CHAPTER VI

Social Causes and Consequences of the Emergent Trend of Alcoholism and Problems of Youth

Introduction

An equally serious problem that afflicts the Shiipomaramth youth in the process of social change is the problems related to alcohol. In a broad sense, alcohol is a drug, which can alter the mental and physical mood of a person. It is a chemical compound of depressant agent, able to generate certain quality results on health, but dangerous when misused. According to Compact Oxford Dictionary, "alcohol is a colourless flammable liquid, which is the intoxicating ingredient in drinks such as wine, beer and spirits".1 Considering both the affects of social and physical aspects, N. Kessel and H. Walton defined it as, "intoxicate, hypnotic, analgesic, anesthetic, narcotic, poisonous and potentially habit forming, or addictive drug or chemical".2 Although alcohol is not a stimulant agent (depressant chemical), innocent trial can yield disastrous chain reactions due to its intoxicative affects since it tends to make the user to feel free and relaxed. Alcohol in this chapter will be referred to any kind of wine; local brew, distilled spirit, beer, beverage or liquor with addictive crave, potentially to endanger both individual and society.

Drinking of alcohol and its pathology knows no boundary of caste, creed and race. This is why alcohol related problems are serious, widespread and show no sign of diminishing. It is no longer an isolated problem. Just how alarming and widespread alcohol is has been acknowledged by WHA (World Health Assembly) during its twenty-sixth Assembly, where it unequivocally ranked alcohol consumption among the world's major public health concerns.3 Unmistakably, increased use of alcohol for intoxication

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and enjoyment also leads to deepening the gravity of problems since ‘drinking alcohol is a sine-qua-non of the resultant pathologies’.4

Nevertheless, it will be unfair to posit that drinking of wine is a modern phenomenon. It was believed that concoctions resembling present day alcohol were widely used since mankind’s remotest antiquity and its use being extended over virtually to every nook and corner of the earth.5 Based on social environment and cultural buildup, individuals in almost all societies have been provided with certain mechanisms to use alcohol.6 Irrespective of this fact, the growing alcohol craze in the present times, particularly among the youth, demands an immediate look in order to find ways to control this menace.

As far as the Shiipfomaramth community is concerned, consumption of rice-beer in temperate and moderate quantity was a social and traditional practice. The members of the community, by and large, followed the customary law of moderation in matters of drinking. There was no written law but both the young and the old alike are governed by the oral conventional means of social control.7 In the absence of written laws and formal law enforcement agencies, the family and neighbourhood as a whole monitored the behaviours and conducts of the young people. Likewise, the institution of morung (youth dormitory) helped to mould the youth from becoming a social nuisance.8 The limited choice of leisure as well as the absence of distilled and foreign liquors had also helped to maintain temperate drinking practice in the past.

At the same time, in the Shiipfomaramth Nagas’ traditional belief system, rice and rice-beer are used in various offerings. Rice-beer is an integral part of their socio-religious life. In indigenous terms, rice-beer is known as ozhe/hayi. It is used practically in all rites and rituals. Therefore, wine is not contradictory to their traditional religion and culture. Noteworthy of this unique culture is that since rice-beer is closely interwoven

8 Role of the morung (bachelor’s house) in youth upbringing is dealt in Chapter III, pp. 85-87.
with the traditional religious practices, it was attached with a sense of reverence and respect. Incidentally, the religious value of wine acted as a spontaneous social deterrence from consumption for intoxication.

Also at feasts and festivals, which are sequenced and celebrated according to the agricultural work phase and needs of the society, drinking wine was not necessarily the priority. For instance, during saleni/lounii\(^9\) an individual is expected not only to be cautious and restrain from indulge in unnecessary enjoyment but also to maintain strict discipline with one's body. During the whole month; that is, salekhro, (name of a month in the lunar calendar) married couple are restrained from sharing the same bed since this is considered to be a time of self-purification.\(^10\) For this very reason, it is forbidden to take the dog meat during saleni/lounii as this festival coincides with the dog’s mating season. Pleasure and enjoyment was not at all the prime objective. Similarly, during paoki\(^11\) the main idea is not to eat or drink but to find something else more tangible - to win someone’s heart.\(^12\) Drink was a means to achieve a set goal. Similarly, rice-beer was not only an element of food but was also a means to express love and hospitality as found in other pre-literate societies.\(^13\)

Even on occasion of the ‘feasts of merit,’ when wine was freely served, its misuse is forbidden. For this reason, some seniors and elders would keep a watchful eye that drinks are not abused. At a certain point, while the serving has reached a particular stage, the elders present would give out a loud yell as an indication to limit the frequency of service. With the commencement of the second hallooing, serving will be further limited. After the last and third yelling no one should go for another drink but is expected to throw away the cup or olebvii (usually made of banana-leaves specially meant for this

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\(^9\) One of the popular festivals of the Shiipfomaramth community, celebrated right after rice-plantation. Even during the monumental preparation of the ‘feasts of merit’, one should not only abstain from certain food items but was also expected to abstain from the wife for number of months. See R. R Shimray, op. cit., p. 187. See also, C. V. Furer Haimendorf, The Naked Nagas, Methuen: London, 1939, p. 17.


\(^11\) A popular festival among the Shiipfomaramth Nagas, which lasts for 3-4 days, celebrated with full pomp and enjoyment.


\(^13\) The used of alcohol as part and parcel of exchange items is popular in other communities also. See, Lynn Pan, Alcohol in Colonial Africa, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies: Uppsala, 1975, p. 7
purpose).\textsuperscript{14} It is worth mentioning here that the feast is a glorification of hard work and thriftiness as only those with these qualities would be able to earn enough wealth to distribute to others. Such a person not only gains public honour but also set precedence for others to emulate.\textsuperscript{15} This being the case, it is clear that the feast of merit calls for discipline rather than pleasure.

