

Twitter Thread by Pen Pencil



Pen Pencil

[@penpencildraw](#)

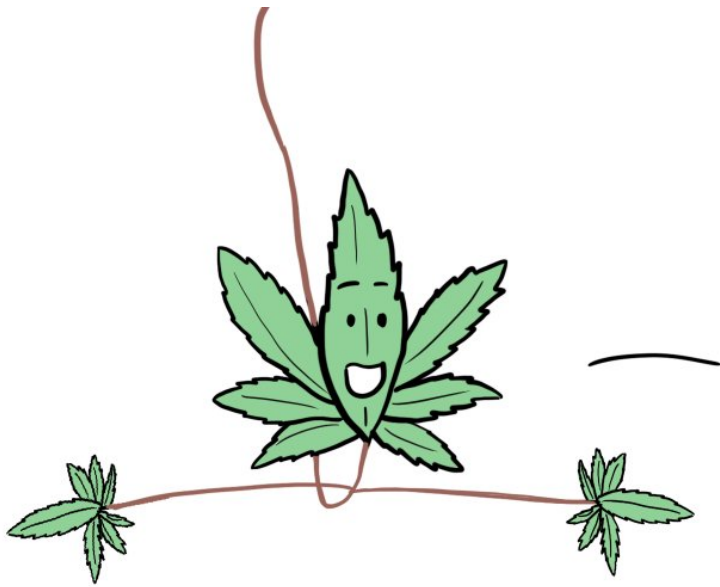


The bizarre history of cannabis in India: a cartoon history thread. (1/n)



[@penpencildraw](#)

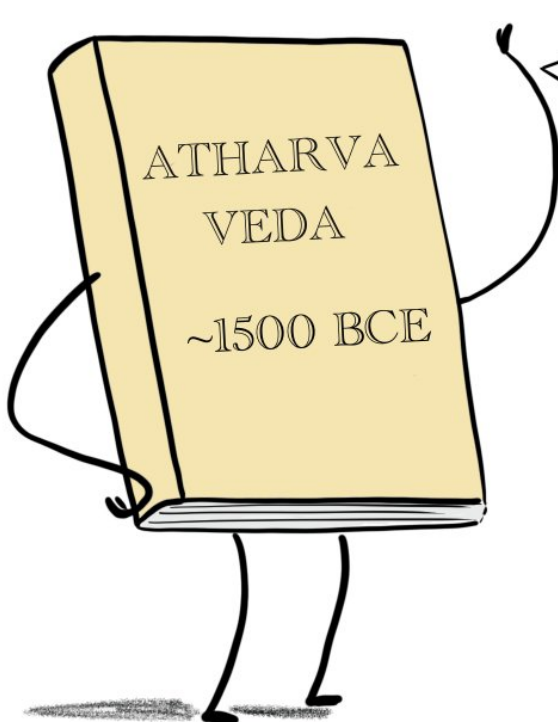
The story of cannabis in India is long and convoluted.



IT'S A STORY OF COLONIAL
INTRIGUE, RACISM AND
DIPLOMATIC PLOTTING. BUT
MOST OF ALL, IT'S A STORY
ABOUT POWER

@penpencildraws

Ancient Indians knew of cannabis very well. <https://t.co/HIJryX9UXp>



"WE TELL OF THE FIVE
KINGDOMS OF HERBS
HEADED BY SOMA; MAY IT,
AND KUSA GRASS, AND
BHANGA AND BARLEY, AND
THE HERB SAHA, RELEASE
ME FROM ANXIETY"

IMMA CALL IT THE
CHILLUM PILLUM



@penpencildraws

For hundreds of years, cannabis was used to treat everyday ailments, pain relief and recreation. And that lasted into colonial times. <https://t.co/Nw4CpcQAHW>



"INDIAN HEMP, WHEN ADMINISTERED CAREFULLY, IS ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE MEDICINES WE POSSESS"

