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DRINKING CULTURE, RITUAL AND MODERNITY: ALCOHOLISM IN NAGA SOCIETY

Introduction

Alcohol is a depressant drug with certain beneficial health components but harmful when misused. Since time immemorial casual, social, sacramental or addictive drink under approval or disapproval is common in human society. For the Nagas, use of alcohol (rice-beer) and its consumption is an integral part of everyday life. In their cultural tradition, eating food and consuming rice-beer implies and carries almost the same and identical connotation. To talk of drinking rice-beer without relating within the context of food will not give its actual implication. Since rice-beer is closely interwoven with food, it is attached with value of sobriety and moderation. In the wake of social change, however, drinking has slowly assumed a new meaning, becoming more of a symbol of lifestyle, “modern” and means of entertainment, from erstwhile as ritual item, food and medicine. Cultural value of wine and its communicative meaning is fast eroded with eclectic indulgence for joviality. In course of time, alcohol consumption becomes a grave concern, mainly due to changes in its communicative value and mode of production and distribution.

Alcohol pathology knows no boundary of caste, creed, language and race since its related problem is serious, widespread and there is no sign of diminishing in future. Just how alarming it was the acknowledgment by WHA (World Health Assembly) during its Twenty-Sixth Assembly, where it unequivocally ranked alcohol consumption among the world’s major public health concerns (Grant 1985: 1). Alcohol-related disease has accounted for “3.2 % of the global mortality and 4.0% of the global burden of disease measured in disability –adjusted life years (DALYS)” (Rehm, Jürgen, Room, Roben, Monteiro, Maristela et al 2004:959). It is expected to rise “due to partly in increases in consumption in developing and emerging economies of south-east Asia and partly to shifting patterns of morbidity and mortality” (Rehm, Jürgen, Room, Roben, Monteiro, Maristela et al 2004:961). Besides any other factors, increased consumption for intoxication and entertainment contributes in worsening of

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its concern since “drinking alcohol is a *sine-qua-non* of the resultant pathologies” (Bedi 1988: 7).

To conceptualise and define, alcohol is a sedative drug potentially able to alter both mental and physical mood of a person. It is a chemical component of depressant drug, with certain desirable health ingredients but harmful when distorted. As long as its intake is within medicinal dose, it is considered advisable. Abused or misused is the prime factor of its resultant pathologies. Alcohol intake beyond bodily requirements produces destructive effect. While considering the affects of both social and physical aspects, Kessel and Walton defined alcohol as “intoxicate, hypnotic, analgesic, anesthetic, narcotic, poisonous and potentially habit forming, or addictive drug or chemical” (1969: 34). Alcohol in the paper will mean any kind of wine (distilled spirit, beer, beverage, vodka, liquor or local brew/wine) that contain an addictive crave.

No matter what, it would be unfair to posit that culture of alcohol consumption is a contemporary practice. Various researches have shown that concoctions resembling the present day alcohol were widely used since mankind’s remotest antiquity and its use has been extended over virtually to almost every part of the earth (Encyclopedia of Social Sciences Vol. 1, 1930: 619). Based on socio-environmental context and cultural setup, individuals in almost every society have been provided with certain means to use alcohol (Douglas 1987: 3-4). Since time immemorial social, sacramental or addictive drink under approval or disapproval has ubiquitous in human society. Irrespective of this fact, increased alcohol craze, particularly among the teens and youth, need to examine so as to find ways to tackle its menace. Alcohol influence is an igniting and galvanising factor of various social deviance and unwanted behaviours. It is notorious for its cascading and vicious consequence.

Naga Society: Tradition and Alcohol

As far as the Naga society is concerned, use of alcohol (rice-beer) and its consumption is social and traditional. Locally or indigenously, alcohol is known as *ozhe/hayi*. *Ozhe/hayi* is a generic term that refers to every type of wine, liquor or spirit. Based on nature and mode of brewing, alcohol in the Naga society can be broadly categories into locally brewed and imported. Imported alcohol includes all sorts of India-made foreign liquors (IMFL) and distilled spirits (native called *tuye*). Locally brewed alcohol is further sub-divided into *zochu* and *tomatie* on the basis of taste and mode of brewing.