There exist a number of sayings among the Shiipfomaramth community, which are directed to deter the young and old alike from excessive consumption of alcohol. For example, 'to construct the terrace is far better than to build a dam'. This means, 'instead of mounting one’s belly with gallons of wine it is far better to cultivate a healthy habit'. Another frequently quoted saying runs: ‘it is a taboo to keep on drinking wine’\textsuperscript{16} The word ‘taboo’ is sufficient to discourage a person from crossing the limit because its implication goes beyond the mere sanction of social norm, custom or unlawful practice but to something that is forbidden by supernatural powers. The usage of the word ‘taboo’ shows how the misuse/abuse of alcohol is looked upon with severity. What this indicates is that gluttony and excessiveness was not only regarded as bad, but also uncultured in the Shiipfomaramth custom.\textsuperscript{17}

It may be noted, the earlier generations rarely used alcohol (rice-beer) for intoxication. They drank wine not for social acceptance or to be at par with others, but to meet bodily requirement. Wine (rice-beer) was more than a mere social drink but regarded as a medicine and accordingly used for physical health and needs.\textsuperscript{18} It was valued as a food for physical nourishment. In usual practice, therefore, wine is attached with an attitude of moderation as in eating, and over-drinking becomes nonsocial and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} Many elders and seniors state this opinion as I gathered during the interview.
\textsuperscript{15} C. V. Furer Haimendorf, op. cit., p. 21.
\textsuperscript{16} These are popular saying that I gathered from many of the elders and seniors in discussion with them.
\textsuperscript{17} In fact, in their traditional practice, the Shiipfomaramth Nagas have particular gemna (mani/kanat) called Pitureshi mani, once in every month, which is a means to control gluttony and excessiveness.
\textsuperscript{18} Rice-beer locally known as ozhe/hayi was less intoxicated and harmful like the distilled liquor or wine, which was primarily consumed for health and used as food. Robert Brown, \textit{Statistical Account of Manipur}, Office of the Superintendent of Government Prints: Calcutta, 1874, p. 19.
\end{flushright}
violation of the code of normal behaviour as was found in the Jewish culture.\textsuperscript{19} Primarily, wine was part of diet, used not only to quench the thirst but also to nourish the body.\textsuperscript{20}

In the wake of social change, however, drinking of alcohol has assumed a new meaning, a symbol of lifestyle and means of enjoyment – different from the erstwhile usage as ritual item, food and medicine.\textsuperscript{21} What catches our attention is that, while defying the cultural value of the wine drinking tradition, many youth consumed wine for intoxication and to project a modern image. The earlier cultural value of wine and its utility is vanishing with an open indulgence for enjoyment. This has prompted us to shift the question from the quantity and frequency of alcohol intake to a more relevant one, which is, the reason behind drinking of alcohol.

Further, the situation has been vitiated due to the easy availability of distilled and foreign liquor, which was unknown in the past.\textsuperscript{22} In course of time, therefore, the Shimpomaramth society witnessed a new problem of alcoholism, mainly due to the change in the traditional system of control over the production, consumption and distribution of alcohol. Ignoring the issue of alcoholism and its various negative consequences, in order to boost the state economy, the government of Manipur took a decision to give licenses to sell foreign liquor freely as a state policy. This has led to a large number of people (many of these constitute the youth) opening up wine/liquor shop with or without license and selling alcohol openly. In this way, the branded foreign liquor, Indian made foreign liquor and distilled spirit pretty soon outnumbered the local made rice-beer. As a result, many youth became victims of alcohol since both local and foreign-liquor is easily available in the market.

\textsuperscript{21} Many youth have become an easy prey to the vice of ‘new culture’ such as drug addiction, alcoholism and moral laxity. See, J. H. Thumra, “Development in the North East: Constraints and Prospects”, in M. Horam, (ed.) \textit{The Rising Manipur}, Manas Publications: New Delhi, 2000, p. 128.
To bring home the role played by the state in promoting alcohol consumption among the youth Table I furnished below shows the amount of money the government collected through Excise tax (1989-1999).

Table I

Consumption of Denatured Spirit, Foreign Liquor and Tax Collected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country Spirit (Litre)</th>
<th>Imported Foreign Liquor (Litre)</th>
<th>Indian made Foreign Liquor (Litre)</th>
<th>Denatured Spirit (Litre)</th>
<th>Tax Collected (Rs.in lakhs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>13,53,411</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>243.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>9,96,050</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>191.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>3,80,566</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>42.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>3,38,708</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>58.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>5,33,851</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>79.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>6,02,468</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>93.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>8,27,424</td>
<td></td>
<td>160.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>8,74,797</td>
<td></td>
<td>175.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>9,65,341</td>
<td></td>
<td>187.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>9,77,273</td>
<td></td>
<td>173.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: In the Government of Manipur, *Statistical Abstract of Manipur 2001*, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Imphal, nothing has been mentioned on revenue from liquor. The reason is seen as the result of the prohibition of liquor in the whole state after many pressures from the women activists and some underground groups.

From the figures in the above table it clear that the government has earned huge revenue from liquor. In the year 1990-91 about 9,96,050 litres of Indian made foreign liquor had been imported in the state and the government earned about Rs.191.99 lakhs through Excise Tax. Likewise, in the year 1998-99 some 9,77,273 litres were imported and the revenue collected was about Rs.173.72. Tragically, this money comes at the cost of many youth’s career, education and even lives.

For some years, the government imposed prohibition on liquor drinking in the whole state. However, in the hill districts the prohibition has been lifted with the enactment of the Prohibition of Liquor (Amendment) Act, 2002. Of course, whether it is
prohibited or not, alcohol is openly found in the market. There is not much licensed wine-
shop in the Shiipfomaramth region. However, this does not mean that alcohol/liquor is
not found. You go to any outlet or vendor, be it in Senapati, Karong or Maram bazaars,
from local wine, distilled spirit to branded Indian made foreign liquor, these are all easily
available.

The commercialisation of alcohol has led to a substantial increase in the rate of
alcohol intake, which was otherwise limited to domestic consumption as food and
medicine. Today alcohol has become the preferred commodity of modern business. This
has also led to the emergence of a new section of people in the society who depend on
alcohol for their survival. In the past distribution or selling of alcohol was not a part of
the profession of the Shiipfomaramth Nagas.

No doubt, social change has also come along with new scope of enjoyment, and
subsequently, in the lifestyle and behaviour of the people. In the past, feasts and festivals
were concentrated in limited space of clan or village. The prevalence of relatively
isolated environment had barred the past generations from experiencing newer and varied
lifestyles. Almost everyone in the society was aware of the behaviour of the neighbours,
clanmen/women and peers. Behaviours and lifestyles were largely identical. However,
the changing behaviour and pattern of lifestyle in the wake of social change culminated in
the increasing fondness of alcohol and subsequently the problem of drinking.

Drinking wine, therefore, was indeed not considered as fatal as today, when the
Shiipfomaramth society was far from modern reach and with fewer or lesser scope of
‘leisure’. So long drinking practice does not deviate from the accepted norm, it was
culturally permissible. The problem starts when drinking of alcohol is considered a sign
of fashion and modernity and the people no longer adhere to the cultural ethos and
temperance. Therefore, the change from cultural practice of drinking wine as food and
medicine to its use for enjoyment and intoxication is the basic focus of this chapter.