JOHN RUSSELL REYNOLDS,
QUEEN VICTORIA'S PHYSICIAN,
1890

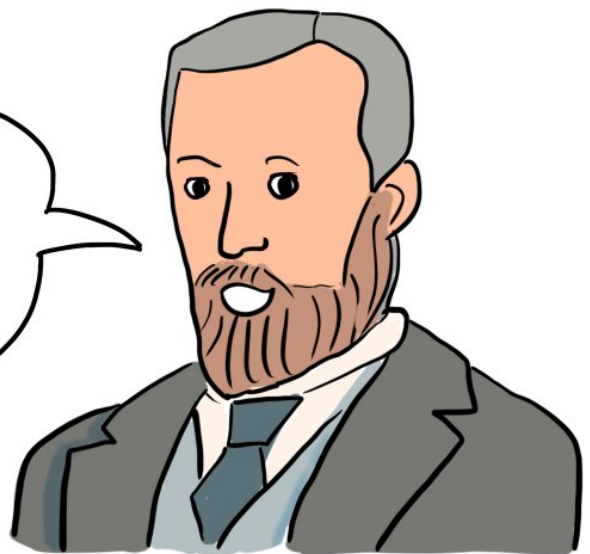
@penpencildraws

FANTASTIC.
DUGNA LAGAN!



Some officials claimed that cannabis caused insanity, so the British set up the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission to investigate. It ended up recommending that cannabis not be banned, but more regulated and taxed. <https://t.co/uc1OQ7sshd>

"THE MODERATE USE OF
HEMP DRUGS IS
PRACTICALLY ATTENDED BY
NO EVIL RESULTS AT ALL."



W MACKWORTH YOUNG
CHAIRMAN, INDIAN HEMP DRUGS COMMISSION, 1894

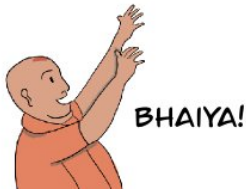


SOUNDS GOOD, RIGHT? BUT WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW WAS THAT HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD, MY BIGGEST ENEMY WAS TAKING HIS FIRST STEPS.

@penpencildraws

Harry Anslinger started his career enforcing US alcohol prohibition laws. When prohibition ended, he started attacking cannabis as a law enforcement problem. <https://t.co/laVABWkRdJ>

"THERE ARE 100,000 TOTAL MARIJUANA SMOKERS IN THE U.S., AND MOST ARE NEGROES, HISPANICS, FILIPINOS AND ENTERTAINERS. THEIR SATANIC MUSIC, JAZZ AND SWING RESULT FROM MARIJUANA USE. THIS MARIJUANA CAUSES WHITE WOMEN TO SEE SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH NEGROES, ENTERTAINERS AND OTHERS"



@penpencil draws

After World War II, the US became the world's biggest superpower. Anslinger represented it at the UN's new commission on narcotic drugs, and his agents began using US clout to influence global drug policy. <https://t.co/xeUd3G4AvB>



"MOST OF THE TIME...I FOUND THAT A CASUAL MENTION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SHUTTING OFF OUR FOREIGN AID PROGRAMS, DROPPED TO THE PROPER QUARTERS, BROUGHT GRUDGING PERMISSION FOR OUR OPERATIONS ALMOST IMMEDIATELY"

CHARLES SIRAGUSA
US FEDERAL BUREAU OF NARCOTICS

@penpencil draws

An aside: Global drug policy depends on who holds power and what benefits them. That's partly why tobacco and alcohol are treated differently from cannabis. <https://t.co/UoY5ikTxWm>



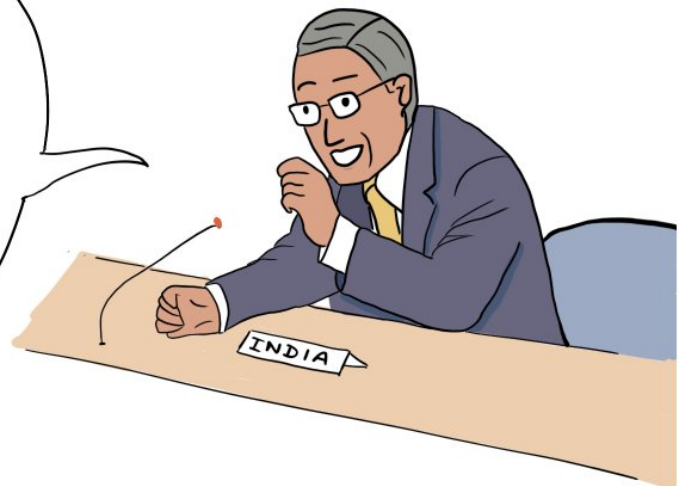
"THE INTERNATIONAL REGIME FOR THE CONTROL OF PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A SYSTEM THAT REFLECTS THE GEOPOLITICS OF NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS IN THE 20TH CENTURY. INDEED, THE STRICTEST CONDITIONS WERE PLACED ON ORGANIC SUBSTANCES- THE COCA BUSH, THE POPPY AND THE CANNABIS PLANT - WHICH ARE OFTEN PART OF THE ANCESTRAL TRADITIONS OF THE COUNTRIES WHERE THESE PLANTS ORIGINATE, WHEREAS THE NORTH'S CULTURAL PRODUCTS, TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL WERE IGNORED"

