

## Research Article

# Alcohol Consumption in Ancient India and the Contemporary Challenges: A Study of Socio-Economic Implications and Anti-Liquor Protests in Tamil Nadu

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This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the political developments in India, spanning from ancient times to the present day. The first section of the paper delves into the historical context of alcohol consumption and its profound socio-cultural implications in ancient India. It explores how alcohol was intertwined with the social fabric, varying across different cultural and caste groups. The second part of the paper focuses on the more recent political dynamics in Tamil Nadu, specifically examining the period from 2016 to 2017 when the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) partially rolled back the prohibition on alcohol in response to widespread protests. Over the last five decades, Tamil Nadu has been predominantly under the rule of two Dravidian parties, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and AIADMK. These parties have alternated between enforcing total prohibition and permitting alcohol consumption. The unique political landscape in the state is characterized by the influence of the alcohol industry as a strategic tool for garnering votes. The paper highlights that both parties have vested interests in the alcohol business, making it a complex issue for effective prohibition. For total prohibition to be successfully implemented, a government must establish robust enforcement measures and create essential healthcare and de-addiction infrastructure. The interplay between politics, economics, and social implications in this context is explored in depth in this paper.

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## Introduction

The goal of this paper is to put in evidence the alcohol consumption in ancient India and its socio-economic implications in the contemporary times, and to justify the enormity of social problems caused by it. It also aims at showing the relationship between prohibition and the political environment in Tamil Nadu, during the Dravidian parties' rule and the consequent anti-liquor protests. The discourses in the paper are based on the review of relevant literature on alcoholism pertaining to the state of Tamil Nadu. Therefore, it is a descriptive paper based on quantitative and qualitative methods of analyzing data, collected from various pieces of literature, reports, Indian national dailies, and personal interviews.

## Alcohol Consumption in Ancient India: a Socio-Cultural Exploration

Across ancient Indian texts such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, there exist vivid references to the consumption of alcohol, reflecting its prevalence in the society of that time. While these texts narrate instances of wine drinking among royalty and excessive indulgence leading to conflicts, they also caution against the sinful nature of excessive drinking, particularly within the Kshatriya clan.

The Rig Veda, an ancient scripture dated around 1500-1000 BC, mentions the consumption of a specific type of liquor called 'soma' by the Aryans during the performance of Yajna, a ritual sacrifice integral to their religious practices.

Scholar Pratima Murthy (2015) emphasizes the strong correlation between alcohol use and socio-cultural contexts in India. While religious determinants historically influenced abstinence, the social hierarchy and later socio-political contexts became pivotal in shaping alcohol consumption. This drinking culture displays significant variance based on cultural, caste, and ethnic differences.

It is apparent that the consumption of alcohol was largely forbidden among higher caste groups, primarily the Brahmins, while being permissible within middle and lower caste groups. Robert Redfield's (1947) perspective distinguishes alcohol consumption as part of rituals in the 'little traditions' associated with non-Vedic practices, predominantly followed by lower caste segments of society.

Drinking is observed as a socio-cultural phenomenon, shaping not just individual behavior but also societal obligations. Even today, in certain regions like southern districts of Tamil Nadu, the offering of alcohol to local deities during festivals persists, signifying the acceptance of alcohol consumption within 'little traditions.'

Anthropological studies across cultures highlight the influence of cultural values such as hospitality, reciprocity, and kinship on drinking habits, fostering mutual interactions and friendships

within communities. These values persist not only in folk and tribal communities but also in modern times, underscoring the enduring connection between alcohol and social interactions.

As scholar David G. Mandelbaum (1965) notes, both the tangible act of drinking and the abstract cultural significance it holds contribute to the understanding of alcohol as a remnant of culture. Drinking habits, defined by specific aspects such as brand, quantity, time, places, and societal roles, are deeply intertwined with cultural meanings and societal connections. The nuances of drinking practices within a society might or might not align with ritualistic acts.

For instance, while the Ramayana depicts instances of wine consumption among royalty and portrays excessive drinking in Ayodhya, cautioning against its detrimental effects, the Mahabharata narrates conflicts within the Yadav clan due to their inebriated state and warns against the sinful nature of excessive drinking, particularly among the Kshatriya clan (Singh and Lal 1979). Moreover, historical texts like the Rig Veda (Samhita: 4, 9 and 54) note that the Aryans or the Indo-Iranians of the Vedic period, around 1500-1000 BC, had consumed a kind of liquor known as 'soma' during ritual sacrifices, marking a historical prevalence of alcohol within religious contexts. Mitra (2016) recounts an episode in which Lord Krishna partook in drinks alongside his brother, brother-in-law, and several other family members.

Notably, the narratives across these ancient texts and scholarly perspectives underline the interplay between alcohol consumption, socio-cultural contexts, and the ethical frameworks that govern individual and collective behaviors in Indian society.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To examine alcohol consumption in ancient India and its socio-cultural implications, as well as its contemporary socio-economic consequences.
2. To understand the historical and cultural roots of drinking in ancient India, considering factors like religion, social order, and caste distinctions.
3. To explore the mixed views on drinking in ancient India, taking into account references in ancient Indian epics, religious texts, and historical accounts.
4. To present facts about alcoholism and its effects in modern India, with a focus on health, social, and economic impacts.
5. To investigate anti-liquor protests in contemporary Tamil Nadu and understand their motivations and consequences.
6. To analyze the relationship between prohibition and politics in Tamil Nadu, including the promises made by political parties in their election manifestos regarding alcohol prohibition.
7. To discuss the socio-economic implications of alcohol consumption in modern India, particularly its impact on the working class and the role of women in households.
8. To assess the feasibility and challenges of implementing total prohibition in Tamil Nadu and the revenue considerations for the state.

## Methodology of The Study

The study conducted employed a descriptive approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

## Research Design

**Literature Review:** Comprehensive review of historical texts, religious scriptures, scholarly articles, reports, newspapers, and personal interviews to understand the historical, cultural, and contemporary landscape of alcohol consumption in Tamil Nadu.

**Mixed-Methods Approach:** Employed both qualitative analysis (interpretation of texts, historical accounts, epics, and religious scriptures) and quantitative analysis (data from reports, statistics on alcohol-related issues) to provide a holistic understanding.

