

# Social Problems in India

-Ram Ahuja

Alcoholism

# The Concept

- Acc. To Ahuja, Alcoholism can be characterized by 4 factors:
  - excessive intake of alcoholic beverages
  - individual's increasing worry over his drinking
  - loss of the drinker's control over his drinking
  - the disturbance in his functioning in his social world
- Don Cahalan's Five-Fold classification of alcohol drinkers on the basis of the frequency of drinking (not the quantity of alcohol):
  - *Rare users*, who drink once or twice a year
  - *Infrequent users*, who drink once or twice in two-three months, i.e., less than once a month
  - *Light drinkers*, who drink once or twice a month
  - *Moderate drinkers*, who drink three or four times in a month
  - *Heavy drinkers*, who drink every day or several drinks during the day. This is also known as 'hard-core' drinkers.
- The WHO has recorded worldwide adult per capita consumption at around 4.3-4.7 litres of pure alcohol since 1990. In 2005, the corresponding figure for India was only 0.6 litre.

# Process of becoming an Alcoholic

- Jellinek, an American psychiatrist, wrote that an alcoholic has to pass through the sequence of seven phases:
  - Blackouts, in which the individual is not able to find a solution to his individual problems
  - Sneaking drinks, in which he takes alcohol without being observed
  - Increased tolerance, in which he tolerates the increased effects of drinking
  - Loss of control, in which he fails to control the desire of not taking alcohol
  - Development of an alibi system, in which he gradually starts neglecting his social roles
  - Going on periodic benders, in which he keeps on drinking regularly,
  - Regular matutinal drinking, in which he regularly starts taking alcohol in the morning.

- Jellinek also formulated the following four stages to explain the process:
- *Pre-alcoholic symptomatic phase*: In this phase, taking advantage of social sanction, an individual starts drinking to reduce tensions and solves his personal problems. Linking drinking with relief, he keeps on searching for those opportunities in which he may drink. The frequency of drinking increases as he starts losing his capacity to overcome conflicts in life.
- *Prodigal phase*: In this phase, along with the increase in the frequency of drinking, there is increase in the quantity of drink too. However, he develops a guilt feeling and knows that gradually he is becoming an abnormal person.

# Process of becoming an Alcoholic

- *Crucial phase*: In this phase. His drinking becomes conspicuous. He develops rationalizations to stand social pressures and to assure himself that he has not lost control over himself. However, he does not lose his self-respect. Gradually, he starts alienating himself from others as his physical and social deterioration becomes obvious to them.
- *Chronic phase*: In this phase, he starts drinking even in the morning. He faces prolonged intoxication, impaired thinking, indefinable fears, tremors and loss of certain skills. He is all the time obsessed with drinking and feels restless without alcohol.

# Classification of Alcoholics

- Acc. To Landis (1959-21-22), alcoholics can be divided into three groups:
- The steady alcoholic (balanced and supported) is one who is not constantly saturated with alcohol.
- The periodic alcoholic abstains from drinking for considerable periods of time and then goes on binges.
- The plateau alcoholic (expanse of high level) is one who drinks more deliberately than either of the above two types and tends to seek the maximum effects from alcohol. He seems to need to maintain a certain level of saturation at all times but does have the capacity to spread the effect of his alcohol over a long period of time

# Causes of Alcohol Abuse

- Personal problems of adjustment gives rise to anxiety and frustration which often lead to alcoholism. “Acc. To Bacon (1959: 208), the main problems are: an individual’s opinion of himself; gaining and holding the respect and the affection of others; conflict with others through self-assertion, through criticism, through out-and-out aggressions; overall security as to ownership, prestige, personal safety as they are tied up with money; responsibilities accepted in the achievement of specific goals; sexual matters
- Acc. to the author, the main sociological causes of alcoholism are: (1) Environmental pressures, (2) peer pressure, and (3) a dominant sub-culture

# Consequences of Alcoholism

- The consequences of alcoholism—in terms of personal misery, family budget, family discord, loss of wages, failure of health, accidents and costs in damage claims, costs in hospital treatment, cost in custodial treatment in jail, monetary damage in courts, and inducement to crimes—are almost disastrous” p. 426
- Social deviance and social problems
- Arrest for crimes like rape, burglary, murder, and theft under the influence of alcohol
- Other socially deviant acts under the influence of alcohol include bribes, wife battering and suicides
- Acc. to the author, increased bootlegging is another consequence of alcoholism



# Treatment of Alcoholics

- “In psychotherapy, resocialization is reinforced through counselling and through group therapy. In environment therapy, the drinker is made to change the environment where his behaviour may be easily controlled. In behaviour therapy, his fears and inhibitions are removed to enable him to develop self-confidence and self-reliance.” p. 429
- The following treatments are prescribed for alcoholics:
- 1. Detoxification in hospitals- Medical care and medical supervision
- 2. Role of family- They minimize his problems and offer him with help and guidance
- 3. Alcoholics Anonymous- Organization of ex-alcoholics which makes use of group interaction to share their experiences
- 4. Treatment Centres- Alternative to hospital treatment, limited number of residents, anti-drinking rules are followed
- 5. Changing values through education- Educational and informational programs to alert about dangers of excessive drinking

# Control on Alcoholism

- Acc. to the author, “Radicals argue that as long as our social structure and economic system continues to produce inequality, unemployment, poverty, injustice, and role-strains and tensions, alcoholism will persist” (p. 432)
- “the present social systems operating in our society produce more frustrations and deprivations”, as a result of which alcoholism will rise (p. 432)
- “a policy and programme to produce more jobs, permit fair competition and reduce corruption and nepotism in appointments and promotions” is needed (p. 432)
- “If the lives of people are made meaningful, rewarding and satisfying, the need for alcohol would not exist or it would be minimized” (p. 432)
- “education about the harm and hurt that alcohol can bring to a person’s life and to society will help control the use of alcohol”(p. 432)