Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

THE GLOBAL SCENARIO AND ALCOHOLISM IN INDIA

Alcohol is the most widely consumed intoxicating substance in the world and it is very much true of India too. It has been part of Indian culture and it is not right to blame it on Western cultural heritage. Alcoholism is the cause behind accidents, crime, diseases, domestic violence, problems in working places, loss of manpower and man-hours, and disturbances in relationships. Alcohol is a social problem as it affects not only the person who consumes alcohol but also everyone who comes into contact with him. This is all the more true of family members. Even those who are in no way connected with production, marketing or consumption of alcohol, are affected by alcohol. Alcohol, though used as a social lubricant, very often becomes the cause for human misery. Money that can otherwise be spent on productive, and useful purposes are utilized for man's slavery to this intoxicating substance.

Drinking is not a new phenomenon in Indian society. Indians drank toddy and other native brews believing that they would relax the nerves. People took them as tonic as they believed that they have nutritious value. Today, consequent to our contact with the West and availability of advanced technology, people have got accustomed to more sophisticated drinks. Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL), which was once considered to be the drink of
the sophisticated and the elites, has come to the local market and is easily accessible to common man. One has to be very much concerned about alcoholism, especially in a country like India where we have not successfully waged war against poverty and ignorance, as devastation caused by alcoholism is immeasurable. Many studies have been conducted to find out the effects of alcoholism in a developing country like India where poverty alleviation gets priority over anything else. People who have analysed alcoholism and its effect on the society have come out with many shocking revelations.

Many studies have been undertaken in India regarding the havoc played by alcoholism and how it is responsible for loss of lives and tranquility in society. This concern is expressed by Martha R. Osei,

The National Road Research institute has estimated that one third of drivers on inter-city roads is under the influence of alcohol and one fourth of all major road accidents is alcohol related. Domestic and social violence, spouse and child abuse and neglect associated with heavy drinking are common. The rate of suicidal deaths increased from 6.8 per 100,000 population to 9.9 per 100,000 population between 1984-1994. This is estimated to be partly related to alcohol consumption in the country. Psychiatric morbidity surveys in general populations have reported the prevalence of alcohol dependence cases to be 3.6 per thousand (Surya et al 1964) and 4.8 per thousand (Verghese et al 1973). The role of alcohol in oropharyngeal and oesophagus malignancies has been documented by a number of studies with results supporting that alcohol together with tobacco contributes significantly to these malignancies in India (Jussawala, 1987, Rao et al 1989, Notani, 1988; Rao et al, 1994). Nearly 15 to 20 % of absenteeism and 40% of accidents at work are attributable to alcohol use by industry workers. ¹

Martha R. Osei gives a data related to the consumption of alcohol in India that are alarming and need immediate and keen attention. “General population studies on alcohol use in India have reported the prevalence of
74.2% among adult males (Deb and Jindal, 1975), 32.9% of all adults (Mohan et al, 1978) and 25.6% of all populations (Lal and Singh, 1978 in Punjab). This alarming trend grows further and alcoholism, especially of male members in the family, is likely to cause untold damage to Indian families for whom poverty is even otherwise the greatest problem to reckon with. Osei adds, “Later studies using superior methodology have also reported alcohol use by 58.3% of adult males and 1.5% of adult females (Mohan et al, 1980), 24.7% of adults (Sundaram et al 1984), 33% of males (Mathruboothan, 1989) and 26.50% of males (Chakravarthy, 1990). Studies among student population have reported alcohol use to be 12.7% in high schools, (Mohan et al, 1979), 32.6% in University (Dube et al, 1978) and 9.3 to 15.1% among college students (Mohan, 1981)”.  