## Data Collection

**Primary Sources:** This study conducted personal interviews with relevant individuals, community members, or experts in the field to gather qualitative data on perceptions, cultural norms, and socio-economic implications related to alcohol consumption.

**Secondary Sources:** Collation of data from various literature, historical accounts, reports, and newspapers for both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

## Data Analysis

**Quantitative Analysis:** Utilized statistical data from reports, government records, and national dailies to extract insights on alcohol-related issues, such as deaths, hooch tragedies, and revenue generated from alcohol sales.

**Qualitative Analysis:** Interpretation of religious texts, epics, historical accounts, and cultural references to understand the socio-cultural implications of drinking in ancient India and Tamil Nadu's contemporary society.

**Objectives:** These were clearly defined at the beginning of the study, which guided the exploration of various facets related to alcohol consumption in Tamil Nadu.

## Limitations

**Scope:** Acknowledgement of potential limitations, such as constraints in historical data accuracy, biases in personal interviews, or limitations in access to specific historical documents.

**Subjectivity:** Recognition of potential biases in interpretation and analysis of historical texts or personal interviews.

**Ethical Considerations:** Presumably adhered to ethical guidelines in conducting personal interviews, ensuring confidentiality, and obtaining necessary permissions for using historical texts and other sources.

**Presentation of Findings:** The paper structured to present findings in a descriptive manner, likely arranging sections based on historical contexts, contemporary issues, and political implications.

The study's methodology is rooted in a multidisciplinary approach, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex subject of alcohol consumption in Tamil Nadu, using a variety of historical, cultural, and contemporary data sources.

## Alcohol in Ancient Hindu Society: a Tapestry of Perceptions and Practices

Somasundaram et al. (2016) cite a Mahabharata story in which the legendary Indian emperor Bharata and his soldiers were given

wine as a sign of hospitality by the sage Bharadvaja. But in his treatise *Manusmriti* (11: 55), the Hindu lawgiver Manu (c. 500 BC) condemned alcohol consumption, viewing it as a vice that should be eliminated from society. Hassan (1922) notes that strict prohibitions against alcohol were advocated in Hinduism's dharma treatises written by Apastamba and Gautama. On the other hand, according to Courson (2008), drinking is depicted as a common practice among Indians from lower castes in the *Shastras* (treatises on applied sciences), literary works, wall paintings, and inscriptions. The usage of intoxicating beverages is frequently mentioned in Sangam literature, which explores ancient Tamil society. For instance, the Sangam literary compilation *Puranaanooru* (56, 216, 235, 290, and 298) describes how alcohol was once widely used by people of all classes and genders and how it was once included in the food. They were typically served during social gatherings, and chieftains and kings would offer them to honored guests. Conversely, in his widely read work *Thirukkural*, Thiruvalluvar, a well-known Sangam poet and proponent of abstinence, passionately discussed the negative effects of alcohol consumption (*Kallunnaamai*: 93). Thus, it's intriguing to discover that both ancient Indian Tamil and Sanskrit literature support and criticize alcohol.

In the context of ancient Hindu society, as elucidated through the framework of the Four Varnas, a general trend of abstinence from alcohol consumption prevailed. This observation is supported by Sharma (1996), who highlights the expectation that Brahmins, belonging to the priestly class, were generally required to refrain from alcohol consumption. In contrast, the Kshatriyas, belonging to the warrior and royal class, were permitted to consume alcohol on specific occasions as part of their military training and practices. Notably, there were relatively few restrictions placed on alcohol consumption within the Vaisyas, representing the agricultural and trading class, and the Shudras, who were part of the serving class. Consequently, it can be observed that in ancient India, the coexistence of stringent abstinence and more permissive attitudes toward alcohol consumption were practiced concurrently across various social classes.

Boesche (2003) has noted that the *Arthashastra* contains passages that provide instructions regarding the production, sale, and establishment of drinking establishments. During the reign of the Mauryan Empire, spanning from 322 BCE to 185 BCE, a period of extensive dominion over India, the production and distribution of alcohol were under centralized government control. This governmental oversight facilitated legal access to alcohol for the populace.

Singh and Lal (1979) have documented that during the Post-Vedic era, ranging from 1400 B.C. to 600 B.C., various texts on medical practices authored by Charaka and Susruta showcased alcohol both as a medicinal substance and as a social beverage. They also expounded on the distinctions between moderate and excessive alcohol consumption. Charaka, in particular, expounded on the benefits of moderate alcohol consumption, highlighting its positive effects on the body, including aiding digestion, fostering well-being, and enhancing cognitive faculties. Additionally, he addressed issues related to alcohol abuse, its impact on social life, and proposed specific treatments for individuals dealing with alcohol addiction. These historical insights offer a plausible explanation for the absence of stringent regulatory mechanisms pertaining to alcohol consumption in ancient and post-independence India.

## Alcohol Consumption in India: Trends, Consequences, and Illicit Production

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3, 2005–2006), approximately one-third of India's population, particularly adolescents and adults, engage in alcohol consumption, with a subset of 4–13 percent classified as habitual drinkers. A concerning trend highlighted in this data is the early initiation of alcohol consumption, with both boys and girls starting this habit during late childhood.

Additionally, findings from the World Health Organization's Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health (2014) reveal a significant increase in alcohol consumption between 2008 and 2012. The report indicates that in 2010, over 11 percent of the total 30 percent of alcohol consumers were classified as heavy drinkers. This led to a per capita alcohol consumption increase from 1.6 liters during 2003–2005 to 2.2 liters during 2010–2012 for individuals over the age of 15.

Comparatively, the global per capita alcohol consumption for individuals over 15 years of age increased from 5.5 liters of pure alcohol in 2005 to 6.4 liters in 2010, as reported in the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2018. This collective evidence underscores the concerning trend of a consistent rise in the number of heavy drinkers over the years.

An additional report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2015 unveils a noteworthy pattern in India's alcohol consumption. Over the two decades spanning from 1992 to 2012, India witnessed a substantial 55 percent increase in per capita alcohol consumption, ranking as the third highest increase globally, following only the Russian Federation and Estonia.

On a global scale, data from the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2018 reveals that more than one-fourth of the estimated 2.3 billion individuals who consume alcohol are adolescents, comprising 26.5 percent of this demographic. Importantly, this prevalence of alcohol consumption among adolescents exhibits minimal gender-based disparities between boys and girls.

