Chapter - VI

ESCHEWAL OF ALCOHOLISM
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From the foregoing discussion, it was found that alcoholism and damage done by heavy drinking constitute a grievous social problem. Many offences are often preceded by heavy drinking.

Social scientists find that drinking problems rank very high among the troubles they have to deal with.

There is in fact no single kind of drinking problem; even among people diagnosed as alcoholic, there are such variety of social situations, behaviour and basic personality that the label "alcoholism" needs more simplification. But regardless of their specific form nearly all drinking problems hurt more people than just the drinker himself.

6.1 ALCOHOL CONTROL MEASURES

Any major attempt to prevent drinking problems must include an effort to influence the whole climate of drinking in our society. A broad programme impinging on the public at many different points through laws, education and more informal arrangements, could reduce various kind of drinking problems. The cultural change required will not be easy to bring about, it can not be simply legislated. No one can say with certainty whether the programme proposed here would work effectively. Its influence may well vary from group to group. On balance, a marked long term reduction of drinking problems, rather than sudden results and total elimination would be the hope, as it is engrained with the social milieu. A set of approaches to prevention has
been loosely defined as socio-cultural or normative, (Wilkinson, 1970; Bales, 1946; Ullman, 1958; Room, 1974; Whikhed, 1987).

The major tenant of this sociocultural approach is that the eradication of drinking problems requires change in the social norms around drinking.

Usually it is believed that per capita alcohol consumption is irrelevant to rates of alcoholism. It is believed that problems result from the lack of norms in society for "Safe" drinking as well as from guilt about drinking.

For the most part the socio-cultural model recommends eschewal through strong government intervention, that limit availability or increase the price of alcohol, chiefly because they are seen to be irrelevant to the pattern of drinking in growing town with multiple social values.

This socio-cultural approaches have led to the expectations that safe or responsible drinking should be the goal of alcohol policy. If safe drinking practices could be taught they would lead to increased per capita consumption and conclusion seems inescapable that not fewer problem would result. (Brunn, 1985)

The best exposition of the socio-cultural approach seems to be that of Wilkinsons (1972) whom I agree with and recommended that:

1. The minimum age of drinking be 18 and that those under 18 be allowed to buy drinks with their parents as it was observed that youth and drinking are more inter-related than other factors.
2. Drinking at home be subject to no legal age limit.

3. Alcohol related problems for young people be decriminalized to a possible extent.

4. There be more alcohol education for responsible drinking and to combat the alcohol consuming tradition.

5. An integrated measure should be worked out for the elimination of factors conducive to alcohol intake in the work and family environments.

6. The religious norms of the society be strengthened so that alcoholics gain confidence in self through meditation and Yogas which help in eschewal of alcoholism.

The value of socio-cultural approach is that it recognizes differences among drinking pattern and emphasizes control on drunkenness.

In this fast spreading alcohol culture educating the masses is only the best alternative left with the society. Many broad based programmes are to be chalked out to involve people in partial or complete prohibition and in modification of alcohol consuming behaviour. An information campaign about the alcohol problems is to be planned.

A common device used with the intention of changing attitudes about alcohol is to spread information about the damage it can cause. Knowledge about possible damage might contribute to a change of attitude. In this connection, both the All India Radio and Doordarshan (T.V.) may play a major role in publicity. Besides these Government
agencies, the newspapers and business firms may display in posters
the evil effect of alcoholism. The Press, Schools, Public libraries,
local authorities and health centres may distribute the booklets
describing the evil effects of alcoholism and voluntary organisations
should participate in this campaign and follow it up. At all levels,
organisation of propaganda against alcohol be made among all sections of
the people.

Attitudes about drinking also show dramatic changes in last
decade. The example of women activity during that period is
noteworthy. As the spread of liquor addiction has brought maximum
problems for women it can be controlled by women mass movement.
Several women movements in different regions of our country have
emerged as a force to hit the problem. To combat the alcoholism, they
in organised groups, stage demonstrations and dharana against opening
up liquor shops and to close down the liquor vends in some villages and
towns by compelling the authorities.

The participation of voluntary organisation in the process of
programme of eschewal of alcoholism is highly required. But a number
of voluntary organisations working for prohibition are largely ineffective
now, hampered by an acute shortage of funds. In order to enforce the
prohibition policy, the Government should involve the voluntary
organisation in Coordination and implementation of the policy with
requisite financial help.

To combat the alcoholism, religious faith is an important factor
because loss of confidence in self leads to alcoholism. It is found that
there is spiritual component to recovery from alcoholism. Absolute faith
in and surrender before almighty which different religious scriptures preach, is foremost essential for eschewal of alcoholism.

To achieve it, meditation is the best way to improve our conscious contact with supreme power. The spiritual awakening as a result of meditation helps the alcoholic to get confidence in self to eschew the practice.

From political point of view eschewal of alcoholism is possible only when strong political will back the prohibition policy. The State Governments is more interested in enormous revenues from the sale of liquor. The consequent high cost of legitimate liquor is one of the reasons why illicit distillation continues unabated. Strong political measures are necessary to check illicit distillation in several parts of the study area.

