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South Asian Drugs and Addictions Research Council (SA-DARC)

Supported by:

EMPOWER India

Candidate for:

Deputy Secretary

I am writing this letter to nominate myself for the position of Board Member. I deeply appreciate the invitation by the VNGOC to self-nominate. This is indicative of the acknowledgement and significance of inclusivity and has motivated me to nominate myself to the Board. Let me tell you a little about myself.

I am currently affiliated with the South Asian Drugs and Addictions Research Council (SA-DARC), New Delhi, which I presently head as the Director. I earned my doctorate from the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati for thesis which is titled, History of Intoxication: Opium in Assam, 1850-1959. It has been published in India by Manohar Publications (2019) and by Routledge in UK(2019).

I am presently working on two manuscripts on Opium Consumption and Experience in India, 1800 to Contemporary times (under consideration for publication by Cambridge University Press) and The Ghazipur Opium Mint, 1820-2020.

An independent researcher on narcotics and drug policy, my research interests include socio-economic and political history of narcotics including various perspectives on Intoxication and drug policy. I have had the opportunity to present my work at various universities and forums at national and international levels. It has been an honour for my work which has been published in national and international journals and print media. I also regularly contribute essays regarding narcotics policy in the editorial section of a leading daily since 2012.

I have presented my work at various universities including at University of Sheffield, UK; Punjab University, Chandigarh and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library NMML), New Delhi; and forums at national and international levels.

As a consultant for International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) I have helped develop the Regional Paper on South Asia to support Civil Society Advocacy 2018. As a contributing editor of Points published by the Alcohol and Drugs History Society (ADHS), University of Florida, I have been able to present the history of drugs and intoxication in India. In September, 2020, I attended the online Train the Trainers Programme on Decriminalization, Health and Human Rights by IDPC. I see this as a great learning experience, particularly in context of the worldwide acceptance of decriminalization as a viable policy option.

Apart from organizing seminars and discussions on substance use and abuse in various educational institutions and universities of the country, I have also been conducting and leading public discussions regarding substance abuse and dependency. I am also invited as a panelist on talk shows regarding drug policy by leading media house.

I believe that my nomination as Deputy Secretary would bridge a huge chasm that exists in policy understanding and development in India. I express concern at the shifting policy attitudes and volatility in South Asia when it comes to developing a humane and scientific policy. While apparently, countries of the region as India continue to exhibit progress on several fronts regarding drugs and drug policy yet there are huge areas of concerns. The

lack of studies and multi-disciplinary research on drugs and drug policy remains the greatest hindrance in the entire South Asian region. I hope that my consideration as the Deputy Secretary, would certainly empower me in my zeal to encourage research and activism which could facilitate a positive and radical change in the attitudes, policies and most importantly, in all the lives who continue to be tormented not so much by drugs but by insensitive policies that discriminate and stigmatize.