India is a developing country where poverty, hunger and all problems connected with malnutrition, health and hygiene continue to be the greatest problems. According to a study conducted by NSSO for the Government of India in 1999. 35.77% of Indian population is under poverty line. These people are underfed and undernourished and struggle to get even one square meal a day. They do not have proper clothing and housing. Society faces several problems – child labour, atrocities on women, illiteracy, exploitation of the underprivileged, to name a few. In this land of superstitions, exploitations in the name of God and religion are very common. Female foeticide, female infanticide and even human sacrifice, though rare, exist even today. In this society that wriggles under the weight of several such social evils, alcoholism is a great problem especially among the economically weaker section.
Alcoholism among the poor people leads to a lot of financial problems. As major portion of the hard earned money is wasted on alcohol, poverty gets aggravated. As money that is to be spent on various vital and pressing demands of the family is wasted, it has its impact on education and health care of children and affects in general the domestic atmosphere. Derek Rutherford has rightly pointed out “In developing countries nearly 800 million people do not get enough food and about 500 million are chronically malnourished. A poor man’s drinking money comes from cuts in family budget. Consequently, drinking is a frequent cause of malnutrition which compounds the problem of alcohol abuse”.

EVILS OF ALCOHOLISM

Alcohol affects the individual who consumes it. When an individual becomes dependent on alcohol he is constrained to give priority to his habit and finds it difficult to survive without it. Alcohol has its impact on the body and mind of the persons who take it in excessive quantity and also regularly and as time passes affects physical and mental health. Physical complications of heavy drinking may be classified under gastroenterological disorders, cardiovascular disease, neurological disorders, neuropsychiatric disorders, skin disease, haematological effects, respiratory disease, musculoskeletal disorders, metabolic disorders, endocrine disorders, and cancers. An alcoholic is prone to various diseases like heart problems, blood pressure, ulcer, liver cirrhosis, pancreatitis etc. Alcohol impairs judgement and affects activities of the mind. Due to the mood altering effect it has, it leads to problems consequent to loss
of inhibitions. Habitual consumption impairs normal functioning of human brain. This results in loss of manpower and man-hours.

Alcohol, when it is consumed in large quantities for a long period has its impact on the body of the individual who consumes it. It causes various damages to organs, most of them irreversible. The diseases alcoholism causes are many and most of them are terminal in nature. It affects human mind also and as a consequence of this, it prevents a person from performing as a normal human being. It affects his performance in such a way that an alcoholic becomes totally undependable. As alcohol has a mood altering effect, it makes an alcoholic totally unpredictable and very often violent. As his priority is for his drinks, many of the pressing needs of life get less priority and usually it is the care required for the members of the family that loses its importance in the personal agenda of an alcoholic.

Alcoholism is considered a terminal disease and many precious lives are lost due to this habit. In a country like India where there is not much facility for counseling, treatment and rehabilitation of alcoholics, the possibility of redeeming an alcoholic is very remote and many very naturally lose their lives, and quite a few in the prime of their life. Alcoholism leads to loss of judgement, and this eventually is the cause for many traffic, industrial and many odd and freak accidents, resulting in the loss of life or making many invalids due to permanent impairments. Uton Muchtar Rafei states, “alcohol use is a socio-economic and development issue and it has to be treated as such. Alcohol use breeds non-productivity and thus poverty. It foments social deprivation, disharmony and homelessness. It threatens the very fabric of our
communities, and affects families. And most of all, it affects the most vulnerable, the women, mothers and children and the poor. Although less than five percent of women in the Region use alcohol, they suffer the brunt of alcohol use. Millions of children are deprived of access to health services, good nutrition and education and supportive environment growth due to the excessive use of alcohol by families.

Abuse of alcohol has very serious consequences. Shanthi Ranganathan has said, “Abuse of alcohol has become a serious public health and socio-economic problem in Indian villages. The harmful consequences of irresponsible drinking are numerous. They can be physiological (hepatitis, gastritis, neuritis), psychological (depression, suicide), financial (poverty, indebtedness) or social (violence, marital breakdown, unemployment). These problems affect the individual, his family and the community in which he lives.”

It is not only the individual who drinks is affected by his or her habits. Even persons around are affected consequent to the individual’s habits. This is all the more true of the members of the family of the addicts. The wife of the alcoholic is subjected to various kinds of sufferings and usually she is constrained to take the twin role of taking care of the family and becoming the breadwinner when the husband becomes an irresponsible alcoholic.

