

Alcohol addiction of Lodha at Jhargram

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Abstract

Jhargram is a tribal populated sub-division. Tribes are characterised by distinctive culture, primitive traits and different socio-economic background. They are very laborious and hard working. Lodha, one of the primitive tribe earn money by forest resources cut and sells or by daily labour. As doing hard work and no other type of recreation, they like to drink alcohol. Not only that, they offered alcohol to the deity as sanctified food also. They make alcohol named as 'Mahul' and 'Handia' and take the pleasure of it. From young to old, most of the people like to drink alcohol. But it has adverse effect also. Most of the Lodha people against to prohibit alcohol.

Keywords: Liquor consumption, liquor types, causes of consumption

Introduction

To study behaviour of animal is a very interesting part of Zoology. Human, the ultimate animal behaviour is very easy to watch but difficult to understand. We, the human being make the division within us- the social status. Thus, some become rich, some become poor, some belong in high society, some in forest, some are civilized, and some are uncivilized. Present study is related to the life style of forest living so called uncivilized people. The tribes who are considered as primitive in origin live at Jhargram, the area where the present study done is a tribal populated area. Much class of tribes are present here like- santal, bhumi, kora, lodha, munda, savar but lodhas are the most primitive type. They live in forest and consider as hunting tribe. They do not like to cultivate for their livelihood

but like to collect money by trapping bird, fishing, wage labour, making country liquor, selling wood, wax, honey etc (Ghatak 2013). Due to their hard labour as well as climatic condition, alcohol consumption is very common among them. They use Mahua flowers, roots of plants in preparing bakhar to prepare local liquor named 'Mahul'. They make another type of liquor by using cooked rice known as 'Handia' in their tribal language. This ethnic group shows a good opportunity to study about traditional practices of alcoholic drinks. This drink contain large quantity of carbohydrate, reducing sugar hence, provides a major dietary constituent and high caloric value of their day to day life (Shrivastava et al. 2012). Consumption of alcoholic drinks in their daily life, especially ceremonial or

festive occasions is quite common among them.

Objectives

Though they get nutritional value from alcohol but there are many adverse effects of alcohol consumption. As alcohol become part and parcel of their life they cannot change their life style anymore. There is no such scientific study undertaken on alcoholism among the tribals in this socially backward area. The present study will evaluate the accuracy of the anthropometric indicators used to classify the alcohol addiction among the children, adolescents, and adult among three villages.

Methodology

The study was conducted at Jhargram block of Paschim Medinipur District of West Bengal, India. There are many villages in Jhargram block and some are tribal populated. In this block, three villages, Pranabpalli, Chandabila and Dahijhuri are selected, where the only inhabitants are Lodha. The survey consists of 511 individuals comprising of 256 males and 255 females that were selected for the purpose of present investigation. The data were collected by personal interview technique and questionnaire.

Result and discussion

The findings of the paper have been discussed as follows-

These two tables represent that the children and adolescent male have tested liquor and more than 80% of adult male take alcohol. But in contrast to male, female children and adolescent do not drink alcohol. But near about 50% of adult female like to drink alcohol. Most of the Lodha female can understand the bad impact of liquor consumption but they cannot resist their male to drink alcohol. So sometimes they also drink alcohol with their male.

The age at which people start drinking

Most of the boys start drinking in between 15 to 20 years of the age but the girls do not start at that age, after marriage at the middle age (31-45 years) females start drinking. The persons who belong in old age (60 onwards) and middle age (31-55) male and female, they drink 1 to 2 litres at a time.

Preference for liquor type

They take two types of liquors, known as Handia and Mahul. They make Handia which is rice beer and Mahul from the sundried flowers of Mahua tree (*Madhuca Indica*) (Mallik et al. 2012).

