

# Alcoholism: Its Socio-Economic Consequences in Society

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**Abstract:** *This research paper critically examines the well-established notion in society that 'alcohol consumption by people fetches income to governments and help economies grow'. The hypothesis of this paper is that the economy of any country is contracted or destroyed due to alcoholism contrary to the predominantly prevalent notion that alcoholism helps the economy grow. It not only causes severe chronic health disorders in drinkers but also cause the destruction of the economies of people at micro level and this in turn adversely impact the country's economy. Even though it is a visible truth, the contemporary governments across the world view the liquor consumption by people as a major source of income as they get huge amounts of money in the form liquor tax. The destruction of the economy at micro level cannot contribute to the growth and development of the economy at macro level. It is this perception that paves the way for carrying out this research. The major objective of this paper is to come up with empirical facts proving that alcoholism is a destructive element both socially and economically. As the purpose of this paper is to prove the mentioned above, the deductive method is to be employed. This research is descriptive in form and transformative in essence.*

**Key Words:** *health disorders, socio-economic maladies, prohibition, drunkards, downtrodden, WHO, behavioural abnormality, crimes, violent assaults, social costs, direct costs.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Alcoholism is not only harmful to those who consume it but also to the entire country. While the individuals who are addicted to this death-defying habit are susceptible to various deadly diseases, the members of their families are deprived of basic amenities as the breadwinners of their families spend their wages on liquor consumption. This is a common phenomenon in India. The consumption of alcohol causes several health disorders in the addicted besides being a cause for several socio-economic maladies in society. So, the governments across the world need to understand the severity of the problem and prohibit alcohol production and consumption. Alcoholism causes severe health disorders in drinkers. Sometimes, the drinkers are susceptible to chronic diseases like, "oesophageal cancer, liver cancer, cirrhosis of the liver" (WHO, Global Status Report on Alcohol.2004).The right to live is a human right under any civilized political system. However, the deliberate policy of making liquor available for people by the democratic governments is a serious threat to the right. While the alcoholism causes "1.8 million deaths" (Global Status Report on Alcohol. 2004) in the world, it directly or indirectly causes "2.6 lakhs of deaths in India every year" (Alcohol Kills 2.6 L Indians Every Year: WHO Report2018). It is just as the availability of a sugar cube or a piece of confectionery that remains a cause for the infestation of ants, the liquor which is made available, alluring people, in the country also is a cause for the drinking habit among people; and consequently most of them likely to become drunkards ruining their health and wealth. If the governments impose Prohibition and implement it strictly[that means, if the availability of liquor in society is made impossible], the people who are addicted to this harmful habit can surely be rescued from the peril of their imminent deaths. "Over 55,000" people who "aged between 15 -29 years" died in Europe in 1999 due to alcoholism (Rehm& Eschmann, 2002. Cited from WHO, Global Status Report on Alcohol. 2004). Alcohol weakens the physical and mental abilities of individuals and this phenomenon in turn causes the origin of several socio-economic problems in society.

The liquor consumption, on most occasions, turns out to be the main cause for several disputes between life partners in families. In a developing country like India, generally the men who are addicted to liquor often resort to domestic violence. They put their wives to physical torture and mental harassment. The women, especially those who are not well-educated with poor economic status are subject to physical violence when they "refuse to give their husbands money for alcohol" or when their chastity is unduly suspected by their paranoid drunkard-husbands (Berg, Kremelberg, Dwivedi, Verma, Schensul, Gupta, Chandran and Singh. 2011). Unless, the liquor is banned and strictly implemented, the downtrodden, especially the women and the children of this class can not lead their lives in peace. Alcoholism is one of the major causes for the occurrence of crimes and the increase of crime rate in society. In addition to the domestic violence, alcoholism causes several "offences" which include "property crime, public-order offences" (Galbicsek. 2020) road accidents, street fights and so on. According to the study and analysis of Galbicsek, the alcoholism instigates the drinkers to resort to robberies due to their "feelings of desperation" and provokes them to "sexual assault" (Galbicsek. 2020) on women and children. The survey of National Crime Records Bureau reveals a

shocking fact that “alcoholism” is accountable for “70 – 80% of offences against women” (Times of India. 22 March 2015). The resource persons who took part in a state - level meeting on the “harmful effects” of alcohol held in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India in 2015 opine that the “government” is unwilling to prohibit alcohol in spite of several “anti - liquor campaigns by women” (85% Crime Against Women Due to Alcoholism: NCRB.2015). Unless the liquor is banned, the crime rate in any country cannot be lessened.

