Chapter 9

SUMMING UP

The present study “Woman as Victim: A Study of the Impact of Alcoholism on Women in the Coastal Fishing Hamlets of Kanyakumari District” was a highly rewarding academic and research experience. The field visits and the survey undertaken supplied the primary source needed for the study. Books, journals, magazines and the electronic media supplied the required secondary data and information.

DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES

By and large, the target group was cooperative and answered the questions. But, they had hesitations in answering questions related to their sex life or the sex life of the husband and hence the answers had to be deduced rather than got directly.

The presence of male members in the house when the interviewer met the women deterred them from answering some questions related to the behaviour of their drunken husbands. Hence, many of the interviewees contradicted themselves when they answered questions related to the behaviour of the husband especially on wife battering.

Illiterate as it was, and as it lacked exposures, the target group was apprehensive of the motive of the interviewer when questions about illicit brewing and sale of spurious liquor were asked. Even when the
interviewees tried to come out with answers, others in the society accosted the interviewer and made sure that the study would not create problems for the community from the law enforcing authorities. This, though created some unpleasant situations at times, made the field study a challenging work.

There are many Indian books on Women’s Studies and many libraries have sections on gender issues. But Indian books on alcoholism are scanty and there is no library worth its name in India that has specialized in alcohol concerns and the libraries in general do not have a section on alcoholism. So mostly books on alcoholism obtained from foreign countries had to be relied on as secondary source for the present study.

**SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

The present study “Woman as Victim: A study of the Impact of Alcoholism on Women in the Coastal Fishing Hamlets of Kanyakumari District” is divided into nine chapters. This division is made to accommodate well-defined different aspects of the study and also to make it a systematic academic exercise. Much care is taken to avoid overlapping or repetition of ideas. Care is also taken to substantiate arguments with the support of data collected from the area of study.

The introductory chapter presents the global scenario and alcoholism in India. It refers to how alcoholism aggravates poverty and sufferings.
The evils of alcoholism including its impact on health are highlighted in this chapter. Definition of alcohol and alcoholism and the methodology adopted in the study are made clear. A description of the coastal fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District forms one section of the chapter.

Pamphlets, booklets, articles, books, training manuals and electronic media used as the secondary source for the study are reviewed in the next chapter. Not many books could be obtained on Women and Alcoholism or Alcoholism and Family. Most of the books used for this aspect of study are published in foreign countries, and books that are relevant to the Indian situation are selected and reviewed in this section. Well-documented and studied books on Kanyakumari District especially with reference to the coastal area are rare. However the researcher could get hold of a few books including two theses, and they are also reviewed. Quite a few Indian books on gender issues are available. These books discuss topics like status of women, crimes against women, social evils perpetrated against women, legal systems and provisions to safeguard the interests of women, feminism and women’s movements, and role of women’s movements. There are a few Indian books on alcohol and alcoholism and along with this, various books published abroad especially in the UK and the USA are reviewed. Many journals, booklets and pamphlets on alcoholism and drug addiction are published both in India and abroad. These works serve as the message taken to the common man. An analysis and review of such documents are
undertaken along with reviewing some of the reports, statements and training manuals produced.

This is followed by a discussion of social life in the fishing hamlets. The financial position, the type of drink consumed, the amount spent on alcohol, frequency of drinking habit and other drugs abused are studied. The reaction of the target group to various factors like the addiction of their husbands, alcoholism prevalent in their community, availability of alcohol etc., is studied.

An analysis of how alcoholism affects family is done to show how the family becomes the victim when a member turns an alcoholic. It shows how the financial stability of the families is torpedoed due to male alcoholism. An analysis of marital disharmony and divorce are made. How the wife and children are affected due to male alcoholism is probed into. A study on the physical and mental make up of the wife of the alcoholic also is made.

Attempt is also made to show how woman becomes the indirect victim of alcoholism when man in the society drinks. Physical, mental and sexual harassment meted out to the wives of alcoholics is studied along with a detailed analysis of domestic violence and wife battering. Atrocities committed against women like eve teasing, molesting and rape, and also other threats to which women are exposed form part of the study of crimes committed against women consequent to male alcoholism.
In Chapter VI a study is made as to how women are affected when they themselves become alcoholics, and the factors inducing them to take alcohol. An analysis is made how women handle alcoholism of male members in the family. Whether women are exploited and made victims in the manufacture and sale of illicit liquor is also probed into.

