



The Peace Gong

Vol - 13

Pages - 06

October 2016



This is published as part of a Media and Information Literacy Initiative of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore Foundation.
This issue is Published in Association with Nada India Foundation.

Editorial....



People were consumed by the dark. The insipid night had the flecked full moon and a handful glittering stars. It wouldn't let them quit. It made their spirit dark and their existence susceptible to infiltration by the dark spirits. It looked like an exciting pursuit, socially and legally accepted. It seemed to be an "escape" from all their anxieties.

Dylan Thomas wrote, "Do not get gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of light." These people didn't understand that they carry within them luminosity. They carry in their hearts love for their family. They bear in them ardor, courage and friendship. They hold a will brighter than the sun. They didn't recognize that they carry within the vigor and valor to fight any darkness.

Alcohol is a threat to life. It is causally linked to eight different cancers and detrimentally related to many cardiovascular outcomes including hypertension and hemorrhagic strokes. It causes liver diseases like alcoholic hepatitis and cirrhosis and also pancreatitis. Alcohol is strongly related to non-communicable diseases (NCD) which account for 60 per cent of all deaths caused in India.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recently published a report and among a list of 40 nations, India got the third position, for shooting alcohol intake between 1992 and 2012. Dr P C Gupta, director of Sekhsaria Institute of Public Health, quoted a WHO report which said about 30% of Indians consume alcohol, out of which 4-13 per cent are daily consumers and up to 50% of these fall under the category of hazardous drinking. This is where our country stands when it comes to consumption of a legal drug.

In a family, parents taking up alcohol create frightening and dangerous situations for their children. The children suffer from residual neglect and maltreatment. These children have more psychological problems than other children and are more prone to evince self destructive behavior including substance abuse. They even develop low sense of self-worth.

Children who indulge in alcohol think that it is a leisure activity or start drinking due to peer pressure. Alcohol is chemically addictive but the getaway it provides from problems of growing up makes it much more addictive. This addiction takes the greatest hold at a young age. It appears to be recreational and mild but it may be the crippling element of life.

In an effort to contain the damage from non-communicable diseases in India, the global NCD Alliance convened a consultation of civil society organizations in July 2015. An impromptu committee of organizations working on NCD issues in India volunteered to form the 'Healthy India Alliance' for the prevention and control of NCDs in India. Nada India Foundation joined the round table and later the Governing Board of the Alliance comprising 18 member organization covering four diseases and four risk factors.

Nada India as a member of the Healthy India Alliance sees it as an opportunity to build joint ventures for strengthening systems related to alcohol prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in India. The best part of this alliance, as it builds upon the unique potencies of varied CSOs like Health Bridge, Indian Cancer Society, Pallium India, HRIDAY, Public Health Foundation of India, and many more, is to mobilize resources and alleviate the health and socio-economic intricacies arising from NCDs in India.

Alcohol may give you perception of wings, but remember that it will take away your blue sky. We don't want another child to veil behind the drapes. We don't want another family to lose a member. We don't want another woman to bear brutality. We don't want another adolescent to engage in alcohol.

We stand with you. With every step you take away from alcohol, we hold your hand. With every alcohol-free breath of yours, we breathe with you. With every stair you climb towards your family, we walk with you. Quit alcohol; save yourself from non-communicable diseases.

Kanupriya Gupta
Class XII, Bhopal

Alcohol and its effects.

Uttami Thangjam, Class -XI, Imphal.

An alcoholic in the family disrupts the happy environment of the family and causes harm to the family members that can last a lifetime. Even though Manipur is a dry state, a large number of people are into alcohol as it is freely available in the black market. So instead of putting on hold the drinking habit of the people of the state, the entire business has gone underground. It is affecting a large number of families in the state.

After a survey of several families where there are alcoholics it was found that the children of these families are the most affected. If the parents are alcoholic, the child usually has a poor self-esteem and has a guilty feeling that 'Oh! my parents are alcoholics because of me'. If the child is a bad academic achiever they think 'its all because of me I am a bad child'. This feeling of guilt is there in most of these children. The effects of these are seen in their studies, school performances and in their friendships.