Alcohol serves as the main cause for violence in the family and society. Uton Muchtar Rafei, says, “Alcohol also contributes to social disorder and family disharmony. Domestic and social violence, spouse and child abuse and neglect are the sad and tragic outcomes of alcohol use in our region. Millions
of productive lives are tragically destroyed or lost due to excessive alcohol use. Countries continue to pay a heavy price in both economic and social terms. Yet, there seems to be some sort of complacency with regard to the dangers of alcohol use."

Alcoholism has destroyed many families and the family life of many individuals. This has to be given a lot of importance, as family is the smallest unit of society. Coherence and love are very essential to bind a family together. Alcohol Problems in the Family records, "Alcohol problems in families are important because families are important. The essential functions of the family are to meet the needs of its members for physical, psychological, social, and economic security and well-being, and the provision of a satisfactory environment for the support, education and socialization of children. All of these functions can be jeopardized by the problematic consumption of alcohol." \(^8\)

**ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM**

All those who consume alcohol do not become alcoholics. There are many occasional drinkers, who confine their drinking to certain occasions. They have control over the quantity, time and place. They do not allow their habit to interfere with their routines. Some who have undertaken studies on alcoholism even advocate such type of drinking. Some call it social drinking. In the West, today, people advocate, what they call “sensible drinking”. What they mean by this term is that a man may drink provided it does not affect any aspect of his life. Along with this is the term ‘problem drinker’. It is this term
that signifies what we mean by alcoholism. Alcoholism is defined by The Advanced Learner's Dictionary as “action of an alcoholic on the human system; diseased condition caused by this” and an alcoholic, in turn is defined as a “person who drinks so heavily that his health is affected”. It must be noted that the effect of alcoholism is not confined to health alone, though pathologically it is true.

Alcohol is the main ingredient in wines, beers and distilled spirits. There are various alcohols. The form normally consumed for intoxication is ethyl alcohol. Ethanol is a central nervous system depressant and it inhibits mechanisms of the brain. It initially produces anxiolytic, sedative and analgesic effects. But periodic consumption makes a person alcohol dependent and the toxicity potential is much more than the benefits it may have. As we undertake a study of alcoholism in a society like the fishing hamlet of Kanyakuinari District, a clear understanding of the term ‘alcoholism’ should be there. By alcoholism the present study means the habit of consuming alcohol in such a way that it affects the consumer’s health, finance, family life, social standing and respect, dependability, efficiency, judgement etc. Alcoholism is the cause behind many physical illness, personality changes and psychiatric disorders. It is not necessary that all these faculties of an alcoholic are affected at the same time. It may be just one or two.

It should be noted that all those who consume alcohol do not become alcoholics. Why a few people alone become alcoholics is a puzzle even to this day. A heavy drinker, or one who drinks excessive quantity of alcohol, that too for a long period, may not become an alcoholic. This also obliquely
suggests that a person need not drink large quantities or for a long period to become an alcoholic. When a person becomes an alcoholic, he develops an overpowering or compulsive desire to continue to drink and adopts any means to obtain his or her drink. An alcoholic also has the tendency to increase the quantity of the alcohol consumed. The person also develops a psychological or physical dependence on the effects of alcohol.

Alcoholism is considered a disease and this is very much true. When considered a disease, we should know that it is a terminal disease, and only a treatable disease and not a curable disease because some of the damages alcohol causes to human body and mind are permanent and irreversible. It also suggests that as alcoholism is a disease, an alcoholic is a patient, and as patient the alcoholic doesn’t have any control over the disease and that it requires an external intervention to bring an alcoholic out of his disease. Why only a few people who get introduced to alcohol end as alcoholics has not been satisfactorily explained. Though a lot of thought has been given to the causes of alcoholism, no satisfactory explanation has been given so far. The myths about alcohol, the opportunities and availability, home atmosphere, various social factors besides individual reasons are responsible for making an individual an alcoholic.