Chapter VII “Women’s Legal Rights and Eradication of Alcoholism” is a study made on the awareness level among women regarding various rights they have for safeguarding their interest. An attempt is made to find out the willingness of women in the coastal belt to empower themselves to fight male alcoholism. So, issues related to women’s organizations, self help groups, women’s commissions and the willingness of the target group to coordinate women in the fight against alcoholism are scrutinized in this chapter.

The study also looks at the origin and history of feminist movements and different types of feminism in existence. Problem of alcoholism is studied from a feminist perspective so as to understand how male alcoholism works against the freedom, status and dignity of women.

Limitations of the study and difficulties encountered during fieldwork, and later in the preparation of report are also looked into. The last chapter presents the findings, and later suggestions and recommendations to the Government, NGOs, service organizations, women’s organizations, Church, and Universities and institutions of higher learning.
FINDINGS

Drinking

Drinking among men is very common in the fishing community of coastal Kanyakumari District. Though 87.1% women acknowledged that their husbands are in the habit of drinking, the researcher suspects that it could be even higher. During the field study, the researcher could see many men in inebriated condition.

The most popular drink among the men of the coastal hamlets is arishtam. 69.7% of the men drink everyday. Naturally, the health hazard due to alcoholism is very high in this community. 46.2% of families spend more than Rs. 200/- per week on alcohol and 8.2% spend more than Rs. 500/- per week. The amount wasted on alcohol is very high and this affects the family budget very badly. Alcoholism is indeed the cause behind the poverty and suffering of this community.

Poly Drug Abuse

Poly drug abuse leads to complications in health, and besides causing drain in the family budget, this causes various health hazards. When 68.8% alcoholics are habitual tobacco chewers, 54.4% are smokers.

Children

It is found from the statement of the target group that even children are exposed to alcohol with 51% of interviewees acknowledging this. The
main reasons for this are social acceptability, availability and wrong role models.

**Clinical Treatment of Alcoholism**

Prevention of alcoholism and treatment of alcoholics in this area faces a lot of difficulty, as 84.1% of the interviewees said that drinking is an accepted practice in their community. No sincere effort is taken by any agency to fight alcoholism in this area and people do not have information on treatment facilities, accessibility to counseling centres or skill for counseling.

**Availability**

No effort has been taken to keep alcohol away from men and 60.1% of women said that alcohol is available in their own hamlets, and the most easily accessible variety is arishtam. Though there are retail outlets of IMFL in some hamlets, for many hamlets they are less than a kilometer away.

**Vulgar and Abusing Language**

Using filthy and vulgar language is part of the drunken habit of the husband and this affects the atmosphere in the home very badly and women bear the brunt of it. 78.4% women said that their husbands use obscene language. The researcher understands that vulgar terminologies have become part of their vocabulary and children easily pick this up. The
husband uses such vulgar terms at the wife under the influence of alcohol and even otherwise and very often such terms refer to the chastity and sexual morality of the wife.

**Behaviour of Drunken Husbands**

39.1% women interviewed said that their drunken husbands suspect their fidelity and 19.8% complained of violence. 7.3% said that their husbands, under the influence of alcohol remove their dress, even in the presence of children and elders. This vitiates the domestic atmosphere and the worst affected are the wife and girl children.

Alcoholism has spoiled family relationships in the study area as there is no proper communication among the family members, and the man not being available at home to take up responsibilities. This has resulted in many of the family needs pushed to the background and many of the responsibilities thrust on the wife. In short the alcoholics in the study area have failed in establishing happy homes.

The male member in the family serves as the cause of initiating other members to drinking. The study shows that 23.4% of women realize that the alcoholic husband has attempted to initiate someone else in the family to drink.

**Impact of Alcoholism on Family**

From the statements of women in the study area it is found out that what they think as having been affected worst is peace in the family
(73.3%). It has to be deduced that most of the women in the study area feel suffocated in the house that has lost peace. 15.7% of women said that health care to the wife is the worst affected one due to male alcoholism and 15% said that health care to children is affected. This is a matter of serious concern as girl children and grown up women do not get the required attention to their health because of male alcoholism.