Notably, even among women, there has been a noticeable rise in alcohol consumption. The All India Institute of Medical Sciences reported that women in India consume alcohol at a comparatively lower rate of 1.6 percent, in contrast to their male counterparts at 27.3 percent. Among school-going adolescents aged 14–18, boys tend to consume alcohol more frequently than girls during specific events or occasions. However, it is crucial to recognize that the global trend reflects an overall increase in the proportion of women engaging in alcohol consumption.

The increasing inclination of teenagers toward alcohol consumption can be attributed to several factors. Observing parental figures, relatives, and peers partake in drinking activities fosters a positive disposition toward alcohol consumption among adolescents. Additionally, association with families where regular alcohol consumption is prevalent, as exemplified by the "family drinking" phenomenon in Kerala, India, acts as an encouraging factor. Other contributory elements encompass disposable income, the absence of robust parental oversight, limited parent-child interaction, academic stress-induced depression, and peer group pressure.

In the rapidly evolving modern Indian landscape, the majority of alcohol consumers, encompassing both adolescents and adults,

appear to be less inclined to contemplate the ethical dimensions of their drinking behavior. Abstinence from alcohol consumption is seldom regarded as a cultural value, reflecting a shift in societal norms and attitudes toward alcohol in contemporary India.

The WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health (2018) starkly highlights the profound global consequences of alcohol consumption. In the year 2016, alcohol consumption was implicated in a staggering three million deaths, accounting for 5.3 percent of all recorded fatalities, and contributed to approximately 133 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), equating to 5.1 percent of all DALYs. An essential dimension of this alarming statistic is the gender disparity, with males experiencing twice the impact of alcohol-related harm compared to females. Moreover, the majority of these afflicted individuals fell within the economically productive age bracket of 25–55. The implications of the premature deaths of millions of individuals ensnared in alcohol addiction, particularly within this vital age group, portend severe economic ramifications in the coming years. This somber assessment is corroborated by an OECD report from 2015, which designates alcohol abuse as the fifth leading cause of death and disability worldwide.

Shifting our focus to the illicit production of alcohol in Tamil Nadu, a concerning pattern emerges. Those engaged in this clandestine enterprise appear primarily motivated by financial gain, often neglecting the grave risks their products pose to consumers due to the use of harmful chemicals in the distillation process. Tragically, sporadic reports of "hooch tragedies" surface, wherein individuals succumb en masse immediately after consuming illicit liquor, which is typically distilled illegally in villages and peddled by bootleggers. This deadly phenomenon is not confined to one region; it has manifested in various instances in both Kerala and Tamil Nadu, leading to significant loss of life. Notably, there was a substantial increase in such fatalities from 2013 to 2014, with 1,699 individuals losing their lives in India due to the consumption of illicit or toxic liquor.

In one harrowing incident in 2015, over 100 people in Malwani, Mumbai, met their demise after imbibing illicit alcohol. The National Crime Record Bureau, in its data spanning from 2005 to 2014, documented the deaths of 1,509 individuals in Tamil Nadu alone due to the consumption of illicit liquor. Similar tragedies unfolded in other states, with Karnataka, Punjab, and Gujarat recording 1,421, 1,364, and 843 deaths, respectively, attributable to these hooch-related disasters. These dire statistics underscore the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address the perilous consequences of illicit alcohol production and distribution.

In the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, a tragic incident unfolded where more than 100 individuals lost their lives due to the consumption of toxic alcohol, as reported by The Hindu on February 13, 2019. Similarly, in the state of Assam, another calamity occurred, resulting in a death toll of 155 individuals attributed to the consumption of illicit liquor, as reported by The Hindu on February 25, 2019. It is disheartening to note that India ranks among countries with a high incidence of fatalities stemming from the consumption of counterfeit alcoholic beverages.

These intermittent and tragic fatalities underscore a disturbing narrative rooted in issues of governance, corruption, and flawed policies that inadvertently create opportunities for vested interests to exploit vulnerabilities within the system. These instances of poisoning and loss of life predominantly afflict marginalized communities who lack access to affordable, quality liquor options.

In this vacuum, criminal syndicates seize the opportunity to produce inexpensive yet hazardous brews, effectively monopolizing this shadowy industry. The result is a recurring cycle of human tragedy, with innocent lives falling prey to these perilous concoctions.

## **The Socioeconomic Impact of Alcohol Addiction in India's Working Class**

The working-class population in India struggling with alcohol addiction faces significant economic challenges, as a considerable portion of their daily earnings is diverted towards the purchase of alcohol. This financial diversion, often exceeding half of their income, has a detrimental impact on their economic stability. Moreover, the consumption of low-cost alcoholic beverages adversely affects their work capacity, leading to reduced productivity and decreased energy levels (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2014). A parallel situation can be observed in Nairobi, where a substantial portion of the labor force exhibits increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, compromised health, and heightened safety risks due to their drinking habits (Kaithuru – Stephen, 2015).

As a result, due to their modest incomes and the prioritization of alcohol consumption over familial responsibilities, men often fail to provide for their family members. This dire economic situation frequently leads to families struggling to secure even a single nutritious meal each day. Consequently, wives and children are compelled to fend for themselves, often seeking employment in hazardous occupations. This phenomenon has contributed to a significant increase in child labor in the country, which blatantly violates the fundamental right of children to education.

Furthermore, habitual drinkers typically lead chaotic lives, neglecting their families and succumbing to various alcohol-induced health problems in the long run. This eventually leads to the breakdown of the family unit, with vulnerable wives forced to support themselves through any available means. The children, deprived of parental guidance, may resort to petty theft and, in some cases, may develop into juvenile delinquents or even criminals. Local criminal syndicates, continually on the lookout for new recruits, absorb these vulnerable youth, assimilating them into a criminal subculture that often comes into conflict with established societal norms and legal institutions. This harmful cycle underscores the multifaceted social and economic consequences of alcohol addiction within the working-class segment of society.

## **Alcohol Consumption and its Correlation to Domestic Violence: Global Insights and Local Realities**

The WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health (2004) underscores a troubling association between alcohol consumption and incidents of violence, with many such occurrences happening when individuals are inebriated. Extensive research conducted beyond India's borders further supports this link, with studies by Shepherd (1998), Budd (2003), Richardson et al. (2003), and Finney (2004) consistently highlighting the connection between alcohol consumption and violent behavior.

