“Moderation” in the Consumption of Alcohol:
Nonsense upon Flimsy Stilts

Mehran Banaei
A general dedication to:
All those innocent victims of
impaired driving and foetal alcohol
syndrome.

A personal dedication to:
My mother, who never touched
a drop and my father who gave it up.
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There are also many personally known individual drinkers who have made immense contribution to this book without necessarily knowing it. I am in debt to all of them, and do respect their choice to drink.

Finally, readers should keep in mind that due to the fast pace of mergers and acquisitions in today’s dynamic business world, the ownership of many companies frequently changes hands. Consequently, the business information provided in Argument 17, had to be revised and updated a few times before publication. It will no doubt keep on changing again in the future. Nevertheless, this kind of change is no real change at all, or one that would make a difference for the better of the general public. As demonstrated there, the corporate world is extremely intertwined and interrelated. Any change of hands, is within the same ideological frame, objectives and network of like-minded corporate participants. After each take over, it is still the same dance to a different tune, the same orchestra for a different conductor.
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“At first the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes the man.”

-Sage
Introduction

Alcohol is man’s oldest and most favourite mood-altering substance. Its use has finely woven into the social fabric of most societies. In many countries around the world, national identity is soaked with brand of a particular beer or other drinks citizens consume. Despite the fact that alcohol is now officially considered a noxious drug, particularly from a group of substances that have ruined the lives of countless people, there is still widespread use of it. In fact, there are more people dying everyday from alcohol-related complications than from the combined use of heroin, cocaine and every other illicit drugs. In the United States, alcohol-related deaths are five times greater than all other drugs combined together. This is because, like tobacco, alcohol is toxic carcinogenic; in essence it is a protoplasmic poison with lethal effects. With continued consumption, if it does not cause sudden death, it certainly corrodes health and shortens the life-span.

Alcohol causes metabolic damage to every cell and depresses the immune defense system. It impairs the body’s ability to absorb proteins, minerals such as zinc, iron, calcium, selenium, magnesium; vitamin A, C, D, E, K and B complex. Alcohol causes the body’s essential nutrients to be eliminated through urination, thereby weakening it and rendering it susceptible to diseases of all sorts. The liver, kidneys, pancreas, heart, blood vessels, brain and many bodily functions are directly affected by alcohol. The Canadian Liver Foundation states that alcohol is a cause of 100 liver diseases. Alcohol causes major dreadful changes in the biochemical response to trauma.

Furthermore, apart from infliction to the individual drinker, there are positive relationships between alcohol use and accidents, social disorder and criminal behaviour. Yet, despite all the harms that come with it, its prevalent consumption is both legalized and normalized in most societies. The normalization is evident by considering the fact that the verb ‘to drink’ has come to mean spontaneously to drink alcoholic beverage, unless it is clearly stated otherwise. In most countries, its sale has even reached into local supermarkets and grocery stories, selling it alongside with bread and lollipop.

Astonishingly, the majority of the general public, do not appear to be concerned about this deadly problem, so long as its consumption is somewhat restrained. Yet, it is indeed extremely

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4. Stoner, H.B. et al. (1979), The relationships between plasma substrates and hormones and the severity of injury in 277 recently injured patients”.


6. The legal parameter of restrictions vary state to state. It is usually the case, that the drinker has to be above certain age, not operating motor vehicles or any industrial machinery, and in some states not be pregnant. Overall, it is
puzzling to the thinking mind that if alcohol, in essence, is a psychoactive substance, addictive, hypnotic, causing social, psychological and physical disorder, even death, then why on earth is it so freely available? Why do people heedlessly drink it?

The answer, perhaps is because society has come to believe erroneously that the damage of alcohol starts only when drunkenness sets in. To an overwhelming number of people, the harmful effects of alcohol lie only in its ‘excessive’ consumption. It is, therefore, not surprising to hear inaccurate proclamations such as “it is okay to drink so long as one does not exceed the limit”, or “so long as one takes a cab home”. The underlying subliminal massage is that, it is okay to drink and be under the influence of alcohol in so far as, for instance, you are not going to drive. These are the all too familiar hazardous games that people often play with their own mind, in order to justify paltry desires, in this case a desire which is not even inborn, but in fact militates against human nature, a desire which is manufactured and proscribed by external stimuli.

Just like laboratory animals, in humans too, the penchant for alcohol has to be acquired. The desire for alcohol is introduced and is artificial. Its artificiality is evidenced by the fact that it is not a need which the human being inherently possesses and ought to be satisfied. Nor is the taste of it a thing which a child, unadulterated by an undisciplined socio-cultural upbringing, would choose over things such as water, juices or milk. In fact, the evidence is that children unhesitantly reject alcohol the moment they taste it. Novice adult drinkers who take a strong drink for the first time tend to throw it up, a reaction quite similar to coughing when people start experimenting with tobacco. The implication of this is that the body seems to be rejecting an incompatible foreign substance at initial encounters — a natural early warning system. The defiance of the initial warning persists by those who choose to keep on drinking, despite the fact that their senses and state of health continuously exhort against their choice.

Alcohol is unlike any other produced goods. Its production and consumption creates a most serious dilemma for each consuming society. For instance, the indisputable data on costly social and health complications arising from the consumption of alcohol, militates against its production and sale. But, the economic factors are too lucrative to be ignored. The extent of business activities that the alcohol industry generates is unimaginable. At the same time, it is admitted by the majority of drinkers, that alcohol, in general, is biologically, psychologically and sociologically deleterious for humankind, yet, most people are adamant not to abandon this expressly destructive desire. A wise man once said, that if a jumbo jet full of passengers were to crash everyday, people would soon come to stop flying. But, the fact that more people are dying everyday from alcohol-related complications, does not seem to stop anyone from drinking. The passion to drink is strong. There is an obvious discrepancy between ‘is’ and ‘ought’, which must be resolved. Both consumers and producers of alcohol must provide a justifiable rationale for producing and consuming a substance which is clear to be harmful.

In liberal societies, a product of this nature is subject of social and governmental control. However, what should our socio-economic policy be subservient to? This may be futile question interesting to note that virtually in every state where drinking is normalized, attitude toward drug consumption is more lenient and lax than toward prescriptions.

to ask, since as always, profit and desire are mightier than logic. Yet, such motivations have an unpopular image and must be disguised. We all like to present ourselves as moral, well-intentioned, intelligent, etc. No one would ever claim that: “I know what I am doing is so stupid, but I like to do it anyway”, nor is there any industry or corporation, which would openly admit that their product is detrimental to the whole welfare of society, but their hunger for mega-profits has precedence above everything else. Therefore, the consumption and sale of alcohol call for formulation of a justifiable reason for drinking. The justification must be sufficient, positive, pleasant, respectable and widely acceptable. As such, the use of a positive notion of drinking, is a way of distancing oneself by cognitive dissonance.