**Women and Money for Buying Liquor**

The alcoholic gives priority to his drinks and does not bother from where the money for his drinks comes. At least 12.1% women said that the husband relies on her earning. Women, getting financial independence is a prerequisite for women empowerment. But it is an irony that in such a society the woman having her own earnings becomes not a contributory factor for empowerment, but rather a cause for her suffering and oppression. 22.3% of the interviewees complained that her drunken husband pesters her for money for his drinks. This leads to a lot of violence and wife battering.

**Male Alcoholism and Domestic Disharmony**

As the wife finds no peace in the family and battering unbearable, 18.3% of the interviewees were separated from their husbands and 34.5% have thought of divorce. But the society does not take alcoholism as a justifiable reason or ground for divorce and she is constrained to bear with oppression and various forces prevent her from coming out of wedlock.
What intrigues one who is interested in the welfare of the society is that 70.1% of those who thought of divorce but did not effect said that financial insecurity is the reason that prevented them from asking for divorce. Already it is established by the present study that much of the income earned by the family is wasted on alcohol and the families do not get enough money for basic sustenance. It is indeed sad that women believe that they will not have even this income if they leave the husband. So it is for this that most of the women bear with the sufferings and insults consequent to male alcoholism.

**Male Alcoholism and Women’s Health**

The plight of the woman living with an alcoholic husband is so pathetic that 37.9% of the women do not share their health problems with their husbands. It is also understood that the health of the daughter also does not get the required attention due to the father’s habits. In short male alcoholism is primarily responsible for the untreated health problems of women in the fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District.

**Impact on Children**

The male alcoholics serve as the wrong role model and 16.1% of the children of the interviewees have experimented with alcohol. The indiscriminate drinking of the males definitely will perpetuate the habit of drinking in the community unless an external force gets involved in the
issue works for prevention. It is also understood that the male members of the family use children, both boys and girls, to buy liquor for them.

The alcoholism of the father has affected the children in many ways. Children do not find their homes a happy place to live in nor do they find it safe. They also witness a lot of violence and the ensuing traumas. 18.5% of the interviewees said that their husbands beat the children under the influence of alcohol. There are even instances of children running away from the house unable to bear the tortures from their alcoholic father.

**Alcoholism of Husband and Suicide Mania of Wife**

Alcoholism of the husband impairs the psychological well being of the wives and the study revealed that 39.3% of the interviewees thought of committing suicide and 11.1% even attempted to commit suicide. This indeed is a very high percentage. Those who have attempted to commit suicide have adopted the cruel ways of consuming poison or even powdered glass, thereby causing permanent damages to their system. Some women have faced the attempted suicide of the husband.

**Crimes against Women**

Besides being the cause behind marital disharmony and the consequent sufferings of women, male alcoholism is the cause behind crimes like eve teasing, molestation and even rape. 84.3% of the interviewees said that alcoholism is a major cause behind eve teasing. Eve teasing is a common crime committed against women and men indulge in it
as they have utter disrespect towards womanhood. For women who are teased, the world looks ugly and the experience makes them avoid coming to public. Man indulges in molesting a woman as he thinks that as a member of the male chauvinistic society, there is nothing wrong in outraging the modesty of a woman. Rape of course is the most heinous crime committed against a woman. As alcohol serves as the reason behind all these, women should take up alcoholism as a concern that works against the dignity of woman.

Harassment of Wife

The study has found out that the wife of an alcoholic (74%) is harassed physically, mentally or sexually. Women in coastal Kanyakumari District are shut out of the house, denied food or battered as punishment by the alcoholic husband, and with the intention of torturing them mentally, the alcoholic husband accuses them of sexual immorality and quite sadly 44.6% of women put up with sexual torture of the alcoholic husband. Interviewees even complained of sexual perversion as a consequence of their addictive habits.

Wife Battering

The suffering of the wife in the fishing hamlet is great as 95.5% of those men who drink come home drunk. The study shows that they are invariably violent, demanding, vulgar and destructive. 35.3% indulge in wife battering when they come home drunk and 56% of the battered women
just bear it. But 85.1% of women said that they know that wife battering is very common.