Similarly, studies conducted within India substantiate the relationship between alcohol addiction and violent incidents.

Research by Vijayanath and Tarachand (2011), the International Center for Research on Women (2000), and Begum et al. (2015) have brought to light numerous cases of violence stemming from drinking habits. Additionally, a compelling association emerges between alcohol consumption and domestic violence, spousal abuse, sexual harassment, child maltreatment, and other forms of abuse. The WHO's Intimate Partner Violence and Alcohol Fact Sheet Website clarifies that increased alcohol consumption contributes to both the frequency and severity of domestic violence incidents.

Collins and Spencer (2002) revealed significant data suggesting that domestic violence tends to increase when both spouses are habitual drinkers. Reinforcing this point, a WHO study in 2004 found that one-third of husbands who are alcoholics are responsible for the majority of violent incidents that occur when both partners are intoxicated. In the United States, McClelland and Teplin (2001) reported that nearly 40 percent of police emergency calls are related to domestic violence involving alcoholic husbands. Research conducted within families or among individuals in relationships consistently demonstrates that the severity of violence escalates when men are under the influence of alcohol, as indicated by studies by Leonard (2005), McKinney et al. (2010), Thompson and Kingree (2006), and Stanley (2008).

Furthermore, a study by Marlene Berg et al. (2010) reinforces the assertion that alcoholic husbands are notably responsible for domestic violence. It is worth noting that men tend to play a more dominant role in incidents of domestic violence than women (Fazonne et al., 1997), a pattern observed in the research of Kaufman and Strauss (1987). Tragically, due to the increased mortality of husbands due to alcohol-related health problems, many young women have been left as widows. Women, particularly those from working-class backgrounds who endure constant physical or emotional harassment from their alcoholic spouses, often find solace in advocating for total prohibition as a means to escape their torment. Consequently, a strong correlation exists between alcohol consumption and physical violence between intimate partners, frequently culminating in separation and the dissolution of marital bonds.

An enlightening case study carried out by Karunanithi (2010) in the Tirunelveli district of Southern Tamil Nadu in 2007 provides insights into instances of spousal abuse within the context of alcohol intoxication.

*In a remote village situated in the western part of Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu, a harrowing incident unfolded, illustrating the tragic outcomes of alcohol-driven spousal abuse. In this household, a husband, grappling with alcohol addiction, engaged in daily disputes with his wife, often stemming from her refusal to provide money for his drinking habits. Shockingly, these violent conflicts persisted even in the presence of their young son and daughter, leaving the children as helpless witnesses to their mother's suffering. On one tragic night, with the children absent, the intoxicated husband subjected his wife to a vicious assault, using a sturdy wooden pole as a weapon. This brutal attack resulted in severe head injuries and profuse bleeding, tragically leading to her untimely death. In an attempt to evade accountability for this heinous act, he set fire to her lifeless body after dousing it with kerosene, making identification impossible. To further conceal the truth, he falsely claimed that his wife had taken her own life.*

*Subsequently, he was apprehended and detained, facing charges of murdering his wife. After several months of legal proceedings, the court delivered its verdict, sentencing him to a double life imprisonment for the murder. Meanwhile, the children were placed under the care of their maternal grandparents, though the profound loss of their mother had a lasting impact on their lives. This heartbreaking incident highlights the devastating consequences of alcohol-induced domestic violence and its profound implications for families and communities.*

A recent comprehensive analysis, conducted as an integral component of the National Family Health Survey-3, has once again underscored the notable association between alcohol addiction among husbands and incidents of domestic violence.

## **The Intersection of Alcohol Addiction, Workplace Consequences, and Women's Resilience in Rural Tamil Nadu**

In the workplace, alcohol consumption yields a plethora of adverse consequences, spanning from premature mortality, injuries, fatal road accidents, equipment damage, frequent absenteeism, punctuality lapses, diminished efficiency, reduced production output, low employee morale, to weakened labor relations. Data sourced from Indian industry associations unveil a disconcerting reality: approximately 15-20 percent of absenteeism and a staggering 40 percent of workplace accidents can be attributed to alcohol consumption (Saxena et al., 2003). Furthermore, a significant proportion of road accidents resulting in casualties can be traced back to instances of drunk driving (Cherpitel et al., 2009).

In addition to these workplace repercussions, alcohol addiction emerges as a prominent factor contributing to the alarming rise in suicide rates. A study conducted by Maurizio Pompili et al. (2010) underscores a critical link between regular alcohol consumption and the development of suicidal tendencies over time. Indeed, individuals afflicted with alcoholism exhibit heightened vulnerability to suicidal ideation and attempts, surpassing those without this habit (Frances et al., 1987; Richardson et al., 2003; Brady, 2006). The broader body of research consistently underscores the association between Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) and an elevated risk of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. Tragically, for some, this perilous journey culminates in a successful suicide, prematurely extinguishing their lives. Hence, it is irrefutable that alcoholism plays a pivotal role in propelling individuals toward either suicide or untimely demise.

The association between alcohol consumption and not only suicide but also homicide is conspicuous in the literature (Lester, 1995; Gruenewald et al., 1995). Furthermore, individuals grappling with alcohol addiction often find themselves entangled in criminal activities. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a substantial proportion of crimes committed in the country can be attributed to individuals under the influence of alcohol. This grim reality is substantiated by the findings of the Federal Research Program, authorized by the U.S. Congress, which underscores that alcohol consumption is the primary contributing factor in 40% of homicides.

In countless working-class households across India, where husbands' incomes are depleted by alcohol addiction, women have assumed the role of sole breadwinners. They undertake this

responsibility to manage their family's expenses and make ends meet. Many of these women, predominantly residing in rural areas, have sought refuge in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) established by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These SHGs serve as platforms for the development and economic empowerment of marginalized women. They provide essential training in household financial management, emphasizing savings and thrift as critical components for future financial security. This economic empowerment, in turn, paves the way for potential political empowerment in the long term.

A compelling case study conducted in Tirunelveli district, Southern Tamil Nadu in 2009, delves into the challenges faced by a destitute rural woman engaged in Beedi (local cigarette) making due to her alcoholic husband. The study highlights how she overcame these difficulties with the invaluable support of an SHG (Karunanithi, 2010). This case serves as a poignant example of how grassroots initiatives can uplift women and provide them with the tools to navigate the adverse effects of alcoholism within their families and communities.