To contextualise the fundamental understanding of consuming rice-beer in the Naga society, it is imperative to acquaint with the terms *shuo* (sip) and *chü* (drink). By understanding the terms *shuo* and *chü* will helps to convey better the food connotation of rice-beer. Consumption of Rice-beer is used in both cases - *shuo we* (sipping) and *chü we* (drinking). In times of narrating folktales, confidentially discoursing important matters, secretive talks, cultural

festivals and *feast of merit*, the term *shuo we* is applicable. On other ordinary days, individuals' seat together at cairn (*tokhu*) over a mug (*bamboo mug*) of rice-beer usually with a bowl where anybody may join also implies in the context of *shuo we*. With a mug of rice-beer, one can spend for hours and hours while sipping it. These acts of consuming do not reflect the response of the body stimuli but are traditional ways of life where sipping is norm. In changing social scenario, the act of taking or drinking tea is generally comes within the purview of *shuo we*. Drinking to quench the thirst or to satisfy the hunger comes in the context of *chü we*. *Chü* is an act primarily responded to the body stimuli and requirements. Usually, there is no specific time or particular restriction of taking *tea/chai* unless on health ground and precautionary measure, as it is very much a part of social life. However, no one keeps on drinking water or eating food unless one is thirsty and hungry. One can still have a cup of *tea/chai* after meal. Of course, it is becoming a habit for many. On the contrary, who goes for another meal when hunger is met? The condition of been thirsty and hungry is the prerequisite for drinking and eating. The act of drinking (*chü we*) is the ultimate reaction of the body wanting/lacking something to runs and functions properly on interval basis. So, rice-beer consumption is essentially an integral and core component of food.

One drinks not for intoxicating and social acceptance but to meet bodily requirements for its sustenance and fitness. Rice-beer is essentially consumed for health and used as food (Brown 1874: 19). Medicinally and scientifically, it is also proved and shown that rice-beer is less intoxicative and harmful as compared to other wine. By virtue of its less intoxicative, perhaps it can be used as food. The food meaning of rice-beer can be further seen when it is used as the only means for sustenance in some traditional rituals. For instance, prior to pulling and erection of a selected stone in honour of the performers of *feasts of merit*, individuals participating in the rituals are expected to abstain from any kind of foods except *ozhe / hayi* (rice-beer) and ginger (Mutum 2002: 202). On the day of every *genna*, the village chief needs to fast (*luo*), is expected to remain chaste and abstain from normal work. Whenever the chief fast, he is expected to abstain from any other foods other than rice-beer. Rice-beer is therefore attached with an attitude of moderation as in eating food and drinking water, and abusing becomes anti-social and considered as violation of social code as found and practiced in the Jewish culture (Keller 1977: 440-42). Consuming rice-beer is part of everyday life but not to get drunk.

In the Naga cultural tradition, therefore, eating food and consuming rice-beer implies and carries almost the same and identical connotation. To talks of rice-beer consumption without relating within the context of food does not gives its actual implication and will deviates from its socio-cultural value. It is difficult to comprehend the value of rice-beer consumption devoid of food. Rice-beer is not incongruous to everyday life as much as to socio-cultural tradition and religious life of the Nagas. As much as one eats food everyday for

proper functioning of the body so is rice-beer consumption. Noteworthy of such practice is that since rice-beer (*zochu*) is closely interwoven with food, religious life and practices, it is attached with value of sobriety and reverence. Consequently, religious and food value of rice-beer have acted as a spontaneous social deterrence from consuming for the sake of entertainment and intoxication. The principle of moral value and self-censorship is heavily injected in the practice of consuming rice-beer. There is no codified law in the Naga society but both young and old alike are governed by oral conventional means of social control and deterrent. In the absence of codified, statute and formal jurisprudence, family, neighbourhood and society as a whole together monitored the behaviours and conducts of a person. Relatively, limited choice of pleasure as well as scanty of distilled spirit and India-made foreign liquor (IMFL) helps to uphold temperate drinking practice then.