The core of creation of the notion of ‘moderation’, is mostly based on the removal of psychological inner tension. For example, those who are involved in alcohol production must convince themselves and the public that they are not uncaring, ruthless, money-oriented bloodsuckers. Alcohol must look like a product which is honourable to sell. Similarly, those who are drinking alcohol must also convince themselves and the non-drinkers that they are not doing anything irrational. Governments must convince the public and their ‘dry’ opposition that the adopted model and policies on alcohol have tamed all ill-effects of alcohol. All involved groups must modify their cognition and public belief concerning the hazards of drinking for the individual drinker and society. The real danger involved must be eliminated or minimized to a point of insignificance. Therefore, ‘drink-in-moderation’ seems a right and convenient alibi for everybody involved. Such an adopted approach appears to be a perfect and ingenious solution to resolve the problem for all.

As noted, an atmosphere of acceptability, when created, is not always purely psychologically oriented. There are many cases when the vested interests of the individuals involved, requires them to appeal knowingly to deception. Their actions are planned and skilful manoeuvres, to distort opposing judgements in winning the public opinions. In an excellently concocted mental decorum, the one who produces or drinks alcohol is seemingly engaged in an innocent activity that violates no ethical standard of right and wrong. Alcohol business ought to appear no different than the soft drink business.

Therefore, in so doing, imaginary concepts such as “moderate drinking”, “light drinking”, “social drinking”, “sensible drinking”, “responsible drinking” and “controlled drinking” are invented to create a ground for the belief that it is perfectly all right to drink so long as one does not become a hard-core alcoholic, problem drinker or semi-dependant. This implies that, it is perfectly all right to drug your mind, if you do it ‘lightly’, ‘moderately’, ‘socially’, ‘sensibly’, ‘responsibly’, etc. Such concepts are coined as a defence mechanism, serving as a means to deny the reality of whimsicality, to justify that which reason clearly dictates otherwise. Those who invented these concepts, act like if we paint a leopard’s spots, it would change the nature of the beast and turns her into a domesticated cat. The objective is just to make a leopard look like it is a pussy cat, not to make it behave like a pussy cat.

Ironically, the idea works. The desirable illusion can be created. There is no doubt that language affects thought process. Psycholinguists would argue that the specific language we are taught, effectively influences our mental processes. For instance, note that water has always

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8. Whorf, B.L. (1956), Language, thought and reality.
been referred to as water, juice is juice, milk is milk, pop is pop; coffee is always called coffee, tea is tea and no one has ever referred to these differently. Virtually every comestible liquid is referred to as what it is essentially made of. But, why is it that an alcoholic beverage, a protoplasmic poison, is called a “drink”? Why is it that the time that people start to engage in quaffing this deadly toxic drink, is referred to as “Happy Hours”? “What is your poison?” is changed to “what would you drink?” The point is, language alters perception, and terms conceal reality which can misleadingly find favour.

Furthermore, the above terms suggest that the rightfulness or wrongfulness of drinking all depends on the added adjective, as though the act of drinking itself has no inherent property. ‘Social’, ‘sensible’, ‘average’ or ‘moderate’ drinking seems to be fine. Somehow only ‘excessive’, ‘heavy’, ‘chronic’, ‘habitual’, ‘compulsive’ and ‘defiant’ drinking are bad and unacceptable. As always, if the chosen adjective sounds gentle, people then tend to underestimate its danger. Likewise, one can confuse the issue by tagging a strong word like ‘abuse’ to some prefixes. For example, “drug abuse”, “chemical abuse”, “substance abuse”, “alcohol abuse”, all convey a negative image in mind, only when the term ‘abuse’ is accompanied. However, as soon as the word ‘abuse’ is removed, unconsciously, concepts such as “alcohol use” appear to be totally harmless. With this sleight of tongue, an artificial distinction with arbitrary boundaries is erected.

Yet, in spite of such designed sophistry, in reality, none of the above sugar-coated terms can, in any logical way, give a green light to drinking. Considering all the consequences, the act of drinking itself is extremely problematic. Studies indicate, there is no such a thing as risk-free alcohol use. When it comes to any mind-altering drug, no safe threshold of consumption exists. Since alcohol has harmful components, there are risks associated with all use. Verily, even with the so-called moderate drinking, there is almost no system of the human body that is not negatively affected. Adverse consequences such as immediate rise in heart rate and blood pressure can arise even as a result of a single drinking episode. Studies have found that, despite positive publicity surrounding the proclaimed protective benefits of alcohol consumption for heart, in reality, alcohol far from being a wonder-drug, even its ‘moderate’ consumption could lead to heart disease. Just small dose of alcohol can cause arrhythmia and would diminish myocardial contractility. Another study indicates that, when compared to abstainers, the chance of hemorrhagic stroke doubles for ‘light’ drinkers, triples for ‘moderate’ drinkers and quadruples for ‘heavy’ drinkers. Nearly, all cells of the body are adversely affected by alcohol. The


    Also see argument 14 for detail discussion.

damage done is proportionate to the amount consumed and the individual’s vulnerability. The harm increases exponentially with long-term intake. This is as absolute as the law of conservation of matter and energy. By insidious change of language and elusive advertising schemes we cannot defy this universal law of cause and effect. There are some studies, which suggest that, the relationship between consumption and harm is sometimes non-linear, with risks increasing faster than consumption, a relationship which is said to be quadratic.\footnote{Kreitman, N., Chick, J. & Plant, M.A. (1986), as cited in “Alcohol Consumption and the Preventive Paradox by Kreitman, N. (1986).}

Furthermore, to bypass alcohol dependency and subvert risks of addiction, the proposed ‘moderation’ approach to the consumption of alcohol is self-defeating, since the acquired need to drink ‘moderately’ is also a form of addiction. Chemical fixation does not necessarily need to be in ‘excess’ in order to be qualified as dependency. The one who finds the urge to drink ‘time to time’ in said ‘moderate’ quantity has acquired such a need, both physically and psychologically. The so-called moderate drinkers are excluded from the discourse on alcoholism by virtue of definition and linguistic rules not of syllogism.

Surprisingly, the notion of ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol is also being carelessly favoured by many reputable health-care organizations such as the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and the World Health Organization. It is often the case in most educational literature and pamphlets, a long list of medical complications arising from the consumption of alcohol is given, statistics on accidents, crimes and other associated social ills are provided — a presentation which equates consuming alcohol to playing with fire. Their underlying arguments lead to the inevitable conclusion that alcohol is the causal factor behind the losses, it demonstrates our incontestable vulnerability to this substance. Yet, after laying down a solid case against alcohol, at the end they surprisingly state that one should now drink ‘moderately’ — a hard blow to the human intellect, and an obtuse mockery of simple deductive reasoning. Indeed, such a tainted approach makes the whole presentation ineffective, since all drinkers, even most of those who are chronic alcoholics classify themselves as ‘responsible’ drinkers who drink ‘moderately’. In nearly all cases, alcoholics define their own addictive habits as ‘moderation’, not fitting the criteria of ‘excess’. Only those who drink above their norms are ‘excessive’ drinkers. This typical widespread disavowal of reality, is what most therapists have identified and refer to as denial. Denial of that, which self intuitively might know, but unconsciously may not be inclined to admit. Therefore, by this faulty approach, rather than motivating them to stop drinking, they are in fact revitalized to continue to drink. Their inclination to deny their drinking problem is now encouraged and supported by ‘moderation’ approval.