Women in this community do not take wife battering very seriously and 63.2% women believe that the husband has the right to batter wife and 51.3% believe that only the man who beats the wife loves her. Wife battering is accepted not only as the sign and right of male authority, it is taken as a sign of love. The study has revealed that the women in the fishing hamlets are steeped in misconceptions regarding the right and respect of women in families, and many elderly women are steeped in male chauvinistic ideologies and believe that a good wife will ungrudgingly bear with the battering and that as it is a matter between the husband and wife, no external force can interfere in this. They believe that the wife should accept it as a corrective measure and as punishment.

**Women as Alcoholics**

It is found out that drinking is not that common among women and only 2% of the women interviewed are in the habit of taking alcohol often and 39.2% of women have never tasted alcohol. IMFL is the favourite drink of women (89.7%). It is a matter of concern that out of the total 306 women who have taken alcohol, 298 (97.4%) said that it was the husband who prompted them to drink. This indeed is another aspect of how the wife becomes a victim of husband’s alcoholism.
Women’s Ability to Help Addicts

Women in the fishing hamlets as such are incapable of detecting an addict or counseling them. 23.4% cannot detect an addict and 70.4% do not know how to counsel them.

Women, Production and Sale of Alcohol

Men use women and girl children for brewing, distilling and marketing illicit liquor and they are also used to buy liquor for the male members. This is a field where women are exploited by male alcoholics.

97.6% of the interviewees said that when women involved in the sale of illicit liquor are detected by law enforcing authorities, they are arrested by men police. This is a matter of concern as this is happening in spite of the hue and cry created by women’s organizations and activists against men police personnel handling women under trials.

Women’s Rights and Awareness

The awareness level as far as laws related to women and their rights is very low among the women in the fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District and this is being exploited by the male dominated society. Only 26.1% of women know about laws related to family, 16.1% know about laws related to marriage. Only 1.6% of the interviewees know about laws related to sexual harassment. Only 25.4% of the target group knows about the existence of Commission for Women at the State and national levels.
No organization has so far taken any sincere effort to create awareness among women.

**Women and Fight against Alcoholism**

Women of the fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District are desperate as far as male alcoholism is concerned and 66% of them have approached the church, 20.1% have sought the help of women in the neighbourhood and 26.9% have just prayed for the alcoholic. So far not many have thought of taking their husband for counselling and systematic training.

It is heartening to understand that the women have realized the need to oppose male alcoholism and 44.4% have thought of organizing women against alcoholism and 82.9% are willing to be a member of a woman’s organization that will fight addiction and are willing to undertake different activities. 74.4% women are confident that the women’s organizations have the ability to fight addiction and 76.6% expressed their intention to fight addiction. The target group in the study area is an ideal one for being organized for social action in the fight against alcoholism and drug addiction.

**Alcoholism as Deterrent to Development**

All developmental activities and poverty alleviation programmes will be exercises in futility if the hard earned money of the fishermen is wasted on liquor. Besides their belief that alcohol is necessary for them after hard toiling in the mid sea facing all odds, alcohol consumption is a socially
accepted practice in the society and has been there down the generations. This has resulted in the wastage of a lot of money on alcohol in this even otherwise poverty stricken community. They have no systematic way of saving for the future or for the lean season and this has landed them in debt traps and exposed them to exploitations by private moneylenders. This is partly due to lack of earnest attempt by the Department of Small Savings to cultivate the habit of saving among the fishing community.

From the study it is very clear that the alcoholism of man has its impact on women's health too. As established earlier, when a man turns an alcoholic the woman finds it impossible to share her health problems with her husband (37.9%). It is a known fact that the health of the woman is very vital in establishing a healthy society. The health care facility in the coastal Kanyakumari is deplorably poor and lady doctors are not available for women for consultation. The private hospitals are unaffordable for the people of the fishing hamlets.

**SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Women should not be exposed to exploitations due to the alcoholism of men. The present empirical study, its findings and the researcher’s discussions with the target community show that there is definitely a responsibility for the society to save women from their sufferings consequent to male alcoholism. The researcher wishes to make some suggestions in this regard. Any effective change in society should be preceded by a concerted effort for awareness building. This is very much
true of women empowerment. The study has revealed that women in the
target group have very low awareness level. They have not realized that
they are being oppressed in many ways and alcoholism in particular. Many
do not even recognize that fight against alcoholism is a field where the
woman should get involved to save her from being victimized.

