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## RAMIFICATIONS OF ALCOHOLISM: SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCENARIO IN TELANGANA

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### Introduction

An alcoholic drink is a drink that contains ethanol, which is produced by the fermentation of fruits, grains, or other sugar sources. Alcohol consumption plays an important role in many cultures especially in the western countries. The consumption of alcohol became a part of the western social life and the reason being the fact that alcoholic drinks preserved the body heat during scorching winters. Slowly it transferred to be an inevitable part of social gatherings and ultimately into a daily routine. When we analyse the Indian scenario, humans have been using alcoholic beverages from the pre-historic times. Ethnic religions and tribal societies celebrate the moderate consumption of alcohol. The consumption of alcohol in a moderated manner is even said to have positive health effects like reducing arthritis and gall bladder diseases. But the scenario becomes different when the intake becomes excessive and uncontrolled. Thus, alcoholism can be considered as the addiction to drink alcoholic beverages. It can be considered as a disorder where a person desires to consume alcohol to an extent that it has a negative impact on all aspects of his life, whether it be social or economic. Alcoholism not only affects the alcoholic but also his entire family. It will cause serious repercussions on family relationships and finances. The alcoholic, in an intoxicated state may indulge in domestic abuse and can even exhaust the family savings. This indirectly affects the education of his/her children as well as their psychological well-being. Hence ultimately alcoholism turns out to be a social evil which affects the society at large. There exist multiple social factors which can lead to alcoholism like social drinking, culture, peers, neighbourhood, sense of helplessness, poverty, and life changes. Every individual will have his/her own set of circumstance that prompt them to excessively rely on alcohol. Studies have established that alcoholics can be of five different types like young adult type, young anti-social type, functional type, intermediate familial type, and chronic severe type. These classifications enable healthcare specialists to determine the appropriate mode of treatment.

In India, the extent of alcohol consumption differs from one region to the other due to the socio-cultural diversity of the land and different individual laws imposed by the respective Indian states. When our nation became independent, Mahatma Gandhi campaigned for the total prohibition of liquor. But the applicability of the campaign was under doubt and every state developed its own set of legal frameworks. But in a general sense it can be understood that alcoholism prevails in the rural as well as the urban areas. In India, there exists a heavy correlation between alcohol consumption and crimes. Studies show that excessive drinking can drive people to commit serious crimes such as rapes. In the Hyderabad gang rape case, it was identified that the accused had consumed alcohol.

Telangana, the south Indian state had turned out to be one of the states with the highest per capita consumption of alcohol. The socio-economic ramifications of alcoholism cut across different classes, but it can be perceived that the lower strata of the society face the brunt of the blight. In Telangana, alcoholism turns out to be a factor that makes bad social conditions. Liqueur sales are at their peak during times of festivals and this reveals the fact that drinking alcohol has turned out to be an inevitable part of celebrations. Moreover, alcohol consumption has turned out to be a celebration itself. Long lines are visible in front of the state beverages outlets where people cash in their hard-earned daily earnings for a bottle of beer. An alcoholic would be ready to toil his sweat to earn money to buy a drink and at the same time would not care to do so to look after his family. Thus, the economic insecurity created and its after math needs to be discussed. Alcoholism in Telangana can be particularly defined as a family illness. The attitude of an alcoholic towards his family needs to be properly analysed. Also, an important issue identified was the abuse faced by women and the way in which they became the unfortunate victims of alcoholism. The battering of a woman by her husband is a usual site at the end of the day. Alcoholic behaviour of their partner makes them subjected to emotional and physical abuse. Also, in Telangana, the perception of the society towards an alcoholic depends on his/her class and economic capacity. Thus, the repercussions are more for the poorer sections and they face the deprivation. Alcoholism should be considered as a disease and what is required is proper treatment irrespective of the class or creed of a person. The role of the state government in aggravating the situation and the deficiencies in the judicial framework regarding this matter will also be evaluated.

A good number of articles and journals were referred by the researcher for gaining a clarity on the topic as well to identify the problems covered by the existing research work.



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The harmful effects associated with excessive drinking is covered in Alcohol Consumption in India: An epidemiological review<sup>1</sup> by Anantha Eashwar. The work covers the socio-economic consequences of alcoholism and identifies that one of the major problems caused by excessive drinking is the increased number of road accidents which occur due to the driving of motor vehicles under the influence of alcohol. The legal problems caused by excessive drinking were also covered. It is argued that alcohol intoxications lead an individual to commit crimes like sexual assault, homicide, rape, physical assault etc.

