

Recent Trends of Santal Culture: A Study on Alcoholism

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Abstract: *Alcoholism is a significant societal problem in today's culture. Sociocultural practices and interpersonal relationships are the main factors that impact the majority of alcohol users, and strangely, alcohol also has negative effects on these practices and relationships. In this essay, we attempt to comprehend the cultural effects of alcohol drinking, which has become more and more common among adults and adolescents. Customs surrounding the intake of alcoholic beverages also have an impact on society and the person; to some extent, cultural practices control an individual's behaviour and way of life. Santal Society practice rice - beer in their ritualistic ceremonies, festivals and cultural practices. In ancient times the Santal people used rice beer as an element of their worship. This Traditional drink (rice - beer) gradually turns into local drinking habituation, which paves the way to the deterioration of health and a number of health issues in the Santal community. Now they are taking local alcohol instead of their rice beer. Local Alcohol is very much harmful, and the cost of price is also high.*

Keywords: Santal, Alcohol, Tribe, Culture, Health, Poverty

1. Introduction

Santals are the linguistically largest tribal group in India and possibly in the world. They are still maintaining their language, culture and tradition Santhals with their distinct language and culture are recognized as a separate community. The Santals have changed their traditions and their culture in some places, which is rarely observed in other tribal groups. Santhals are the preserver of ancient language and culture known as Kherwari (Santali) which flourished in the very ancient time, long before the emergence of Vedic culture and civilization. Now the Santhal community is largely concentrated in Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. More than six million people are considered as Santal in India. Their primary occupation is agriculture and daily labour though there is an increasing move among youth towards better education and self - income generating activity.

In India, alcohol usage is a serious problem for public health. However, alcohol consumption is not distributed uniformly in a complicated country like India. Some states, like Gujarat and Bihar, have outright banned alcohol consumption, while other areas have adult alcohol consumption rates of up to 75%. In 2004, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the Indian government, conducted the country's first representative survey on alcohol consumption. This revealed that whilst less than 5% of adult females consumed alcohol, 21% of adult males did. Data from regional studies conducted in various parts of India, however, have proven inconsistent. According to a Rajasthani survey conducted in a rural village, 13% of women and 36% of men drank alcohol. According to another survey, 34% of Rajasthani street youngsters (5 to 15 years old) drank alcohol. In light of this, the pattern of alcohol use across various societal segments, stratified by age, gender, and religion.

In India, reports of alcohol consumption are significantly greater in rural, tribal, and underprivileged communities. According to a Madhya Pradesh study, the percentage of tribal participants who drank alcohol was 29.3%, more than twice as high as the comparator non - tribal group. According to a National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau survey conducted in rural areas, 3.5% of rural women and 28.4% of rural men reported drinking alcohol. A recent (2017) survey among tribal population in Arunachal Pradesh indicated that 49% of males and 28% of adult females of some tribes drink alcohol regularly. The use of alcohol varies by ethnicity and age.

Alcohol consumption is therefore a serious health concern in some Indian tribal tribes. Ethnic minorities and tribes are frequently at a disadvantage when it comes to health information and access. Alcohol consumption contributes to poverty and perpetuates this inequity. Therefore, treating alcohol misuse should be India's top public health priority, especially for the country's tribal people. Well - being and health are the third of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) outlined by the UN. The prevention of dangerous substances like alcohol and the decrease in mortalities and injuries from traffic accidents—which are frequently brought on by alcohol—are two of the goal's specific objectives.

Objectives

- 1) To Know the origin and myth of Rice Beer.
- 2) What are the impacts of alcohol on Santal society?

General History of Alcohol

Fermented beverages had used in early Egyptian civilization, and there is evidence of an early alcoholic drink in China around 7000 B. C. In India, an alcoholic beverage called sura, distilled from rice, was in use between 3000 and 2000 B. C. The Babylonians worshiped a wine goddess as early as 2700 B. C. Fermented grain, fruit juice and honey have been used to make alcohol (ethyl alcohol or ethanol) for thousands of years. In the sixteenth century, alcohol (called "spirits") was used largely for medicinal purposes. At the beginning of the

eighteenth century, the British parliament passed a law encouraging the use of grain for distilling spirits.