Also at times of feasts and festivals, which are interally sequenced round the year and celebrated according to phase of agricultural activities and needs of the society, Nagas used rice-beer but not to get drunk. Besides their significance as times of feasting, festival is an occasion where one reposing one's allegiance and faith in god. At the same time, during festival, the menfolk are expected to take a ritual bath in the wee hours from spring well as a mark of purification. Drinking is just a means to makes the feast/festival complete of its significant. For instance, during the festival of *saleni* (festival that symbolises the end of rice-plantation and beginning of reweeding) individual is expected not only to be cautious and restrained from indulging in gratuitous pleasure but also to maintain strict and well discipline with one's physical desire. During the entire span of *salekhro* (name of a month in the lunar calendar), where *saleni* falls, it is expected that every married couple shall restrain from sharing the bed since it is an occasion of self-purification (Hodson 1911: 181-83). For this reason, it is forbidden and undesirable to take dog's meat during *saleni* since it coincides with dog's mating season. Even during monumental preparation of the *feasts of merit* (*zhoso mozhü*) one should not only abstain from certain food items but is also expected to abstain from wife for number of months (Furer Haimendorf 1939: 17). Pleasure is not the prime attention, although feast/festival is an occasion of celebration while inviting nuptial family members, neighbours, needy and cowherds. Merry-making is just a means to achieve the preset goal. Besides, the culture and habit of serving rice-beer to guest/visitor is much more than just an item but communicates deeper meaning that reflects the expression of welcoming and showing hospitality as found in other pre-literate societies.¹ It signifies exchanged of pleasantries as well as expressing an act of harmlessness while extending the hands of friendship. Even during times of acrimony or someone has offended and hurt by words or deeds, rice-beer is used as a gesture of friendship and a mark of apology while seeking for rapprochement and forgiveness. Be it individual, village or community, wrong doers either in words

or deeds will carry a gourd of rice-beer along with a cock while seeking for pardon from aggrieved person/party. Depending on situation and context, rice-beer has wide communicative value and multi-dimensional implications.

Not to forget abusers and stray individuals, even during *feast of merit*, where rice-beer is lavishly served there is well established oral social code to ensure that it is not abused. *Chü mohru* (feasting at the host's place) is a manifestation of the *feast of merit*. To enforce and meet such social code, some honorary volunteers of elderly and respected fellows in the society would keep a watchful eye from abusing. When serving has reached to a particular stage, these elders would pronounce a loud yell audible enough as a mark to limit the frequency of serving. With the expression of the next hallooing, serving will be further restricted. After the last and third yelling, no one should go for another sip but is expected to fold *olebvüo* (cup made of banana-leaves specially meant for this purpose) and cast it away.² As practice and tradition, it is expected to drinks only in *olebvüo* and not in glass or mug during *feast of merit*. The feast marks success and fortune of one's life and sharing of the same with community members. It is a series of feasts defined by custom in every detail while aiming to maintain socio-economic balance and a means of elevating one's social status as the performance of which bestow prestige on the host. Each succeeding feast entails increasing the amount of paddy barn to be given for preparing food and brewing rice-beer, and number of cattle to be slaughtered. To commemorate the name of the benevolent person who has given the feast different monuments such stone monolith, *tukhu* (a cairn which serves as an open platform for the villagers to relax and get together), etc. are built. The feast communicates that honour and status do not lie in acquisition of material wealth but in the act of sharing the fruits of one's labour. It signifies a celebration of enterprise, hard work, good health and industriousness. The underlying message is not limited to strengthening of community ties alone, but to communicate the importance of hard work and commitment to one's profession. Organising a grand and lavish feast for days for fellow beings earned a person a place of honour and a role model for others to emulate. Performer of the feast besides the need to be diligent and thrifty gained public honour and set concrete precedence for other to learn (Furer Haimendorf 1939: 21). As a mark of honour and respect, a traditional shawl called *zhoso sa*, ornaments and certain traditional practices are reserved for the feast giver, the use of which was prohibited for others. Such was the significance and value of the *feast of merit* that one aspires to perform whereby motivated to be sincere, dedicated and industrious. The feast is an acclaimed social code and message that calls for introspection and discipline to become one of the performers.