*I was primarily employed as a beedi worker and found myself in the role of a mother raising three daughters, whose ages ranged from 10 to 18. Unfortunately, my husband had fallen into the clutches of alcohol addiction, rendering him neither economically nor morally supportive to our family. The burden of providing for our livelihood predominantly rested on my shoulders, as my earnings became our primary source of sustenance. Regrettably, he frequently coerced me into relinquishing a substantial portion of my income for his drinking habits. Inevitably, I found myself in a precarious financial situation, which led me to borrow money from a local moneylender at an exorbitant interest rate. Over time, repaying the interest became an insurmountable challenge. Faced with these circumstances, I had no choice but to compel my eldest daughter, who was pursuing her secondary education, to engage in beedi rolling to augment our income. This was necessary not only to cover our basic necessities but also to meet the interest payments. Subsequently, my second daughter, who was still in primary school, joined her elder sister in this laborious work. It was a painful reality that both of them were forced to forgo their right to an education through no fault of their own.*

*However, a glimmer of hope emerged when I became a member of a Self-Help Group (SHG) established in my village by a local non-governmental organization (NGO). In a relatively short span of time, the collective efforts of our SHG members led to the creation of a substantial group fund through weekly contributions. This fund became a lifeline for me, as I availed a modest loan at a nominal interest rate from our group fund, in addition to my share of microcredit obtained by our group from a local bank for entrepreneurial endeavors. With this financial support, I managed to clear my debts and liberate myself from the clutches of the moneylender.*

*Although I had been forced to deny my two elder daughters their right to an education, I resolved to provide my youngest daughter with the opportunity to pursue higher education. In the interim, I successfully orchestrated the marriage of my eldest daughter and*

*guided my second daughter to join another SHG. With the unwavering support and assistance of my fellow group members and the dedicated NGO, I was able to gradually reform my husband's behavior and encourage him to assume various family responsibilities. Furthermore, I assumed the role of household leader, actively participating in decision-making regarding all our domestic affairs, in consultation with my fellow group members.*

In contemporary times, a discernible trend has surfaced in rural Tamil Nadu, indicating a steady increase in households led by women. This trend reflects a scenario where husbands have fallen victim to alcohol addiction, consequently shirking their familial duties. Resultantly, wives have assumed the primary breadwinning role, often surpassing the income of their wayward spouses, thus placing the economic stability of these households firmly on their capable shoulders. These women have become the mainstay, playing a crucial role in supporting their families.

However, despite their newfound economic responsibilities, these women face persistent challenges, including harassment and, at times, physical assault from their addicted husbands demanding money for their drinking habits. This distressing phenomenon is particularly prevalent in rural areas. Addressing and alleviating the suffering of these resilient and economically empowered women fall within the purview of governmental responsibility. It is essential for the government to formulate a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing and ultimately eradicating the hardships caused by alcohol addiction, thus ushering in enduring peace and stability in numerous households. Hence, the discourse concerning the policies and initiatives executed by the Tamil Nadu government regarding the implementation of total liquor prohibition assumes paramount significance in light of these evolving societal dynamics.

## Political Maneuvering and the Challenge of Prohibition in Tamil Nadu

Throughout several decades in Tamil Nadu's political arena, the issues of prohibition and public elections have maintained centrality, even as the state paradoxically thrives as a significant liquor market in India. Politicians, often devoid of genuine intentions to enforce complete prohibition, cynically exploit this matter to sway female voters during elections. While the government bears a moral responsibility to safeguard its citizens from the ills of excessive drinking, the substantial revenue generated from liquor sales is also of paramount importance to the state's treasury. Consequently, there exists an urgent necessity to mitigate the adverse social consequences of alcohol consumption.

The history of prohibition in Tamil Nadu is characterized by oscillating periods of enforcement. Commencing in the late 1930s, there was a persistent demand for total prohibition in the state. Sri Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the Chief Minister of the then Madras Presidency, introduced total prohibition on an experimental basis in Salem in 1937, which later expanded to encompass the entire state. After a hiatus of over a decade, prohibition was once again enforced in 1948, during the tenure of Sri. Omandur Ramasamy Reddiyar, the Chief Minister of Madras State. This ban remained in effect until 1970. In 1971, the new Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government lifted prohibition, only to reinstate it in 1974 at the behest of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari. He personally implored the then Chief Minister,

M. Karunanidhi, elucidating the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption on future generations.

When the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) came to power, the ban was once again lifted in 1981, with the government also permitting the sale of arrack and toddy. In 1983, the government established the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC), which took over the distribution of liquor throughout the state. TASMAC became the exclusive entity responsible for liquor distribution and further consolidated its control by opening 6,798 retail outlets across the state, with an eye on the substantial revenue they could generate for the government. As a result of this move, the government earned a staggering 180,000 million INR during the 2010–2011 fiscal year (Prabhakar, *The Economics Times*, 2013).

In 1987, the governing AIADMK party was compelled to reinstate prohibition due to widespread public outcry. This decision came in response to a series of deaths attributed to the consumption of adulterated liquor. However, when the DMK regained power in 1989, it promptly reintroduced the sale of arrack and toddy in polythene packets at lower prices in 1990. Subsequently, the AIADMK, which took control from the DMK in 1991, reversed this policy by banning the sale of arrack and toddy as part of an election promise.

In 2002, the same AIADMK government reinstated the sale of inexpensive liquor through TASMAC outlets, justifying it by arguing that Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) was inaccessible to the economically disadvantaged population. This move substantially increased government revenue during the 2014–2015 fiscal year (*The Indian Express*, 19 04.2016). During an election rally on April 9, 2016, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, leading the AIADMK, pledged to reintroduce prohibition in a phased manner if her party emerged victorious. In response, the DMK made a counter-election promise of implementing total prohibition in the state if they secured victory.

Following the 2016 elections, the AIADMK returned to power, and the Chief Minister took the initial step toward fulfilling her election promise by ordering the closure of 500 TASMAC outlets as the first phase of the prohibition plan. Subsequently, in February 2017, an additional 500 outlets were closed. Despite the closure of 1,000 outlets, 5,262 outlets remained operational. This was evidenced by TASMAC's revenue of 33 million INR from liquor sales during the Diwali festival of 2018, indicating that alcohol consumption in the state was still on the rise. The government has continued to uphold its commitment to implementing total prohibition in a gradual manner.

