

Legalization of marijuana

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Manifest Pedagogy

Inter-disciplining

The issues related to goods that have negative externality on human health need an inter-disciplinary approach. They need a study of their science, their pattern of cultivation, their impacts on society, their legal consequences and the commerce involved in their production. The questions on such issues can appear in any of the GS papers including Ethics and Essay.

In news

Research on the therapeutic potential of marijuana

Placing it in syllabus

Paper 2: Issues relating to health

Paper 3: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Static dimensions

1. Marijuana and its derived products
2. Medicinal and recreational use of marijuana
3. Legal provisions for intoxicants and narcotic drugs

Current dimensions

1. Legalization of marijuana
2. Research on medicinal usage of marijuana

Content

What is marijuana?

Marijuana, is of the cannabis super-family – native to India which grows as a weed. It is used for medicinal and recreational purposes. Its commercial cultivation is illegal in India though it is found as a weed across the country. Uttarakhand, Jammu and Uttar Pradesh have allowed restricted cultivation of the plant for medical research. Bhang is an edible form of marijuana commonly available in north India. Some states like Odisha and Uttar Pradesh have legalised bhang.

What our laws say?

Article 47 of the Constitution says that the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.

The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985 criminalized the cannabis plant, ganja and charas but not bhang. Under the act cannabis should be delivered by cultivators to the State government. It is a major impediment to the cultivation of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes.

Bhang, ganja and charas – products of the cannabis plant – are enlisted in the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 for use in Ayurvedic, Siddha and Unani medicine.

Research on marijuana derived drugs in India

The therapeutic potential of marijuana find mention in Ayurvedic and other traditional-medicine knowledge systems hence the studies into it has gained the thrust.

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research(CSIR), the

Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) – are getting together to promote research in drugs derived from marijuana.

CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM) and the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) are conducting first investigations into marijuana and its derived drugs. The studies will go for few years.

Two active compounds of cannabis that are being explored for medical use are **tetrahydro cannabinol (THC)** and **cannabidiol (CBD)**. However, cannabidiol (CBD) is non-addictive and non-psychotic and may alleviate pain.

Tests on effectiveness of strains of marijuana is underway in the treatment of:

1. Breast cancer
2. Sickle-cell anaemia
3. Epilepsy
4. Bio-equivalent to marijuana-derived drugs approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA).

However, the U.S. FDA has approved cannabidiol oral solution for the treatment of seizures associated with two rare and severe forms of epilepsy. The FDA has also approved the laboratory-produced cannabinoids, dronabinol and nabilone, to treat nausea and vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy in people. There is very limited clinical trial data to suggest that cannabinoids can fundamentally cure disease.

A collection of articles about cannabis, in *Nature*, in 2015 revealed a plethora of potential scientific investigations.

When pain-relieving medications based on cannabinoids exist Indian patients should also be given access to it affordably. We have all the raw material and the scientific know-how to conduct our own medical investigations.

Legalization of marijuana:

Many countries are rightly experimenting with legislative models of decriminalisation as well as legalisation of cannabis, in order to break the connection between organised crime and the growing number of law-abiding people who use cannabis.

India is at crossroads right now in the debate of legalizing or decriminalizing the goods and activities which have negative externalities on the health of its people.

Advantages of legalization of marijuana:

1. The cannabis plant has tremendous amount of medicinal value and potential for industrial usage.

Case study: China is investing in developing different strains of the marijuana plant towards several objectives. It has proper factories for processing marijuana.

2. It has unlimited usage in diverse fields, including in the field of semiconductors.
3. The cannabis plant is a potential cash crop which natural to India, especially the northern hilly regions. It will increase the income of marginal farmers.
4. It can be grown on the bunds along with other crops like paddy.
5. It can replace other recreational habit forming intoxicants.

Disadvantages if legalized:

1. It causes amotivational syndrome, psychosis, bipolar disorder and disorganised schizophrenia.
2. It is a highly addictive substance, produces dependence.
3. It is toxic for the brain. It is the gateway to harder substances.
4. It will legalese drug warlords and their business.

5. It will increase the vulnerabilities of the youth.
6. It may lead to an increase in crimes like prostitution.
7. It will play havoc with the social and mental health of societies.

Laws should be made to suit people so that they do not break the law to maintain their lifestyle. Laws should weave around an existing lifestyle, not obstruct it. Criminalization of a commodity as popular and widespread as cannabis makes little economic, social or legal sense.

Test yourself: Mould your thoughts

Discuss the medicinal and recreational uses of marijuana. Also, bring out the possible consequences if marijuana is legalized in India.