

# Cultural Aspects of Drinking Among Kinnaura Tribe

## Abstract

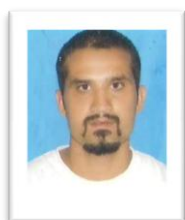
Drinking practices vary considerably in tribal district of Himachal Pradesh as are result of diverse socio- cultural factors. In modern years, alcohol use has taken on the shade of an almost tolerable lifestyle. In the current study attempt has been made to investigate the socio- cultural factors and alcoholism among tribal people of Kinnaur. The result based on qualitative research shown that alcohol was prepared at home and then presented to the deities on religious or special occasions and then distributed among villagers in the form of Prasad. So, alcohol is customary practice among Kinnaura tribe and it is socially accepted. These kind of customary practices increase the interest of youngsters toward alcohol abuse without any hesitation, because of readily accessible and available of alcohol, curiosity, peer pressure and cultural modeling. Alcohol abusing harmfully affected their physical health, psycho-social wellbeing and family environment but still they cannot imagine their socio-cultural life without alcohol.

**Keywords:** Socio- Cultural Factor, Alcoholism, Qualitative, Licit and Tribal.

## Introduction

Alcohol is psycho active substance, which is licit allowed for trade and consumption in India. Alcohol is a dependence-producing substance that has been widely used in many cultures for centuries. WHO, estimates provided in the Global Burden of Diseases indicate that tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug using, singly or in combination, are among the top 20 risk factors of ill-health. It is estimate that alcohol is responsible for 3.8% of deaths and 4.5% of disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) in the population worldwide (Srivastava, 2013). The harmful use of alcohol causes a large disease, social and economic burden in societies. Alcohol impacts people and societies in many ways and it is determined by the volume of alcohol consumed, the pattern of drinking, and, on rare occasions, the quality of alcohol consumed. The harmful use of alcohol can also result in harm to other people, such as family members, friends, co-workers and strangers. Moreover, the harmful use of alcohol results in a significant health, social and economic burden on society at large. Alcohol consumption is a causal factor in more than 200 disease and injury conditions. Drinking alcohol is associated with a risk of developing health problems such as mental and behavioural disorders, including alcohol dependence, major non communicable diseases such as liver cirrhosis, some cancers and cardiovascular diseases, as well as intentional and unintentional injuries, including those due to road traffic crashes, violence, and suicides, and fatal alcohol-related injuries tend to occur in relatively younger age groups. Alcohol consumption by an expectant mother may cause fetal alcohol syndrome and pre-term birth complications (WHO, 2015).

Alcohol is forbidden in some parts of India such as Manipur and Gujarat, but it is legally consumed in the majority of states. There are believed to be 62.5 million people in India who at least occasionally drink alcohol. International brewers and distillers of alcoholic beverages are keen to become popular in India, because it is potentially offers the third largest market for their product globally. India is a vast sub-continent and the drinking habits vary greatly between the different states. It is therefore impossible to describe a single drinking culture for the whole of India. In recent years there has been a noticeable rise in the number of urban males who claim to use alcohol as a means to relax. It still tends to be the poor and those who live in rural areas that are the highest consumers of alcohol. It is believed that as little as 5% of alcohol consumers are female – although this figure is higher in some states. India once had a reputation as having a culture that promoted abstinence towards drugs like alcohol. Things have changed and there is now serious problems arising due to



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alcohol abuse – some would say that there were always problems associated with alcohol.

Fermented grain, fruit juice and honey have been used to make alcohol for thousands of years. Fermented beverages existed in early Egyptian civilization, and there is evidence of an early alcoholic drink in China around 7000B.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. In Greece, one of the first alcoholic beverages to gain popularity was mead, a fermented drink made from honey and water. Greek literature is full of warnings against excessive drinking. Alcohol is the most frequently abused substance in Kinnaur. Kinnauri people have strong culture and beliefs generally follow the Buddhism and Hinduism. This was reflected through their dressing sense, outfits, ornaments, and habits. The district is well known for apple. Grapes, pear, wild apricot and wild peaches grow here in abundance. People use these fruits to prepare local liquor called 'Ghanti' in their local language. Taking of alcoholic drinks in their day today life and also on the ceremonial or festive occasions is quite common among them. Alcohol is distilled at the household level. It is made out of fruits like grapes, apple, wild apricot, pear etc grown locally and of barley