After talking to a large number of people it was felt that social and economic problems, depression, sadness, anger, failure are some factors that lead to alcohol consumption.

Talking to a few doctors in Imphal it was clear that heavy consumption can lead to damage of heart, liver, memory problems, immune disorders, etc. Alcohol consumption means laying foundation stone for many diseases or welcoming them to our body.

The students who were interviewed for the story opined that use of alcohol should be avoided at all cost. They felt that depending on alcohol to avoid problems is a foolish idea. All problems has its own solution and we should try to find the solution to solve our problems rather than depending on alcohol to forget it. The students said, "If all people stop using drugs and alcohol then the world will be filled with cheerful, healthy people; less crime better law and order situation".

Some teachers felt participation in online social media e.g., Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp have skyrocketed in recent years has created a new environment for teens these days. They may be exposed to and influenced by alcohol-related content. Young people are exposed to images through online portrayals of drinking on personal pages as well as unregulated alcohol marketing on social media that may reach underage people. Such online display of alcohol behaviour is tempting making many youth to taste at least once and this is how the habit starts, the teachers pointed out.

Peer pressure or direct or indirect encouragement from one's own age group to take to alcohol and drugs is another important reason for young people becoming alcoholic. Some students felt that it has become trendy to consume alcohol hence a large number of youth take to alcohol in order to be 'more socially accepted'

So our appeal is that instead of making alcohol intoxicating our lives why don't we eradicate alcohol and bar it from entering our life.

Interview

Suneel Vatsyayan

Suneel Vatsyayan, is a practicing social worker and Chairperson of Nada India Foundation and member of Governing body of Healthy India Alliance for Prevention and Control of NCD in an email interview with The Peace Gong team, Mr. Vatsyayan underlines the essentials of an ideal alcohol policy



What are the essentials of an ideal alcohol policy?

India has a long tradition and culture of temperance and sobriety, majority of the population is abstainers from alcohol specially women and children that is why alcohol industry sees India as a potential market. Essentially the national alcohol policy should protect abstainers in a market driven society and preserve the culture of temperance by focusing on:

Prevention of alcohol-related harm and protection of public health and welfare of the people

Alcohol taxation to reduce consumption of alcohol and taxation revenues dedicated for alcohol prevention. It should support NGOs involved in alcohol prevention and rehabilitation.

Minimum legal age for sale and purchase of alcohol (minimum 21 years) and provision of random breath-testing on road and workplace.

Administrative license suspension or other swift punishment for offenders of legislation on drunken driving and people providing alcohol to young people below legal age.

Effective ban on alcohol brand and brand extension promotion, sponsoring and counter monitoring and education to challenge prevailing alcohol expectancies.

Integration of Non communicable diseases and alcohol control into national development agenda is the key for long-term sustainable and effective alcohol policy.

I think Article 47, Directive Principles should become the basis of all alcohol policies, It states that "The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary should become duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health".

How does youth get access to alcohol inspite of the age- bar in every state?

Alcohol distribution is state subject and each state frames their own rules and age vary from state to state like in Delhi it is 25 year and 25 in neighboring states like Haryana is 18, Punjab 25, 18 year in Utter Pradesh and Rajasthan 21. Since alcohol industry targets young people so there is general tendency of leniency in implementing this rule of age by shop keepers and restaurants. The biggest source of alcohol availability is home and use of alcohol in the family by adult promotes rather prevent early experimenting with alcohol. The government has proposed to make it mandatory for police to register a complaint if a child is found to be under the influence of liquor, narcotic drugs, cigarette, paan masala or other tobacco products.

In a move aimed at tightening the noose around those selling or offering such substances to a juvenile, police will also have to ascertain how the juvenile came under the influence or possession of these substances. Nada India supports such amendments in the JJ Act.

Indian youth is at risk and people in our country are individually blaming the youth for their indulgence. What is our policy lacking?

You are right young people are always being blamed for their indulgence, there is a need to look at other side of the issue from social perspective in a market driven society. Alcohol is state subject as far as enforcement is concerned, we need young people like you and child right groups to see around them and raising their voices. Section 33 of UN Convention on child right says that the state should take measure to protect children from substance abuse and prevent the use of children in the illegal trafficking of such substances. Our policies should be preventive and protective.