**IMPACT OF ALCOHOLISM ON WOMEN**

When one thinks of alcoholism usually the alcoholic and his problems come to the mind. What is often forgotten is the indirect victims, especially the family members. Derek Rutherford in his address "Alcohol Problems in the
Families of problem drinker are families in distress. They are ‘fragile families’ who need help’.

When someone drinks the worst affected are those who are close to him, especially the members of his family. When a man drinks, naturally his wife and children are affected very much. Donald E. Meeks says in Alcoholism and the Family “An alcoholic’s family is often seen as both the cause and victim of the drinking problem. While it may be true that family pressures had a hand in the early development of the alcoholic, it is also true that the family shares in suffering the consequences.”

Alcoholism affects families in various ways. Very often its very structure is affected and its foundation shaken. Every member of the family struggles to cope with the problem drinker and also find many difficulties in living as a member of the society. Donald E. Meeks writes, “Often, families undergo drastic internal reorganization in attempting to cope with a problem drinker in their midst. The usual responsibilities undertaken by the drinker are reassigned to others, a situation resented by the alcoholic, who feels, and perhaps is, excluded from the healthy relationships that would normally exist in the family. The problem drinker also may experience guilt from letting the family down. Whatever the surface appearances, anger, tension, and resentment are usually part of the family picture.”

It is a known fact that Indian women are not prone to drinking and usually they do not approve of drinking. There are many reasons for this and the main one being conservative background. But this statement does not apply
to all. Though this is very much a part of middle class morality, women in the upper socio-economic strata do not generally oppose drinking. Many of them, though may not be alcoholics, consume liquor in family circles and also in social gatherings. Drinking is considered part of the culture in some communities of lower socio-economic group too.

Experience has shown that when a man drinks, the women around him—mother, sister, sister-in-law, daughter, and wife— are the worst victims. This study aims at making an in depth study of the woman as victim of alcoholism. Though reference is made to how women are affected when they themselves become alcohol dependent, the major focus of this study is woman as the victim of male alcoholism. To understand the seriousness and gravity of the problem, this study concentrates on how the wife is affected when her husband turns an alcoholic.

**METHODOLOGY**

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

The present study is a diagnostic one as the main aim is to diagnose the evil impact of alcoholism on women and how male alcoholism serves as a cause for oppression of women. The study also aims at finding out various contributory factors for male alcoholism serving as a cause of victimization of women. It also attempts to find out how the status, dignity and well being of women will continue to be affected when man takes alcohol.
PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was conducted in six fishing hamlets – five in the Arabian Sea coast and one in the Bay of Bengal Coast. This was done with the intention of finding out the feasibility of the study and also to make an assessment of the relevance of the study and gravity of the problem discussed.

STUDY AREA

The present study is based on the data collected from women in the 44 coastal fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District. As the educational level of the target group is not high the investigator used interview schedule. The interview schedule was prepared in English, but Tamil and Malayalam were used while interviewing women, as these two are vernacular languages of the region.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The interview schedule (Annexure I) was prepared after carefully studying the target group and making the pilot study. The first part of the interview schedule aims at getting the needed personal details of the interviewees. The questionnaire is divided into seven sections with a view to get information on the seven different objectives of the study. The data collected with the help of the interview schedule is the primary source for the present study.
FIELD VISIT

The investigator personally visited all the 44 hamlets and spoke to the target groups, besides having discussion with men, village leaders, children, local priest etc. Random sampling method was used in identifying interviewees, and the interviewees are all married women. This refers to women living with their husbands, separated, divorcees or widows. The investigator had to undertake the challenging task of getting the response of the interviewees with the help of the interview schedule. When some women came out very openly with their reaction to alcoholism, many had initial hesitations. Some even refused to answer the questions. No compulsion was exerted on the interviewees to get response. Some had initial reservation as they were afraid of the male members in the family or they had apprehensions about the intentions of the investigator. Once the intentions were made clear to the interviewees, there was no difficulty in getting the response.

OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of the present study:

1) to describe addiction panorama in the fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District

2) to bring out the impact of alcohol addiction on the family economy and its consequences on health, education etc.