Likewise, the institution of *morung* (youth dormitory) helped to mould the person from becoming a social nuisance as it was power house of knowledge and skills where individuals learned social lessons require for becoming responsible member of a society. Social, religious and cultural norms of the

society were communicated through the *morung*. It was in the *morung* that the young people learned their history, culture, folksong and dance through play-acting, singing and dancing. It also trained them in handicrafts, sculptures, sports, games, defence, warfare and other skills related to headhunting and raids. It was a premier institution for socialisation, and establishment responsible for developing the sense of security and premeditated modes of meeting life situation for young people (Jacobs, Macfarlane et al 1990: 27). Through its various activities, it helps to enhance traditional socio-cultural values for continuity and transmitted attributes of discipline, self-control, moral responsibility and avoidance of inebriated behaviour contrary to consider it as a 'den of vice'.³ While it was indeed difficult to rule out the possibility of falling to human lust, such behaviour was against the ethics and norms of *morung*. It was also true that personal relationships were formed and nurtured in the *morung*. But as a social institution, rather than encouraging promiscuity and perverseness, it serves as an ideal mechanism to control illicit sexual behaviour and other immoral activities such as abusive drinking, besides carrying out numerous other social roles. Referring to the objectives and role of the *morung*/youth dormitory, Bhowmick writes, "this acts as fraternities, secret societies or institutions meant for the seminary of future life, being trained and ordained by the cultural matrix of the group concerned" (1992: 22).

In addition, there are various sayings and adages directed to desist from alcohol abuse. For instance, this is what a popular saying goes, "to construct the terrace is far better than to build a dam," which means "instead of mounting one's belly with gallons of wine it is far better to cultivate a healthy habit". Another frequently quoted saying while reprimanding the abusers, "it is a taboo to keep on drinking".⁴ Taboo does not only indicate forbidden but also something, which is anti-social, uncultured and uncivilized not healthy for a normal person. The word taboo in Naga's usage and terminology means *chüno*. *Chüno* does not merely implies prohibited/forbidden but something that and individual should morally responsible to avoid. It reflects an act of moral obligation as well as a manifestation of self-restraint. Moral self-responsibility is a core component of the term *chüno* rather than social restriction alone. The violation of the norm of *chüno* besides attracting wrath of the community is an act amount to displacing god. Following the norm of *chüno* is an act of religious life. To live a life of socially respectable and god fearing person, one is expected to follow and abide the rule of *chüno*. The incorporation of the term taboo shows how alcohol abuse is looked down upon with severity and disdain. Not to mention that gluttony and excessiveness are regarded as unhealthy but uncultured too. In fact, in their traditional practice, the Nagas have a particular *genna (mani)*⁵ called *Pfüreshi mani*, once in every month, which is a means to control gluttony and excessiveness. Such loaded social deterrents prevent one to drinks for sake of pleasure and intoxication.

Social Change and Alcohol

In the wake of social change and modernisation, however, drinking has slowly assumed a new meaning, becoming more of a symbol of lifestyle, “modern” and a means of entertainment, from erstwhile as ritual item, food and medicine.⁶ Cultural value of wine and its utility is fast eroded with gross indulgence for joviality. This prompted to shift the question from quantity and frequency to a more relevant one, which is, the reason behind drinking. The situation has further convoluted due to available of India-made foreign liquor (IMFL) and distilled spirit, unlike the past. In course of time, alcohol consumption becomes a serious concern, mainly due to changes in its communicative value and control over its production and distribution.

True that rapid social change and modernisation come along with newer and varied form of enjoyment, and subsequently lifestyle and behaviour. In yesterdays, scale of entertainment was relatively low and even monotonous mostly concentrated within the limited space of clan, neighbourhood and village. The prevalence of fairly isolated socio-economic and political environment has barred from experiencing newer and varied lifestyles. Almost everyone was conscious and aware of the behaviour of the neighbours, clansmen/women, peers and villagers. They lived in a closely knitted social environment. Behaviours and lifestyles were largely identical then. However, mediated behaviour and lifestyle in the wake of social change has culminated in increasing alcohol fondness and subsequently its menace too. Drinking, therefore, is not as fatal as contemporary, when the society was far from the reach of mediated world and with equally low range of entertainment. As long as drinking practiced was within the range of accepted norm of socio-cultural life, it was culturally permissible. Serious alteration from cultural value of wine/*ozhe* as food and medicine to its use for pleasure and means of escape has increased its menace manifold.