Furthermore, considering the fact that denial is the number one symptom of alcoholism, to promote ‘moderation’ as a legitimate choice, creates a false sense of security, not only for the drinker — making the person feel that he or she is on the safe side — but also for the society. This faulty approach further reinforces the myth that only ‘excessive’ drinking is problematic, thus, making the society on the whole, feel that there is no reason to be alarmed. However, a brief glance at the social and health report-cards of societies where alcohol is easily available,
and the majority are said to be drinking ‘moderately’, indicates a different story. For example, statistical figures indicate a positive correlation between alcohol consumption and death caused by cirrhosis of liver.

The position to promote ‘moderation’, not as a means to an end, but as the end result itself is based on an incomplete thought. The supporters of this view lack consequential thinking. They make at least four pivotal mistakes.

Firstly, as pointed out, this campaign has no impact on the drinking habit of ‘heavy’ drinkers, the target group so to speak, since most ‘heavy’ drinkers presuppose that they are already ‘moderate’ drinkers and in need of no further cut down or assistance. On the other hand, there are some ‘heavy’ drinkers who are fully aware of the seriousness of their drinking habit, nevertheless, they too see no reason to cut down drinking. These confessing alcoholics believe that due to years of ‘heavy’ drinking, they have reached the point of no return, drinking any less is not going to recuperate their already ravaged system, since many biological damages of heavy drinking are irreversible. In fact, because of thinking, that they have reached “the end of the rope”; they deliberately keep on drinking, either to forget this fact, or to accelerate the journey of self-destruction all the way to the very end. Therefore, the ‘moderation’ approach does not seem to serve its main principal objective.

Secondly, in coming sections, it will be proven that no universal criterion for ‘moderation’ as a rule of thumb exists. It will be further established that given the wide variety of consequences in response to alcohol, no definition of ‘moderation’ can be a simple, exact, zero-tolerance approach to risk, and above all, universally applicable to everyone. Therefore, having established this conclusively, any arbitrary approach in the promotion of ‘moderation’ and setting up, supposedly, a valid universal norm for drinking, could cause those who do not drink at all, to start drinking and those who drink, but below the given standard amount, to increase their consumption rate, once the prescribed standard is perceived to be a harmless universal norm. This would be an inevitable interpretation of the injunction by the general public. The confusion escalates to a greater obscurity by the publicity surrounding the use of alcohol as a heart remedy. If ‘moderate’ drinking is not only safe, but also advisable, it would certainly encourage abstainers to start, and the low risk drinkers to increase their drinking allowance to the maximum “safe moderate level”.

Seemingly, the ‘moderation’ campaign has the potential to increase consumption, rather than reduce it. Thus, it is not without adverse effects. As such, the promotion of ‘moderation’ could backfire by encouraging some people to drink more at the individual level, and concomitantly increase per capita consumption. This, in turn, would open up and accelerate the journey towards all kinds of alcohol-related misfortunes and an inevitable and indubitable increase in alcoholism. The consequences of this approach are directly contrary to the view of a particular postulation, which recognizes that the per capita consumption of alcohol has a direct relationship with

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13. Seventh Special Report to the U.S Congress. on: Alcohol and Health: From the Secretary of Health and Human Services, January 1990, p. 110.

problems associated with alcohol. The recommendation is that in order to reduce alcohol-related ills considerably, we ought to aim for an across-the-board decrease in the overall consumption. It is believed that even ‘moderate’ drinkers must further ‘moderate’ their consumption, in order to affect the overall proportion of alcohol-related problems faced by society. For defenders of this view, a feasible solution lies only in reduced per capita consumption, which by promotion of ‘moderation’ we would do just the opposite, and would definitely end up loosing the battle against alcohol-related detriments. In this respect, Dr. Ole-Jorgen Skog has another dexterous point. He believes that prevalence of alcoholism is intimately connected to drinking in general. Let us read him in his own words:

[‘Moderation’ perspective] overlooks the fact that the ‘normal’ drinkers create the drinking culture in which the heavy drinkers are embedded. Ordinary drinking forms, so to speak, the cultural foundation of abuse, as is seen from the fact that population rates of abuse increase and decrease in direct response to overall level of drinking in the culture.

If preventive efforts are exclusively targeted at heavy drinkers and potential heavy drinkers, while no attention is given to ‘normal drinking’, then there is the risk that any effects will rapidly become extinguished, since some of the mechanisms that caused the problem in the first place are left unchanged. Therefore, setting ‘moderate’ drinking norms is utterly ineffective in serving its primary goal and has some definite harmful drawbacks, which are never broached.

Thirdly, this approach presumes that ‘moderation’ should be a permanent substitute for alcohol dependency. But, is one always obliged to choose the lesser of two evils? Choosing between either alcohol dependency or ‘moderation’, implies that, firstly, ‘moderate’ consumption is a determinable and viable option, which, throughout this book it shall be argued, it is not at all. Promotion of ‘moderation’ as the finalized goal will never eradicate the problem of alcoholism, since the aim is openly set on ‘harm reduction’, not harm elimination. This is indeed an inefficient approach to combat alcoholism. On the contrary, it is a potential recipe to nourish its sustenance. Particularly, for the rehabilitated alcoholic the idea of ‘moderate’ drinking increases the likelihood of relapse and losing control. It further allows the inordinate victimization of new potential recruits in the absorbing web of alcoholism.

Fourthly, the majority of the proponents of ‘moderation’, who adhere to the ‘harm reduction’ model, have come to believe that availability and use of a great variety of psychoactive drugs is an immutable “fact of life” in modern societies and we better get use to it. Therefore, for them, harm elimination may not at all be intended in the first place, since this model has already accepted man’s mutual co-existence with the so-called ‘recreational drugs’, particularly with alcohol. The idea is just to reduce the risks, not to eliminate them. Otherwise, in a logical


analysis of the harm reduction model, one cannot help not to be puzzled, as to why should the objective of a recovery program stop short at harm reduction. Is something wrong with harm elimination? The problem is that, with respect to alcohol and some other potent drugs, the issue of any serious harm would be contested, for moderationists would vacuously insist that: “There are only risks”. In this case, the harm-reduction model is only a step toward ‘risk-free’ use, not harm-free use. Therefore, their attempt to reduce addiction cases would not at all exclude drug use.