3) to identify various crimes against women due to alcoholism such as oral abuse, eve-teasing, molestation, rape, etc.
5) to discuss the effect of alcoholism on various types of domestic violence such as mental harassment, wife battering, destruction, threats etc.

6) to describe the behaviour of women as alcoholics and women in alcohol trade

7) to analyse the role of NGOs and Women's Movements in eradicating alcoholism and empowering women.

COMPUTERISED DATA PROCESSING

Once the data was collected, they were fed into the computer for tabulation. The responses of the interviewees and the case studies recorded were carefully studied and the tabulated data were taken up for interpretation. The investigator also went through books and journals on gender issues as well as alcoholism besides whatever record was available on the target area.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The present study is descriptive in nature. The data collected from the study area are used to describe the state of affairs of the target group as far as male alcoholism is concerned. The data collected are represented in the thesis in the form of Tables and Diagrams. To substantiate and clarify arguments, Case Studies are presented.

DEFINITIONS

Alcohol has a factor that induces man to go for it again and again and many find it difficult to come out of this compulsive nature of alcohol. Even those who consume it out of curiosity or for experimentation subsequently
Alcohol has a factor that induces man to go for it again and again and many find it difficult to come out of this compulsive nature of alcohol. Even those who consume it out of curiosity or for experimentation subsequently become addicted to it. As mentioned in the chapter earlier, once a person becomes an alcoholic he fails to function as a normal human being.

Alcoholism, as dependence to alcohol is called, affects some part of human life – personal life, family life, or social life. An alcoholic is one whose consumption of alcohol causes problems in one or more areas of his life like family relationships, job, financial status, behaviour in the public, performance etc. Alcoholism can be defined as that condition when some faculty of human life is affected due to regular consumption of alcohol. When man comes to this stage, he is called a problem drinker or one with alcohol problem.

Various definitions are given to alcoholism. It can be defined as a disease characterized by a physical and psychological dependence on alcohol. Alcohol dependence replaces ‘addiction’ and covers the spectrum of behaviour ranging from physical dependence to the complete disintegration of personal and social functioning. Its gravity is judged by a range of factors such as quantity consumed, frequency of consumption, tolerance, withdrawal, inability to abstain, and degree of physical, personal and social damage caused. An alcoholic is one who has loss of control over his drinking.

While there are numerous definitions of an alcoholic, a few simple ones are listed below. *This Sugar is Bitter - A Citizen’s Report on The Status of Chemical Dependants and HIV Infection in India* gives the following definitions:
3. The alcoholic is one who continues the use of alcohol in the face of adverse consequences, physical harm, legal or financial problems, difficulty in school or work, or in relationships.\textsuperscript{12}

SAMPLES

For the present study, “Woman as Victim: A Study of the Impact of Alcoholism on The Women in the Coastal Fishing Hamlets of Kanyakumari District”, women in the following 44 fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District are taken as samples. 41 of the fishing hamlets are in the West coast facing Arabian Sea and three on the East coast facing Bay of Bengal. The names of the fishing hamlets are given below starting from the North West and ending with North East.

**Hamlets on the West Coast (The Arabian Sea)**

- Neerodi
- Marthandanthurai
- Vallavilai
- Iraviputhanthurai
- Ezhuthesam Chinnathurai
- Thuthur
- Poothurai
- Irayumanthurai
- Mulloorthurai
- Ramanthurai

- Inayam Puthanthurai
- Inayam Chinnathurai
- Inayam
- Melmidalam
- Keelmidalam
- Naduthurai
- Melakurumpanai
- Keezhakkurumpanai
- Vaniyakudi
- Kodimunai
Hamlets on the East Coast (The Bay of Bengal)

Kanyakumari
Chinnamuttom

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Kanyakumari is a small district with 1684 square kilometers of land. It has Tirunelveli Kattabomman district on the northern side, VOC district on the northeastern side, and Trivandrum district on the northwestern side. It is a very fertile district with abundant natural wealth. India has a coastline of about 6000 kilometres of which 1200 kilometres belong to Tamilnadu. Kanyakumari has 67 kilometres of coastline of which 7 kilometres belong to the eastern coast.
and the rest to western coast. Fishing is a very important occupation in this
district and the district has about one third of the fishermen of Tamilnadu. The
fishermen use different types of vessels, namely kattumaram, vallam, rubber
boat, and mechanized boats to go for fishing. Even kattumaram, vallam and
small rubber boats are fitted with motor. But even to this day one can see
some of the kattumarams and boats still using sails.