In an environment of swift change, as in the case of the Shiipfomaramth society,
it has become a major challenge. For this reason, there is a need to identify possible
factors and to suggest suitable means to contain the menace of alcoholism. To know the
possible factors, it is imperative to look at the prevailing socio-cultural life, drinking
practice and pace of change. It will be possible to ascertain the extent of the problems of
alcohol by examining these elements. Undoubtedly, the magnitude and dimension of its determinant is manifold. However, the reason for the increase in the alcohol obsession and the resultant consequences can only be obtained by identifying some of the causal factors vis-à-vis change. Thus, the present chapter aims to focus on some of those important looming factors. In fact, the resultant consequence of alcohol is due to increase in the alcohol obsession.

**Sample Familiar with Alcohol**

Although to drink (or not to drink) alcohol is an individual prerogative; the matter has become a necessity to describe its negative impact. As a result of strong reservation about alcohol particularly among women it is difficult to obtain statistical data on its users. Under such circumstances, some of the respondents who indulge in alcohol might have gone unreported. However, the answers provided by our respondents show that 69.5 per cent of them used to consume alcohol. This leaves just 30.5 per cent of the respondents who do not take alcohol. This is derived from responses towards the question: ‘Do you take alcohol or not? If yes, how often do you usually take?’ It may be mentioned here that the craze for alcohol among the respondents does not show any difference along age and class. The children of both poor and rich families have equal weakness for alcohol. Irrespective of economic conditions and educational background there is little variation when it comes to the use of alcohol.

Table II presents the data on alcohol use among the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever I get chance</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
<td><strong>139</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our data suggests that majority of the respondents consumed alcohol. However, this does not mean that whoever has experienced drinking alcohol is going to end up being a
regular drinker or an alcoholic. It is clear from the table that the number of regular drinkers among the respondents is low. The danger, however, lies in the fact that once a person has tasted alcohol it would not be easy to stop since alcohol contains substance that increases the craving for it. Keeping in mind the objective of this chapter, let us now turn our attention to some of the more prominent factors responsible for aggravating the problems of alcohol.

**Easy Availability and Inadequate Sensitising on Evils of alcohol**

As stated earlier, the tradition and culture of the Shiipfomaramth Nagas has always been associated with home made alcohol (rice-beer) and consumption was very much prevalent in the society. But this did not pose any grave or much problem as the institutional mechanisms were in place to put a check on alcohol abuse. However, with the erosion of the controlling mechanisms and easy availability of alcohol, drinking among the youth has become a major problem. Added to these factors, the lack of sensitisation about the evils of drinking makes the youth easy prey to the abuse. The absence of serious effort to prevent easy availability reflects lack of concern to the evils of alcohol. It starts as a social drink and in due course many youth began to increase the amount and frequency of intake. This correlation is quite startling. Most of the respondents challenged the role and initiative of the society in educating the youth on the evils of alcohol. This can be seen from the response to this question: 'how do you find the role of the society in imparting the evils of alcohol to youth? State the reasons'. (See Table III for the responses).

**Table III**

**Response on Society Role in Educating the Youth about Alcohol**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23(11.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on individual</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30(15.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>94(47.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to do more</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>53(26.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures within the bracket indicate the percentage to the total respondent*
It is clear from the above table that the role of the society to create awareness about the evils of alcohol was not satisfactory. Of the total respondents, 47 per cent expressed that they are not satisfied with the information given on the evils of alcohol. In addition, 26.5 per cent of them responded that there is a need to intensify the information on evils of alcohol. On the other hand, 15 per cent of them are of the opinion that irrespective of information about the evils of alcohol, individual ought to own responsibility. Only 11.5 per cent of the respondents said that they are satisfied with the role of the society in disseminating information on the evils of alcohol.

It is unfortunate that social education on the evils of alcohol is inadequate. In plain and simple words, many respondents stated that there is not much information about the effect of alcohol use. But the irony of the fact is that many youth start drinking since it is easily accessible. Indeed, there is a strong correlation between easy availability and lack of initiative to educate on evils of alcohol, which is directly affecting the youth. This fact finds affirmation in the response of a college student, who says, 'there is nothing as right or wrong information about alcohol. The fact is that many youth drink alcohol because it is easily available'. A student leader of Yaikongpao village makes a similar point: 'easy availability and inadequate knowledge on evils of alcohol lead many youth like me to cultivate habit of drinking alcohol'. It means deficient knowledge about the consequences of alcohol and easy availability creates difficulty when it comes to abstention. In the light of this argument, a private schoolteacher also maintains that 'the increased problem of drinking is partly due to lack of information on its consequences and easy availability'.

In contrast, a few respondents stated that socially accepted norms are becoming difficult for the youth to follow, and with it the value to abstain from alcohol. According to them, at the start it may be due to easy availability or lack of information about the evil consequences of alcohol, but the end result is all about one’s responsibility. In this regard, one postgraduate student says, ‘instead of waiting for others to tell, if one thinks drinking alcohol is bad, one should give up’. A woman leader of Purul village expressed the same opinion when she notes that ‘the irresponsible behaviour of many youth is a matter of deep concern since whatever amount of information we provide, they seldom
listen'. It suggests that besides inadequate sensitising on evils of alcohol, individual irresponsibility adds to the problem.

By and large, the responses given by the respondents show that lack of proper understanding on evils of alcohol and easy availability leads many youth to succumb to it. This is partly responsible for them to develop drinking habit without being truly aware of its consequences. In short, the adage, 'ignorance is bliss' does seem to hold here.

This is how drinking wine, which is traditionally prevalent in the Shiipfomaramth society, has contributed to the increase in amount and frequency of consumption among the youth. What this means is that it is not only the youth but other sections of people in the society are also in the habit of drinking. From persons of average standing to those of eminent statures to common people all drink wine barring a few who do not drink. Growing up in the society where alcohol (rice-beer) is part of their tradition, many youth indulge themselves in it. As the person cultivates the culture of the society through the process of socialisation, many cultural traits have been naively adopted/imitated.

**Indecisiveness to Combat Alcohol Menace**

The reason behind the lack of adequate knowledge on negative consequences of alcohol has many other intricacies. Many members in the Shiipfomaramth society share the feeling that discouraging the use of rice-beer would mean taking away an important part of their culture. Similarly, there is certain section of people who are reluctant to combat alcohol menace due to their own interest in it. As a result, tradition is used to cover one's own weakness for alcohol.