The above view is meager in soundness. We know that frequent drinking guarantees ‘certainty of loss’. On the other hand, we know that abstinence guarantees ‘certainty of no loss’. ‘Moderation’ is intended to be as a point of compromising between loss and no loss. However, if the validity of the above premises is acknowledged, the intended conclusion cannot be validated. The so-called point of compromise is indeterminable, arbitrary and erroneous. Because, although it is true that ‘less’ is much better, ‘less’ cannot be hazard free. Surely ‘less’ is better. By taking ‘less’ drugs, the actual harmful consequences of drugs to the individual, family, local community and society is reduced, but logically ‘none’ is the best and the safest approach. There is at least one thing we can say for sure, that is, zero alcohol equals zero risk. Further, there is no shred of evidence, which can conclusively establish ‘harm reduction’ model is a viable solution for every type of chemical dependency at all stages of addiction. While this approach may indeed be harm reduction for some, under some circumstances, but in the long run and in overall interconnected scheme of things, it is harm creation for many others. Yet, this approach is ubiquitously advocated and favoured. With respect to recognition of the so-called “fact of life”, there is a hidden assumption here that once a thing is labelled as “fact of life”, it is then justified or should be left alone. If so, one can then question their bias selectivity, since many things in present society can carry a similar label. For instance, on the same merit we can equally argue that, doping in sport competitions, lying under oath, speeding, etc. are other “facts of life”; and we better get use to them. However, we are not. We do not remove or arbitrarily increase the speed limit, just because some drivers have the desire to cruise above the computed speed limit. The International Olympic Committee, FIFA and other sports governing bodies have a very firm policy with respect to drug free competition, and severely punish dishonest athletes who test positive for banned substances. Thus, if principles can be twisted, and popularity and commonality become factuality, how come with respect to these “facts of life” and many others, there is no compromise?

Of course, in debunking ‘moderation’, it is not reasonable to assume that one or two glasses of alcohol, on occasion, will make one an alcoholic; this is not the position of this book. But, what is more unreasonable is to outrule the potential of shifting towards that end, or to think that drinking categories are fixed for life, particularly when they are set arbitrarily. While ‘controlled drinking’ for some drinkers might be a fact, it is also a fact that many initial “controlled drinkers” eventually lose control and move towards the other end of spectrum. No novice drinker can be sure of never becoming alcoholic. The truth is that for many “controlled drinkers”, the motivation to drink becomes gradually and progressively stronger as they drink more and more. Tempting physiological and psychological craving for stimulants is the inherent property of all psychoactive drugs. In fact, that is why they are called drugs. The continuous exposure of a drug user to any addictive substance could lead to a diminishing ability to control his craving. Craving is a result of alcohol’s accumulated biochemical and neurochemical damages. Surely, nobody
starts to drink with the intention to become a full-time practising drunk, yet many do pathetically end up as such. Virtually every single hardcore alcoholic, at one point used to be an unalarming ‘moderate’ drinker, until things got out of hand. At first, drinking is just a means to an end, then it becomes an end in itself. In reviewing the profile of all alcoholics, there is strikingly one common compelling theme overwhelmingly conspicuous; that is drinking problems occur along a linear evolutionary continuum, and different points along this continuum represent different types or degrees of drinking complications. Alcoholism is a progressive affliction, which would only begin with casual drinking. In fact, the road to alcoholism starts with the first ‘innocent sip’.¹⁸ One drink is said to start the craving for another. The loss of control, loosening the normal inhibitions, the sense of euphoria and buoyancy, basically the pleasurable properties, all tend to encourage further drinking. The process involved can be elucidated by the theory of operant conditioning, the principle which explains human behaviour is reinforced by reward and benefit of a given stimuli. Initially one drinks to attain pleasure. Over time, drinking renders the drinker’s physiological reaction to alcohol in a way in which drinking will be continuous, initially to obtain the reward, but later on to avoid the punishment of the withdrawal symptoms. Sealed by social approval and increased craving, the physical demand for alcohol gradually overrides any cognitive or voluntary control. There is a famous Japanese adage which neatly encapsulates this phenomenon: “At first the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes the man.” The vicious circle of indefensiveness begins when one is obliged to avoid the symptoms of drinking by continuing to drink. The cycle keeps on spinning faster. This is the common story of all chronic alcoholics, who have taken the journey to extinction. Ralph Waldo Emerson describes this expedition as such: “There is this to be said in favour of drinking, that it takes the drunkard first out of society, then out of the world.”¹⁹

The popular conception of an alcoholic is synonymous solely with an unclean old man who lives on the streets and drinks out of brown paper bag. Or, an individual who has a low self-esteem, emanating from a poor dysfunctional family with a long history of alcohol ‘abuse’ in the family whose drinking problem unable him to hold on to a job. These images are totally erroneous and description of alcoholic as such is mythical. In recent years, many successful corporate executives, television celebrities, academics, athletes and ordinary people with no prior history of alcohol abuse were forced or willingly signed up for treatment. These one-time healthy people, to their surprise, moved unexpectedly from a ‘moderate’ consumer of alcohol to being entirely consumed by alcohol. Often what ignites a quicker shift on this continuum, is an occurrence of some personal crisis or series of stressful events in life.²⁰ Other variables such as availability and affordability²¹ of alcohol act as extra catalysts. Indeed, the legitimization of

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   Weeks, Morris T. (1948), *13 Steps to Alcoholism.*

¹⁹. Emerson, Ralph Waldo. (1866), *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of R.W. Emerson.*


²¹. Davies, Phil. (1983), “The Relationship Between Taxation, Price and Alcohol Consumption in the Countries of Europe”.
‘moderate’ drinking is the legitimization of the consumption of alcohol at large, which in turn paves this hazardous continuum.

Furthermore, some critics have wrongly argued that the vast majority of people drink appropriately, and only one in every five or six drinkers becomes alcoholic, posing danger to themselves and the society. These critics believe that alcoholics, being a small minority, give the majority of ‘moderate’ drinkers a bad name. The proponents of this view overlook the fact that alcoholism is only one problem among many on the long list of alcohol-related complications. The truth is that, “the majority of alcohol-related problems in society are contributed by the larger numbers of light and moderate drinkers.”

In other words, the problems are generated by those who avoid drinking in ‘excess’. In 1986, Norman Kreitman, a British researcher, brought this point to our attention. He argued that, although complications arising from ‘moderate’ drinking is comparatively lower, ‘moderate’ drinkers produce collectively more social problems than heavy drinkers, since they outnumber the heavy drinkers. He introduced the notion of “preventive paradox”, and argued that a significant reduction in alcohol-related ills would be brought about only by an across-the-board decrease in the overall consumption, not just by a reduction in number of drinks consumed by heavy drinkers. He makes his point candidly:

[By promotion of ‘moderation’] it is also assumed that the public interest is thereby best served (an argument that confuses risks for individuals and population prevalence). Reducing the likelihood of harm for a group of individuals has been erroneously equated with the optimum strategy for reducing the likelihood of harm for the population at large.

