



# Psychedelic Substances

**For Prelims:** Psychedelic Substances, [Psychiatry](#), [NDPS Act 1985](#), [Depression](#), [Drug Trafficking](#).

**For Mains:** Psychedelic Substances and their implications.

## Why in News?

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the use of **Psychedelics** in the clinical and research domain of [Psychiatry](#).

- In India, the [Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985](#) prohibits the use of psychedelic substances.

## What are Psychedelics?

### ▪ About:

- Psychedelics are a group of drugs that **alter perception, mood, and thought processing** while a person is still clearly conscious. Usually, the person's insight also **remains unimpaired**.
- Psychedelics are **non-addictive and non-toxic**. Compared to illicit drugs, psychedelics **cause much less harm to the end user**.
  - The two most commonly used psychedelics are **d-lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and psilocybin**.
  - Less common ones include **mescaline**, found in the North American **peyote cactus** (*Lophophora williamsii*), and **N,N-dimethyltryptamine**, the principal component of the South American ceremonial sacrament ayahuasca.

### ▪ Impact on Body after Consumption: Users of psychedelic substances report **changes in perception, somatic experience, mood, thought processing, and entheogenic experiences**:

- **Perceptual distortions** most commonly include the **visual domain**.
  - An intriguing phenomenon called **synaesthesia** may occur, where the sensory modalities cross and the user may **'hear colour' or 'see sounds'**.
- Somatic experiences may include the **visceral, tactile, and interoceptive (body's internal state) domains**.
- Mood changes may include **elation, euphoria, anxiety, and paranoia**.
- Entheogenic experiences include **transcendental spiritual experiences**.

### ▪ Issues:

- An overdose requires **cardiac monitoring and supportive management** in a low-stimulus and reassuring environment.
- Synthetic psychedelics (such as 25I-NBOMe) have been associated with **acute cardiac, central nervous system**, and limb ischaemia, as well as serotonin syndrome.
  - There have also been reports of death attributed directly to synthetic psychedelic use.

### ▪ Treating Depression:

- In November 2022, the results from a **phase II psilocybin trial** were published in the New England Journal of Medicine. The trial found that a **single 25-mg dose of psilocybin reduced [Depression scores](#)** over three weeks in people with treatment-resistant depression.
- These findings were more recently replicated in a **phase IIB trial, which found that a single dose of 25 mg psilocybin** improved measures of depression severity, anxiety, and functioning.

## What is Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985?

- It was enacted in 1985 and deals **with [drugs and their trafficking](#)** in the country.
  - The act has since been amended thrice in 1988, 2001, and 2014.
- The Act prohibits the production, manufacture, sale, purchase, transportation & consumption of many **narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances**, including cannabis, heroin, opium etc. The law,
  - However **Bhang** is not prohibited under the Act.
- **Section 20** of the NDPS Act lays out the punishment for the **production, manufacture, sale, purchase, import and inter-state export of cannabis**, as defined in the Act. The prescribed punishment is based on the number of drugs seized.
- It also provides for the death penalty in some cases **where a person is a repeat offender**.

**[Source: TH](#)**

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