Origin of 'Rice - Beer' According to Santal Myths

In Santal community, rice beer is called "Handi". This Handi is very close to Santal culture since ancient times. 'Handi' i. e. rice - beer, is the most sacred and indispensable drink of the Santals. Santals believe in one "supreme being" whom they call Thakur Jiu (God) or Marangburu (Another name of God) who is considered to be the "supreme" among all the "religious beings." According to a myth, the Supreme deity, 'Maran Buru', taught the first two human 'Pilchu Haram' and 'Pilchu Budhi' to prepare 'handi'. They prepared Rice Beer with the root of the Mahua Tree. At that time they did not know the impact of this beer. After the drunk, they lost their shame and married each other. So according to their myths they think that 'Pilchu Haram' and 'Pilchu Budhi' are their first parents.

Process of Making Rice - Beer in Santal Community

Rice - beer was prepared on every occasion of Santals or drink for their daily life. The process of making rice - beer is very simple. Broken Rice is cooked and spread over a mat which is made by palm leaves but now they are using polythin paper (Image - 1).



Image-1

After cooling a powder is mixed with that broken rice. This powder is a most important ingredient. In Santali language this powder is called 'Ranu' or 'Bakhor' (Image - 2).



Image-2

The mixture of rice is placed in a container mostly preferred mud - pot which is called 'tukuch' (Image - 3) and covered with an old jute sack or piece of red cloth, mostly preferred jute sack, so that minimum vapours can escape out of the container, and kept for 3 - 5 days in a locked room.



Image-3

It can be more days, depending on the weather conditions or time of need. They mix hot water with that mixed rice while drinking and they extract out) Image - 4 & 5) the water and drink it.



Image-4



Image-5

Santals life with Rice Beer

The festivals of the Santals would appear lifeless without the rice - beer. Ancestor worship is a common feature among them. As a Symbol of remembrance and reverence can be like, tumbling a few drops of Handi or Rice - beer. The Santal believe that the world is inhabited by a large number of spiritual beings of various kinds, called 'Bonga' some of whom are directly connected with the welfare of particular persons and groups or society. The Bonga have much influence on daily living of the Santals. To ensure their continuing care, besides annual sacrifices, the Bonga are also remembered on a daily basis. According to the Santal religious beliefs there are two types of Bonga—the malevolent and the benevolent ones. The Bonga - worship is primarily to please and to invoke the powers of the benevolent Bonga and to avert the ill will of the malevolent bonga.

The Santal tribal festival is incomplete without the rice - beer. Rice - beer occupies a pivotal role in the tribal community, socially, culturally and economically. It has religious usages and values. The usage of rice - beer is very common in the occasion of marriages, birth anniversaries and festivals. It is associated with other Santal festivals and rituals as well like: 1) Sohrai - harvest festival 2) Sakrat - hunting festival 3) Baha Prob - flower festival etc.

Recent Scenario of Rice Beer

This rice - beer is very close to their daily life. Santals are mainly engaged in agriculture or daily labour. After work and at the end of the day Santal men and women take liquor as their refreshment. At first it was rice - beer, but now that is changing as they are using local alcohol instead of rice beer. There are many reasons behind this.

The reasons are

- 1) The percentage of alcohol in locally available liquor is very high.
- 2) It is easily available everywhere.
- 3) After consuming rice - beer they feel discomfort.

4) Rice - beer preparation requires more time.

Problems of Taking Local Liquor

Population of Old - Age People is Decreasing

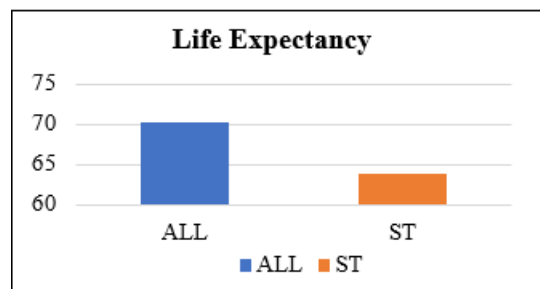
The number of people aged 60 years and above in the population is increasing. In 2019, the number of people aged 60 years and older was almost 100 crores. This number will increase to 1.4 billion by 2030 and 2.1 billion by 2050 due to improvement of various development opportunities but Scheduled tribes in India have a lesser proportion of aged with 6.9% of the population above 60 years compared to 8.6 among the general population in India, due to their high mortality rate and one cause of high mortality rate is taking too much Alcohol.

Life Expectancy

The life expectancy of Scheduled Tribes has generally been the lowest among all other social groups in the India. According to the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the tribal population has a life expectancy of hardly **63.9 years** as compared to the other group's life expectancy is 70.19 years.

Scenario of Alcoholism on Women

Alcohol is used in Santal communities both by men and women as part of their culture. In women, alcohol has extra harmful effects as it is a risk factor for breast cancer and has harmful effects in pregnancy.