Considering these points, the arguments presented in the formulation of the notion of ‘moderation’ as a hazard-free alcohol mode of consumption are wholly inadequate. This is because, if ‘moderation’ is taken to mean “not given to extremes”, then this notion does not at all exclude not being under the influence of alcohol. One does not necessarily need to drink alcohol excessively, to be influenced by it. And not everyone who gets intoxicated is a chronic heavy drinker. The point is, it is certainly not just the high number of drinks that could lead one to commit unacceptable behaviour or violations. It is intoxication and being under the influence of alcohol. Studies indicate that ‘moderate’ users of alcohol account for a much greater numbers of alcohol-related traumas. For instance, consider the fact that in 1984, a total of 113,000 out of those who were caught for drinking and driving in the U.K. have been convicted for impaired driving. However, within this period of time, only 25% of the drivers killed in the road accidents in England and 40% in Scotland, had consumed alcohol above the legal limit. This simply means that about 75% in England and 60% in Scotland, out of those who lost their lives...
were drinking ‘lightly’. Foster’s study on contribution of alcohol in traffic fatalities, later on
confirms that only 25% of road accidents are attributed to excessive alcohol consumption.28 The
majority seem to drink within the boundaries of legal and socially acceptable limit, yet despite
that, the consequence seems to be fatal. Therefore we come to this conclusion that drunkenness
and alcohol-related traumas are not necessarily a mere outcome of heavy drinking, but could also
occur by ‘light’ and ‘moderate’ drinking. In fact, studies have shown that even a blood alcohol
level of 0.015% can impair the skills necessary for safe driving.29 The idea that, alcohol can be
tamed, if it is consumed ‘moderately’ is totally erroneous.

Besides, as mentioned, the problem that alcohol generates is not just alcoholism, but an
innumerable number of other medical and social ills. Some of the most common social problems
relating to intoxication by ‘light’ or ‘moderate’ drinking are: Family arguments, domestic
violence, criminal damage, theft, child neglect/abuse, domestic accidents, absenteeism from
work and school, on-the-job drinking, accident at work, inefficient work, public drunkenness,
public aggression, football hooliganism, burglary, assault, homicide, drinking and driving, taking
cars and driving away, road traffic accidents, sexually deviant acts, rape, unwanted pregnancy,
fires, falls, poisonings, suicides, drownings, death by exposure, hunting and industrial
accidents.30 Transport Canada reports that 43% of air rage incidents involve alcohol. In the
United States alone alcohol is related to 50% of spousal abuse, 50% of traffic fatalities, 49% of
murders, 68% of manslaughter charges, 69% of drownings, 38% of child abuse, 52% of rapes,
62% of assaults and up to 35% of suicides.31 Are all those who are involved alcoholics? Having a
low rate of alcoholism in society does not necessarily mean that the society is free from alcohol-
related complications. The so-called moderate drinking proposed to replace “excessive” drinking
may reduce, eliminate or prevent alcoholism, but is it also capable of having a similar effect on
all the above noted troubles? When the common denominator in all the above cases is presence
of alcohol, not alcoholics, then to put the blame solely on alcoholism is ill-focused.

Another pertinent point in this respect is that, the sociological problems usually arise
concurrently when the clinical problems surface. However, both are the symptoms and the cause
in an odiously reflexive feedback cycle. The problem of alcoholism should not be discussed in
context of disease model, but merely in terms of the damage done to tissues of the individual
drinker. The social, psychological and family damage are by far, more important, but less visible.
In fact, in the case of alcohol, the problems posed by it, reach into every facet of life and affect


Pamphlet produced by the Addiction Research Foundation, titled “Alcohol: Do you know enough about it?”,

31. Source: Modified from the Office for Substance Abuse Prevention. Data derived from the National Institute on
Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, as cited in Drugs: In Modern Society by Charles R. Carroll, (1996), Fourth
the whole of society. Therefore, the goal should not be set on the reduction in alcoholism rate for the sake of the drinkers’ health. This approach utterly fails to adequately address the repercussions of the overall impact of alcohol consumption towards the total environment, which includes humans and non-humans.

Secondly, the promotion of ‘moderation’ implies that there is no better alternative, such as abstinence. It is argued by the moderationists that abstinence is shown to be an absolutely useless approach to combat alcoholism, since, in some cases, while abstinence was being promoted, the rate of alcoholism was continuously climbing. The general extrapolation is that, those who enjoy getting dizzy would not adhere to this mode of conduct. That may be true, but what kind of argument is this? This is like saying, those who take pleasure from racism and sexism will never adhere to equalitarianism, then why bother promoting human rights? Doing the right thing is certainly not like entering a ‘popularity contest’. It means ignoring what is politically correct or incorrect. It is indeed defeatist to assume that since most drinkers may not give up drinking, advocating abstinence is therefore pointless. Surely with such a self-defeating attitude nothing can ever be accomplished in any area of life.

The moderationists further like to emphasize that “for some, abstinence may not be a realistic goal.” By all means this may be so, but is it because it is unobtainable, or is it because despite its sensible foundation it is incompatible with one’s goals and desires? If it seems to be at odds with one’s preference, then what is unrealistic is certainly not abstinence, but perhaps one’s perception of reality. This is like saying that for the racists and sexists, egalitarianism may not be a realistic goal. But the principle of equality can never be compromised just because it does not fit the desires of some adamant self-centered racists and sexists. On the other hand, we know that, willingful abstinence, far from being an unobtainable goal, far from being an outdated legacy, has been and still is the chosen way of life in many scattered human societies. Thus, if this objective can be achieved in some places, why could it not be achieved in all places? Furthermore, one can use the same logic and equally argue that ‘harm reduction’ or ‘moderation’ is not a realistic goal for some people, particularly in cultures where the objective of drinking is intoxication. Hence, how and where do we draw the line? How is the realisticnessity of a goal determined?

The other assumption here is that, all the above criticisms against abstinence are not applicable to the harm reduction model, which, by all means they are, even more so. We can ask, if the ‘harm reduction’ approach is better suited, how come then the number of alcoholics in societies such as the United States where this model is being practised is also on the rise? And for those who are very much into drinking, ‘moderation’ may not be a realistic goal. The interesting point here is that virtually every single argument used against abstinence by its opponents could also be used with much greater force and effect against any other suggested alternatives, such as against the ‘moderation’ or ‘harm reduction’ approach.