The study conducted among women in the fishing hamlets of
Kanyakumari district clearly shows that alcoholism of men is the basic
reason behind suffering and oppression of women. It is also found that no
effective step has so far been taken by government, NGOs or service
agencies to improve the plight of women. Alcoholism among men goes
unabated, unquestioned and unchecked, and consequently women in the
study area continue to be silent indirect victims.

Bearing in mind the gravity of the problem of male alcoholism and
the sufferings and agony undergone by the woman in the family and also
how male alcoholism has affected the dignity of women, the following
suggestions and recommendations are made to the Government, NGOs,
service organizations, women’s organizations, church, and the Universities
and institutions of higher learning. These suggestions and
recommendations are presented with the hope that these structures will
realize how the dignity of women are at stake in the fishing hamlets of
Kanyakumari District and come out with programmes to reduce
consumption of alcohol and also to mitigate the sufferings of women
consequent to male alcoholism.
GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Alcohol Policy

One of the major causes for alcoholism round the world is the availability of alcoholic beverages in the market. Though it may not be practically possible to keep alcohol away from the men of the coastal area as it involves various aspects of the government’s alcohol policy, it is still possible to have certain restrictions. Imposing restrictions to individuals through licensing and reducing the timings of retail outlets are some of the ways by which accessibility to alcohol can be minimized. But, what intrigues one is that the men have a fancy (71.1%) for arishtam that can be classified as an abused prescription drug. The State and District administration should bring out stringent measures and implement them so that arishtam menace can be totally eradicated. The illicit arrack is not that common except in the hamlets close to Kerala border. The government and law enforcing agencies should further tighten their drive against distilling and brewing as illicit liquor causes a lot of health hazards and even death. Special attention is needed for this as the interviewees said that women and girl children are exploited in the manufacture and marketing of spurious liquor.

Recreation

Recreational facilities in the fishing hamlets are deplorably poor. For men gambling is the only recreation. 37.1% respondents said that their
husbands gamble. This serves as another cause for wastage of money. All efforts should be taken by the Government to provide basic recreational facilities to men and this will indirectly deter men from resorting to alcohol.

**Exploitation by Private Moneylenders**

Private money lenders exploit the poverty and drinking habits of men and fleece them making use of the poverty of the community especially during lean season. The Government should take effective steps to curb the activities of private moneylenders and stringent action should be taken against those who violate rules. Nationalised banks, Government and the cooperative sector have the responsibility of making loans easily accessible to the fishing community. The Department of Small Savings should initiate drives to rope in the people of the fishing hamlets into small savings programmes. This will not only decrease the amount wasted on alcohol considerably, but also bring about a kind of financial security to them, especially women who are now burdened with clearing the debts incurred by the alcoholic husbands.

**Creating Legal Awareness among Women**

The study also shows that many women lack even basic legal awareness. The question asked about the legal awareness evoked deplorably poor response from the respondents, and only 25.4% women knew about the presence of Women’s Commission. To inculcate self-confidence and also to enhance confidence building in seeking legal
remedies, it is necessary that women know about their legal rights. Setting up of legal cells that are dedicated to the cause of women will definitely improve the plight of women. Such legal cells besides imparting legal education can extend legal assistance.

It is understood that in spite of all literacy movements and the claim of cent percent literacy, many women in the coastal belt of Kanyakumari district still remain unlettered (25.8%). Education for women has never been a priority in the community under discussion, though the study has not established any significant connection between the educational qualification and the plight of women as victims of addiction. It is a known fact that education is a prerequisite for women empowerment. Hence the literacy drive among women in the fishing hamlets should get top priority. Adult literacy programme, non-formal and informal education should be planned and executed for women in the fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District. Awareness creation on the legal rights of women should form part of this. School drop out among girls should be studied and checked and all steps should be taken to create an atmosphere whereby girls go for schooling. If only society provides education to girls there is the possibility of women attaining Mary Wollstonecraft’s concept of personhood.

Conscientising women alone cannot better the plight of women. The government, service organizations, NGOs and educational institutions should create the same awareness among men also. Men should also realize that it is wrong on their part to unleash violence on women on the pretext
that women are dependent on them and that culture has taught women down
the ages to put up with such violence.