What role does a family play in child's life? Can family be a cause for child taking up alcohol?

The adults in the family are important especially during first five years of the child

and our communication with children. Most the time adults use language indiscreetly and abusive and it effects their self esteem. Family has to listen the child first. Listening to children and youth is the first step to help them grow healthy and safe .The life-skills training and education on the real effects of alcohol on families effected and affected by alcohol should be imparted.

If alcohol is banned in India, will it end addiction completely?

No, just banning alcohol is not enough, cutting supply of alcohol is important and India has set a target of reducing alcohol by 10% by 2025. False demand created by alcohol industry and sustained alcohol marketing targeting young one should be countered by demystifying the alcohol and its effects as a wonder legal drug for all occasion and reasons.

Non- communicable diseases pose a great threat to the Indian society today and a major reason for them is alcohol. How can the alcohol policy cover this aspect of addiction? This needs to be discussed.

In India, NCDs are estimated to account for 60% of all deaths. Science knows about the correlation of cancer and alcohol use since the 1980s. The International Agency for Research in Cancer (IARC), the WHO's research body, classifies alcohol as class one carcinogen since 1988. "Indian society is losing more than it is gaining due to alcohol"

Alcohol can also significantly drain family budgets, since costs for NCD-related health care, medicines, and costs for alcohol diverts households' income and resources from ensuring food and nutrition security and from basic education. It is estimated that while gains in terms of revenue from alcohol sales in India are Rs 216 billion every year, losses from the adverse effects of alcohol are estimated to be Rs 244 billion, apart from immeasurable losses due to multiple and rollover effects of alcohol consumption.

Nada India as a member of the Healthy India Alliance sees it as an opportunity to build partnerships for strengthening systems related to alcohol prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in India. I see HIA as an engagement of multi-sectoral Civil Society Organizations to tackle NCDs by generating awareness, building capacity, empowering people effected and affected by NCD and advocating for health promoting norms to reduce premature NCD mortality by 25% by 2025.

Interview

Rahul Luther

Mr. Rahul Luther of the Hope Trust is working to create awareness against alcoholism. The Trust is promoting treatment for addictions- alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling and dual diagnosis. In an email interview with The Peace Gong Editor, Kanupriya Gupta, he talks in detail how consumption of alcohol affects families and children.



How does alcohol consumption in a family affect the children?

- Families affected with addiction could be a risk factor for children

to use drugs/alcohol themselves.

- Children are likely to be victims of physical/verbal abuse when addiction runs in the family.
- Addicted parent is more likely to lack the ability to involve actively in the family and therefore expect their children to be competent but are likely to follow a damaging discipline.
- The children tend to be over/under achievers, lack of healthy emotional balance, lack of empathy for others, suffer from low self-esteem, inadequate social/interpersonal skills, at a high risk of developing mental health issues such as mental disorders (depression, anxiety, psychotic disorders, thinking disorders, etc.), develop maladaptive personality traits such as aggression, may get overly responsible at an early age.

Can abuse on women and children be blamed on alcohol consumption?

- The alcoholic/addict when under the influence seems to have lack of proportion and perspective of the reality. Therefore, there is a likelihood for alcohol consumption as a cause of domestic violence.

What are the reasons for teen substance abuse?

- Family history of addiction
- Lack of family system/organization
- Poor parenting skills
- Peer pressure- need to belong to a certain group; non-assertive traits
- Inquisitiveness developed through media

- Lack of skills to cope with stress
- Lack of healthy social/interpersonal skills
- Premorbid traits of an addictive personality

What are the ways and means through which children get access to alcohol? How can we prevent under age drinking?

- Children can get access to alcohol which is available at the household premises. They either steal it or are offered by their friends and family members.
- A lot of children have access to getting forged/fake ID proofs which gives them entry in the places where liquor is served.

What are the effects of alcohol on children?