Those individuals having interest in alcohol are not sincere and committed to combat alcoholism. Instead, many respondents claimed that these members refused to come out from their own liking for alcohol, thereby failing to take note of its evil consequences. In turn, this has prevented the society from taking a right decision to tackle

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23 Besides, illicit and spurious local brew (but made outside the Shiipfomaramth region) is available at large. The demand of this local made is on the rise since many cannot afford better quality and costlier ones. There are reports that to meet the rising demand, certain unethical methods are being adopted for faster production like the use of harmful chemicals/substances, which is a different issue. What is of concern is that the extent of the problem of drinking is in part determined by easy availability.

24 Interest can range from individuals who are seemingly concerned with the preservation of tradition to buying/selling of alcohol, to personal craving for alcohol and so on.
the menace of alcohol. In this regard, one respondent who is a science graduate states 'the presence of many indecisive and defensive opinions in the society has hindered the attempt to effectively contain alcohol problems'. A private schoolteacher similarly opined 'to my understanding, it is hard to hate what one likes so also to those who are interested in alcohol'. It is not surprising that those interested in alcohol have stalled the society from taking tough stand on matter of alcohol problems. A youth leader of Kalinamei village made the comment that 'alcoholism persists because many members have their own self-interest in alcohol'. These statements bear the testimony that there is a strong negative influence that misleads or distorts opinion by those persons who have interest in alcohol for whatever reason.

There are also strong indications that those persons having self-interest in alcohol have justified drinking in the name of tradition. Large number of persons interviewed stated that since their culture permits drinks, many members are indecisive to control the menace of alcohol. Consequently, many individuals take refuge in tradition because there is always a possibility that this sort of view may not openly go against the spirit of their custom. In the light of this perception, a college dropout says, 'in the name of tradition (which permits drinks), many members supported selling of alcohol and has thus misled many youth'. Another respondent notes: 'the presence of many individuals in the society favouring the sale of alcohol under the guise of tradition is but a manifestation of their own hidden interest'. With this sort of reasoning, more and more youth are contaminated. By rationalising tradition in the line of one's own interest, it fails to impart the immediate evil consequences of alcohol.25

Another reason for the lack of control over alcohol is the perception that selling/marketing of alcohol brings economic benefit. Many respondents are of the view that large numbers of people in the society earn their livelihood by selling alcohol. Therefore, in the understanding of these respondents, this practice has limited the chance to combat the problem of alcohol. This is illustrated by the response given by a youth leader of T. Khullen village, who says, 'many persons who derive their income from sale of alcohol have disallowed the society from taking stringent rule against it'. Lending

25 However, the fact is that wine, in traditional practice was regarded as a supplement and medicine and accordingly used with moderation is conveniently ignored by both the consumers and the sellers. The result is many begun to use alcohol for pleasure.
support to this argument, an undergraduate student also comments that ‘many individuals have supported selling of wine with the hope of material gain’. This is how economic consideration has prevented the society from taking proactive role, thereby undermining the danger emanating from alcohol.

Another interesting view emerging among the members of Shipfomaramth society is linking alcohol consumption to ideas of personal freedom. In the view of many respondents, there are opinions in the society, which consider irrational to impose prohibition on alcohol as this interferes with an individual’s free choice. According to this section of people, an individual should be allowed to define his/her own charter on drink and food habit. In this regard, a local NGO functionary says, ‘many have the opinion that prevention must not be greater than the mischief that comes from prevention’. An employee in a primary school endorses this point, as he asserts that ‘many members believed that it is improper to impose prohibition on individual choice such as the taking of alcohol’. These responses are suggestive of the fact that there are members who see prohibition as amounting to interference with one’s choice. In other words, it is believed that individual choice should not be forced to sacrifice at the altar of social good. This is how, on the pretext of protecting individual ‘freedom’ the ill effects of alcohol has been ignored.

Likewise, there is strong negative influence emanating from the conflicting versions on drinking. Many individuals in their society tend to categorise alcohol intake into ‘social’ or ‘controlled’ and ‘heavy’ or ‘addicted’. While keeping this issue in mind, it is noteworthy to look into some of the instances. Thus, a priest serving in one of the high school has this to say: ‘drinking of traditional wine is fine’. 26

In one particular village, a signboard near the waiting shed reads ‘no foreign liquor; defaulters shall be fined Rs. 5000’. This prompted me to ask what does this mean. ‘You know, no liquor in our village’, states a professed social worker. Since it relates to the area of my study, I enquired if it meant there was no alcohol in his village. He laughed. ‘What about local wine?’, I pressed on. ‘It is all right’; he answered. 27 This sort of response is not at all unusual. Likewise, an elderly person who was also once the Hoho

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26 Fr. Mario is a teacher in Don Bosco School, Senapati.
27 This is based on the conversion I had with David at Tunjoy.
president of his tribe states that ‘drinking wine is fine, provided the intake is within the limit’. However, the pertinent question is: what is the limit?

In this way, many young people have been misled or are confounded by conflicting opinions thereby making them vulnerable to alcohol. In this regard, a woman leader in a local church says that ‘opinion such as controlled or limited alcohol intake is alright has badly affected many youth since it gradually leads them to succumb to alcohol’. A commerce graduate also opines that ‘the conflicting opinions and classification of drinking into moderate and uncontrolled intake among the members has misled many youth’. This suggests that classification of drinking into categories has undermined the effort to educate people about the evils of alcohol. In turn, this has allowed many youth to remain unresponsive to the call to desist from alcohol.

Clearly, the above description reflects that indecisive opinions have made many youth not only confused on the evil consequence of alcohol but also become vulnerable to it. It also shows that a highly destructive and cynical opinion has been propagated through different model or categorisation. This is how many youth are confused with the role of the society to contain the problems related to alcohol.

This also goes on to show the magnitude of the lack of collective commitment to create healthy environment for the Shiipfomaramth youth to restrain from alcohol consumption. It also reveals that many individuals are self-seeking and basically cares only for one’s own interest. Further, this suggests that many members in the society who supported the social cause, such as speaking out about the problems of alcohol are conditional and few. From the above account, we may conclude that one’s own interest in alcohol is defended in the name of culture, economic benefit or personal freedom.

To be more precise, the prevailing social environment of the Shiipfomaramth Nagas suggests that its community has so far ignored the impending danger of alcohol by putting self-interest ahead of social good. The ambivalent opinions and vested interests truly encouraged alcohol abuse by resorting to plausible, though palpably erroneous excuses. The outcome of contradictory views has failed to bring the expectation of the society to fruition. In other words, those concerned about their own interest do not have commitment for the society but support the social system only where their interests are

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28 Ashiho expresses this view.
met. In turn, the insensitive role of these individuals has dissipated even the effort to clinch and consolidate the problems of alcohol to any meaningful result. The fact is that when one cannot take clear decision whether to support or to oppose a move, it obviously affects the cause.