**Helping Battered Women**

The interviewees said that not much help comes to them when they
are physically assaulted by their drunken husbands. If at all some help
comes, it is from women in the neighbourhood (54.6%). This may be just
fire fighting that gives only temporary relief. As the percentage of battered
women is very high in the coastal hamlets, shelters for battered women can
be started in the target area. Such shelters should have counselors who will
give emotional as well as legal support to women in distress. Women
police have the responsibility of patrolling in the coastal belt especially at
night and prevent the incidence of wife battering due to male alcoholism.

**SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS/NGOs/GOVERNMENT**

**Preventing Under-age Drinking**

As evident from the study, children in the target area are quite
vulnerable to getting introduced to alcohol. Hence unique programmes for
prevention of under-age drinking should be designed by the Government,
NGOs and service agencies targeting children of this area. All attempts
should be taken to enhance recreational facilities for children. Laws
related to the prevention of under-age drinking should be very effectively
implemented.
**Treating Alcoholism**

There is no hospital specialized in treatment of alcoholism. The private hospitals available are far away from the coastal belt and are quite expensive. The Government, service organizations and NGOs should start hospitals in the coastal belt for treating alcoholics. Trained personnel including qualified counselors should take care of counseling, treating and rehabilitating alcoholics. Training programme for doctors, para medical staff, social workers, community development workers etc. should be carried out as a joint venture of the Government, Non Governmental Organizations, Service Organizations and organizations interested in the well being of the society.

**Financial Independence of Women**

This naturally makes one look at the financial independence of women in the study area. Most of the women in the study area are dependent on their husbands financially. This indeed is a major cause behind women being easily subjected to harassment and violence. When asked why they did not think of coming out of wedlock in spite of tortures, 70.1% interviewees said that financial insecurity is the major cause behind their readiness to put up with any affliction. Women should be helped to get involved in income-generating programmes so that they can assert their rights. This is what H. Taylor also stressed as a solution to many of the problems of women. Financial independence of women, no doubt, will go a long way in empowering women in asserting their dignity. Training in
handicrafts and self employment programmes connected with fishing like fish drying in hygienic ways, fish preservation, fish pickle making etc., should be given by the government and by agencies connected with the welfare of women. Government and quasi government agencies and nationalized banks have the responsibility of extending loan facilities to women to be self-employed whereas service organizations, NGOs and educational institutions should offer training to women.

**Educating People**

Though many of the people in the study area are unlettered, Government and service agencies should bring out pamphlets, posters and booklets on addiction exclusively designed for the target community and undertake intensive canvassing in the area.

**Women’s Health**

It is established by the present study that alcoholism of men has its impact on women’s health. When a man turns an alcoholic many of the woman’s health problems go unattended. The government along with other agencies and NGOs should establish health clinics and hospitals especially with lady doctors with whom women can freely discuss their health problems. With very poor financial background women in the target area deserve free health and medical care.
WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS

Women’s Organizations also have great responsibility. They should realize that male alcoholism is also a matter of their concern as it serves as a cause of victimization of women. They should make their voice heard whenever there is a change in alcohol policy that will ultimately be harmful to women, and endeavour to raise the consciousness level among women especially those in the fishing hamlets. Seminars and symposia may not be the right media, though they may evoke some response among the educated women. So they should evolve alternative strategies to reach the message. Attempt should be taken to spread the message through television and by using folk arts to fight addiction and also for empowering women.

The awareness level of the people in the study area is very low. Hence legal awareness camps should be conducted in the area to conscientize the people, especially women, of their legal rights and the remedies they can seek in case their rights are violated.

Helping Women with Suicide Mania

Another frightening revelation of the study is that many of the wives of alcoholics live under the grip of suicide mania. 64.1% women said that they know cases of suicide in the target area. This indeed is a matter of concern that warrants attention and action. Programmes that will inculcate self confidence, courage, self worth and self esteem in women should be designed and popularized in the area by agencies interested in women’s welfare. As suicidal tendency is common among the wives of alcoholics in
the study area, all efforts should be taken to have intensive and effective counseling against suicide. Help of medical psychiatrists and psychologists should be made available to victim-women of the area.

It is also found that women in the coastal fishing hamlets have not at any point of time thought that they should plan strategies to eradicate alcoholism. Though they have realized that they have the potentiality, never have they made a planned, organized and concerted effort. Hence the basic effort for the eradication of alcoholism should be made by creating awareness in the society, especially among women. Women should be told how alcoholism causes drain in the family budget, and also is the cause behind many of their sufferings. Unless women realize that they are the silent indirect victims of alcoholism, no effective step can be taken for the betterment of the condition of women.