- Until the age of 25, the brain of humans is still "under construction." Alcohol, drugs or any other behavioural addictions (eating, internet, porn, relationships, etc.) have a direct affect on the functioning of the brain, therefore changing the state of their mind. As a result, there is an abnormal/dysfunctional development of the brain which may lead to varied mental illnesses at an early age (if not taken care of, can lead to being an untreatable mental health condition).
- Alcohol/drugs also tend to affect our organs in the body, especially the immune system which is responsible for fighting any diseases/illnesses. The children who are acquainted to alcohol/drugs at an early age continue to become weak and develop varied physical deformities. Excessive use can also lead to death.
- In the area of personal development and growth, they may end up in a chaotic state in life with regard to education, career, relationships, and social life. They may end up in a legal suite or a mental asylum at an early age with a disintegrated life.

What is the best way to educate children about drinking?

- It is important to teach them social skills at an early age which can help them tackle peer pressure and other social stressors. This can also be of great possibility when the children are still at school-level as they can be moulded in any form.
- A healthy parenting style is also an important aspect to be taken care of while the children are growing up.

Is there any treatment or intervention for the children who consume alcohol occasionally?

- Yes. There is a treatment available for children who consume alcohol/drugs. Schools can have counsellors that can help them deal with their issues effectively.
- Various educational workshops can also bring in lot of knowledge/awareness among children in the purview of addiction.
- Parents can also be educated about this issue so that they can take effective measures to avoid a situation like this as much as possible.
- Schools can also send them for fieldtrips and/or conduct audio/video sessions (movies/documentaries) that bring in awareness.

What role can children like us play to spread awareness about alcohol and its effects?

- Children can spread awareness among the peer groups about the effects of addiction in their lives through formal/informal talks.
- They can encourage their friends/family members who consume alcohol and also take them for help if possible.
- They can volunteer to work with various organizations that conduct outreach programs in schools.



A Nada Peer support workshop in progress

WHO calls on governments to do more to prevent alcohol-related deaths and diseases

Worldwide, 3.3 million deaths in 2012 were due to harmful use of alcohol, says a new report launched by WHO today. Alcohol consumption can not only lead to dependence but also increases people's risk of developing more than 200 diseases including liver cirrhosis and some cancers. In addition, harmful drinking can lead to violence and injuries. The report also finds that harmful use of alcohol makes people more susceptible to infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and pneumonia.

The "Global status report on alcohol and health 2014" provides country profiles for alcohol consumption in the 194 WHO Member States, the impact on public health and policy responses.

"More needs to be done to protect populations from the negative health consequences of alcohol consumption," says Dr Oleg Chestnov, WHO Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. "The report clearly shows that there is no room for complacency when it comes to reducing the harmful use of alcohol."

Some countries are already strengthening measures to protect people. These include increasing taxes on alcohol, limiting the

availability of alcohol by raising the age limit, and regulating the marketing of alcoholic beverages.

Report highlights

The report also highlights the need for action by countries including:

national leadership to develop policies to reduce harmful use of alcohol (66 WHO Member States had written national alcohol policies in 2012);

national awareness-raising activities (nearly 140 countries reported at least one such activity in the past three years);

health services to deliver prevention and treatment services, in particular increasing prevention, treatment and care for patients and their families, and supporting initiatives for screening and brief interventions.

In addition the report shows the need for communities to be engaged in reducing harmful use of alcohol.

On average every person in the world aged 15 years or older drinks 6.2 litres of pure alcohol per year. But as less than half the population (38.3%) actually drinks alcohol, this means that those who do drink consume on average 17 litres of pure alcohol annually.

The report also points to the fact that a higher percentage of deaths among men than among women are from alcohol-related causes - 7.6% of men's deaths and 4% of women's deaths – though there is evidence that women may be more vulnerable to some alcohol-related health conditions compared to men. In addition, the authors note that there is concern over the steady increase in alcohol use among women.

(<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2014/alcohol-related-deaths-prevention/en/>).