Throughout the past several decades, the two primary Dravidian political parties, namely the DMK and the AIADMK, which have taken turns in governing the state of Tamil Nadu, have demonstrated that they predominantly utilize the issue of prohibition for political advantage. Over this extended period, both parties have engaged in a cycle of alternating between implementing and rescinding prohibition measures. As a consequence of these oscillations in government policy, a significant portion of the state's population, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, has developed alcohol dependence. Furthermore, a substantial number of adolescents have also succumbed to this detrimental habit.

Both the DMK and the AIADMK intermittently make promises to institute prohibition in the state, yet they struggle to relinquish the substantial revenue generated by liquor sales. They have

established the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) as a tool to court a portion of the electorate by preserving the pledge of a continuous supply of alcohol. This enduring pattern underscores the notion that the realization of absolute and comprehensive prohibition in Tamil Nadu remains largely aspirational and elusive, as the political landscape is primarily driven by electoral considerations and revenue concerns.

## Challenges and Continuing Debates Surrounding Alcohol Prohibition in India

In 1958, the state of Gujarat implemented complete prohibition as a homage to Mahatma Gandhi, a staunch advocate of alcohol abstinence. In response to his appeals, the Government of India introduced a constitutional amendment, specifically Article 47, granting individual states the authority to enact prohibition measures. However, contemporary Gujarat has witnessed a rise in unrestricted alcohol consumption, indicating that total prohibition in the state has proven ineffective (*The Hindu*, 31.08.2014). Rahi Gaikwad has documented the existence of a well-established underground network engaged in the illicit production and distribution of counterfeit liquor within the state, a practice that has persisted for many years.

At present, total prohibition measures are only enforced in the states of Bihar, Nagaland, Manipur, and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, which is an island. While Kerala and Andhra Pradesh do not enforce complete prohibition, they have implemented various restrictions on alcohol sales. Nevertheless, these states grapple with significant challenges, as bootleggers persist in supplying alcohol through illicit means. As an illustration of the extent of the issue, the government of Bihar, since enacting its new prohibition law on April 1, 2016, has apprehended 71,000 individuals for offenses related to alcohol supply or consumption. Furthermore, in the first quarter of 2017, the government confiscated substantial quantities of alcohol from bootleggers, including 852,452 liters of Indian Made Foreign Liquor, 560,770 liters of counterfeit brew, and 11,617 liters of beer (*Firstpost*, 02.02.2019).

It is worth noting that movements advocating for the implementation of total prohibition continue to transpire in various states of India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, where such initiatives have been underway since July 2015. This underscores the ongoing social and political discourse regarding alcohol prohibition in the country.

## Rising Anti-Liquor Protests and The Challenge of Total Prohibition in Tamil Nadu

In the annals of Tamil Nadu's history, the prevalence of crimes and violence, including domestic violence, remained relatively low, leading to subdued protests and agitations. However, the post-independence era witnessed a notable surge in crime rates, giving rise to heightened anti-liquor movements in the state. Here, we shall delve into select anti-liquor demonstrations in contemporary Tamil Nadu.

The first significant protest unfolded in August 2015 when a series of anti-liquor agitations were orchestrated by civilians and students across the state. During this period, several opposition parties lent their support to the movement, advocating for a



statewide bandh (general strike) to compel the incumbent AIADMK party to enforce total prohibition. Regional parties such as the Paattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) and the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), an offshoot of the DMK, persistently echoed the call for total prohibition. Notably, the establishment of new TASMAL shops (Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation, responsible for alcohol distribution) or Elite TASMAL outlets (exclusive outlets for imported liquor) often triggered protests. Among these protests, three stand out.

The first protest occurred in August 2015 in Kalngapatti, a village in the Tirunelveli district of southern Tamil Nadu. Villagers aimed to shutter a TASMAL shop within their village. The protest, led by the elderly mother of the president of the MDMK party, sought the closure of the liquor outlet. When villagers, along with members of this political party and the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK – Liberation Panther Party), attempted to vandalize the outlet, the police responded with a lathi charge and tear gas.

The second notable protest transpired in Kanyakumari district, where the situation escalated to the unfortunate death of Sasi Perumal, a Gandhian activist, on July 31, 2015. He had been demanding the closure of a liquor shop (The Indian Express, 01.08.2015). These agitations triggered a wave of smaller protests across the state, targeting TASMAL shops. In response to mounting pressure, many shopkeepers were compelled to shut down their establishments. In some areas, the protests escalated to the point where the shops were ransacked and vandalized.

The third significant protest occurred on October 30, 2015, when the police arrested Kovan, a folk singer and a member of the Makkal Kalai Iyakkam (People's Arts Movement). Kovan had criticized the government's revenue generation through liquor sales in his folk songs, leading to sedition charges against him. Opposition party leaders vehemently condemned his arrest and called for his immediate release.

Many of the anti-liquor protests in Tamil Nadu during this period drew inspiration from the rural women's agitation in Andhra Pradesh in 1990, which had a profound impact on the government and the ruling party at that time (Kancha Ilaiah, 1992: 2406-2408). Similarly, agitations against alcohol sales and consumption in various parts of Tamil Nadu were spearheaded by women who had borne the brunt of alcohol-induced violence and suffering for many years. One notable example is the protest in Anaikatty village in the Coimbatore district, situated in western Tamil Nadu. On April 1, 2017, a group of women organized a non-violent anti-liquor protest following Gandhian principles. Their demand was the immediate closure of a TASMAL outlet in their village. After three months of patient and peaceful protest, they achieved success (Sudhir, Firstpost, 27.04.2017).

Another incident occurred on April 4, 2017, in Serinchamalai village, within the same district, where a protest took a sudden violent turn, resulting in a clash between the protesters and TASMAL shop staff. When a police officer attempted to restore order, he was assaulted by the protesters (Rakesh Mehar, The News Minute, 26.04.2017).

On April 23, 2017, a group comprising 28 individuals, including 17 women, engaged in an act of vandalism targeting a newly opened TASMAL shop in Mecheri town, Salem city, Tamil Nadu. Initially, the women had staged a peaceful protest. However, despite their patient and peaceful demonstrations and despite a court order, the authorities proceeded with the relocation of the shop. This decision infuriated the women, causing them to lose their

composure and resort to vandalizing the shop. Consequently, they were promptly arrested for their actions (Sudhir, Firstpost, 27.04.2017).