6.2 LEGAL PURVIEW OF ALCOHOLISM

Drinking is socially accepted and legally permitted but state of drunkenness is not tolerated by the law. After drinking to indulge in undesirable activities such as brawls are punishable offence under the provisions of different acts.

Under section 34 of the Police Act any person causing nuisance in public place under influence of alcohol can be hauled up and detained by the police without warrant. The bailable offence invites the maximum punishment fine of rupees 50 or simple imprisonment for 8 days in default.

Under section 290 of the IPC. Which provides; whoever commits a public nuisance in any case not otherwise punishable by this code, shall be punished with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees.
Another provision, section 160 in the IPC also can be used against the persons causing threat to public peace. The Provision states: two or more persons causing affray in public place can be dealt with but they may not be essentially alcoholics.

Analysis of the provisions of law reveals that the present law has always taken a mild view against those indulging in drinking. Not only this, the law also protects the ignorant drinker. If one is made to drink or use intoxicant against one's will or without knowledge and by reason of intoxication caused thereby, one becomes incapable of knowing the nature of the Act or that he is doing what is either wrong or contrary to law and one commits an act which is criminal, that comes under the exception provided under Section 85 of the IPC. Law presumes that such person has committed no offence. Section 86 of the IPC also provides protection to the person who has been administered intoxicant without his knowledge or against his will.

Possession of more than permissible quantity of liquor, illicit distillation and unauthorised storation of alcohol attract the provisions of section 60 and 63 of the excise act. All offences under Excise Act are bailable, but the real plight is that a big recovery by the excise official is rarely found. Even if there is a big recovery at initial stages, the cases dilates with the passage of time because bargains are settled from top to bottom because of deep rooted corruption in the society.

Secondly there are a good number of alcohol related cases lying pending for years. These cases hardly end in conviction because of lack
of public witnesses which further encourage the spread of alcoholism more widely in the society.

The manufacturers of illicit liquor is a big business in adjacent areas of Chandikhole. The clandestine operation involves at least 100 such families belonging to Sundhi Caste which have adopted it as a full time profession. The women have also been active partners, in the manufacture and sale of the illicit liquor.

The unauthorised "Bhati's" discovered in the adjacent area gain significance because of their proximity to the growing township. This enables manufacturers to get better returns from its supply to the town where constant check on the sale of illicit liquor is virtually absent.

The process of manufacture involves the use of farm manure, bark and root of a plant, used battery cells, some other intoxicants besides "Gur" which is the principal raw material. After fermentation the liquor is filtered into tins which are transported to different places by bicycles.

It may be recalled here that illicit distillation, trafficking of alcohol are away from purview of Narcotic and Psychotropic drugs Act 1985 which provides deterrent punishment. Obviously it expresses sanction of the Government for production and consumption of alcohol. The Government should take stringent legal measure to enact law which will forbid the spread of alcoholism.

6.3 COUNTER ATTRACTION MEASURES

Several Counter attraction measures are to be taken in the rampant alcohol consumed area in order to distract the people from drinking habit. Some counter attraction, to drink are directly connected
with happy life. Cinema, theatre and various cultural programmes which should be organised frequently to keep the potential alcoholics busy in those activities. Besides it, sports, games and competitions should be carried out frequently by the local Government authority as well as by local bodies. It is a kind procedure to direct the people and to keep them engaged in those activities.

Another point of view is that alcoholics spend their measure chunk of income on alcohol. It was observed that majority of the drinkers belong to low and middle income group who are involved in different transport industry of the locality. The small savings department of government should canvass and motivate the people to save a good amount of their income. The saving agents and convassers are not at all working properly in this area. The money spent in the liquor drinking may be saved in this way and may obstruct the development of drinking habit.

The present alcoholic scene in study area very clearly reveals that the State Governments, knowing the debacles of drinking, have allowed the free consumption of liquor.

At least in the welfare state the only aim should not be the collection of revenues for which Gandhiji wrote in the Young India (1.6.1921) the contention that excise is necessary source of revenue will hold no water on examination. From the excise and financial policy of Government, it was observed that government is not in a mood to check the alcoholism.
Illicit distillation of liquor throughout the country doubled the problem of alcoholism. Impure liquor are available in more amount than good liquor to serve the selfish end of some people. In 1994, the famous Cuttack tragedy, the then district headquarters of study area, nearly 200 people lost their life and equal numbers were affected physically. Among the main reasons for the ineffectiveness of the policy were extremely corrupt enforcement agencies, loopholes in the law and the nexus between political and bootleggers to fulfill their selfish ends respectively.

However, we will never attain our goal until we face up to the necessity for people to organize a grass root movements setting a good example for moderation in their own drinking rather than self-indulgently passing the responsibility on to the other agencies like educational system, communication media or Governmental agencies.

Lastly, I would like to say that a multidisciplinary research organization at national or state level like Rutgers University Center on alcohol studies or the Finnish Foundation for alcohol studies should be set up to carry out research on this topic.
Scattergram of drinking day consumption and probability of continued drinking (Market Area, N=201)
Scattergram of drinking day consumption and probability of continued drinking (Sungoda, N 100)
Scattergram of drinking day consumption and probability of continued drinking (Subhadra, N = 89)
FIGURE-19(C)

Scattergram of drinking day consumption and probability of continued drinking (Khatrapal, N 136)