

## Verity of Cannabis

United Nations proclamation bring forth the legal framework for restricting the supply of narcotic or other related hazardous drugs, utilization of drugs with medicinal values for medical and scientific purposes and drugs controlling.

In order to facilitate the Researches on Cannabis plant consists of non-addictive chemical substance known as “cannabinoids”, accomplished for medical applications by renowned researches, subcategory IV was decided and agreed by WHO to remove from the list which include Narcotic as a severely restricted medicine with high risk, out of the categorization of Cannabis in subcategory I and IV, in the final WHO conference proceeded on December 2 in 2020.

This is to be anticipated, the removal of legal obstacles for the chemical substances which include in the Cannabis plant and Thus to be utilized for medicinal and scientific purposes.

Consequently, news reports published on Cannabis as an internationally standardized hazardous drug included in the list of the categorization, was said to be removed from the respective categorization is considered a misinterpretation and furthermore as maintained by the provisions of unitary protocol concerning the control of Cannabis in 1961 and the criteria of United Nations, Cannabis is listed as a hazardous and highly addictive drug in the sub category I.

This decision of the United Nations is not permitted by the international law to minimize the rules related to Cannabis as a prohibited drug and therefore it is not ought to be applied to Sri Lanka as well.

Thus, it is the responsibility of others including myself to terminate the impact of the prevention of hazardous drugs via such fallacious definitions of Cannabis and preventing them to be publicized in the society.

On the report of Dangerous drug control act, no 11 in 1984, National Dangerous Drug Control is considered as the responsible government agency which conduct and implement drug control, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. As per the board act, Board has the monarchy and capacity to bestow advices and recommendations to the respective minister who is accountable for drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation course of actions. Accordingly, the board has the liability of implementing the formulation of rules and regulations, providing advises, guidance and recommendations related to challenges derived by drug related tribulations, in order to minimize the drug problem. For the reason that trends and patterns vary from time to time, in contemporary social discourse created by differing opinions of social media and individuals in the society, National dangerous drugs control board has the responsibility to provide and create positive ideological attitudes as well as the correct understanding in the mind of people on cannabis in the society. Therefore, correct understanding related to biological, legal and sociological impact of cannabis is able to be considered as an urgent need and is indeed vital to aware people about it.

## What is meant by Cannabis?

Cannabis is defined as a psychoactive drug taken from the cannabis plant consists of Cannabis Sativa, Cannabis Indica, and Cannabis Resin. In spite of the usage of cannabis in medicinal purposes, it is utilized after detoxification of the chemical substance in it known as THC-Tetra Hydro Cannabidol. Nevertheless, once it is utilized as a form of Narcotic; it converts in to an addictive substance. This chemical influence harmfully affects the brain and the activity of the central nervous system. This very addictive condition created by cannabis in the human body is able to cause physical, mental and social impact which is scientifically described as “Cannabis use disorder”. In 2013 American Psychological Association had taken the “Cannabis Use Disorder” under DSM 05 category and under which mild, moderate, severe health problems had been identified.

## Is there a trend in the usage of Cannabis in Sri Lanka?

Once the popularity of the misuse of Cannabis is inquired, it is clearly identified that it is being thoroughly misused by the majority of the population in Sri Lanka and worldwide. According to recent statistical reports, it is even proved that the majority of the population has addicted to the misuse of Cannabis. As stated by the National Survey on the prevalence of drug abuse, it is estimated 301,989 of drug addicts found in Sri Lanka. According to the report it is further estimated that 4736 women and 297162 men were reported among the drug addicts in Sri Lanka. In addition, it is found out that people who have addicted to cannabis have also addicted to another major type of Narcotic known as heroin. Furthermore, as stated by National Dangerous Drugs Control Board, it is evident large number of cannabis usage is found among the majority of addicts of illegal drugs. Over the past few years, as claimed by the evidences from the statistical reports of National Dangerous Drugs Control Board, it is clearly evident that there has been a rapid expansion in the usage of Cannabis.

## What is the viewpoint of current government with regard to Cannabis?

On October 7<sup>th</sup> of 2020, in the opinion of the statement made in the parliament by Hon. Prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksha, he specified on the strengthening of the mechanism for the prevention of the promotion of cannabis as well as the acknowledgment of harmful health related consequences. Nevertheless, it is apparent that both national and international organizations attempting to create a social discourse to legalize the usage of Cannabis and furthermore some of the Transnational Cooperation are striving to promote cannabis globally by creating strategic planning and providing financial aids.