CANADIAN SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ILLEGAL DRUGS, 2002

@penpencildraws

At the UN, the US pushed for an international treaty banning cannabis along with more dangerous drugs. But there was resistance, led by India. <https://t.co/EoJ9lw5xHT>

"CANNABIS DRUGS ARE USED IN INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS OF MEDICINE IN INDIA AND IT HAS NOT YET BEEN PROVED THAT THESE DRUGS ARE AS DANGEROUS AS THE OTHER DRUGS LISTED IN THE SCHEDULE OR TOTAL PROHIBITION OF THE DRUGS IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY"



B N BANERJI

INDIAN DELEGATION AT UN COMMISSION FOR NARCOTIC DRUGS

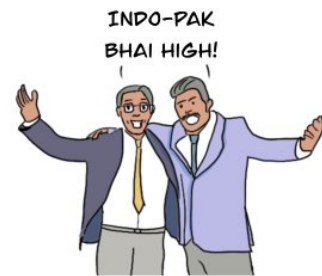
@penpencildraws

Eventually the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs came about & cannabis was classified with dangerous drugs like heroin. But pressure from countries like India & Pakistan ensured some parts of the plant were protected, and governments were given 25 years to ban other uses.



HUMAN FORM OF U.N. IN 1961

"'CANNABIS' MEANS THE
FLOWERING OR FRUITING TOPS OF
THE CANNABIS PLANT (EXCLUDING
THE SEEDS AND LEAVES WHEN
NOT ACCOMPANIED BY THE TOPS)
FROM WHICH THE RESIN HAS NOT
BEEN EXTRACTED"



@penpencil draws

The US went on to launch an ill-fated 'war on drugs'. And in 1985, the Rajiv Gandhi government in India passed the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.



CANNABIS
MEANS...AH, IT'S
PRETTY MUCH THE
SAME DEFINITION

@penpencil draws

But today, many countries are turning the clock back on cannabis. Medical and recreational marijuana is now legal in several US states and in countries like Canada and South Africa. The US Congress has now passed a bill to decriminalize cannabis.

"I DEFINITELY BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD LEGALISE MARIJUANA. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WAS MORE ADVOCATING MEDICAL MARIJUANA, BUT I BELIEVE WE JUST NEED TO LEGALISE IT, PERIOD."

KAMALA HARRIS, 2019



I WOULD BE A TREMENDOUS PLANT. TREMENDOUS

@penpencil draws



But in India, cannabis is now a villain. In Mumbai, which has the most NDPS arrests in the country, nine out of ten people arrested are not drug barons but cannabis users, most of them slum and street-dwellers. <https://t.co/uH8hQrwjFD>

RICKSHAW DRIVER

CATERING

SERVICE

DRIVER

LABOURER

STUDENT

MUJHE DRUGS DO.
GANJA LAO, MDMA
LAO, ECSTASY LAO



WHO'S GOING TO TELL HIM THOSE ARE ALL VERY DIFFERENT?

VIDHI CENTRE FOR LEGAL POLICY, 2020

@penpencil draws

Many experts agree that drug addiction is better treated as a public health issue, and that cannabis should be decriminalized and regulated. <https://t.co/sqQO5rUkh5>



"THE LAW IS REDUNDANT AND HAS BECOME A TOOL TO HARASS SMALL-TIME OR POOR BUYERS AND SELLERS. SENSITISATION AND DIALOGUE ARE MORE EFFECTIVE IN CURBING ADDICTION THAN HALF-HEARTED CRIMINALISATION"

ROMESH BHATTACHARJEE, FORMER NARCOTICS COMMISSIONER*

*RESEMBLANCE TO ACP PRADHYUMAN OF C.I.D. TOTALLY INTENTIONAL

@penpencildraw

Last week, the UN narcotics commission, based on World Health Organization recommendations, removed cannabis from its list of most dangerous substances. <https://t.co/rzvlymrpci>