Kanyakumari District is in the southernmost part of Indian Peninsula
where the three oceans - the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of
Bengal - confluence. The Bay of Bengal is on the Eastern side, the Indian
Ocean is on the Southern side, the Arabian Sea is on the Western side, Kerala
State is on the Northwestern side and Tirunelveli District is on the North and
Northeastern side. Nagercoil is the headquarters of this tiny district that has
four taluks – Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode. It has 7
Legislative Assembly constituencies, namely Kanyakumari, Nagercoil,
Padmanabapuram, Colachel, Thiruvattar, Killiyoor, and Vilavancode. The
whole of Nagercoil and a part of Thiruchendur Lok Sabha Constituencies
cover this district. The total area of the District is 1672 sq. kilometers

The coastal Kanyakumari District is ideal for fishing and organized and
regulated fishing takes place round the year. As Jezer Jebanesan puts it,

The coastal ecosystem of this District comprises 68 km in length
spread over the West Coast, and East Coast and studded with 44
coastal fishing villages. It is unique that this District is situated
at the extreme south of Indian subcontinent close to the equator
and the coastline has been formed by three seas, namely,
Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal. However, the
main part of the coast of the District faces the Arabian Sea.
Further, about 80,000 working fishermen are actively engaged in
fishing. An area of one lakh hectares is reported to be suitable for marine fishing. One of the richest fishing grounds in the world, viz. the Wedge bank lies 88 km off the south coast of Kanyakumari and extends about 56 km on either side of Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari). This offers much scope for harnessing fishery-related industries.¹³

K. Vareethiah says, “The District’s coastal belt runs to a length of 67 km, which is dotted with 41 coastal hamlets, a municipality and a township. These neighbourhoods hardly occupy 30 km² area. The 1997 statistics of the Tamilnadu State Fisheries Department puts the coastal population at 1,35,255. As per the departmental data, the population density in coastal hamlets is well above 4500/km²”.¹⁴

FISHING, THE MAJOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Though fishing is a round the year activity, the fishermen face untold miseries during inclement weather. They have mainly three methods of fishing. The first type is casting nets in the deep sea. For this they use more than forty varieties of nets to suit the different varieties of fish available in that season. Fishing is also done in the deep sea with the help of ten varieties of angles. The third type is known among the community as karamadi in which net is cast from the shore and pulled back by many men.

No one goes for fishing alone, or in other words, it is a community activity. Many people join together and go for fishing in the boat and the number is determined by the size and capacity of the vessel. Usually relatives go together in a boat. It is a common practice that the brothers-in-law go out on fishing together. Mechanised trawlers especially those with facilities for
preservation take more than a day in the sea for their fishing activity, but mostly the fishermen spend about eight to twelve hours for fishing. The time when fishermen go for fishing varies from hamlet to hamlet. Those vessels which go out into the sea late in the evening come back early in the morning, and those who go out early in the morning come back in the afternoon. The catch of the day brought to the shore is auctioned. Fishing hamlets witness hectic activities during auctions, and the practice of auctioneering is age-old. Auctioneering is in vogue to ensure that appropriate price is obtained for the fish caught. With cold storages available all over the coastal belt, price that fishermen get even when the catch is very high is quite reasonable. Money obtained through auction, after deducting the commission for auction activity and contributions to associations and church, is equally divided among the men who are engaged in fishing. But, when boats or fishing implements do not belong to them, a major share goes to the owner of the boats or implements.

Fishing vessels used in Kanyakumari District are not fitted with sophisticated equipments. Accidents and tragedies during fishing are not uncommon. Though there are two lighthouses, fishermen by and large rely on their knowledge about wind, rain and other natural phenomena.