For some years, under pressure from Christians and women organisations, and underground groups selling of alcohol has been restricted. The state government also passed a Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act (NLTP) in 1989 with insistent from the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (CNBC). Whether prohibited or not alcohol is available. NLTP Act becomes a mockery as flow of India-made foreign liquor (IMFL) has increased manifold through liquor barons and bootleggers (Telegraph February 17, 2012). Go to any towns or bazaars, from local wine, distilled spirit to branded India-made foreign liquor (IMFL), is not difficult to get. In the changing times, commercialisation of alcohol also has led to substantial increase of its menace. No long ago, use of alcohol for commercialisation was unknown in the Naga society. In an environment of swift and sea change, therefore alcohol consumption becomes a major concern, where there is a need to identify possible factors and to suggest means to contain its menace. To unfold possible factors, it is imperative to examine the prevailing socio-cultural life, drinking practice

and pace of change. It will be helpful to ascertain the extent of alcoholism by examining these elements.

Availability and Sensitisation

As noted, the Naga tradition is closely associated with locally brewed wine (rice-beer) and its use is nothing new. But somehow this does not pose grave problem as certain social deterrence and communicative practices were in place to put a check on its abuse. However, with fast erosion or sheer negligence of deterrence mechanisms coupled with availability, drinking becomes a cause of concern. Besides, weak sensitisation on its harmfulness makes an easy prey to it. The lack of serious and concentrated effort to prevent availability reflects the amount of frail concern on its risks. It all starts as social drink and part of tradition and in course of time increases amount and frequency. There is a strong correlation between availability and gravity of sensitisation on its hazards. Availability and deficient knowledge about its consequence creates difficulty when it comes to abstention. Of course, that does not rule out that socially accepted norms and advices are increasingly neglected particularly, by the younger generation and with it also the value of moderation. In some way, drinking, which is a traditional practice contributes in increasing its fondness. Everyone from person of average standing to those of eminent stature and common people barring with some few individuals consumed. Growing up in the society where alcohol consumption is part of tradition, indulging becomes common.⁷ As one cultivates culture through socialisation, cultural traits have been naively adopted, including drinking.

Understanding Alcohol

The underneath frail knowledge on consequences of alcohol abuse has other related intricacies. There is a propensity in the society that discouraging the use of rice-beer would mean robbing away an important value of cultural tradition. Likewise, a perception exists that prohibition and restriction of alcohol (rice-beer) would devalue the culture. Abstain from drinks will ruin the cultural value. Such endemic understanding of an intimate links between culture and rice-beer is injurious to control its menace. Every possibility is there that these sorts of perceptions are not going against the essence and spirit of cultural tradition. Cultural permissiveness, implicitly or explicitly, allows certain section of the population to defense their own weakness for alcohol. No one is propagating that rice-beer should stop using in rituals, ceremonies or as a cultural symbol to promote and protect cultural identity. The issue is that prevalent of permissive socio-cultural environment is not communicating enough messages to take appropriate step in tackling alcoholism. While advocating that culture permits drink, besides promoting alcoholism, it favours commercialisation. By rationalising tradition in the light of one's own interest, it fails to communicate and educate on its hazard.

Another interlinked understanding that comes in the way of combating alcoholism is the perception that marketing of alcohol yield economic benefit. Alcohol becomes one of the most preferred forms of modern business ranging from small localised part time to fulltime professional enterprise. Somehow, it leads to the emergence of those engaged in marketing alcohol as a means of livelihood and profession. Understanding of this sort is not necessarily inappropriate but has limited the chance to combat alcoholism. Presence of those who directly or indirectly derived income from alcohol is a barrier for the society from taking stringent rule against alcohol abuse. In hope of material benefits, view on liberalising alcohol sell is getting louder. Economic consideration prevented the society from taking proactive role, thereby undermined danger emanates from alcohol abuse. An interesting view is also related to ideas of individual freedom since there is a perception that to impose prohibition interferes in one's choice. Accordingly, there is a feeling that an individual should be allowed to define his/her own charter on drinks and foods. A popular opinion exists that prevention must not be greater than the mischief that comes from prevention. An act of prohibition is seen as something that amounts to interference in one's freedom. It believes that individual choice should not be forced to sacrifice at the altar of social good.