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of alcohol consumers and non consumers in different age groups of male (n=256).

| Age group | No. of individuals | Alcohol consumption | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|
| | | Frequency | Percent |
| 1-11years | 71 | 2 | 1.81 |
| 12-17 years | 26 | 3 | 11.54 |
| 18 years and above | 159 | 132 | 83.02 |

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of alcohol consumers and non consumers in different age groups of female (n=255).

| Age group | No. of individuals | Alcohol consumption | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|
| | | Frequency | Percent |
| 1-11years | 52 | - | - |
| 12-17 years | 26 | - | - |
| 18 years and above | 177 | 85 | 48.02 |

Procedure

Bakhar:

The roots of some plants named, *Asparagus racemosus* (Mallik 2012; Panda et al. 2014), *Elephantopus scaber* (Panda et al. 2014), *Lygodium flexuosum* (Dhal et al. 2010), *Orthosiphon rubicundus* (Dhal et al. 2010) have been uprooted and later these are dried in the sunlight. Then the dried up root is made into light paste form by grinding. Then the paste of bakhar is first mix with Atap rice and it is made into small round pieces to again dry up in the sun. This dried piece of the mixture is sold at 50-60 rupees per kg at the market.

Handia:

Rice is prepared boiling in a pot. This boiled rice kept and spread on a mat to dry in the sunlight. Next, bakhar is mixed with rice in another pot and water is added to it. This mixture is kept 4-5 days in this manner and finally Handia is made.

Mahul:

Flowers are first collected from Mahua plant and then these flowers are dried under sun. After that those dried Mahua flowers mixed with bakhar and molasses are kept with water in a pot. In this case, three pots are placed vertically one on the top of the other. In the bottom pot, the ingredients are mahua flowers, bakhar, molasses and water. A hole is made underneath the middle pot. Stream is transported from bottom pot to the middle pot through this hole. Another hole is located on the side wall of the middle pot. A dish with a cylindrical outlet is kept inside the middle pot and this outlet is drawn out of the pot through the side hole. A thin pipe is attached to the end of the outlet. The other end of the pipe is placed inside of bottle. There is cold water in the top pot and this cold water helps to condense the vapour coming into the middle pot. In this way Mahul is prepared and it is collected inside

the bottle in liquid form as drops of Mahul are transported through the pipe.

They take both of this liquor which is available. They prepare this liquor by themselves. Sometimes they buy liquor from nearby liquor shop but always drink country liquor.

Reasons for liquor consumption:

It is important to the possible reasons for severe prevalence of alcoholism among the Lodhas.

A majority of the respondents expressed that the liquor consumption was customarily during festivals, marriages and fairs. Almost an equal percentage of people consume liquor for entertainment and as binding due to village deity. Some people take it for getting rid of tiredness and some people takes to release tension.

Tribes are educationally backward. They enjoy special status of schedule tribe and get free education, books, uniforms etc and even reservation for admission to educational institutes. But they do not use these benefit at all. They have no care about education, their children or hygiene. They go to forest to cut woods and sell it. The earning is divided into two portions. They use half of their earning for liquor consumption and remaining half for feeding clothing, medicine and other purposes.

The Lodha communities are forest oriented. They went to forest after worship of Goddess Kali and offered her Mahul liquor as sanctified food. Goma, the God of forest and Sannyasi, the God of hunting are also offered Mahul as sanctified food.

As, there are no other type of recreation, they spend their afternoon by drinking alcohol.

The main occupation of Lodha people is forest resource cut and sells. So, they have to do hard labour. To overcome the body pain and tiredness, they like to drink alcohol.

They also take alcohol to overcome boredom, tension etc.

They said that Handia is very good for their health. According to them, this drink keeps their body cool, as they have to work under the scorching heat.

Bad impacts in alcohol consumption:

As the Lodha people drink liquor tremendously, it affects the health such as drowsiness, slurred speech, headache, unconsciousness, blackouts etc. Thus, various problems are created such as – increased family problems, broken relationships, intentional injuries such as firearm injuries, sexual assault, domestic violence etc.

Lodhas attitude towards prohibition of alcohol consumption:

The high prevalence of alcoholism among the tribal people adversely affecting their lives should never be allowed to persist. Many social agencies or organizations are engaged to create awareness among the people about the ill-effects of alcoholism.

Some of Lodha woman favour for prohibition but most of men disfavour it. According to them if they give up alcohol consumption, many problems arise to them, such as – problems in entertaining guests during marriages, festivals etc., religious ceremonies will not be performed, problem in doing hard labour, problem in releasing tiredness, a large chunk of mahul flowers will go waste.

Conclusion

It has been concluded from the survey that scientific efforts should be made by the governments, NGO, social agencies or organizations, scientists. They have to concern the Lodha population for the improvement of their life style. Though total prohibition is to be very difficult yet effort can be made to modify their mentality by awareness to reduce the alcohol consumption.

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