When men go for fishing, women mostly take care of the home. But there are some women who are fishmongers, and their life is full of sufferings and miseries, as most of them have to carry fish to the market on their heads. They usually walk long distances before they sell their purchases. They have difficulties in competing with men fishmongers as men use motorcycles to
transport fish to the markets. This has placed women in a disadvantageous position even when they participate in the auction process. Some of the women participate in fishing activity by repairing and even making fishnets and getting ready the angles. Womenfolk also undertake activities like drying fish. Fishermen of Kanyakumari District, because of stiff competition among themselves and also due to competitions from bigger vessels with deep-sea fishing potentials, very often find life miserable. Hence many of them migrate to neighbouring districts and neighbouring states.

Kanyakumari District is by and large fertile with an average rainfall of 140 cm as it has the unique advantage of rainfall during Southwest and Northeast monsoons. With fertile soil and reasonable rainfall, agriculture is the major occupation of the people, with rice as the principal crop. Coconut fields are there in plenty and rubber, spices, tea and coffee are grown in the mountainous regions. The District has high literacy rate and 1991 census shows that the District has 71.13 percent literacy rate as against the national literacy rate of 52.11 percent. The educational facilities offered in this District are commendable as it has many Primary, Middle, High and Higher Secondary schools, ITIs, Polytechnics, Arts and Science Colleges and Engineering colleges.

According to the 1991 census, which is the latest authentic record, the District has 16 lakh people. M. Jezer Jebanesan writes, “The labour population is 26.9 percent, which is the lowest in the State. Cultivators and agricultural labourers account for 48 percent of the labour population. The balance of 52
percent is engaged in occupations like construction, transport, communication, industry, livestock forestry, plantation, fishing and other service sectors. The percentage of the working population in the urban areas is 28.7 and the rural area it is 26.6%.

Fishing is the major occupation of the people living in the coastal villages. Though there are Hindus, Christians and Muslims living in the District, only the Roman Catholic Christians, that too belonging to the Mukkuva and Bharathar communities mainly go for fishing. G. Santhanakumar says "The fisherfolk of this coastal best belong to two castes: the Bharathas and Mukkuvars. The first constitutes a very ancient group, famous already during Tamil Sangam period. Each of these cases has two sub castes. They are: kadalodies, mainly sea going fishermen and Menakkadans who are educated and doing business of other kinds. Both groups are gazetted as most backward community for getting education, employment, housing etc".

People, irrespective of caste and religion are engaged in fish trade. There are 44 coastal fishing villages having separate facilities for fish auction that is controlled by the local communities. These 44 villages have churches of their own and basically they are church based communities.

Men alone go out into the sea for fishing and women in general take care of the home in the coastal fishing hamlets. Some women engage themselves in fish drying and fish mongering. With rich resources of fish, lobsters, prawns, lobsters etc. the fishing hamlets of Kanyakumari District are active round the year. When the catch is low, fishermen of the District migrate temporarily to neighbouring Districts and even to Kerala.
FISHING VESSELS

Different kinds of fishing vessels are used in this District. Catamarans and boats fitted with sails and motors, and trawlers are used for fishing. According to Dr. G. Santhanakumar the fishing craft used by the fisher-folk of Kanyakumari are mainly of four types. They are Kattumaram 8038 numbers, Vallam 3339 numbers, Boat (Thoni) 175 numbers, and mechanized boat 1512 numbers. He also states that there are different types of fishing gears like gillnet, shore seine, trawler net, drift net, set net, and hooks and lines besides the specific fishing gears for capturing specific species of fishes. Vareethiah states that “The 67 km coastal belt of Kanyakumari is presently occupied by 1449 mechanised vessels (580 in 1977), 3271 outboard motor boats (OBM) (255 in 1977) and 7912 kattumarams, the artisanal fishing crafts (15930 in 1977)”.17