The work, From Pleasure to Taboo: Drinking and Society in Telangana<sup>2</sup> by Dilip M Menon focuses on the historical background of the practice of drinking in Telangana. The work mainly focuses on the social history of drinking in Telangana and analyses how did there occurred a move from community drinking to individual drinking. It was pointed out that drinking was perceived as a way of seeking pleasure during festivals and community gatherings and the practise gradually moved towards a regular individual habit. The work thus analyses the way in which alcohol consumption transformed into a taboo on the society and identifies it to be linked with the change in the individual and community self-perceptions.

The article Alcoholism in Telangana and the Organised Violation of Human Rights of Women<sup>3</sup> by A Shaji, provided an insight on the various kinds of abuse faced by women due to alcoholism. The author identifies that the growing alcohol intake and the associated social, economic and family problems are visible across all cultures and it is the poorer sections of the society which is affected the most. It is identified that the spouse of an alcoholic is fearful, anxious and frustrated at most of the times and may be even exposed to despair and hopelessness. The author concluded by pointing out the kind of abuse that they face may even lead them to carry out a suicide attempt as well and this clearly portrayed the seriousness of the issue.

The work Prevalence of alcohol use and the interventions needed among adults: A community study in a rural area in South India<sup>4</sup> by Anil Sukumaran, conducts a case study to identify the prevalence of alcohol consumption and dependence among alcohol users in a rural area in Telangana. The author identifies that health education is the most required intervention to reduce the burden of alcohol consumption. It was also identified that the prevalence of alcohol use among males is higher than females. The study concludes by pointing out that the alcohol use among older adults is seen to be under recognised by primary health physicians due to the lack of an updated epidemiological data.

## Research Objectives

1. To understand the kind of abuses faced by the family members of an alcoholic and to know about the insecurities faced by them.
2. To study the role that economic status plays in determining the perception of the society towards an alcoholic.
3. To identify the extent to which alcoholics violate the human rights of women and the reasons that makes them vulnerable to alcoholism.
4. To evaluate the role played by the state government in increasing the consequences and to analyse the deficiencies in the judicial framework.

## Hypothesis

- The perception and approach of the society towards an alcoholic depends on his/her financial capability and societal status.
- Women whose husbands are alcoholics, are subjected to serious human rights violations like battering and marital rapes.

## Methodology

The methodology employed for conducting this research was a mix of analytical and deductive form of study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected a considerable number of information expressed in numbers and statistics as well as those expressed in words. Both primary and secondary sources of information were collected and evaluated. The most suitable tools for collecting data for the research was through online surveys, and most importantly personal interviews. This is because the circumstances and scenarios differ from person to person and the evils of alcoholism is something that many people are reluctant to

<sup>1</sup> Anantha Eashwar, Alcohol Consumption in India: An epidemiological review, jfmpe, Vol 9(1), 49-55, (2020).

<sup>2</sup> Dilip Menon, From Pleasure to Taboo: Drinking and Society in Kerala, India International Centre Quarterly, Vol 22, 143-156, (1995).

<sup>3</sup> A Shaji, Alcoholism in Kerala and the Organised Violation of Human Rights of Women, Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities, Vol5, 191-202, Jul (2017).

<sup>4</sup> Anil Sukumaran, Prevalence of alcohol use and the interventions needed among adults: A community study in a rural area in South India, Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, Vol 9, 2769-2773, (2020).



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answer. Thus, it was identified that personal interactions will be the most appropriate method because online interviews can hinder the privacy of the person. The samples was collected from different strata of the society and from different age groups as well. This particularly included women and children from various backgrounds. This is because the impact of alcoholism will be different according to one's age and class. But the deductive approach followed enabled the researcher to bring out some general threads as well.

### Significance of the Problem

Alcoholism is a social evil which affects the society at large. Many the youth are into the practise of excessive drinking. This has serious consequences on their mental and physical well- being. Uncontrolled alcohol consumption triggers them to commit many crimes. From a way to seek pleasure, slowly alcohol turns to be an addiction. An alcoholic will lack the mental strength to face the tough realities of life and may ultimately commit suicide or succumb to chronic diseases like liver sclerosis. Also, the hardships faced by the women of the family is an issue to be looked upon. There are instances were husbands forcefully give alcohol to their wives and thus making them addicted. The addiction of the mother thus can eventually affect the well-being of the children. Thus, the ramifications are unbreakable and at the same time dangerous. An alcoholic is subjected to social deprivation and thus the society digs his pit deeper. Thus, alcoholism and its socio-economic ramification is a significant area of study, especially in the state of Telangana where almost 50% of the government revenue is generated from the sale of alcohol. Thus, a discussion on the topic turns out to be the need of the hour.