In the lead-up to the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections in May 2016, prohibition emerged as a central theme in the election manifestos of all political parties. The DMK party, in particular, emphasized it as a key element of their election platform. Their declaration stated that upon assuming power, the new chief minister would sign into law immediate and total prohibition in the state. The AIADMK party also made a similar promise, pledging to implement total prohibition in a phased manner if re-elected to office. Irrespective of which political party, be it the DMK or AIADMK, assumes power, they are inclined to maintain the status quo concerning liquor sales in the state. This inclination stems from the substantial revenue that liquor sales contribute to the state's treasury, particularly in times when governments are grappling with financial constraints. However, during elections, these parties strategically employ the promise of prohibition as a means to secure the votes of women. The implementation of a blanket ban on liquor poses the risk of scrapping many of the government's subsidy programs. Consequently, political parties engage in a nuanced game during elections to sway public opinion, particularly among women. An alternative approach would involve regulating liquor sales instead of pursuing total prohibition, striking a balanced compromise between the state's development and revenue generation.

It is undeniable that the imposition of total prohibition could lead to the illegal production and sale of spurious liquor. Thus, it becomes the state's responsibility to establish a robust monitoring mechanism to detect and prevent such activities. Failure to do so would likely result in the continued occurrence of hooch-related fatalities, predominantly affecting economically disadvantaged segments of society. Some individuals, in addition to succumbing to addiction to spurious liquor, might even become involved in the illicit trade, viewing it as a source of income, especially among unemployed youth. The bootleggers may enlist these young individuals, who may subsequently become entangled in smuggling and corruption. This entanglement often stems from the existence of a nexus between bootleggers, political leaders, and officials. In this corrupt system, the former pays bribes to the latter to turn a blind eye to their illegal activities, including the illicit manufacturing, transportation, and sale of spurious liquor. Shiv Viswanathan (The Hindu, 11.04.2016) cites the example of Kerala, where bar owners pay substantial bribes to political leaders to ensure the unhindered operation of their liquor businesses.

When contemplating the implementation of total prohibition in the state of Tamil Nadu, the initial step should involve the closure of all distilleries responsible for liquor production, particularly those with ties to leaders from the DMK and AIADMK parties. Disrupting the manufacturing process would effectively curtail liquor sales. Justice Sandru, a former Madras High Court Judge, contends that the Dravidian parties, who have been in power since 1967, alternate their stances on prohibition and employ election manifestos as a means to deceive voters. Their commitment to total prohibition is questionable, given their awareness of both the challenges and benefits associated with it. Economist Venkatesh Athreya suggests that the ruling AIADMK government is unlikely to enforce total prohibition, given the substantial revenue it derives from liquor sales. Instead, the government may opt for a phased reduction in the number of TASMAL shops as a more practical approach to eventual prohibition (The Hindu [Tamil], 12.04.2016).



The informed segment of the public is well aware that the Tamil Nadu state government is unlikely to implement either phased liquor bans or total prohibition due to its reliance on liquor-generated revenue. Furthermore, most distilleries and breweries in the state receive support or ownership from political leaders affiliated with either the ruling AIADMK or DMK parties, their relatives, or associates. Consequently, regardless of which party assumes power in the state, the actualization of total prohibition remains a distant dream. This scenario may also hold true for other states that depend on liquor sales revenue, particularly during challenging times. For example, when the 40-day COVID-19 lockdown was lifted in Tamil Nadu on May 4, 2020, and liquor shops reopened, long queues formed at TASMALC shops. People disregarded social distancing precautions and engaged in jostling and competition to purchase liquor. Simultaneously, protests erupted in various locations demanding the reopening of liquor shops. The government, recognizing the substantial revenue generated by liquor sales, chose not to forego it, even amid the ongoing viral pandemic. Furthermore, additional funds were required to combat COVID-19 and its economic repercussions, prompting the government to reopen liquor shops as the virus continued to spread throughout the state.

## Challenges and Commitment: Tamil Nadu's Gradual Path to Alcohol Prohibition

While the state heavily relies on the revenue generated from TASMALC outlets, accounting for over a third of its tax income, the incumbent AIADMK party in Tamil Nadu is committed to a gradual implementation of total prohibition. Previous endeavors to enforce prohibition in the state have often resulted in the proliferation of illicit distillation points and undercover liquor sales. In such scenarios, individuals grappling with alcohol addiction typically turn to local bootleggers for their supply, and some may even travel to shops in the nearby Union territory of Pondicherry, where prohibition is not in effect. The government, if it were to enact a complete ban, would face the formidable challenge of finding alternative employment for the more than 5200 TASMALC outlet employees, as well as losing the revenue generated from liquor sales through these establishments.

Notwithstanding these substantial challenges, the present AIADMK government appears resolute in gradually phasing out liquor shops. This commitment was conveyed to the public through their election manifesto prior to the 2016 elections. Perhaps the present moment provides an opportune time for the government to initiate the step-by-step closure of TASMALC shops, particularly as the 2021 elections for the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly draw near. With the support of political parties, the public, and civil service organizations, this move has the potential to rescue a significant portion of the population from the clutches of alcohol addiction and the associated long-term health risks.

## Conclusion

The exploration of alcohol consumption in ancient India and its contemporary socio-economic consequences provides a multifaceted understanding of this complex issue. Throughout history, alcohol has been both revered and condemned in Indian society, with cultural, religious, and caste distinctions shaping drinking practices. While ancient texts and historical accounts depict a nuanced relationship with alcohol, modern India faces a

growing challenge of alcohol addiction, illicit production, and their far-reaching socio-economic impacts.

The study has revealed that alcohol consumption in India is on the rise, with a significant proportion of the population, including adolescents, engaging in habitual drinking. This trend has led to an increase in heavy drinking and poses serious health, social, and economic challenges. The consequences of alcohol addiction in the working class are particularly dire, as individuals divert substantial portions of their income towards alcohol, resulting in reduced productivity and negative effects on family dynamics.

Moreover, the study has highlighted the connection between alcohol consumption and domestic violence, including spousal abuse. Alcohol often exacerbates violence within households, leading to physical and emotional harm, separation, and even dissolution of marriages. This underscores the urgent need for interventions to address the intersection of alcohol addiction and domestic violence.