THE CATCH AND LANDING CENTRES

Kanyakumari District coastal line is good for fishing and the catch is fairly good and the catch is there round the year mostly. As Jezer Jebanesan says, “The annual catch of fish is estimated to be about 70,000 tons. The main varieties of fish landed are white baits, ribbon fish, sharks, mackerel, achoviella, seer, sardine, prawns, tuna, pomfrets, rays, lobster, silver bellies and half breaks. The important fish landing centres are Chinna Muttom, Manakudy, Muttom, Kadiyapatinam, Colachel, Midalam, Thengapatinam and Thoothoor. Nearly 50% of fish landed is consumed within the District and the rest sent to other Districts.”(11).18 There are many ice plants along the coast
and this helps fishermen to get ice for preservation. There is facility for
preserving fish in many of these ice plants. Trucks, many of them with
freezers, come to important landing centres to collect that day’s catch.

DISCUSSIONS IN THE PROPOSED CHAPTERS

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter I “Introduction” takes
a glance at the global scenario and alcoholism in India and points at the various
 evils caused by alcoholism. It makes clear the methodology adopted and the
 samples used for the study and gives the demographic details of the fishing
 hamlets of Kanyakumari District.

Chapter II “Review of Literature” presents various books and articles
written down the ages on the age-old problem of alcoholism. As not many
literatures are produced in India, the study relies heavily on Western writers.
As the impact of alcoholism on women gets the basic thrust in the study,
 essays, articles and books on gender issues and women empowerment,
especially those written in India are analysed in this chapter. The researcher
also evaluates a few of the books/dissertations written on the socio-cultural life
of the people of Kanyakumari and especially the people of the coastal belt.

Chapter III, “Fishing Hamlets in Kanyakumari District and Addiction”
studies the social life in the fishing hamlets and the socio demographic
character of the target group besides looking at the availability of alcohol and
the behaviour of the alcoholics.

Chapter IV “Alcoholism and Family” studies how alcoholism causes
financial drain and is responsible for loss of peace and marital disharmony.
This chapter also looks at how alcoholism affects children and the physical and mental make up of an alcoholic’s wife.

Chapter V “Alcoholism and Crimes Against Women” looks at the various ways in which women, especially the wife is affected when the man becomes an alcoholic. This chapter deals with the physical, mental and sexual harassment of the wife and also the various tortures borne by her. It also looks at alcoholism as the main cause behind domestic violence and wife battering. Chapter VI is “Women, Alcohol and Alcohol Trade”. This chapter probes into how women are involved in alcohol trade.

The VII chapter “Women’s Legal Rights and Eradication of Alcoholism” studies the awareness level of women in the target area. This chapter also probes into the target group’s willingness for empowerment and their readiness to get involved in the fight against alcoholism.

Chapter VIII is “Alcoholism and Woman as Victim: A Feminist Perspective”. This chapter proposes to look at the origin and history of feminist movements in different parts of the world and India in particular. It proposes to make a quick survey of different types of feminism in existence. The chapter plans to analyse the problem of alcoholism from a feminist perspective, to show how male alcoholism works against the freedom, status and dignity of women, and is the major cause of oppression of women in the study area.

Chapter IX sums up the findings of the study and makes suggestions for future research and also for work among women to save them from being victims of male addiction. Suggestions made in the chapter include the
programmes that can be designed by women's organizations, self-help groups, service organizations, NGOs, and universities and institutions of higher learning, not only in eradicating alcoholism but also in empowering women in fighting addiction. As a pioneering study in the field, this dissertation makes concrete suggestions to forums like Women's Commission at the state and national levels and WHO, which will definitely strengthen the position of women and improve their socio economic conditions. Before proceeding with this issue in detail empirically, it is appropriate to go through earlier literatures on alcoholism, which forms part of the following chapter.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid. p.32.

3 Ibid. p.32.

4 Derek Rutherford A Lot of Bottle London: The Institute of Alcohol Studies, 1997 p.56.


7 Uton Muchtar Rafei op cit p.8.


11 Ibid. p.1.


17 K. Vareethiah. op cit p.102.

18 M. Jezer Jebanesan op cit p.11.