

## Legalize Cannabis in the Indian Sub-Continent for Improving Economy and Health

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The cannabis has now been legalized for medicinal as well as recreational purposes in several countries in the west including some states in the United States. A large section of the society, farmers, distributors, patients, recreational consumers, and scientific researchers are already engaged in the cannabis industry. With more countries working on legalizing it medicinally or recreationally or both ways, cannabis is going to be one of the major determinants for the economy in the coming years.

Despite very long human-cannabis relationship, the Indian sub-continent seems to be lagging on the utilization of this valuable plant. Though the plant's medicinal values were mentioned in the Vedas and several other Indian books some thousand years ago, the subcontinent could not effectively translate and transcribe the ancient knowledge. The present bureaucracy in the subcontinent seems to be reluctant to even discussing the plant's importance in the economy or any other aspects. Several universities in the west have already started the research programs and have reported several conclusive results showing the medicinal importance of chemical compounds produced by the cannabis plant. The Indian subcontinent, in contrast does not even bother to try interpreting the knowledge that is widely practiced in different cultures and was clearly mentioned in ancient books.

A large chunk of the South Asian economy is spent on buying expensive medicines that are produced by big pharmaceuticals around the world. If the cannabis-based medicinal system is revived, the whole region could benefit. Secondary metabolites produced by the Cannabis plants are found to have medicinal properties for several diseases. Cannabinoids, the major and most-talked secondary metabolite, have been studied and found to be helpful in curing diabetes, pain, depression, and several other diseases. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), a psychoactive and Cannabidiol (CBD), non-psychoactive compounds are being actively researched for their medicinal properties. There are already written texts in the

Indian ancient books about the selective extraction and use for the specific disease. If these ancients' claims are verified in the modern scientific laboratories, it may yield great utility to human society.

There are several challenges that need to be addressed before the legalization of medicinal or recreational cannabis in the region. The unmanaged open market could be the biggest hurdle in regulating cannabis products. Testing laboratories, which ensures that the cannabis products are labeled with the correct information, are required to be set up in the adequate numbers. Legislation should be made for the farmers, distributors, consumers and each entity in the industry.

With crossbreeding to produce the desired chemical constituents in the plant, the wildtypes are now rare to find. It is believed that Afghanistan, Nepal, the Mountains of India and Pakistan still have the landraces which could be important for medicinal research. With so much potential to become a hub for the cannabis industry, the Indian sub-continent region should now seriously think of legalizing cannabis which will open the door for farming, business, medicine, and research and hence bring back prosperity to everyone.

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