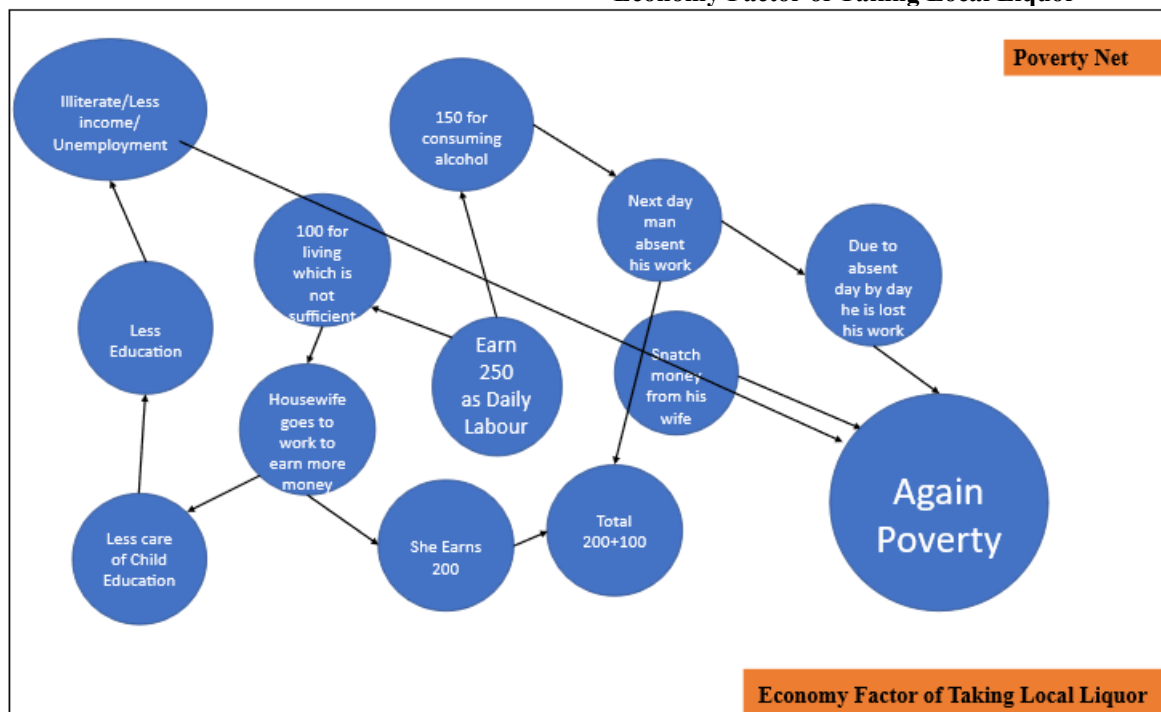
Cause of High Birth Rate

After drunk Santal men and women go with unsafe intimate. This is one of the causes of the high birth rate because, according to the 2011 census Total population decadal growth for West Bengal is 13.84 %, but where the decadal growth rate of the ST population is 20.20 %.

Economy Factor of Taking Local Liquor

According to the survey, most Santals men consume at least one bottle of liquor per day. In West Bengal, daily labour wages are around 250. If a person consumes one bottle per day, he has to spend around Rs.150 per day. The remaining 100 rupees he spends on daily living which is very less so Santal women go to work to earn money so that the children are less cared for and they do not attend school regularly. After drinking too much, the man can't go to work the next day; he doesn't have money to drink that day, so he takes money from his wife and tortures her. The wife also be compelled to give him. 40.6% of the ST population lives below poverty line as against 20.5% of the non - tribal population.

Economy Factor of Taking Local Liquor



Scenario of Tuberculosis (TB) among the Tribal

Total tribal people in India is 10.4 Cr which is 8.6% of total population. Tribal people have a higher prevalence of TB compared to the national average. In the National average 256 people per 100, 000 population but in the Tribal group 703

people per 10000 population. 10.4% of all TB - notified patients are from tribal communities. Alcohol consumption is very much associated with tuberculosis.

2. Conclusion

In west Bengal Total literacy rate is 76.26 according to 2011 census where total ST literacy rate is 57.90. Literacy plays a vital role in development. Alcohol consumption prevalence is high among Santal women but they are not alcohol dependent and their drinking habit is influenced by their culture. An awareness program needs to be undertaken about harmful consequences of alcohol consumption with due respect to their culture.

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