Kerala Story

Society needs to act against alcoholism

Roshni Nair, Class XI, Wayanad

God made Kerala at leisure, breathing into it a fine balance of timeless beauty and divine elegance. He took time to smooth the rough edges and decorate it with stunning beaches, lush green flora and rolling hills just to name a miniscule part of the geography. But today it is home for the largest number of alcoholics; it has a rapidly growing population of cancer patients and now the latest shocker of all—74 per cent of the children between the age group 5-18 in the state use tobacco. The state has the highest per capita liquor consumption in the country (over 8 liters per person a year), surpassing traditionally hard-drinking states such as Punjab and Haryana.

The Peace Gong Waynad team did a survey amongst students, parents and teachers and tried to gauge the impact of alcoholism in their lives. It was unanimously pointed out that alcohol turns people into different people, incapable of differentiating right and wrong. It is common knowledge that

alcohol affects the functioning of the brain. There is an aggressive streak in every person. It is the inhibitions brought on by social and cultural norms which keep those streaks in check. Consumption of alcohol makes one lose those inhibitions and the person acquires an unusual and unnatural courage, which makes them feel they can do or say anything. They turn authoritarian and turn violent at the smallest of provocations.

The survey revealed that alcoholism affects interpersonal relationships of individuals. "The wife and children are the worst hit, as they are the ones readily available to face aggressive behaviour of alcoholics," all of those who were interviewed pointed out.

Alcohol, tobacco and inhalants are common initial substances of abuse and have been described as gateway substances. Over consumption of these gateway substances has made Kerala as the state of highest cancer patients. Out of every one lakh males, 133 persons suffer from the disease,

while in the case of females, it is 123 for every one lakh.

The students who were interviewed for survey felt that alcohol is undoubtedly the root cause of all evil for a good section of such families, and a ban will be a blessing for them.

Roshan, a youth volunteer pointed out, "Consumption of alcohol makes one lose many inhibitions and the person acquires an unusual and unnatural courage, which makes them feel they can do or say anything. This results in wrecking of relationships."

Alcoholism, the survey revealed, is an individual's problem and it occurs in a personal space. So to solve the alcoholism problem, it is the individual who has to take the maximum responsibility. The state can at best facilitate the process of stopping alcoholism but it is the individual and the society who needs to act to stop this menace.

Recognizing the Boundaries of Liberty

Parul Shukla
Class - XII
BHEL, Bhopal

Liquor destroys liberty. Liquor maims the future. Liquor impedes education. So why should we let our youth destroy everything valuable a life is comprised of? These were the questions that The Peace Gong Bhopal posed during group discussions with youth mostly college and high school students. There were eight girls in the group of 20 during the discussions to understand the effects of alcohol in the lives of people.

Different views and ideas emerged from this group discussion. The group felt that alcohol abuse is a pattern of drinking that results in alcohol dependence regardless of its negative consequences. Among the upper class, it is considered as a status symbol to mark every occasion, as simple as a get together or as impressive as a wedding, with a pint. And among the lower income groups, it has become a tradition to consume some after getting wages for a day's work.

The group discussion revealed that it was unfortunate that despite being aware of the cost of consuming alcohol, people do not give heed to the continuous warnings issued in public interest. Alcohol consumption attributes to about 10 per cent of the disease burden due to tuberculosis, epilepsy, hemorrhagic stroke and hypertensive heart disease in the world. It can even lead to liver failure, pancreatitis and neurological disorders.

One Indian dies every 96 minutes due to alcohol. According to National Crime Report Bureau (NRCB) alcohol-related deaths had a sharp rise by 21 per cent in 2012 and it has been surveyed that Maharashtra was at the top followed by 564 deaths in Madhya Pradesh.

The group discussion also revealed that aside from physically harming the human body, alcoholism also paves the way for broken relationships, neglected family life, debt to fund drinking habit, drunk-driving

accidents and dis-inhibition leading to sexual assaults and crimes.

One of the most pressing matters persisting in our society today, as an effect of alcohol abuse is violence against women and children. Excessive drinking results in impaired judgement, slurred speech, memory lapses and impulsive behaviour. Heavy intoxication can make abusers aggressive, angry or depressed, and may take out all their frustration on their innocent wives or children.

Nationally, it was felt there has been an astonishing rise in the number of road accidents caused by driving under the influence of alcohol. Its intake lowers the functioning of the brain as a consequence of which, the number of cases related to destruction of life and property are on the rise.