Technically and medicinally, the classification of drinking habit into ‘social’, ‘controlled’ or ‘habitual’ may be meaningful at an analytical level but destructive in practice. To interpret ‘social’ and ‘controlled’ drinking as harmless would mean exoneration of its evil consequences. Nevertheless, the pity is that not one final definition of alcoholism has been arrived yet.²⁹

The boundary between ‘moderate’ drinking and ‘uncontrolled’ or ‘habitual’ drinking is difficult to draw. In Tek Chand’s words, ‘the term social drinking is vague and thus defies definition’.³⁰ In short, those proponents of moderate or social drinking will not mind crossing beyond the limit given the opportunity.³¹ The irony is that it needs just one peg/bottle of any wine to sail into disastrous ‘chain reaction’.

**Parental Negative Role**

Another related factor leading to inadequate information on evils of alcohol is the role of the parents and guardians. The role of the parents is crucial for the Shiipfomaramth youth since family continues to be the primary socialising agent. However, many parents and guardians are far from being ideal role models when it comes to alcohol. The fact is that most parents have failed to display their obligation as responsible parents, and hence, through their conduct, consciously or unconsciously encourage their children to take alcohol. Parents’ inability to serve as a role model is partly responsible for many youth taking up drinks. This is confirmed by the responses received to the question: ‘what sort of moral lessons do the parents inculcate in the youth through their lifestyle to abstain from alcohol?’

The answers reveal strong indications that parents have not contributed enough to control alcohol use among the youth. Many persons interviewed expressed that most

parents and guardians have failed to display the responsibility/obligation through their action. Many parents and guardians are not satisfactory role models for the youth to abstain from alcohol. In this regard, one respond of a college student runs, ‘many parents reprimand the children not to drink alcohol, but they themselves do not abstain from alcohol’. A woman leader of Kalinamei village expressed a similar view when she says, ‘many parents who drink cannot correct their children because of their own involvement’. This implies that words alone without accompanying deeds have failed to deliver a positive impact in the mind of the children. This, then, goes on to show how a certain section of the society imputes parents’ irresponsibility as a contributing factor to the problem of drinking among the youth.

There are enough evidences to suggest that when parents themselves are drinking wine, they are less able to control their children from alcohol use. In the opinion of many respondents, parents have failed to control their children from alcohol because of their own drinking habit. Instead, many children have imbibed drinking habit from their parents. This can be illustrated by the response of a student leader, who says, ‘parents and guardians are not good role model since they covertly drag their children to alcohol’. An undergraduate student also commented that ‘because many parents themselves indulge in drinking, they unconsciously lure their children to alcohol’.

In contrast, few respondents did answer that many parents have renounced their habit of drinking and that they are no less ideal role models worth emulating. Therefore, according to these respondents, many youth do not pay heed to the advice of the parents. For instance, one postgraduate student says, ‘parents are definitely role model as many of them had stopped drinking and had asked their children to do the same’. A college dropout holds a similar view, ‘many parents stopped drinking and had shown that they can be true role model but many youth do not listen to them’. Similarly, in the view of some respondents, there is of late a strong wave of realisation among parents of the need to take a proactive role through their conduct to control the menace of alcohol among the youth.

What is noteworthy is that if the parents themselves were caught in between about what value to cherish on matter of alcohol, it would be difficult to teach their children. This is a common experience in the Shiipfomaramth society, since there are strong
indications that many parents take alcohol, thereby becoming bad role model for their children. In this way, many parents unconsciously drag their children to alcohol.

This shows that exemplification of drinking habit by many parents only lead their children/wards to do the same. Parents should know that they serve as role models for the young. The children take cues from what the parents do as well as what they say. If the parents present models of stable, responsible behaviour, facing problems realistically, their children will get a clear message. Similarly, if parents drink alcohol, the youth are more likely to do the same. Accordingly, it is clear that many parents have failed to become good role models. In the same way, many children have learned little lesson from those parents who themselves drink wine. On the whole, parents’ action is in some way responsible for increasing problem of drinking among the youth.

The above account shows t is not easy to pinpoint who should take the blame for the menace of alcohol in the Shiipfomaramth society. Many parents are not free from alcohol, many swear by their individual rights, many invoke upon the name of culture, and the apathy on the part of the state government to acknowledge it as a social problem has not helped. What comes out as glaring in this section, however, is the role of the parents in failing to impart the evils of alcohol to their children/wards. At the same time, many youth have failed to learn from the mistakes of their parents.

**Drinking of Alcohol is seen as ‘Modern’**

Another important reason leading to fondness of alcohol is the imitation of others’ lifestyle. Many youth have fallen into the trap of blindly running after modern (western) lifestyle and fashionable trend. As a result, reckless and imprudent youths easily become victims of alcohol. This issue is clearly reflected in response to this question: What, according to you, is the impact of social change/modern lifestyle on alcohol consumption by the youth? Illustrate your answer. Table IV presents the response to this question.

**Table IV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Link Between Modern Lifestyle and Alcohol use</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has little to do with alcohol use</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40(20.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change increases alcohol misuse</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>88(44.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drinking is symbol as modern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>40</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>72(36.0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures within the bracket indicate the percentage to the total respondent.

The table shows those who think that social change have in some ways influenced the fondness of alcohol. From the total respondents, 44 per cent of them expressed that social change has led to the increased misuse of alcohol. Occupying the second slot is the group of respondents (36 per cent) who feel that youth tends to think taking alcohol is modern and fashionable. While, 20 per cent of the respondents are of the view that social change has got little to do with attitude on alcohol.

Before analysing the responses it is essential to consider what is modern lifestyle? Modern (western) lifestyle and standard, according to Alex Inkeles, means economically independent and self-earning, socially responsible, knowledgeable and tactful to address issue confronting at hand and reasonably to face worldviews and beliefs. It projects a successful individual who is capable to withhold trial and tribulation, hatred and love. This implies one’s ability to take decision independently, make choice singularly, capability to face risks and challenges, and relatively free from social and familial influences. This also refers relatively to independence from patronage, politics and background. In this regard, P. Garg and I. Parikh also have noted, ‘modern identity meant primarily to be rational, to have scientific approach’. In short, modern identity and lifestyle means a paradigm shift from traditional mode of life.