Likewise, certain influence emanates from categorisation of consumption patterns into "social" or "controlled" and "heavy" or "addicted". Thus, a priest has this to say, "taking of traditional wine is fine".⁸ In one particular village, a signboard near the bus waiting shed reads "no foreign liquor; defaulters shall be fined Rs. 5000/-". This prompted me to ask what does it mean? "You know no liquor in our village", noted a professed social worker. I further enquired; it means there is no alcohol in your village. He laughed. What about local wine? I pressed on. "It is all right," he answered.⁹ Likewise, an elderly respected fellow who also once held the post of the President of his tribe council (Hoho) states that "drinking is fine, provided its intake is within the limit".¹⁰ The pertinent question is what is the limit? Opinion such as like controlled or limited use is misleading. Classification of drinking pattern into moderate and uncontrolled drinks is not effective in controlling alcoholism. Down the line, classifying drinking patterns has undermined the effort to educate its threat. This reflects the magnitude of the lack of collective commitment to create conducive environment for combating alcoholism. It means that individuals with strong and undaunted moral authority speaking out against it are few and insignificant.

Technically and medicinally, classifying drinking pattern into "social", "controlled" or "habitual" is meaningful and interpretative, but destructive in individuals' everyday life. To interpret "social" and "controlled" drinking as harmless and fine would mean exoneration of its harmful consequence. Moreover, the pity is that not one final definition of alcoholism has been arrived yet (Chopra & Chopra 1990: 110), although the boundary between "moderate"

and “uncontrolled” or “habitual” drinking is difficult to draw. In Chand’s words, “the term social drinking is vague and thus defies definition” (1972: 143). In short, the propagators of moderate or social drinks will not mind crossing beyond the limit given a chance.

Dinking as Modern

Another reason for fondness of drinking is considered it as “modern”. While defying deep socio-cultural value/meaning attached to it, one starts consumed to project it as “modern”. Such consideration makes an easy prey to fall into the trap of modern lifestyle and fashion. The foreseeable problem starts when alcohol is used for entertainment and considered part of “modern”. In this regard, it is intuitive to conceptualise the notion of modern lifestyle. Modern lifestyle and standard, according to Inkeles (1969: 208-12) means economically independent and self-reliant, socially responsible, knowledgeable and tactful to address issue confronting at hand and reasonable to face worldviews and beliefs. It reflects a successful person who is capable to withhold trial and tribulation, hatred and love. This implies ability to take decision independently, make choice singularly, capability to face risks and challenges, and relatively free from social and familial influences. This also refers somewhat independence from patronage, politics and background. Garg and Parikh also noted that “modern identity meant primarily to be rational, to have scientific approach” (1995: 20). Modern identity and lifestyle means a paradigm shift from traditional mode of life.

By any standard, however, in the Naga society, quality of education and economic condition is weak to foster and sustain modern lifestyle. Their socio-economic condition is marred with backwardness and they hailed from a poverty-ridden community. Likewise, “modernisation of tradition” is far from satisfactory. At the same time, sense of maturity and intellectual level is comparatively weak. Relatively, they are more dependent and insecure. Despite this sharp contrast between ideal of modern lifestyle and theirs empirical reality, imitation of modern lifestyle is high so is alcohol abused. While reflecting on the blind imitation, a youth leader in the church notes, “people drink and puff cigarette because they want to look as smart as one of those celebrities and heroes shown in the films and advertisement. Ironically, in contrast to their expectation many end up as a village goon and frustrated person”.¹¹

It is used to promote one’s image and social acceptance. Often alcohol is deployed as a common denominator in projecting what one’s considers as “ideal world” or “modern world”. Drinking is becoming a means to socialise and makes friendship. With such understanding one began to imitate “modern” lifestyle as a way to cope with the contemporary changing times and to show one’s credential of being modern. Within the emergence of mediated and globalised world, there is a wave of considering drinking as fashionable. The implication of this acceptance is harmful because it insinuates internalising

false assumption into one's attitude as something essential and relevant. Individual is made to believe that in order to be modern or suave, one needs to take alcohol. That one needs to indulge to show his/her modern credentials. Drinking is becoming the concomitant behaviour of youth's lifestyle. Modern lifestyle appears to be lubricated by alcohol. Situation has created that modern lifestyle means necessarily involves drinking. Indeed, the craze for modern ways and lifestyles has being felt acutely. However, change through copying of other lifestyle without compatible socio-economic condition only leads into a mad-rush chimera. Imitation of lifestyle incompatible to cultural practice, which is in the words of Grant, "imitating the cosmopolitan drinking patterns of the tourist" (1985: 5) is causing the problem.