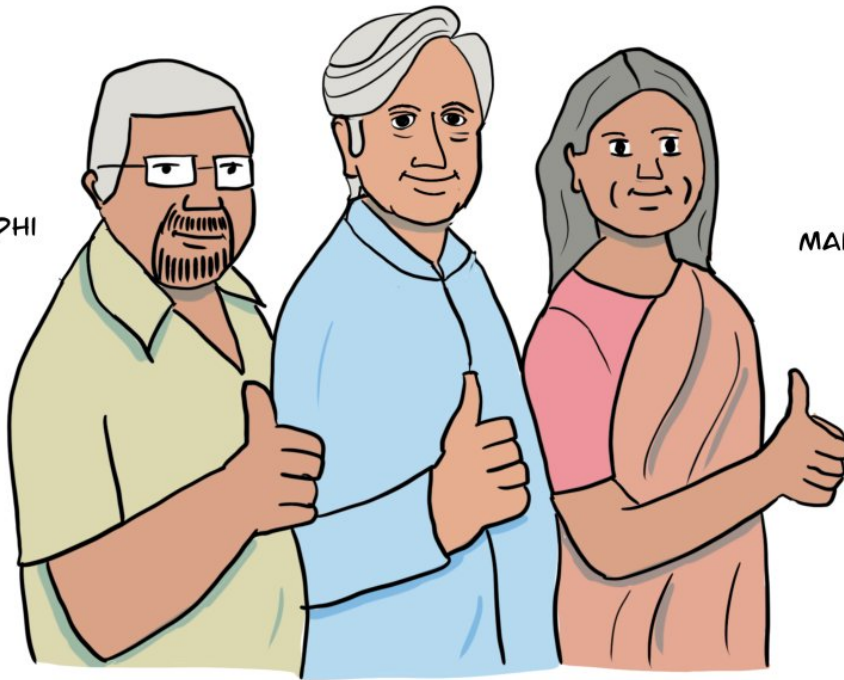
"THE COMMISSION HAS OPENED THE DOOR TO RECOGNISING THE MEDICINAL AND THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF THE COMMONLY-USED BUT STILL LARGELY ILLEGAL RECREATIONAL DRUG"

**MANSOOR AHMAD KHAN, CHAIR,
UN COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS**

@penpencildraw

Before India's current crackdown on cannabis, some politicians across parties have said they are in favour of decriminalising and regulating it.

DHARAMVIR GANDHI
FORMER AAP

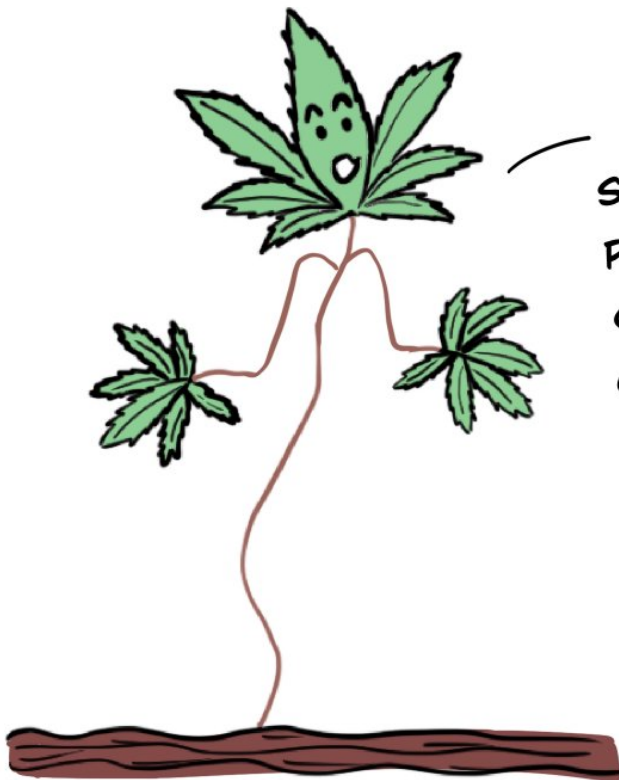


MANEKA GANDHI
BJP

SHASHI THAROOR
CONGRESS

@penpencildraw

Fin.



SO I GUESS WHAT I'M
SAYING IS THAT I'M JUST A
PLANT, STANDING IN FRONT
OF A COUNTRY, ASKING IT:
CAN WE GO BACK TO HOW
THINGS WERE?

@penpencildraw