Aishwarya Yadav of The Sanskaar Valley School, whose mother is a nurse superintendent said, "My mother even tells me about such cases she has witnessed where people have gone through an accident due to drinking and driving that they couldn't even realize that they are lying in a hospital with severe wounds even after many hours due to alcohol consumption."

Today not only the adults but also the children, the teenagers have got into the trap of alcohol. Youngsters and most of the elders don't know the long term effects of alcohol. Sneha Pandey, a counsellor said, "The first step to cut down the consumption of alcohol is creating awareness. Most youngsters consume alcohol because of some random peer pressure and because they think it makes them enjoy life even more."

Though everyone is conscious of the outcome of alcohol abuse, people still consider it as a tonic for all their troubles. According to the Organization for Economic

Cooperation and Development (OECD) report released in May 2015, alcoholism increased by about 55 per cent between 1992 and 2012. On the 'Years of Life Lost' scale, which is based on an alcohol-attributable years of life lost, India has been rated 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. This implies that the alcohol consuming population of our country loses most years of their lives because of drinking and its consequences.

Many states like Bihar, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have banned liquor and perhaps Madhya Pradesh is on its way. "No new liquor shops will be opened or beverages would be encouraged" said Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mr Shivraj Singh Chauhan though the state has no plans to ban alcohol.

One in four men in Madhya Pradesh's rural area is affected by alcohol abuse. According to Dr Shidhaye who took part in the group discussion pointed out on a test was conducted on 3,220 adults in Sehore district, using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) to know the number of people who consumed alcohol and the proportion of people who faced various problems due to it. He said that among drinkers, 33.2 per cent had AUDIT scores consistent with hazardous drinking, 3.3 per cent with harmful drinking and 5.5 per cent with dependent drinking.

Thus, the group discussion observed that people might be thinking they are consuming alcohol whereas with each sip of it they have, alcohol is the consuming their lives. It is the moral duty of parents and elders to be role models and make their children aware of the harmful effects and outcomes of alcohol consumption; as rightly put in words by Franklin D. Roosevelt - "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."

Simran Gupta
Class- XI
Bhopal

Peer educator's experience

Komal, Class XII
New Delhi, Pehchaan Nada India

Drama is a powerful medium to create awareness on social issues. It communicates easily to a wide spectrum of audience. Aware of the enormous potential of the medium, the Nada India team performs plays in different localities and educational institutions.

As part of the sensitization programme against drugs and alcohol, the drama team of Nada India organized a programme in

D.A.V. Public School Vasant Kunj. The team comprised of 20 students where four were peer leaders and six were peer educator and rest 10 students came from different families.

We exchanged ideas about our play with the school students who were of class 10th and also got the chance to talk to their drama teacher. They were the first one to present the play which highlighted the issue of "Say

no to drugs" and "Female foeticide".

Our play was about a cancer patient. It showed how a man gets diagnosed with cancer and how this changes his and family's life forever.

A man who smokes cigarettes, drinks alcohol, and takes drugs soon gets to know that he has cancer. All his life he disrespected the women in his life, be it

his mother or wife. With no surprise his wife leaves him as soon as he is diagnosed with cancer. The mother is now the sole bread earner who is a domestic help and could hardly afford food for the day. The play shows how alcohol and other harmful

behaviors not only affect the user but also destroys the lives of family members.

The Nada India team also performed the play in Sambhu camp and Bappu Camp. Besides performing a drama on female

foeticide, the play on alcohol was also organized. The also talked about ill effects of drugs, alcohol and gutkha and how these things can harm their life and put their families in danger.



'Nada Young Peers'.

"From Nada Peer support workshop in Amity University".

How many more lives will be lost? How many more families will be destroyed? COME let us all come together - children, youth and all responsible individuals to put a FULL STOP TO ALCOHOLISM. LET US MAKE ALCOHOLISM HISTORY !

The Peace Gong Team

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Designed by: Jose Paul

Printed at: Bosco Society for Printing & Graphic Training, Okhla Road, New Delhi Ph.: 011-26910729 E-mail: boscopress@gmail.com