Festival and life style of Kinnauras was found very different from the other communities and they use alcohol as a part of tribal ritual. Tribal People use to serve local liquor on ceremonial, festive occasions and in social functions. Taking of alcoholic drinks in their day today life and also on the festive occasions and social function is quite common among the kinnaura tribe. Alcohol is extract at the household level among kinnaura tribe. Most of alcohol is made by kinnaura tribe from the fruits and very little percentage of alcohol extract from barely. Kinnauri people live under very harsh conditions, created by the inclement weather and climatic conditions. Due to climatic conditions and religious reasons, liquor consumption is very common among the people here. Alcohol plays such an important role in their life that even the worship of a deity is considered as incomplete without offering of liquor. In the times of erstwhile rulers, the people were freely allowed to distil liquor. They do so mostly for their own consumption and rarely had occasion to sell it for profit. Though with the application of the Punjab Excise Act 1948, distillation of liquor was made illegal in the state yet it could not be enforced in the district primarily because of the cultural tradition and secondly due to remoteness and inaccessibility of the area (Bali; Gupta; Chand & Chauhan, 2011).

#### **Review of Literature**

Bali, Gupta, Chand and Chauhan (2011) result reveal that alcoholism a social evil among the tribals of Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. Result further reveal that more than three fourth (78%) of the respondents were liquor consumers. The percentage of the liquor consuming women respondents was found to be negligible. Thus it implies that alcoholism is very common in men. The women rarely use it

except for medicinal purpose during illness. 40 per cent of the respondents had started drinking with the start of puberty ie between 15 to 20 years of age. Therefore, the study implies that more than 70 per cent of the respondents had started drinking during the age of 15 to 25 years. Sreeraj, et al. (2012) had studied reasons for substance use: A comparative study of alcohol use in tribals and Non-tribal's. Finding revealed that the problems related to alcohol were more severe in the tribal's, when measured on the alcohol dependence scale. Education and socioeconomic deprivation could be the cause for such a variation. Cultural factors like traditional acceptance may enhance the number of people involved in dinking.

The family interactions play an important role in the development of an individual. These interactions and interpersonal relationships are seen between parents, parent and child, siblings, and other family members. Research shows that both overall family system functioning and parental behaviors are positively related to adolescent well-being and protected from addiction (Karavasilis et al., 2003; Kauffman et al., 2000 and Miyamoto et al., 2001). A number of studies have found robust associations between quality of parent-child relationships and high-risk health behaviours, such as smoking, illicit drug use, alcohol use and sexually risky behaviours. Ample evidence also now exist that use of alcohol and other substances runs in families (Hicks *et al.*, 2004). However, it is widely accepted that parenting is associated with substance use, perhaps through parents modeling inappropriate drug-using behaviour (Steinglass, 1981) or creating a psychological environment in which children become more susceptible to substance use (Steinberg, 1987). Parental substance abuse disorder predicts a decrease in family attachment and increases in both life events and drug use (Hoffman and Su, 1998).

Dixit, Chauhan & Azad (2015) had studied Social factors play vital role in unfolding of alcohol use disorders in any given population. Several factors beyond the confines of treatment settings influence treatment outcome in alcohol dependence syndrome. Social support has positive effect in treatment outcome of alcohol dependence syndrome. Further, Kumar and Tiwari (2016) cross sectional study of alcohol consumption among tribals and non-tribals adults result revealed that alcohol consumption is widely prevalent habit among tribal & non-tribal. Awareness about its hazardous effects is important to reduce the number of alcohol users and its dependency in them. Among tribal study subjects about 29.3% of the subjects consumed alcohol whereas in non-tribal this was 14.3% & this difference was found to be statistically significant P.

Studies revealed that Amount of alcohol consumed during the week is positively correlated with severity of alcohol related problems (Caetano and Clark, 1998). Babor et al. (1987) reported that amount of alcohol was not always related with risk of having alcohol related problems and they suggested that it represents a complex interrelation of many variables (Payne, 2005). Severity of alcohol related

problems are related with both physical and mental dimensions of quality of life. High rates of depression and anxiety have been found in alcoholic samples (Gratzer et al., 24; Hasin & Nunes, 1997; Weitzman, 2004), and self-report measures of neuroticism tend to be higher in individuals with alcohol use disorders (AUDs) (Jackson & Sher, 2003; McCormick, Dowd Quik, & Zegara, 1998; Prescott, Neale, Corey, & Kendler, 1997).

#### Objectives of the Intervention

1. To identify the cultural aspects for alcohol abuse behaviour among tribal people of Kinnaur.
2. To find out awareness among Kinnaura tribe about alcohol related problem.