The main objection of this book is that, despite the enormous campaign for ‘moderation’ by various advocates, the merit of its efficacy has not yet been established. There is not even any debate surrounding its validity. As a result, nobody seems to question its authenticity, as for instance, the way scientists would question a plausible theory when it has not yet proven to be a fact. On the other hand, there are those who do not narrow down the pernicious effects of ethanol to ‘excessive’ drinking or alcoholism, but to its use, regardless of its quantity. To this group, who are labelled as ‘alarmists’, all of the previously-mentioned sugar-coated notions and adjectives
are elegantly phrased nonsense. They believe the term ‘moderation’ is deceptive and one should not fall victim to this bogus concept. They claim, in order to confirm this assertion, one does not really need to conduct an extensive research, for the use of simple logic can debunk this modern myth. The whole underlying issue, can be put into a single proposition: Is there such a thing as ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol? The response by all so-called ‘social drinkers’, the alcohol industry and some health-care agencies would be affirmative. The response of an ‘alarmist’ or rather a rational consequentialist whose value-system is based on causality and the ‘reality principle’ as opposed to ‘pleasure principle’ is unduly sceptical. Consequentialists demand, if ‘moderation’ is determinable, what then is the limit that separates ‘moderation’ from ‘immoderation’? What is the safe dividing line between use and ‘abuse’? They claim the limit cannot be determined, and in the attempts to define ‘moderation’, there is no valid theoretical, philosophical, moral or legal basis for any given argument. When the notion of safe applied to alcohol consumption, is it referred to here-and-now, later, always, or all of the above?

The common difficulty inherent in these discussions arises from failure to acknowledge that the concept of ‘moderation’ is a subjective human construct. Therefore, to define ‘moderation’ is an exercise in sheer relativism. Furthermore, it shall be established that the concept of ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol is a badly needed man-made invention, not a recovered solution to the problem of alcohol consumption. Its promotion is intended to further the interests of the inventors, not to resolve the socio-health problems arising from the consumption of alcohol. There are ulterior motives to promote ‘moderation’. It shall be discussed as to why the general public cannot fathom that cupidity is the driving force behind such adoptions.

The intention of this book is not to argue against alcoholism, or whether habitual drinking is justified, detrimental and so on. Enough has been written to expose this problem. By now, this is an axiomatic truth, and writing any more against alcoholism is cliché and superfluous exercise. To prevent alcoholism our attention has to be shifted to the root causes. No sensible person today would advocate ‘excessive’ drinking, therefore why write against it. On the other hand, ‘moderate’ drinking, as a means of vindicating the consumption of alcohol, if not the only means, is certainly the most frequent defence presented for drinking, for no other argument has ever been put forward so frequently to defend drinking. The proposed notion of “moderation” is an illegitimate licence to drink. The readers must note that this treatise is not intended to be a personal attack on those who drink ‘moderately’, but is an academic attack on those who promote or legitimize drinking alcohol in ‘moderation’. The massive and incessant promotion of ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol has a significant influence on beliefs and drinking pattern of millions of people. It will be further argued that, although not apparent, the ‘moderation’ campaign is specifically designed to boost alcohol sale and increase per capita consumption. This is what the campaign for drinking in ‘moderation’ is unabashedly set out to do. Consequently, this is why it makes it so important to embark on this issue, and summarily expose the oversimplification of the notion of ‘moderation’ and the maleficient consequences of its promotion. When alcohol industry begins to exploit, manipulate and misinform consumers on ‘moderation’ for their financial advantage, alarm bells must ring out.

This book rejects the concept of “safe alcohol consumption” at the outset. The harmfulness of even a small dose of alcohol intake, in the short term and long term, is both immediate and accumulative.\textsuperscript{33} The fact of this matter is well established and the general public is adequately aware of this matter. This is a proven fact, not a theory, and is empirically and experientially verifiable. Let us avoid redundancy, and evade discussing that which is crystal clear to both sides. Even if one argues that alcohol is not inherently harmful for everybody at all the time, it is, nonetheless, inherently harmful for most people at most of the time. Less is better, that is true, but since mankind is vulnerable to alcohol, none is the best.

As the title of this book hints, it aims to refute the widespread point of view: that the innocuous form of alcohol consumption is when it is taken in ‘moderation’. It shall be argued that the concept of ‘moderation’ is nonsensical. It cannot even be defined, nor can it ever be measured. Hence, that which many refer to as the “Moderate Level” does not exist in reality. Any proposed definition of ‘moderation’ with respect to the consumption of alcohol is elusive. Audrey Kishline, founder of Moderate Management Network in her recent book spends 168 pages to establish a guideline for ‘moderate’ drinking.\textsuperscript{34} Likewise, Vogler and Bartz engage on a similar venture.\textsuperscript{35} One would expect that since their work is specifically on ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol, at least they would first establish what ‘moderation’ really is. However, they completely avoid getting embroiled into giving any definition or setting standardized parameter for ‘moderate’ consumption. This avoidance is often an epitomy of defending the indefensible. In the Spring of 2000, moderationist Audrey Kishline, a champion of ‘harm reduction’ movement, was involved in an automobile accident having a blood alcohol level of 0.26, which is three times more than of the legal limit. She drove the wrong way on a Washington State highway and smashed her car into an incoming vehicle, killing the other driver and his 12-year-old daughter. State troopers found her unconscious with a half-empty bottle of vodka by her side. Kishline was charged with vehicular homicide and sentenced to 54 months in jail. After this tragic incident, she has been at least honest enough to admit in prison that her moderate management program is a “program for alcoholics covering up their own alcoholism.”\textsuperscript{36} As Mao Tse-Tung puts it, the only standard by which truth can be assessed is by its practical results.

Thus, if the best defence for drinking is shown to be defenceless, then the consumption of alcohol cannot be logically defended. The subsequent conclusion must be that if ‘excessive’ drinking is out, ‘moderate’ drinking is out, ‘light’ drinking at any minute doses is out, then the only logical deduction would be the observation of total abstinence.

The first part of this book consists of twenty-three different arguments, which tend to expose this baseless claim from various angles. The aim is to demonstrate that the motley arguments in


\textsuperscript{34} Kishline, Audrey. (1994), Moderate Drinking: The Moderation Management Guide.

\textsuperscript{35} Vogler, Roger E. and Bartz, Wayne R. (1982), The Better Way to Drink: Moderation and Control of Problem Drinking.

defence of ‘moderate’ consumption of alcohol are inherently flawed. They cannot serve their intended purpose. In longing to initiating a new discussion, the author hopes to convince health promoters not to campaign boorishly for ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol. The author strongly believes by so doing, they are confusing and misleading people, when they cannot even tell them what ‘moderation’ is.