### Interpretation and Analysis

An analysis on the topic can be carried out effectively by conducting case studies. The Case study was conducted by specifically focusing on two respondents. Respondent X was a middle-aged woman who belonged to the marginalised section of the society and worked as a housemaid in a village in Telangana. Respondent Y was a man in his fifties who belonged to the educated middle- class group. Respondent X belonged to a scheduled class community in Telangana and was forced to stop her education at the age of fourteen. She was married off to a daily wage labourer at the age of sixteen and had two sons by the time she reached twenty -four. She revealed that her husband had the habit of drinking alcohol even before their marriage and the intensity increased by the time when she was expecting their first son. She was subjected to constant battering during her pregnancy days by her drunken husband. Almost 90% of his daily earnings were exploited for buying alcohol and thus poverty struck the household. This ultimately forced her to seek job as a maid in the nearby rich households. It turned out that the daily earnings seemed to be insufficient to satisfy the husband's thirst for alcohol and he started to torture her for extracting the cash she earned for a living. He started to approach her employer for the salary of his wife and created issues at her workplace if she declined to give the amount. He started to forcefully give her alcohol and found this as a way of abuse. She was subjected to forcefully indulge in sexual relation after consuming alcohol and this ultimately affected her mental health. She started to rely on alcohol and identified it as a means to have a peaceful sleep. Family relation was strained and the children were subjected to the repercussions of this evil at a tender age. The drunken wife and her alcoholic husband had daily quarrels and at times she was strained with blood. The husband died within a few years due to liver dis-functioning caused by excessive drinking. X, became a widow at the age of 35 and by this time had turned out to be a complete alcoholic. She started to drink even during her working hours and this ultimately made her to lose her job. She was subjected to social isolation due to her drinking habit and this even portrayed her as a woman of bad conduct. All these had major impact on the children as well. There was no one to care about their education or development. Peer-pressure and family conditions dragged them to follow the path of their parents and they too started to consume alcohol. It becomes evident that this cycle thus continues to the next generation. While analysing this woman's case it becomes evident that multiple factors contributed for converting an individual into an alcoholic. She was subjected to serious human right violations by her drunken husband. Studying the case reveals the fact that alcoholic consumption can have devastating effects on the lower sections of the society in an intense manner. The woman was deprived of education and was married off at a young age and this had something to do with her coming from a lower section of the society. This cycle of denying education continues with her children as well. They also left school due to the family conditions and poverty. Thus, the scope for education to bring a change was destroyed. People were reluctant to provide financial help to a drunkard's wife and this points out that family member of an alcoholic is subjected to extreme forms of humiliation and isolation from the society. Her excessive drinking even made her to lose her job. This points out that she was even subjected to financial instability due to her drinking. Her position in the society was in a deplorable state. This case reveals the traumas faced by the family members of an alcoholic and at the same time points out how a woman from a poor economic background can turn out to be an alcoholic.

Respondent Y was a government employee in Telangana and was married and had two children. He belonged to the middle - class section of the society and had a respectable position. Peer pressure and the youthful quest to try drinks had prompted him to consume alcohol from his college days itself. His wife was an educated lady who had a job and was thus financially independent.



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Gradually, his friend circle expanded and so did his drinking amount. The addictive and alluring tendency of alcohol was clearly exhibited after sometime. The family problems that he faced added fuel to the fire. The daily fights that had to face from his mother and wife further encouraged him to come home drunk. He started to fall into a larger circle of drunkards and ultimately turned into one. In initial days, alcohol was consumed weekly or on a monthly basis, began to be consumed regularly and what was consumed only during night time began to be taken during the broad daylight as well. Family problems began to get aggravated. The person even stopped coming to his home daily. This affected his professional life as well. His greed to drink forced him to indulge in financial malpractices at his work place and left him with huge amount of liabilities. He was charged and had to drain his savings to run the case. The approach of the society changed indirectly. Although no one exhibited their contempt towards him directly, he became a subject of laughter. His wife had to face humiliation from the neighbours and was subjected to verbal and physical abuse from her husband. But a significant element that has to be noted while analysing this case is the fact that the economically independent wife was able to support the family even during the time of crisis and asked for a divorce from him. The case clearly depicts how alcoholism can affect the financial stability of a family and the way in which it can cause wounds in family ties. Their children were forced to see the violent act of Mr. Y and this had a negative impact on their studies and emotional development.