#### Current Study

The study conducted to identify the cultural aspects of Drinking among Tribal People of Kinnaur. Their alcohol abuse behaviour and awareness about alcohol abuse related physical and psycho-social problems. This study is confined to district Kinnaur, which is a tribal district of Himachal Pradesh and approximately 270 Km from Shimla town. The current study is attempt to address physical and psycho-social problems of alcohol abuse and find out the opinions of different groups about the alcohol abuse problem. The main objective of this study is, to find out the socio- cultural factors of alcoholism among tribal people of kinnaur and assess the awareness about alcohol related problem at grassroots level.

#### Methodology

The study was conducted in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, in the Kalpa block out of the three blocks viz Kalpa, Nichar and Pooh. The data were collected with the help qualitative method i.e. focused group discussion (FGD). These focused group discussions (FGD) is conducted in De-addiction centre Reckong peo, lower kothi Aangnwari centre, sub centre Pangri and kothi temple. The focused group discussion (FGD) done with Influential Community members, Non-Influential Community members, alcohol abused patients, Youth Group, and Women Group. Permission of all was obtained to participate in the intervention.

#### Sample Design

The present study is a descriptive study. The study design gives in brief universe, sample size and criteria for selection of respondents. The study was conducted in kalpa block of District Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh. In this study total 5 FGD had conducted and number of participants in each FGD were 10 to 12.

#### Measure

In this study only qualitative measure has been used. In qualitative method field observation, Fuzzy cognitive mapping, focused group discussion (FGD) has been used.

#### Focus Group Discussion

1 (Women Group)

#### Districts Covered

Kinnaur

#### Locations

Anganwari centre Lower Kothi, Kalpa Block.

#### FGD-1

(Focus group discussions in Anganwari centre Lower Kothi, Kalpa Block of Kinnaur yielded the following information)

Activity	Alcohol use/ misuse in the community
Time	90 minutes
Type of interview	Focus Group Discussion
Category of FGD	Category – Women Group
Name of District	Kinnaur
Name of Tehsil / Town	Kalpa
Name of Village / Ward	Kothi
No. of participants	10 females

#### Identification Details of Qualitative Interview

##### Introduction

A focus group discussion was conducted among tribal women of Kothi Village of Kalpa Block, aged between 21 -50 years on the topic "Attitude, belief and perception of Kinnauri people regarding alcohol use/ misuse in the community.

##### Objective

To understand the attitude, belief, perception of the tribal women regarding alcohol use/ misuse in the community.

##### Methodology

After detailed discussion with the participant of local tribal women of Kothi village, a list of 25 participant of Kothi block for the study was obtained, out of which 8 participants were chosen randomly for the discussion. Verbal consent was taken and date time and venue was fixed. On the fixed date discussion was carried out for 1.5 hours. All the participants were assured confidentiality of the information which they provided. Moderator kept the group in good humour. Active participation was ensured from all the participants. Notes were taken and Transcripts made. Debriefing was done at the end of discussion followed by analysis

1. On asking about various alcohol containing drinks available in their area and their cost, most of the participants were aware of the type of the drinks available, through specific brand were not know to most of them. Participants were also aware of the sale on alcohol on 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.
2. Most of the participants were of the view that availability of alcohol is easy from home, from the liquor shop and there is no restriction of age procurement or the number of bottles one can buy at a time. Availability and accessibility of alcohol is very easy because in villages, mostly by women was very common who sell them at their own houses.
3. Most of the people have licence but they produce extra quantity of alcohol.
4. All the participants were unaware of the legal age of drinks. There was no adequate knowledge of acts or laws on drinking.
5. Most of the participants were of the view that alcohol is the biggest reason for youngsters' accidental deaths in Kinnaur. During marriage session the ratio of accidental death is much high.

6. On asking about what are the Common reason why people drink, following point was observed-
  - a. As far the reason for starting alcohol and other substance were concerned, majority were of the opinion that it is basically the cultural influence because in kinnaur alcohol is brewed at home and consumed regularly. It is offered to the deities on special occasions and then taken as Prasad. Therefore it is culturally accepted and is not taken as social stigma.
  - b. Influence of elderly, parents and society is the common reason
  - c. Since the liquor is available at home and the child knows that it is permissible to take it.
  - d. Peer pressure.
  - e. Now days Kinnauri adolescence gets money without hard work, they know they have basic source of money (Apple tree) so they spent their most of the time in enjoyment, party, substance, fight etc.
  - f. Emotional blackmail to parents, Liberal parents-easy and open pocket money
  - g. One participant view that ‘ aaj kal k bacche to marriages me ganti (local alcohol) ko to mana karte hai aur demand kerte hai aangragi daru ki”

