Concerns in Marijuana Legalization

What is the issue?

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- India is struggling to control the three addictive substances of tobacco, alcohol and areca nut.
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- In this scenario legalization of Marijuana would worsen our overburdened healthcare system.
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What is the brief account of Marijuana usage in India?

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- In India the earliest known reports regarding the use of cannabis come from the Atharva-Veda, written around 2000-1400 BCE.
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- Cannabis has been consumed in different ways—smoking (ganja), chewing (bhaang), drinking (tea), etc.
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- Its plant has been used for manufacturing clothes, shoes, ropes and paper.
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- In ancient India, it was used for treating or alleviating symptoms of several diseases.
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What are the ill effects of Marijuana usage?

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- Marijuana and hemp are members of the cannabis family and contain chemicals with varying degrees of psychoactive properties.
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- While marijuana induces intense psychoactive effects, hemp is low on that.
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- Ganja, charas and hashish are known to cause hallucinogen, euphoria, temporary loss of senses and a funny behavior.
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- The International Classification of Diseases and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders designate cannabis as an addictive substance, with recognized dependence disorders.
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- Around 9% of people who try it ultimately become addicts.
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- Its withdrawal symptoms are irritability, sleeping difficulties, dysphoria, etc.
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- For those who try to quit, relapse rates are a high 71% at six months.
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- It noted there is substantial evidence that its use may lead to cancer, cardiovascular illness, lung diseases, road accidents, impaired adolescent health, serious drug interaction and reproductive health disorders.
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- There is an increased incidence of vehicle accidents in those who may be either short-term or long-term users of marijuana.
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What are the efficacy of Marijuana’s medicinal purposes?

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- Cannabis is effective in pain management, but it is weaker and less safe than opiates that are approved.
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- A study did show beneficial effects of cannabis in a small percentage of extremely rare form of epilepsy and multiple sclerosis.
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- Similarly, there is no data to support its use in oncology practice outside of clinical experiments cannabis derivatives are known to have immunosuppressive that can promote cancer.
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- In summary, its medicinal benefits aren’t as strong as presented by the proponents of legalization safer and effective alternatives are available in the market.
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What is India’s regulation on Marijuana?

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- The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, prohibited cultivation or production of cannabis plant by anybody, while reserving these rights with central and state governments if they wish to do so, by creating rules later.
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- It is alleged that the NDPS was a result of an intense international pressure following the UN’s Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961.
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- In India there is no restriction for cultivation and procurement of cannabis for therapeutic use or experimentation.
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- The government has been generous in giving licenses for such purposes.
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What is status of Marijuana legalization?

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- There is a global wave of legalization of cannabis, based on its medicinal properties and commercial utilities.
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- In the US, the use of marijuana (a more addictive derivative) for medicinal purposes is legal in a number of states, whereas its use for recreational purpose has also been legalized in some states.
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- Canada has legalized its use for recreational as well as medicinal purposes.
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- Europe recognizes the use of marijuana for recreational purposes as a crime, but its use for medical purposes is permitted in many countries.
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- Buoyed by success in the West, cannabis supporters are pushing for legalization in India.
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What are the challenges for India in legalizing Marijuana?

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- India has a history of misuse of even prescription drugs that are otherwise beneficial.
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- In Indian context, when prescription drugs are grossly misused, It is hard to use ensure disciplined used of cannabis.
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- Already India is struggling to control the three addictive substances of tobacco, alcohol and areca nut.
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- As per the Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 270 million Indians use tobacco and it kills around 1.35 million Indians every year.
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- Nearly 30% of India’s adult population is using alcohol, leading to 3.3 million deaths.
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- Legalization of cannabis is not only going to worsen these alarming statistics, but also serve as a gateway for one of these carcinogens.
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- Introduction of yet another psychoactive drug will wreak havoc on a population still struggling with tobacco, alcohol and pan masala.
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Source: Financial Express

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