In the second part, after having established abstinence as being the only logical approach towards alcohol and all other drugs, its feasibility and track record will be discussed.
“Moderation” in the Consumption of Alcohol: Nonsense upon Flimsy Stilts

1. The Relativity of “Moderation”

There have long been ongoing controversies in the definition of legible concepts such as: What is “addiction”? Who is an “addict”? And, even what is a “drug”? These controversies are not necessarily in the legal realm, but also in medical and sociological fields. However, surprisingly, when it comes to the concept of ‘moderation’ with respect to that which is said to be indefinable or ambiguous there seems to be no controversy at all. The notion of ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol is so widely accepted, to the extent that the word ‘moderation’ does not even appear in quotes, by those who write about it and promote it. This inconsistency would seem somewhat sanctimonious. If anything, it is quite possible to define terms such as addiction, addict and drug, save ‘moderation’, since the former are subject to empirical scrutiny and the latter is subject to contextual, perceptual and physical variations, or a matter of opinion.

To begin with, ‘moderation’ is a mathematical concept. It means the middle-ground, middle-range or mean average. The quantity, value or position of the middle-ground solely depends on the chosen point of reference and the extent of its limits. For example, in a two-dimensional axes (a plane) and in a three-dimensional axes (space), the point of reference is set by geometricians at the tip where the axes intercept, mathematically described as (0,0) and (0,0,0). Every other point is measured based on its distance from the so-called point of origin. Thereupon, we have concepts such as far, close and central. However, in this respect, the point of reference could easily be any other given coordinates. Thus, if you move the position of the point of reference, you have altered the coordinates of all other points and their notion of far, near, central and mean average.

Take the example of planetary distance, in our solar system the sun is taken as the point of reference and the distance between each planet is measured with reference to sun. Mercury is said to be close by, only 58x10^6 km away, and Pluto is said to be quite far (59x10^8 km). However, it is also the case that in some discussion, it is the earth which is taken to be the point of reference. Then in this case, the planetary distance in solar system is completely a different set of numbers. A slight change has a domino effect on subsequent calculations. This boils down to the fact that the notion of middle or ‘moderation’ is not an absolute concept, but relative and its physical quantity varies from person to person, time to time, culture to culture and context to context. What is ‘moderate’ consumption for one, could be ‘excessive’ consumption for another and vice versa. To specify that the intake of a certain amount of a certain product is ‘moderate’, all depends on one’s point of reference. The point of reference is always set arbitrarily from one’s own viewpoint. Mine is most likely to be different than yours, due to the socio-cultural, ideological and individual disparities. Therefore, how do we come to establish and measure a subjective construct? In all subjective assessments, such as the determination of the concept of ‘moderate’ drinking, the measurement always depends on the individual’s definition of ‘moderation’. Its scope is never constant nor could it ever be universally defined or standardized. Is the glass half empty or half full?

In societies where people drink by bottles, the ‘moderate’ amount is far above the maximum amount that people drink in societies where drinking is less common. In the latter societies, the ‘moderate’ amount may be so insignificant when compared with the former one. In this case, the mean average differs, and therefore, the notion of ‘moderation’ refers to two different quantities.

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Mark Twain, as he saw it, defined ‘moderation’ in general as: “one at a time”. But, even if we take this dim and disputable definition as the universal guideline for consumption, what is the qualitative essence of that given “one” and how long is the duration of the given “time”? How is the parameter established? Not surprisingly, Twain’s definition begs the question right at the very outset as he enters a vicious circle.

In addition, any proposed universal definition of ‘moderation’ requires universal contextual base in order to have any validity. For example, Twain’s definition may be valid and reliable in certain contexts and cases, but it certainly cannot be universally applicable to every case and situation. Therefore, logically, it is unattainable to have a universal concept of anything when a common contextual base does not exist, and both the required definition and point of reference are relative. Naturally this implies that the concept itself is inherently relative as well. Needless to say, an absolute manifesto requires an absolute foundation, otherwise its unequivocal pronouncement becomes a worthless caricature.

The concept of ‘light’ drinker, which is often interchangeably used with ‘moderate’ drinker, suffers from a similar predicament. The term ‘light’ is a human construct. Here, a distinction between human concepts and outright or natural phenomena must be brought into account. For example, consider the concept of ‘hot’ used in our ordinary language. ‘Hot’ is a human concept, it is not a theme of the universe. No physicist would ever claim that boiling water is hot. It is surely hot to our fingers, but it is not hot at all when compared with the surface of sun. No physicist would ever ascertain that hot is a theme, which has existed from eternity and it is a basic universal principle like the law of conservation of matter and energy. Thus, to say something is hot or light, is a statement whose validity, once again all depends on the selected point of reference. The point of reference is relative, arbitrary and contextual.

The notion of ‘average drinking’ is another utmost meaningless concept, when it is used to imply drinking at a safe and ‘moderate’ level. The term ‘average’ is a statistical concept where its value depends on sample size, and bulk of the lowest and highest figures in that given sample. Average is referred to the sum of components of a sample, divided by number of components of the sample. It has absolutely no fixed universal meaning, nor this notion can in any way be used as an indication of the so-called “safe drinking”.

In summary, to talk about concepts such as ‘average’, ‘light’ or ‘moderation’ as clear-cut notions, universally applicable to all human beings and situations, requires a criterion that is universally applicable. No such criterion has been, nor could ever be rationally established. In the absence of such a universal criterion, the use of the term ‘moderation’ is necessarily relative. It is, therefore, logically invalid and ethically inappropriate to promote ‘light’ drinking or ‘moderate’ drinking, when it means different thing to different people. By doing so, we commit an error called ‘fallacy of equivocation’. Hence, where a concept or thing is not universally applicable, it should not be preached universally. The relative nature of prescription of ‘moderation’ in consumption of everything is self-contradictory. To illustrate the relativity of ‘moderation’ as one critic puts it; the notion of everything in ‘moderation’ is in itself a very extreme position.

It has been shown that ‘moderation’ does not and cannot have a scientific definition. It has been demonstrated that ‘moderation’ is a non-quantifiable concept, and far from being absolute, it is a flexible and relative concept like “pretty”, “ugly”, “nice”, “good” and “bad”. Therefore, it suffices to stop at this point, since this short argument alone is sufficient to reveal the utter relativity of the obtuse concept of “moderate drinking”. However, to make the case stronger, let us precede further.