**Focus Group Discussion**

2 (Youth Group)

**Venue**

Dakho Play Ground

**Participants**

5 females + 7 male, (Age group- 15-30 year)

**Time**

90 minutes

**Result**

FGD-2 ((Focus group discussions in Dakho Play Ground of Kinnaur, yielded the following information)

Activity	Alcohol use/ misuse in the community
Time	90 minutes
Type of interview	.Focus Group Discussion
Category of FGD	Youth Group
Name of District	Kinnaur
Name of Tehsil / Town	Kalpa
Name of Village / Ward	Dakho
No. of participants	5 females + 7 male

1. As far the reason for starting substance. Majority were of the opinion that it is basically the curiosity and peer pressure which leads to start. They don't want to left out and want to be part of their group.
2. Culture is second one of the most prominent reason for starting of substance use in adolescence. In Kinnaur alcohol (Local Alcohol) is made in most of the home so use of the alcohol is not as a social stigma. This encouraged youngster to consume alcohol or substance.
3. Most of the participants in the group were well versed with different brands of various alcohol drinks available in their respected area.
4. Availability of substance is another strongest reason to start substance in adolescence.
5. As far prohibition or ban was concerned the group was the opinion that it was not really

possible since government gets lots of VAT on these drinks.

6. Communication gap between parents and the child.
7. None of the participant knew the correct age approved by the law to procure and consume alcohol.

**Public Impact of Drinking, Which Brought Forward Following Points**

1. Eve teasing
2. loss of inhibition
3. Violence-domestic as well as public.
4. Increased incidences of road side accidents, head injuries, death.

**Suggestions by the Group**

1. Most of the participants believed that proper counselling, family support, mind relaxing exercises and meditations under guidance of Mental Health professional could be great health.
2. Peer support can play a big role in tracking the problem there should be campaigns for awareness against substance use.

**Focus Group Discussion**

3 (Influential Community members)

**Venue**

H.P Tourism Hotel, Kalpa

**Participants**

(5 male+ 6 Female) age group- 25-60 yrs.

Chosen randomly

**Time**

90 minutes

**Result-**

FGD-3 (Focus group discussions in H.P Tourism Hotel, Kalpa yielded the following information)

Activity	Alcohol use/ misuse in the community
Time	90 minutes
Type of interview	Focus Group Discussion
Category of FGD	Influential Community members
Name of District	Kinnaur
Name of Tehsil / Town	Kalpa
Name of Village / Ward	Kalpa
No. of participants	5 males + 6 female

1. Adolescence substance use is one of the burning issues in our Kinnauri youth. The real picture is far worst then it looks. Majority of the participants believed that one of the reasons behind is cultural influence because from childhood they observe their parents, family members, community.
2. Most of the participant says that most abused substance is alcohol followed by nicotine and cannabis (Marijona) in youth. Some of the participant said that he personally seen some students in heal some substance which had a addicted behaviour.
3. Most of the participant blamed parents for their poor or very less supervision on their children's about their academic and substance use behavior.

- Some of the participant talked about performance of these students, they said that in pervious classes the performance of the some student was very good but now days when they indulged in substance use activity their performance in academic and sports are declining.
- They also think that the influence of substance use behavior among adolescent may be due to their sibling , peers and also some role models by which they are influenced it's not about only movies star this is also due to society role models , it's may be parents, uncle, relatives or senior students.

**Focus Group Discussion**

4 (Non-Influential Community members)

**Venue**

Kothi Temple

**Participants**Total 12 Number (5 females + 7 male)  
(Age group- 25-60 year).**Time**

90 minutes

**Result**

FGD-4 ((Focus group discussions in Kothi Temple of Kinnaur , yielded the following information)

Activity	Alcohol use/ misuse in the community
Time	90 minutes
Type of interview	Focus Group Discussion
Category of FGD	Non-Influential Community members
Name of District	Kinnaur
Name of Tehsil / Town	Kalpa
Name of Village / Ward	Kothi
No. of participants	5 females + 7 male

- On asking how youth access these drinks, majority of the group reply that alcohol is brewed at home and alcohol drinks are available in every nook and corner of the village
- As per the various laws are concerned most of them not know about them. They not know the legal age for alcohol use.
- As far the reason for starting alcohol and other substance were concerned, majority were of the opinion that it is basically the cultural influence because in kinnaur alcohol is brewed at home and consumed regularly. It is offered to the deities on special occasions and then taken as Prasad. Therefore it is culturally accepted and is not taken as social stigma.
- Majority of the group were unaware of the medical problems related to alcohol use.