**Alcoholism and Financial Implications on Family**

Women should also be made to realize how man escapes from his responsibility to the society and the family, taking his alcoholism as an excuse. The money earned for the needs of the whole family is wasted on his craving for alcohol. When man turns an alcoholic, the burden of the woman in the family is doubled and she is constrained to take up the dual role of being the breadwinner and caretaker of the house. She gets additional burden of taking care of the irresponsible husband. This, the woman should realize, eats into the family budget relegating basic needs like food, health care and education to the background.
Domestic Violence and Wife Battering

Women in the coastal hamlets have not realized the implications of domestic violence and wife battering. During field work the researcher could meet many women battered by their alcoholic husbands. A forty-year-old woman in Puthoor showed her hands that were fractured by her husband six years back. Wife battering has also become a routine and part of life of almost all women. Most of the women do not see anything wrong in being battered by the husband. Society's outlook needs a thorough change and women are to be told not merely the legal implications and legal provisions but also how it affects women emotionally and psychologically. Society should come forward to have the consciousness-raising women's groups that will make women realize the humiliating aspects of wife battering.

CHURCH

People in the fishing hamlets are Church centred and they have great respect for the priests. They go to Church regularly and participate in the activities. Church, as it wields enormous influence on these people should take very special effort to fight addiction by strengthening the already existing 'Thiruppumurai' and extending its activities to all the fishing hamlets. Church can play an effective role in the fight against domestic violence and wife battering. Wife battering goes unabated in the study area, as nobody has told them how it infringes on the right and dignity of women. Church is the right agency to take the message to the people of the area.
Universities and institutions of higher learning have their responsibilities in eradicating alcoholism and safeguarding the interests, dignity and rights of women. NSS units in colleges can take up fight against alcoholism on war footing in areas like the coastal belt. NSS units, especially in women’s colleges, should focus on gender issues so that the women will be enlightened on the ways they are exploited and victimized and how they can safeguard their privileges and rights. NSS volunteers may be trained in managing alcoholism, especially in the basics of counselling and made use of in the fight against addiction. Such volunteers should be trained in handling gender related issues and extending help to affected women. Colleges should be encouraged to have village adoption programmes, and while taking care of the wholesome welfare of the villages, alcoholism and rights of women should get priority. In short, women empowerment should get priority in the agenda of NSS activities.

Universities, on their part should encourage Women’s Studies. This can be done by opening Departments of Women’s studies, instructing colleges to have Women’s Cells, making field studies related to gender issues mandatory, and encouraging colleges to conduct outreach programmes on problems facing women. Universities should encourage research on socially relevant areas like alcoholism, gender issues etc. and all facilities should be extended to scholars who undertake such studies.
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

International organizations like WHO have their responsibilities too. It is suggested that WHO should undertake a study of the prevalence and impact of alcoholism in the coastal villages of India and plan strategies to combat this social evil, that serves as the major cause behind malnutrition and health hazards, not only of the alcoholics but also of the members of the family of addicts. Some special nutritional programme may be designed and executed for the alcoholics and women and children in the families of alcoholics. WHO, with its commitment to fight addiction and expertise in handling the issue should design a programme to train personnel from NGOs, women’s organizations and service agencies that are willing to work among alcoholics and women and help activate the fight against alcoholism in the coastal villages of India. International funding agencies may come forward to help NGOs and service organizations set up health clinics and treatment centres devoted to the care of addicts and their family members.

Peer group pressure is indeed a major reason behind many people taking to alcohol. Organizations like Alcoholic Anonymous should organize recovering alcoholics and teetotalers and conduct programmes so as to bring alcoholics out of their habits and prevent relapses in the case of those who give up drinking.
CONCLUSION

It is established beyond doubt that male alcoholism is the basic reason for the suffering of women in the coastal fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District. Male alcoholism is responsible for various crimes against women in the society. Only fighting male alcoholism can mitigate the physical, mental and sexual tortures borne by women. Wife battering, separation, suicide attempts, lack of proper health care to women, poverty and malnutrition etc. as a consequence of male alcoholism are matters of concern. Fighting male alcoholism is indeed a prerequisite for women empowerment. Hence prevention of male alcoholism should get priority in the agenda of women empowerment.