In contemporary social discourse in Sri Lanka, it is evident that there is an emerging controversial circumstance with respect to legalize Cannabis. Furthermore, many of mass/ social media, academic professionals such as university lectures, professors and other mighty social groups who have the ability to compel the society (Politicians, Religious leaders, Artists) are attempting to legalize cannabis by developing positive attitudes among the people in the society. Promoting campaigns of Cannabis carried out by some social media such as

Face book, you tube can be taken as examples. Yet from the realistic point of view, it is vital to focus on the legal as well as the sociological aspects derived from this critical issue.

### What is the legal status related to Cannabis in Sri Lanka?

When inquired on the legal aspect of Cannabis, Toxins opium and Dangerous drugs act no 13 in 1984 is able to be considered a very imperative act. As stated by this act, it is insisted that coca, poppy or hemp pods, leaves, flowers or any part of Cannabis plant should not be either imported or exported and there should not be any preparation with regard to the Cannabis plant cultivation within the territory of Sri Lanka. Moreover, it is also included that the cannabis plant is illegal to cultivate, utilize for non-medicinal purposes, possession and trafficking.

### What are the varieties of Cannabis?

There is a controversial discourse with regard to the legalization of Cannabis in Sri Lanka. Moreover, governmental and non-governmental agencies are attempting to obtain the permission for the purpose of cultivating the Cannabis plant for medicinal purposes. These agencies are attempting to obtain the permission to cultivate two varieties of Cannabis consisting of CBD and THC. They are known as Hemp and Marijuana. Between these two plants Marijuana plant consists of minimum amount of CBD and large amount of THC (15%-20%). In contrast, Hemp plant consists of large amount of CBD and minimum amount of THC. That is, it consists of less than (2%) of THC.

CBD has a high level of therapeutic value and for the purpose of extracting for medicinal purposes; it has been permitted by the Secretary of International Regulation and Administration. Thus, Hemp plant is considered the most suitable plant for medicinal purposes. Further Hemp plant has minimum legal restrictions and space for diversion is minimal. And moreover, it is proved that the Hemp plant is able to cultivate in any environmental condition.

### What has occurred to countries which legalize Cannabis?

Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Korea, and Japan have legalized the usage of Cannabis with the intent to utilize it for medicinal purposes. Notwithstanding the usage of Cannabis for medical purposes, it is evident that these countries tend to face adverse consequences regarding the legalization of Cannabis. Furthermore, it is evident that cannabis is misused for non -medicinal purposes, an increase in the number of addicts, misuse of power of the companies produce drugs in these countries.

What is the physical, mental and social impact caused by the misuse of Cannabis?

The chemical substance known as THC which consists in Cannabis is identified as a psychoactive agent that causes harmful physical impact to the human body. Therefore, it is proved by the scientific researches carried out recently, that there is a higher tendency for individuals to become addicted to the misuse of Cannabis. In addition to addiction, long-term and short-term harmful health consequences are able to be caused by the misuse of Cannabis. Further, Misuse of Cannabis can cause delay in thinking and reacting time, weakening balance and concentration, cough and harmful impact to the respiratory system, memory loss, weakness in the learning process, palpitation, high anxiety condition. When compared to men, it is proved that women have a higher risk of rapid increase in physical health consequences, namely low birth rate, deformities in the reproductive health, behavioral disorders etc. By addicting to Cannabis, not only it is able to cause adverse health consequences but also it causes harmful economic as well as social consequences. At macro level it negatively affects the country's health system, economic system, and criminal justice system, environmental and social structures as a whole.

Some professional and mighty social groups, who are able to compel the society, are attempting to legalize cannabis as a contemporary social trend. Yet as Cannabis consists of highly harmful chemical substances, individuals who utilize it have a tendency of addicting to it. Therefore, for the reason that Social media, internet and some social groups attempting to socialize positive attitudes towards legalizing Cannabis, most of the people tend to create optimistic attitudes regarding the usage of Cannabis. Many of the social media striving to create positive attitudinal change among the people by spreading mythical and false information regarding the usage of Cannabis. On account of the fact that National Dangerous Drugs Control Board is responsible for Drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation course of actions, it is indeed it's responsibility to aware the harmful reality of Cannabis to the people of this country. Moreover, it has the responsibility to protect youth and children from the adverse entrapment of Cannabis in order to create world free of dangerous drugs.

Badhrani Senanayaka -Director General

Nilani Renuka - Research Officer.