

**SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA AT THE
PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING
SERVICES IN THE FIELD OF PREVENTION OF ALCOHOLISM
AND SUBSTANCE (DRUGS) ABUSE**

Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi: 26-06-2014

I am indeed happy to be present amidst you this afternoon on the occasion of presentation of the National Awards for recognizing those who have made an outstanding contribution in the field of Prevention of Alcoholism and Drugs Abuse.

2. I extend my heartiest congratulations to all the Awardees for the commendable work done by them. I also compliment the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for motivating people to work towards making the society addiction free.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Alcoholism and drug abuse have become a major social concern. Today, the entire world is confronted with this problem in some form or the other. With India's vulnerable geographical position between the two major drug producing zones -- the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent, drug menace continues to spread

its tentacles in the country, acquiring ever growing dimensions. The society pays a significant cost due to people abusing substances such as drugs and alcohol. Illicit drug use is a serious concern since it poses significant health challenges. The younger generation is especially vulnerable to the menace, being easily lured to drugs, be it for excitement, curiosity or drug related risk taking behaviour. At this age, peer pressure to experiment with illicit drugs can be strong and those taking drugs tend to be either misinformed or insufficiently aware of the health risks involved in it.

4. While on the one hand, the use of drugs and alcohol is increasing, on the other hand, we find that social taboos, emphasis on self-restraint, discipline inherent in a joint family system and traditional moorings are eroding. Among other factors, the fast changing social milieu arising out of this social and economic transition, which the country is going through, is contributing to the proliferation of drug abuse. The introduction of synthetic drugs and intravenous drug use leading to HIV/AIDS has added a new dimension to the issue. Drug abuse is not merely a problem arising out of the availability and supply of intoxicating drinks and drugs but has a great deal to do with the social conditions which create the demand for the consumption of such substances. The vulnerability of modern society plays a catalytic role in promoting the consumption and abuse of narcotic and psychotropic drugs.

5. The harmful use of alcohol can have serious social and economic consequences for individuals, families and society as a whole. Drug overdose may even cause death. Drug use adversely impacts the entire family and makes its members, particularly women and children, extremely vulnerable. The family faces stigma, isolation and constriction of resources. It is necessary to encourage individuals and families to seek early assistance for problems related to alcoholism and drug abuse.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. There is an urgent need to provide a whole range of community based services for the identification, counselling and de-addiction of addicts along with their after care and rehabilitation. Alcoholism and drug abuse is a psycho-social-medical problem requiring a holistic approach. The aim of the comprehensive treatment programme should not merely be to get the addicted individuals off alcohol or drugs. Focussed attention on making the addicts productive members of the society by making them drug free, crime free and gainfully employed, is what is required. In this connection, the importance of skill building and vocational training

of drug dependent persons for their effective social and economic reintegration cannot be over emphasised. Generating continuous and sustained awareness through innovative methods about the harmful effects of drug abuse also assumes critical importance.

7. In December 1987, the United Nations General Assembly decided to observe 26th June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. This was an expression of its determination to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse. The international campaign by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime also aims at raising awareness of the major problem that illicit drugs pose to society, especially to the young people.

8. Acknowledging the importance of having an addiction free society, our Constitution makers had, through the Directive Principles of State Policy made improvement of public health as one of the Government's primary duties. In particular, it was laid down in Article 47 of our Constitution 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'. In order to contain both the supply and demand of drugs, the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act,

1985 was enacted. This Act makes stringent provisions for the control of illicit trafficking of drugs and empowers the Government to establish centres for the prevention and treatment of drug addiction. Since last year, the Government of India has also started conferring National Awards to institutions and individuals who have made outstanding efforts such as awareness generation, research and rehabilitation to address the problem of alcoholism and drug abuse. The institution of these National Awards is indeed a manifestation of the Government's commitment to address this problem and take effective steps in this direction.

9. The Government is also implementing the Scheme of Assistance for Prevention of Alcoholism and Drugs Abuse which aims at providing a whole range of services including awareness generation, identification, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts through de-addiction and rehabilitation centres. The Scheme provides for the involvement of NGOs and Community Based Organizations in this regard. I hope that these efforts will eventually lead not only in the improvement in public health and reduction of crime but also in the upliftment of the entire social milieu.

10. However, much more needs to be done with the active involvement of the entire Civil Society. With a view to reducing the demand for the consumption of alcohol and dependence producing substances, the thrust should be on preventive education programmes and on reintegration of the addicts into the mainstream of society. The stress should be on mobilization of community resources and greater community participation. Apart from this, law enforcement agencies should be sensitized to the needs of victims of substance abuse to enable them to be rehabilitated and reintegrated in the society. I urge employers to implement an effective alcohol and drug prevention programme at the workplace. This will also help in increasing their productivity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. On this Day, let us all join hands together to help people suffering from alcoholism and drug addiction. I call upon all stakeholders to strive to address the problem in a holistic and sensitive manner. Let us each contribute to prevent and reduce the damage caused by the problem of alcoholism and drug abuse so that we can move further ahead towards a healthier and happier society. I once again congratulate the awardees and convey my appreciation to them for their efforts and achievements. I also commend the efforts of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in this direction and wish them all success in their future endeavours.

Jai Hind!!