pressure etc.

An evidence of the extent of illicit drug consumption in the state of Madhya Pradesh emerges from a study conducted in the city of Indore which highlights the alarmingly high level of sales of over the counter drugs from the pharmaceutical stores. The study asserts that the nonmedical use of prescription and over the counter medications implies that the drugs were being abused for purposes other than the prescribed ones (Shroti et al, 2011).

Despite the dearth of statistics, some quantitative evidence emerges from the National Crimes Bureau Report which asserts the instances of crimes falling under the Narcotics Drugs and Psychoactive Act to be of the magnitude of 721. The national range of drugs related crimes in the
stood at 2.1% out of which Madhya Pradesh depicted a prevalence rate of 1% of these national level crimes. Similar study also highlights a rate of prevalence of these crimes in the city of Bhopal to be of the magnitude of 0.7% (National Crimes Record Bureau, 2011).

These trends remain despite a National Act on Drugs and Psychotropic Substance being in existence since 1985 with various amendments introduced there in. With a careful scrutiny of the current situation, the study thus aims to augment the current literature and statistics to highlight the extent and magnitude of the problem under study in the designated areas of Bhopal city in Madhya Pradesh.