The first case was about an alcoholic woman who belonged to the lower class while the latter one studied about a middle - class working individual who turned out to be an alcoholic. On comparing the two cases, it becomes evident that the impact of alcoholism on the person and the family members are somewhat similar in nature. The way it affects them may differ according to their socio-economic condition, but the basic elements remain the same.

### Analysis and Discussion

Quantitative data was collected by conducting an online survey which had 116 respondents belonging to different age groups. It is found from the study that 57.9% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 18 to 25, while 30.7% were the ones between 25 to 45 years. 5.3% were above 45 years and the remaining constituted students below 18 years of age and 100% of the respondents belonged to the state of Telangana and they were purposefully selected so. Since women were the major victims of the wrath of alcoholism, 62.3% of the respondents were selected to be women and around 36% formed men while a small number of people preferred not to reveal their gender. 65.8% of the respondents revealed that neither them nor their family members consumed alcohol while 29.8% either themselves consumed alcohol or had family members who did. Also, the remaining number of people preferred not to reveal the same. Thus, the response of the last two mentioned groups were significant for understanding the conditions faced by an alcoholic and his/her respective family member.

While analysing the economic background of the respondents, almost 70.4% of them belonged to the educated middle class and upper middle class while the remaining constituted the lower strata of the society. Since it was evident that the ramifications of alcoholism are graver for the lower sections, the response of this 29.6% was remarkable. It was interesting to note that more than 60% of the respondents have witnessed the negative impacts of alcoholism in real life. This ultimately reveals the fact that the issue of alcoholism is widely prevalent and that there exists a large number of instances to be pointed out by each and every individual. When coming to the reasons that drive a person to consume alcohol, 29.3% opined that peer pressure is the widely seen reason, while 24.1% cited family problems and economic instability and social isolation were considered to be the reason by 10% each. An important part to note here is that 26% opined that there exist other significant reasons. About 6% of the people responded that alcoholism is a condition which is suffered only by men, while 48.3% opined that alcoholism exists among women but the number seems to be less. When inculcating the economic status of the respondents in this point, it can be noted that women belonging to the upper strata were more prone to alcoholism than the ones in the lower strata. 44.8% of the people opined that women whose family members are alcoholic mainly face mental torture, while 31.9% of them revealed that they were subjected to battering by their fathers or husbands. 15.5% reported verbal abuse while 7.8% cited sexual abuse. An important thing to be noted here is that such crimes against women had increased during the lockdown period and a large number of them were subjected to domestic violence. 64.7% of the respondents pointed that the family members of an alcoholic will not be isolated by them while the remaining cited that the family of an alcoholic can be isolated. 60% held that the approach towards an alcoholic will not depend upon his/her economic status while the remaining 40% opined that it will. Here, it needs to be noted that the educated middle- class youth were the ones who opined that the attitude towards an alcoholic has nothing to do with the economic condition. But, when coming to the lower class and the educated middle-aged group, they responded that economic status had a role to play. 60% criticised the government for promoting the consumption of alcohol through government run beverages outlets. While analysing this, it can be identified that state-government is not forcing the people to consume alcohol. But it turns out that the government misuses the disorder of alcoholism by prompting the individuals to drink excessively. The reluctance of the respective state governments to shut down liquor shops even during the covid-19 times serves





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as an ideal example. The main reason behind this reluctance is the fact that alcohol sale proves to be a huge source of government revenue generation. Thus, a holistic government plan is urged by the respondents.

While coming to the solutions to end this social evil, 33.6% believes that stricter implementation of rules that regulate alcohol consumption was the most suitable and practical solution. Interestingly, 28.4% urged for a complete prohibition of alcohol consumption in the state and 24.1% voted for making people aware of the harmful effects of excessive drinking. While analysing the statistics available, it became evident that the scope of law in this regard continues to be relevant. Fusion of legal regulation along with a sociological approach is urged by the people to end this social evil.

## Conclusion

From the work carried out, it became evident that peer pressure is the prominent reason that drives a person to consume alcohol. Excessive drinking can have serious consequences on the personal and professional life of an individual. Women are affected the most and are subjected to mental torture and suffer insecurities within the family itself. The family members of an alcoholic have a high tendency to get subjected to social isolation. But it should be noted that an equal number of people exhibit a sympathising approach towards the family of an alcoholic. The work identified that the perception towards an alcoholic may or may not depend on his economic status. The educated youth have a much liberal attitude and revealed that an alcoholic would be socially reprimanded irrespective of his social or economic status. It can be concluded that a proper implementation of regulatory measures and spreading awareness on the harmful effects of alcohol consumption can reduce the seriousness of the issue to an extent.

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