We have already seen that most of the Shiplomaramth youth have not received quality education and lacked the economic means to maintain a modern lifestyle. Their socio-economic conditions are marred with backwardness and most of them hailed from poverty-ridden families. Likewise, modernisation of tradition is far from satisfactory since there remains vast scope yet to be blended on similar values of emerging socio-religious system and existing value system. Most youth are educationally poor, their sense of maturity is weak and understanding is low. They are far from independent and secure.

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Despite the sharp divergence between the means of modern life style elucidated above and the empirical reality of the Shiipfomaramth Nagas, imitation of modern lifestyle and misuse of alcohol is closely interwoven. This is corroborated in the view of many respondents, who expressed the feeling that imitation and influence of westernisation has increased problem of drinking, since it is increasingly considered as being modern and fashionable. In this regard, a science graduate says, ‘imitation and influence of westernisation has increased the frequency and misuse of alcohol many times for many youth’. Reflecting on the blind imitation, a youth leader in the church also notes, ‘many youth puff cigarettes and drink wine because they want to look as smart as one of those celebrities and heroes shown in films and advertisement. Ironically, in contrast to their expectation many tend to end up as a village goon and frustrated person’. There are also strong indications that alcohol is illusively used to promote one’s image. According to answers provided by large numbers of respondents, many youth have begun to consider alcohol as a common denominator in their projected ‘ideal world’. Likewise, alcohol is increasingly considered as a means to socialise and make friendship. In the light of this perception, a college student observes, ‘many youth have begun to use alcohol as a means to socialise and end up wrecking their own future’. A student leader of T. Khullen village echoes similar sentiments, ‘drinking wine is increasingly considered as a mode of socialising and medium to show one’s credential of being modern’. With this erroneous understanding of alcohol, many youth have begun to imitate ‘others’ lifestyle as a way to cope with the changing time.

On the whole, the responses reflect the present trend that many Shiipfomaramth youth are quick to imitate ‘modern’ lifestyle and behaviour. The responses show that copying of present lifestyle has contributed in increased alcoholism. The issue of concern, however, is that the wave of accepting drinking alcohol as fashionable and modern is strong. The implication of this acceptance is dangerous because it insinuates internalising the false assumption into one’s attitude as something right and relevant. In other words, a person is misled to think that in order to be modern or suave, one needs to take alcohol. Many youth consider that one needs to drink alcohol to show his/her modern credential. Drinking wine is becoming the concomitant behaviour of today’s
youth lifestyle.\textsuperscript{34} In other words, if a person does not take alcohol s/he is no longer considered in his/her prime or progressive.

Indeed, it is no secret that the craze for modern ways and lifestyles is being felt more acutely. According to Horam, this entails a huge demand for items, which contribute to modern living, and while these demands are multiplying, the means to meet these demands do not seem to increase.\textsuperscript{35} In this regard, J. Saikia’s words in the context of the Naga society as a whole, is applicable to the Shiipfomaramth society as well. ‘Instant acceptance and imitation of other mode of life is apparent among the young group rather than among the old’.\textsuperscript{36} This unhealthy imitation, including drinking of alcohol, has caused much social problems in the form of increasing alcoholism.

Thus, the use of alcohol as a symbol of modern lifestyle is part of the problem in increased alcoholism. Change through copying of other lifestyle without compatible socio-economic development can lead into a mad-rush chimera. The change of lifestyle and imitation as modern implies an acute problem of socio-cultural identity. Imitation of lifestyle incompatible to actual cultural practice of a society, what is in the words of M. Grant, ‘imitating the cosmopolitan drinking patterns of the tourist’\textsuperscript{37}, is causing the problem.

**Peer Pressures and Lack of Self-Responsibility**

Individual irresponsibility and peer pressure is also to be blamed. Initially, one may blame easy availability, permissive tradition or parents’ negative role, but the end result is all about one’s responsibility.\textsuperscript{38} Lack of self-control by many youth has also contributed to the problem of drinking. There is a certain degree of negligence by many

\textsuperscript{34} To drink is to belong, and anyone who chooses not to drink is considered an outsider. Modern social lifestyle appears to be lubricated by alcohol. S. Manzoor, “Cheers to Abstinence”, in Hindustan Times, December 24, 2004, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{35} M. Horam, Naga Polity, Low Price Publication: Delhi, 1975, p. 135.


\textsuperscript{37} Marcus Grant, op. cit., 1985, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{38} If at the cost of one’s failure and due to easy availability a person takes to alcohol, it only manifests individual lack of determination. However, this sort of incidence is rampant among the Shiipfomaramth youth.
youth to listen to the warning on evil consequence of alcohol. We have seen that personal irresponsibility is partly responsible for the increasing problems of drinking in number of sections in this chapter, which needs no repetition.

The role of friends and peers are no better. The influence of the peers is strong since the Shifpomaramth youth have a tendency to look up to friends. Peers and friends constitute a strong social component for the youth. Both at times of jubilation and trials the companion of peers is crucial. However, unfortunately the role of the peer group cannot be called favourable with respect to alcohol. This is clearly echoed in responses to this question: ‘how do you relate the role of peer/friend in drinking practice among the youth?’

In the opinion of most respondents, many youth tend to consider drinking alcohol as a means to socialise and as an occasion to build companionship. As a result, increase of alcohol obsession among the youth is not free from influence of friends. In this regard, a polytechnic student notes, ‘alcohol has become a common stuff in all social gatherings and functions where friends/peers’ influences is difficult to resist’. In line with this argument, a local NGO functionary maintains: ‘it is hard to say no to friends. Peer pressures come in the form of initially urging to partake a little portion of alcohol for the sake of fun and eventually many youth like me end up habituated to it’. It means during feasts and festivals and social functions many youth have failed to resist the pressure of friends. As an undergraduate student also puts it; ‘the influence of the friends is strong because I look up more to them’.

This indicates that initially colleagues exert pressure on their counterparts to drink and subsequently many youth fall prey to it. Many youth hold their friends and peers responsible for their drinking habit. Indeed, there is no secret that whenever the youth get the opportunity to meet friends and peers, they enjoy themselves and have fun with alcohol. This kind of practice is common and many even share drinks with friends.

\[39\] The society is not wholly responsible for the growing menace of alcoholism in the Shifpomaramth community. While the social set up within which the youth are raised is partly accountable, individual irresponsibility and lack of self-respect is also a factor leading to problem of drinking. However, as one’s action directly or indirectly affect every member in a society, the problems of alcohol need to be identified within the social system.
Consequence of Frustration and Hardship

Frustration over failure and hardship in life has also prompted many youth to consume alcohol. Besides other factors such as easy availability, lack of commitment to combat alcoholism, parental negative role, pressure from peers and the tendency to view it as symbol of modern lifestyle, use of alcohol to release tension or escape from reality is common among the youth. In order to get rid of tensions, hide from shame and despair many youth have begun to drink alcohol.