Parental Role

Besides, close and interlinks factor that contributes in the rise of alcoholism is the role of the parents. Parents' role is important and crucial since family continues a primary agent of socialisation in the Naga society. However, with exception of some few, most of the parents are far from being an ideal role model. Parents' inability to serves as an exemplarily role is contributing for the wards to do the same. Parents' drinking habit only leads the children to follow them. They are unable to exemplify as responsible individuals, and hence, through their conduct, consciously or unconsciously allow their wards to do the same. Most of the children exposed to the habit of indulging or abstaining within the roof of the family. Of course, blame cannot goes to parents alone for many abuses much against the wishes of the parents. Parents do reprimand the children not to indulge in drinking, but they themselves are not free from it. Words alone in the absence of desirable behaviour fail to deliver positive impact. The noteworthy point is that when the parents themselves are caught in between what value to cherish, whether to drink or not, it is difficult to impart the value of abstinence. Children take cues from what the parents are. If the parents present models of stable and responsible behaviour, facing problems realistically children will get a clear message. Otherwise, children are most likely to fall into the same trap.

Peer Pressure and Self-Responsibility

Individual irresponsibility and peer pressure is also a contributing factor. Initially, one may hold accounts on availability, traditional permissiveness or destructive parental role, but the end result is all about one's responsibility. There is growing attitude of negligence to pay heed on advices and teachings as one prefers to define ones' own course of life. The influence of friends and peers is not better. Their influence is vital since there is strong tendency to look up to them on various issues related to life. Peers and friends together constitute a strong social component in one's life. Both in times of jubilation and trials the companion of peers is crucial. Increasingly, there is a tendency

to consider drinking as a means to socialise and becomes a common stuff in every social gathering and function. Giving the situation, one is more likely to yield to desire and requirement of peers/friends. Peer pressure comes in the form of initially urging to have a sip for the sake of entertainment and eventually end up been habituated. One failed to handle dynamically peer pressure during events and celebrations but ends up entertained with alcohol.

Likewise, frustration of being failure and hardship prompts one to abuse. Using alcohol as means to release tension/stress or to escape from reality is common. It is used to get rid of tensions, hide from shame and despair. The frustration of being unemployed, failure to achieve, financial problems and the likes makes a person difficult to face the situation. Besides few who are determined and focused, hardship facilitates to take alcohol. Reflecting this view, a private schoolteacher says, "I started taking alcohol when I did not get a proper job".¹² A college dropout also shared similar experience as he notes, "I am driven to alcohol due to failure and frustration".¹³ Due to disappointment and helplessness one caught up with alcohol since it is considered as the means to escape. In haste to wrap up shame, frustration and hardship, one ends up an abuser.

Measures to Combat

First and foremost, the society needs to build up a strong opinion and value on not to consume. Creating adequate awareness and consciousness of alcohol hazard is essential. Likewise, pro-alcohol attitude need to be checked. Youth organisation, local club, women's group, church and parents need to take up proactive role and joint action to tackle alcoholism. Besides providing quality education, there is a need to engage in vocational activities like sports, talent competition, community development, leadership training, skill enhancement training, career counseling and other short term vocational courses. Above all, self-actualisation and self-discipline is the best option to tackle alcoholism. Similarly, there is a need to restrain alcohol commercialisation and alternative means need to be explored for those considered it as a means of survival. At the same time, needs to organise seminar/workshop and talk in a systematic way with consistent effort to create awareness about its hazard. There is a noble task to impart and motivate healthy will power to alcoholics of how to overcome. Encouragement should be given to habitual abusers to lead a positive life through intensive motivation and counseling.

Amplly clear that single family or one village alone cannot redeem the situation. Joint effort and collective responsibility of different stakeholders is required to contain alcoholism. There is also need of solid social commitment and earnest campaign on it. Abuse cannot be merely adjudged as good or bad since it cuts across health, economy, social norms, career and family. The possible revival of its abuse as social and moral issue and preventive control is becoming all the more vital. A holistic approach to the treatment of alcohol-

related problems in tune with socio-cultural environment becomes a necessity (Porter, Arief & Curran, 1986: 26). The objective should be to change the attitude and belief of individual, particularly, the high-risk group – the youth. In fact, the most proven means to combat is, to use the words of Rootman, “guarantee value on evils of drinking” (1985:59). When there is a clear demonstration on the value of abstinence and effect of alcohol, people would be receptive to preventive methods.