**Suggestions Made by Group**

- Create awareness campaigns among school children about ill effect and addiction potential
- Parents should avoid keeping alcohol or any other substance openly at home. They should not drink in front of their children even when they are young.
- Educate parents regarding substance and health.

**Focus Group Discussion**

5 (Alcoholic Group)

**Venue**

De-addiction Centre, R-Peo.

**Participants**

Alcoholic Patient (10 male) age group- 25-50 yrs. Chosen randomly.

**Time**

90 minutes

**Result**

FGD-5 (Focus group discussions in De-Addiction Centre, Peo yielded the following information)

Activity	Alcohol use/ misuse in the community
Time	90 minutes
Type of interview	Focus Group Discussion
Category of FGD	Non-Influential Community members
Name of District	Kinnaur
Name of Tehsil / Town	Kalpa
Name of Village / Ward	Reckong Peo
No. of participants	10

- According to group, all kind of drinks they use but they use most commonly local alcohol. In alcohol shop they commonly go with friends, in groups.
- Most of the participant says that they start alcohol at age of 14-15 years and all had a family history of alcohol use.
- In Kinnaur it is always easy to get drink but now days its more easy because more number of alcohol shops are open and majority of youth access these shop.
- Majority of the participant believed that one of the reasons behind alcohol misuse is cultural influence, in most of Kinnauri marriages and parties' people use alcohol day and night.
- Most of the respondents had history of alcohol abuse several time (continue taking alcohol 2-3 days).
- On asking what was the right thing to do reduce problem of alcohol misuse, most of the participant replied that awareness and alcohol intake should be discouraged initially itself because once someone starts it.
- Cultural factors associated with increased alcohol use are quite unique "In Kinnaur alcohol use/misuse is not social stigma. This encourages youngsters in the region to consume alcohol without any inhibition at a very young age.
- As far as their personal opinion about drinking was concerned, majority were of the opinion that anything in moderation is acceptable but it the age at which alcohol is started is important. Appropriate amount is the one when person remain in this senses.
- Most of the participant had history of medical and social problems related to alcohol problem. Loss of inhibition, irritation, sleep and appetite problems, violence, injuries, accident, misbehaviour, fights, fight with wife and mood swing etc.

**Conclusion**

Cultural factors associated with increased alcohol use, they brewed alcohol at home and consumed regularly. Their alcohol consumption rate is very high because alcohol brewed at almost every household of Kinnaura tribe. In Kinnaura tribal women's made and even sale alcohol at their own houses. It is offered to the deities on special occasions and then taken as "Prasad". Finding revealed that in Kinnaur alcohol is accepted and it is not taken as social stigma and in Kinnaur most of the people use local alcohol but with passage of time Kinnauri people also attracted to wine, Beer, Whisky and people who are addicted to alcohol, sometimes resort to borrowing of money from relative, local money lenders, banks etc. This adversely affects the finances of family and most commonly affected families are those from the lower socio-economic status families and early onset families/ chronic alcoholic families (they start alcohol very early age). Past generations of Kinnaura tribe took alcohol on ceremonial, festive occasions and in social functions for enjoyment, but now days it is misused roughly for reducing tension and relaxation. The district administration continues to follow a liberal policy in the effective implementation of excise act. Consequently, due to high extraction of liquor, most of the people have become addicts. The Kinnaura people in alcohol are brewed at home. It is offered to the deities on special occasions and then taken as Prasad. Therefore alcohol use is culturally accepted and is not taken as social evil. In past alcohol is offered for deities and for enjoyment but today, people misuse alcohol.

Intangible cost of alcohol misuse is suffering from ill health, and then spends money on medication, hospital visit, road accident etc. Result also shows that they had inadequate awareness about laws on doing and drinking. Cultural factors encourage youngsters in the region to consume alcohol without any inhibition at a very young age. Alcohol abuse among adolescents and young adults are increasing like an epidemic in Kinnaur. Problem started or began to arise when; this cultural belief, tradition and social custom use of alcohol became abuse of alcohol, which effect individual health, family and society and create many problems for the family. Now it's time came when parents/ elderly should avoid keeping alcohol openly at home; they should not drink in front of their children even when they are young. Awareness campaigns at grass root level by involving community, awareness among school children's about its ill effects and addiction potential. Raising awareness of public health problems caused by harmful use of alcohol and ensuring support for effective alcohol policies.

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