Those unsuccessful youth tend to have inferiority complex among his/her friend, which alienate him/her from friend circle and society at large, thereby becoming more vulnerable to alcohol. The frustration of being unemployed, financial problems and the likes has made many youth difficult to face the situation and turn to alcohol. In this regard, a private schoolteacher says, ‘I started taking alcohol when I did not get a proper job. This was made more complicated due to financial problems since my parents cannot afford to support my further studies.’ A college dropout also relates similar experience as he notes, ‘I am driven to alcohol due to family problems and frustration’. Due to disappointment and helplessness many youth find themselves out of place and begun to take alcohol since it is the easiest way to escape. In the light of this argument, a youth and student leader of Purul village opines that ‘I began to drink alcohol since I am jobless and became frustrated. Besides, as most of my friends were in similar condition, I think the peer influence is also an important role in this’. In time of suffering and hardship many youth do not take constructive path by determining not to succumb to failure. Instead, this facilitates many youth to take alcohol as they failed to take recourse for introspection.

Many youth have failed to realise that adversity or failure does not mean defeat. Ups and downs are very much part of human life. Instead of taking the experience of being unsuccessful and hardship as a challenge for a new horizon, it has led many to increase alcohol abuse. The use of alcohol as tension reliever, anxiety remover or easing problems is high among the Shiipfomaramth youth. In haste to cover shame, frustration and hardship many youth drink alcohol and end up inviting more problems.
Consequences of Alcoholism

The outcome of the problems of alcohol is difficult to delimit to one or two serious cases but to numerous consequences. Alcohol has both short term and long-term effects, which harms not only the individual but also his/her family and society as a whole. The immediate consequences of alcohol are on physical, mental, social, career and economic conditions of an individual and the social environment at large. Its effects are found associated with increase in social crimes, undesirable sexual activities and drug abuse. Alcohol also have implication for all kinds of measure of social well-being including job prospects and employment, family harmony, one's personality growth and sense of responsibility. This is manifested in response to the question: 'what is/are the consequences of alcoholism in your society'?

There is strong evidence of widespread consequences of alcohol in the Shiipfomaramth society. Young people having problem of drinking has caused much trouble and anguish to their families. As a result, it disturbed family peaceful life thereby leading to frequent quarrelling. Likewise, many respondents expressed that alcohol related sickness has led to many premature death. However, unfortunately, in the opinion of many respondents, youth are encountering with the same environment, friends, same problems and circumstances that give less chance to stop them from taking alcohol.

It is within the family that the consequences of alcohol are most intimately experienced. Most of the respondents answered that many youth were first exposed to the customs of drinking or abstaining within the roof of their families. We have already seen that many parents are not satisfactory role models for youth with regard to alcohol abstention. In elaborating the role of the parents a college dropouts says, 'many youth are exposed to drinking wine through their parents and subsequently caused family disharmony'. On the other hand, a postgraduate student maintains, 'alcohol has spoiled many youth’s personality and career. They get involved in drinking against the wishes of their parents and become rebellious towards parents’ authority'. In this way, both ways parents are groaning about what alcohol has done to their son/daughter.

Additional stress for family stems from the economic burdens associated with the cost of alcohol. As a result, if the parents fail the demand of their children it further leads to confrontation and creates more tension in the family. In this regard, a theological
student comments, ‘there is antagonistic relationship between parents and children because of the high cost of alcohol, which the user need to procure regularly. It also affects one’s health and studies’. In the view of some respondents, the mental torture and suffering of the family members is heightened due to loss of social standing and respect.

The problems of drinking has caused embarrassment, mental anguish and suffering to the rest of the family members. It is further complicated by parents’ own inability to keep a distance from alcohol. Many irresponsible parents in their inebriated state exasperate the children thereby adding more fire to the already tense relationships. To illustrate, a youth leader of a local church maintains, ‘many youth have become alcoholics because of the parents’ failure to control the situation in time’. This, in turn, increased the estranged relationships between parents and children thereby causing serious family disharmony. In the process, the role of the parents to mould their children gets eroded. Children began to pay less heed to parental advice.

Likewise, at the personal level the ill effects of alcohol run into volumes. Many youth use alcohol as the gateway to drug abuse, the path to deviate from community values and the sine qua non for the growth of personality disorder. There is also strong correlation between anti-social behaviours and alcohol. This is reflected in the response of a woman leader of Yaikongpao village, who says, ‘the influence of alcohol find manifested in irresponsible and acts of nuisance’. One postgraduate student holds similar view: ‘many youth squander their lives with alcohol wherein they ruined their studies and health. This is also partly responsible for the increasing anti-social behaviour’. These statements are indicative of the reality that problem of drinking is associated with personal health problem, ruins of education and career prospect.

Thus, an individual who started his/her first drink as a social drinker, for the sake of fun, gradually turns into a regular drinker. With the increase in amount and frequency of intake, personal responsibility is badly affected. Many youth have become alcoholic in this manner. As a local NGO functionary comments, ‘alcohol becomes the mentor and a kind of a life-support system for many youth. They have lost motivation and develop personality disorder’. A graduate in commerce makes a similar statement; ‘many youth have lost the natural capacity and become dependent on alcohol for any work’.
The consequence of alcohol is not confined to the individual and the family alone. This evil trickles down and threatens the whole fabric of society thereby causing tensions and more problems. In this matter, a private schoolteacher makes this remarks, ‘increased alcohol obsession in the society and in particular among the youth has led to the breakdown of social deterrence and control’. Holding a somewhat similar opinion a woman leader of one Baptist Association also says, ‘by invoking individual right and consumer choice, consumption of alcohol has broken the very threat of social deterrence and goodness’. Thus, conformity with the past accepted practice of temperate and moderation is fast eroded. The consumption pattern of alcohol has cross beyond cultural permissiveness.