Alcoholism causes behavioural abnormality in drinkers and it desperately prompts them to commit crimes. Galbicsek’s study reveals this fact. He opines that the excessive alcohol consumption causes “irritability and extreme mood swings” in several individuals who in such a drunken state resort to sudden violent assaults causing “serious injury” to others (Galbicsek. 2020). Another important reason which reinforces the demand of Prohibition is that the excessive drinking habit in individuals make them abandon their natural responsibility of taking good care of the members of their family. As the drunkards spend almost all the amount of their wages on the consumption of alcohol, their children become victims being subject to the deprivation of education, health and other basic amenities and these miserable conditions are likely to contribute to “an increased risk of developing behavioural and physical problems as they get older” (Galbicsek. 2020). Justice N. Anand Venkatesh, the High Court of Madras finds fault, in this regard, with the contemporary governments. He has proclaimed in an order that “the State cannot wash its hand from the adverse effects of its policy of selling liquor to its own people” (Bokar and Khare. 2019). Allowing liquor production and consumption in the country means that the allowing of crimes to take place in society.

Aside from its severe harmful impact on the social life of individuals, its adverse impact on the country’s economy is enormous. It causes the contraction of the country’s economy. Because, it is due to the availability of liquor, right from villages to towns and cities, the people who are addicted to it spend almost all the amount of their wages on liquor itself. Instead of buying and consuming the other goods and services which are necessary for the healthy, socially accepted and dignified lives, the individuals purchase only liquor and this contributes only to the growth of the unproductive and useless liquor industry hampering the growth and development of the other crucial industries. It can be asserted from the statistics related to the liquor tax revenue of some states in India. *The Hindu Business Line* study reveals the fact that the state of Tamil Nadu earned “21,800” crores of rupees in the form of liquor tax in 2017, while the state of Kerala derived “22 percent of the total government revenue” (Basheer. 2018) from liquor. These statistics prove that the people who are addicted to drinking spend the lion’s share of their incomes on liquor consumption. It can be rationally assumed that their earnings could have been productively utilized for the purchase of the other essential goods and services like hygienic and nutritious food, necessary clothing, children education, health and medical commodities, household electrical and electronic appliances, if the liquor had been prohibited in those states. This progressive mode of consumption in turn surely strengthens the other industries. Furthermore, this desired and proposed liquor ban can surely enhance the people’s small savings which can help them meet their expenses of contingencies.

The social and economic costs of alcoholism are appalling. According to Klingemann and Gmel, the “social costs” are the “costs to society”. The drinkers and drunkards, due to their alcoholism, happen to fall ill often and consequently the probability of their susceptibility to several deadly diseases is very high. In such situations, the costs of their medical treatment --because of their poor economic status-- are not borne by them; those costs are to be borne essentially by society. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India says, a citizen should “produce the amount [he or she] consumes” to prevent himself or herself from being “a burden to society” (Rajvanshi. 2016). The words of Jawaharlal Nehru are to be agreed upon with some exceptions. As some sections of people such as the older people, the physically handicapped and the mentally challenged people, children, and the victims of genetic abnormalities cannot produce the amount what they need to consume, it is the responsibility of society to burden these “direct costs” which means that “the value of goods and services actually delivered” (Harwood, Fountain & Live more. Cited from WHO, Global Health Status Report on Alcohol. 2004) to meet their needs. So, the burdening of the “direct costs” of the needy by society is indispensable and justifiable. However, the individuals whose physical and mental conditions are normal are not to become a burden to society. So, they are to be sensitized on their irresponsible and unethical tendencies which adversely impact the society’s welfare by the progressive people’s forums and the well-intended non-governmental organizations in the country. The society loses its wealth not only through the direct costs of the medical treatment of the drunkards but also through the lesser productivity recorded in workplaces due to the physical and mental inefficiency caused by alcoholism in employees. According to Harwood, Fountain and Live more, apart from the “direct costs”, the society is also burdened with “indirect costs”. They opine that the drinking habit of people negatively affect the “value of personal productive services” (Harwood, Fountain and Live more. Cited from WHO, Global Health Status Report on Alcohol. 2004) which would in turn badly impact the productivity in workplace. Moreover, the alcohol consumption by people “before or during work hours” or “the night before” make them “arrive at work with a wicked hangover” and these negative tendencies of people cause the “reduction of productivity, workplace accidents and injuries, employee absenteeism, low morale, and increased illness” (Hughes. 2076). The alcohol ban can contribute to the progress of productivity in workplaces.

The alcoholism weakens the capabilities of the individuals who are addicted to it and causes the prevalence of chaotic conditions in society. It is a hurdle for the growth of the agricultural, manufacturing and territory sectors, as this habit among people who are employed in all these three sectors. As it is alleged by some intellectuals and social activists, if the governments make use of liquor production and distribution as a means of income, the ordinary who lack the ability of discretion cannot abstain from their liquor addiction. Unless the liquor is prohibited, the individuals' health, social harmony and economic progress will remain a mere dream forever. Furthermore, if the citizens of a country doze with alcoholism which is an aspect of hedonistic culture, they cannot always protect their country from foreign invasions. In this perspective, the alcoholism is a grave threat to the sovereignty of the country too.

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