Conclusion

Alcoholism has numerous consequences, which harms individual, one’s immediate family and society at large. The immediate consequence is on physical, mental, economy and career. Its effects are found associated with increase in social crimes, moral laxity and substance abuse. It has implication in every measure of social well-being including job prospect, family harmony, one’s personality and sense of responsibility. The abusers caused much trouble and anguish to the family. It disturbs family’s well-being whereby leading to frequent quarrelling and tension. Likewise, at the personal level the effects run into volumes. Its abuse is the gateway to substance abuse, the path to deviate from normal social life and the *sine-qua-non* for the growth of personality disorder. While squandering lives with alcohol, one ruins both studies and health. Thus, one starts as social drink, for the sake of entertainment, gradually turns into habit formation. The consequence is not confined to the individual and the family alone. It trickles down and threatens the whole fabric of society thereby causing tensions and more problems.

By invoking individual right and consumer choice, it leads to breaking down the very thread of social deterrence. The consumption pattern has crossed beyond cultural permissiveness while deviating from cultural value of temperance. Cultural value of wine (rice-beer) has altered with time. Thanks to situation of traditional permissiveness and misused of the cultural value, drinking is increasingly considered as modern. The atmosphere of awareness of the risks of alcohol in terms of life, health and economy is inadequate. There is no strong cross-sectional community participation in combating alcoholism. Not a single NGO, to mention the least, is wholeheartedly engaged in combating it other than women organisation. The role of the schools and colleges to reduce risk of alcohol is negligible. Although, for the Nagas locally brewed rice-beer is as old as their society, new pattern of alcohol craze is threatening the traditional social system.

NOTES

1. The use of alcohol as exchange item and expression of friendship is popular in other communities also. See, Pan, Lynn Pan 1975. *Alcohol in Colonial Africa*. Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, p. 7.
2. Lokho Nenio, Daikho Nepuni, Daiho Hepuni of Shajouba Village, Senapati, Manipur

stated the view during the course of the author interaction with them.

3. Other studies had also noted that the lessons on discipline, good manner, and obedience were done in the *morung*. Shimray, R. R. 1985. *Origins and Culture of Nagas*. New Delhi: Privately Published by P. Shimray, pp. 193-95.
4. These are some popular sayings/adages that the author gathered from Nepuni Salew, Kaisü Lohrü , Kho Toshüni in the course of his interaction/discussion with them.
5. The term *genna* has a religious connotation rather than mere social norm. During the pre-literate days, the Nagas did not have ordained priest, doctrinal institution, place of worship or sacred texts but worshipped god and spirits by means of *genna*. The term, in its primary sense applies to mass prohibition, permanent or temporary, periodic or occasional, from usual activities and cultivation work, and forms an important part of the tribal law.
6. Many have become easy prey to the vice of “new culture” such as drug addition, alcoholism and moral laxity. See, Thumra, J.H. 2000 “Development in the North East: Constraints and Prospects”. In M. Horam (ed.) *The Rising Manipur*. New Delhi: Manas Publications, p. 128.
7. Besides Indian made foreign liquor such as Beer, Rum & Whisky, illicit and spurious local brew is available. The demand of the local made is on the rise since many cannot afford better quality and costlier ones. There are views that to meet the demand, certain unethical methods are being adopted for faster production like the use of harmful chemical/substance.
8. Fr. Mario, who teaches at Don Bosco School, Senapati, Manipur.
9. This is based on the interaction that the author had with David at Tunjoy Village, Paomata sub-division, Senapati, Manipur.
10. Ashiho, social worker and distinguish fellow from Kalinamei village of Mao-Maram sub-division, Senapati, Manipur expressed the view.
11. Leader of a Christian Youth Endeavour (CYE) of T. Khullen village shared the view, which was also echoed by different individuals in various walks of life.
12. David, a graduate teaching in Mount Gibeon Higher Secondary School (MGHSS), Tadubi expressed the view during the course of the author interaction/discussion.
13. Kholu, an undergraduate dropout hailed from Purul village of Purul sub-division, Senapati shared his mind during the course of the author interact with him.

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