It is clear that the consequences of alcohol permeate almost every aspect of society. The cost of alcohol on family and society’s economy, and the amount of money spent on alcohol related problems are enormous. Even a conservative estimate would show that the Shiipfomaramth society annual economic cost on alcohol run into crores. Besides, health, finance, family problems and ruins of career, alcohol is associated with drug abuse. Alcohol is also link to unrestrained sex and the consequent rising incidence of HIV infection. It is true that not all who take alcohol are drug abusers, and many drug abusers are not necessarily alcoholics. But, there is significantly a higher incidence of HIV/AIDS among those who indulge in alcohol.40

**Measures to Combat Alcoholism**

The Shiipfomaramth society needs to build up a strong social opinion to direct the youth not to indulge in alcohol. Youth organisations, local clubs, women’s groups, churches and parents need to take up proactive steps and joint action to abolish this menace. Besides, the youths need to be given quality education and engage in activities like sports, talent competition, community development, and leadership training programmes during their leisure time. Above all, self-actualisation and self-discipline by the youth themselves will be the best option to control.

Similarly, there is a need to restrict selling of alcohol and alternative means need to be provided for those who consider it as a means of their survival. Organising seminars

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40 This is based on the information provided by common people in the villages and the source from the doctors in district hospital and other primary health centres.
and talks in large-scale and with consistent effort to create awareness about the evils of alcohol is urgently needed. There is great need to impart and motivate healthy will power to alcoholics in order to overcome alcohol. Encouragement should be given to the drinkers to lead a positive life through motivation and counseling.

Mechanisms to prevent commercialisation of alcohol should be evolved because this alone is one of the largest factors leading to easy accessibility and subsequent problem of drinking. In addition, educating the youth about the evils of alcohol; building extracurricular infrastructures and facilities to spend time fruitfully; promoting quality education; and joint anti-alcohol operation are some other possible means to combat. To help the youth from indulging, it is prudent to provide an opportunity to keep them engaged in constructive activities. Likewise, there is an immediate need of healthy environment and alternative place to play and sweat out.

It is amply clear that one family or village alone cannot solve the problem. Joint effort and collective responsibility of community and the state is required to contain the growing menace of alcohol. Importantly, infrastructures such as playgrounds, stadiums, training institutes, and others that promote artistic talent and space need to be adequately provided. Interactive programme is needed to build an alternative mechanism to spend their time off. Quality education and some sort of economic security is essential to make the youth realise the uselessness of consuming alcohol. In the same way, there is urgent need of deeper social commitment and earnest campaign on the evils of alcohol.

It may be pertinent to note that consuming alcohol cannot be merely adjudged as good or bad since it cuts across health, economy, norms, career and family. This is the reason why possible revival of drinking alcohol as a social and moral issue and preventive control is becoming all the more important. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why a holistic approach to the treatment of alcohol-related problems in tune with socio-cultural environment becomes a necessity. The objective has to be to change the attitudes and beliefs of the individuals, particularly, the high-risk group – the youth – since, they are the leaders, parents and citizens of tomorrow. In fact, the most proven means to combat the menace of alcohol in any society is, to use the words of I. Rootman,

guarantee value on evils of drinking'. When there is a clear demonstration on the value of abstinence and the effect of drinking alcohol people would be receptive to preventive methods.

Conclusion

The findings show that in the Shiipfomaramth society there is growing menace of alcoholism. There is strong indication that alcohol obsession, particularly among the youth is steadily on the rise. Further, it shows that alcohol is increasingly considered as fashionable and a symbol of modern lifestyle. If drinking is seen as a problem, it is because the prevailing social environment does not create enough measures to combat the menace. There is no sufficient alternative mechanism to control the growing threat of alcohol. Instead of harnessing it to combat the worsening of alcohol menace, social condition has covertly encouraged its promotion. This makes many youth to be dismissive of the evils of alcohol. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that an optical illusion is at work at the popular level.

What we have seen is that the cultural value of wine has altered with time. In the wake of social change, indigenous means to control excessive use of alcohol is fast eroded. This led many youth to cultivate excessive drinking habit in contrast to their traditional practice. Thanks to permissive situation and misuse of the cultural value of wine in tradition, many youth have increasingly considered wine as a modern lifestyle. The study reveals that the youth need clear and straightforward message that drinking alcohol is unhealthy. Indecisive opinions not only led to the popularisation of alcohol but also to the miserable inadequacy to sensitise the many evil consequences of alcohol. What this shows is that the prevailing social environment is not helpful enough for many youth to abstain from alcohol. Instead, it helps the wine brewers/sellers and self-interested persons to corner the situation in their favour.

We have seen that the myriad messages received by youth have confused and misled them. The proponents of social or controlled drink are conscious that one should remain within the limits. The fact however, tells a different story. One simple question is what amount or quantity will be considered as social or moderate. How will the youth

know that certain amount is within their limit? Can the youth restrain from misuse, if at all there is a mechanism to measure, when alcohol consists of intoxicate drug? Who will like to miss the kick just by a sip or peg? Does not the drinker need to increase the frequency and amount to get optimum satisfaction? There are tens of reasons to prove that moderate or social drink defies logical definition.

The atmosphere of awareness of the risks of alcohol in terms of life, health and economy is far from effective. No sufficient knowledge of the negative effect of alcohol been instilled in youth. Cross-sectional community participation in combating the peril of alcohol is weak. The level of igniting anti-alcohol value to the youth and peer group is way behind. Not a single NGO, to mention the least, is wholeheartedly engaged in combating the alcohol problem other than local women’s group and churches. The role of schools and colleges to reduce the risk of alcohol is hardly visible.

Although, for the Shiipfomaramth Nagas, locally brewed rice-beer may be as old as the society itself, the new pattern of alcohol craze is threatening the social system. In the past, wine was limited to dietary food item and medicinal use. It was used for quenching the thirst and not for intoxication. In other words, people did not drink for the sake of drinking. Drunkenness was forbidden even in the past. However, in the present changing scenario, many youth are escaping from reality under the allurement of alcohol. Thinking that it helps to socialise, promote one’s image or ease tensions, many youth have begun to adopt a very artificial form of life – dependence on alcohol. For many of them, a life without alcohol seems hollow and empty. Wine in turn becomes the mentor and controller of their life. Many young people’s well-being is now solely dependent on alcohol.

In sum, casual, social and sacramental or addictive drink under approval or disapproval has been prevalent since time immemorial. Rather, in a relatively permissive society, alcohol becomes a problem when it is misused. Awareness and consciousness of alcohol hazard in the community and among the youth is essential. Likewise, the pro-alcohol attitude and mood need to be corrected from the social environment. Social milieu, as far as possible, should be freed from all unfortunate, and in fact, erroneous myths and conceptions. The bottom line is, of course, if society wants to rid itself from the menace of alcohol, it needs to generate value against the use of alcohol.