The intersection of alcohol addiction, workplace consequences, and women's resilience in rural Tamil Nadu reveals a complex and deeply rooted issue with widespread implications. The narrative illustrates the profound impact of alcohol addiction on the workforce, families, and particularly the pivotal role women play in these scenarios. The dire socioeconomic challenges, often perpetuated by alcoholism, continue to shape the lives of individuals and families, particularly in rural settings.

The stories shared in this study reveal the grim reality faced by many households where alcohol addiction disrupts the very fabric of family life. These challenges are not just isolated incidents but representative of a larger issue prevalent in many parts of Tamil Nadu. Women, often the sole breadwinners in households affected by alcohol addiction, face immense hardships, juggling economic responsibilities while dealing with abusive behavior and, in some cases, violence from their addicted spouses. It's a reality that paints a picture of resilience, but one that shouldn't be the norm.

The government's role in addressing this multifaceted issue is crucial. The study indicates the oscillating political history of prohibition in Tamil Nadu. The politics surrounding prohibition—fluctuating between election promises, revenue concerns, and the challenging enforcement of such measures—paints a picture of a landscape where the well-being of individuals and families often takes a back seat to political maneuvering.

It's clear that prohibition, while appealing in principle, presents a complex set of problems in implementation. The clandestine production of illicit liquor, the potential for increased crime, and the existing revenue streams from legal alcohol sales create a complicated scenario for policymakers. Additionally, a deeply rooted nexus between political leaders, alcohol producers, and officials adds another layer of complexity to the issue.

The struggle between idealism and pragmatism in enacting prohibition remains a challenge, with the lives and well-being of individuals—especially women and their families—hanging in the balance. The narratives in this study are not just stories of hardship but a call for comprehensive, pragmatic solutions that balance the need for revenue, social stability, and the well-being of society's most vulnerable members.

These narratives emphasize the necessity of a balanced approach—one that aims for a gradual shift away from alcohol dependence while addressing the socioeconomic issues it leaves in its wake. A focus on economic empowerment, educational opportunities, and community support systems is essential. These, coupled with

strategic policy changes and robust enforcement mechanisms, could gradually shift the narrative and offer a ray of hope for the countless families struggling in the clutches of alcohol addiction.

The study examines the intricate interplay between alcohol addiction, its impact on the workplace, the resilience of women in rural Tamil Nadu, and the contentious issue of alcohol prohibition in the state. It sheds light on the myriad adverse consequences of alcohol consumption, such as workplace accidents, absenteeism, suicide, and violence. Women in rural areas have taken on the role of breadwinners due to their husbands' alcohol addiction, often seeking refuge in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to empower themselves economically and socially. These women exemplify remarkable resilience in the face of adversity.

Tamil Nadu's history with alcohol prohibition has been marked by oscillating policies and political maneuvering. Prohibition is often used as an electoral promise, but it has proven difficult to implement due to the substantial revenue generated from alcohol sales. The challenge lies in striking a balance between addressing the social consequences of alcohol addiction and sustaining government revenues.

## Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the complex and multifaceted nature of alcohol consumption in India. It is evident that the historical and cultural roots of drinking practices have shaped India's relationship with alcohol. The coexistence of abstinence and permissiveness across different social classes in ancient India exemplifies the diversity of attitudes toward alcohol.

In the contemporary context, India faces several challenges related to alcohol consumption, including a rise in habitual drinking, the adverse economic impact on the working class, and the connection between alcohol addiction and domestic violence. These issues necessitate a comprehensive approach to tackle the multifaceted problems associated with alcohol consumption.

Addressing alcohol addiction in India requires a combination of strategies, including public health initiatives, awareness campaigns, and treatment options. Moreover, policies that regulate the production and sale of alcohol need to be revisited to mitigate the risks associated with illicit production and consumption.

The study also highlights the need for addressing domestic violence and its connection to alcohol consumption. Interventions should focus on providing support to victims and rehabilitating perpetrators while fostering awareness about the consequences of alcohol-induced violence.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of recognizing the impact of alcohol on marginalized communities, especially women and children. Initiatives to empower these vulnerable populations and provide them with opportunities for economic and social improvement are crucial.

The study demonstrates the intricate interplay between alcohol consumption, historical and cultural contexts, and the contemporary challenges it presents in India. It is imperative for policymakers, healthcare professionals, and social organizations to work together to address the multifaceted issues related to alcohol consumption, with a focus on public health, economic well-being, and the prevention of domestic violence. A holistic approach that takes into account the historical, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions of alcohol consumption is essential to create a healthier and safer environment for all members of Indian society.

The study underscores several critical aspects that merit further discussion. First, it highlights the pervasive and detrimental impact of alcohol addiction on various aspects of society, from workplace productivity to family dynamics. It underscores the urgent need for effective strategies to address alcoholism, which continues to be a pressing issue in Tamil Nadu.

The resilience of women in rural Tamil Nadu who take on the role of sole breadwinners is commendable. Their participation in SHGs empowers them to overcome financial challenges and social norms that perpetuate the cycle of addiction. It opens a discourse on how such grassroots initiatives can contribute to women's economic independence and the improvement of their living conditions. However, these efforts also underscore the need for a broader societal shift towards addressing the root causes of alcohol addiction, including mental health support and community-based interventions.

The discussion on alcohol prohibition in Tamil Nadu raises essential questions about the feasibility and practicality of implementing such policies. While prohibition might be an ideal solution to curb alcohol-related problems, the study illustrates the challenges in its execution due to the economic interests involved. Policymakers need to weigh the potential social benefits of prohibition against the revenue losses, the risk of illegal alcohol production, and the impact on the workforce.

Furthermore, the study's exploration of anti-liquor protests in Tamil Nadu demonstrates the depth of public sentiment against alcohol-related issues. These movements reflect the concerns of various segments of society, particularly women who have borne the brunt of alcohol-related problems. The government's response to these protests has been mixed, and it highlights the complexities of addressing this issue while considering economic and political interests.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges posed by alcohol addiction in Tamil Nadu. It emphasizes the resilience of women in the face of adversity and the intricate political landscape surrounding alcohol prohibition. The discussion that arises from these findings is instrumental in shaping future policies and interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of alcoholism in the region while acknowledging the complexities involved in pursuing total prohibition.

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The author affirms that he has no competing interests related to the research and publication of this article.

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