2. Overlooking Numerous Significant Variables

The second inherent difficulty with the promotion of ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol is that human beings are far from being uniform psycho-physical species in their reaction to any given mental or physical stimuli. We can only say that there would always be a similar reaction to a similar stimulus if man was an undifferentiated input-output machine. With respect to alcohol the diversity of man’s reaction is truly phenomenal. To suggest ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol, is to narrowly assume that there is one and only one relevant variable, that is the alcohol dose, ignoring a handful of other crucial variables. This is indeed an unforgivable error in any analysis, where each factor is well capable of making a significant difference. To investigate an issue by means of empirical analysis, one crucial factor should always be considered, and that is the condition(s) under which the issue is being studied. The forerunners of empirical science like Hume, Bacon, Mills all acknowledge that, any conclusion which proceeds by simple enumeration of particulars, careless observations or flawed experimentations is invalid. The inference is precarious, if there are variations or conditions, which have been ignored. Such a judgement is decided on a few limited data, only on those which have been identified. Thus, the finding cannot be a fact, but conjecture; for who can be certain upon particulars which appear at hand, while there are many others which appear not. Philosopher of science, Karl Popper states:

In general, a sequence of experimental results will be chance-like if the frame conditions which define the sequence differ from the initial conditions; when the individual experiments, carried out under identical frame conditions, will proceed under different initial conditions, and so yield different results.\(^{39}\)

By way of analogy, in determining the boiling point of certain liquid, we cannot just account for the temperature at which the liquid starts to evaporate. All other variables must be equally brought into the consideration such as, for instance, the atmospheric pressure, density and the purity of the given liquid. When all are considered, only then can our assessment be valid.

Similarly, to ascertain the blood alcohol level present in the body — the key element which determines the degree of intoxication, health damage, poor judgement, reaction time and lack of co-ordination, we ought to evaluate all relevant factors. Drinking without any side-effect depends on considering a number of important things which each contribute to one’s drinking response. The mere consideration of alcohol dose consumed can establish nothing, but the amount of cheque to be paid at the cash register. How on earth can anyone make an absolute universal conclusion, when in his or her analysis all the significant variables are left loose, particularly in a

scientific investigation, which by definition is expected to be the most rigorous of all. However, as is evident, in this particular case, it does not seem that way, but is quite the opposite when the issue is examined in its totality.

Thus, by considering those points which are blindly neglected, one’s conclusions would certainly be diametrically different. It is not possible to determine ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol simply because its measure depends on numerous complex behavioural, environmental, cross-cultural, pharmacological, biological and genetic factors such as: body weight, body temperature, body fat, liver size, composition and metabolism, enzyme activity, type and amount of food and fluid already present in the stomach, the amount of calorie and food substance in the beverage (distilled spirits have none), the buffer capacity of the beverage, the rate of disappearance of alcohol from the blood, degree of blood sugar level, altitude, the temperature of surrounding environment, race, age, sex, (for women it also depends on their stages of menstrual cycle in which drinking is occurring), predisposition, one’s family drinking history, individual’s health condition, the concurrent use of other drugs and medications. Moreover, there are some other variables which are unquantifiable, such as: innate differences in the central nervous system’s sensitivity to alcohol, individual’s state of mind, subliminal socio-environmental cues, cultural upbringing, psychological expectations, the degree of social control that is present or absent and above all one’s acquired tolerance level. Considering more than one of these variables would elucidate why one man could easily finish up five drinks in an hour and still remain thirsty, while another man is still trying to finish one in two hours. It explains why for some people, one drink is too many, while for some others a thousand may not be enough.

Therefore, the effects which the consumption of alcohol produces, depend invariably on the environmental and psycho-physical make-up of the individual who takes it. Even in the same individual the effects of alcohol may vary at different times. In this respect, alcohol dose is external to the consumer, and the pleasant and unpleasant effects of alcohol do not directly correlate with the amount consumed. The existence of a broad variation, thereby, makes it impossible to formulate a general rule governing ‘moderate’ consumption for even a single individual, let alone for everyone. The answer to the question of: “How many ‘drinks’ will take to reach any given blood alcohol level,” can never be a constant number and universally applicable to everyone.

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44. Lucia, S.P. (1963), Symposium on Alcohol and Civilization, pp. 24-25.

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41. Menstruation and ovulation complicate drinking for women, this is why women are not used as subject in alcohol related studies. Using female subject undermines the accuracy of the study.

42. Stress, nervousness and anger can increase the speed at which the stomach empties its contents into intestines, thereby influencing the absorption rate.
3. The Complex Nature of Alcohol Tolerance Level

There is, however, another component which makes the determination of ‘moderation’, particularly when it comes to consumption of opiates, utterly impossible. This component is due to the adaptive and fluctuative nature of its consumption and effects. Alcohol is no exception; its ‘moderate’ level varies among people not only because of the above-mentioned reasons in argument one and two, but for far more than what meets the eye. This is because of the complex nature of alcohol tolerance level.

The notion of tolerance is continuously changeable. Tolerance means reduced sensitivity to drug’s effects. The reduction is a homeostatic process. A drug-user has to employ more and more of a given substance, or more accurately a higher concentration, in order to achieve the same desired effect. Or, the same-sized dose has progressively less effect as time proceeds.\(^{43}\) Subsequently, even with a gradual increased consumption, many drinkers do not appear intoxicated and dysfunctional, until severe psychological and physical banes develop. This is because by the passage of time, their tolerance level concomitantly increases without visible ill-effects.

Take the example of prescriptive opiates, the pain-reducing power of any pharmaceutical pain-killer such as morphine decreases if the drug is given over a long period of time. The patient develops immunity to the established dose and his or her body adapts to the presence of fixed dosage. To prevent this diminishing effect, the dose ought to be increased, otherwise the patient remains in pain. Therefore, a ‘moderate’ dose will also increase as the time goes on. That is to say, for the same individual, ‘moderate’ dose of morphine or ‘moderate drinking’ in the case of alcohol (the amount that one starts with) does not always remain constant or nominal. Consequently, if the dose of drug or the frequency of intake does not increase and remains constant, the individual will start to experience mild symptoms of alcohol-withdrawal syndrome.\(^{44}\) The severity of the withdrawal syndrome all depends on the advancement of ones addiction.

Adding further complexity, increased acquired tolerance creates another complication, which may often not be apparent to the consumer. That is, the drinker develops \textit{cross-tolerance} between alcohol and drugs of other classes. For example, \textit{cross-tolerance} is detected between alcohol and opiates with respect to both hypothermia and inhibition of intestinal motility.\(^{45}\) Another highly common \textit{cross-tolerance} between alcohol and other drugs is with tobacco,\(^{46}\) though there are


\(^{46}\) DiFranza, Joseph R. & Guerrera, Mary. (1990), “Alcoholism and Smoking”, \textit{Journal of Studies on Alcohol.}

Henningfield, Jack E. et al. (1990), “Involvement of Tobacco in Alcoholism and Illicit Drug Use”, \textit{British Journal of Addiction.}
some associated cultural and environmental contingencies. Nevertheless, as one keeps drinking more and more, one also tends to smoke more and more. Have you ever seen or heard of a non-smoking bar? All to the contrary, bars and taverns are always filled with clouds of smoke, despite being equipped with elaborate ventilation systems. The idea of expanding and effectively implementing smoke-free by-laws into bars and taverns have always provoked a strong opposition from customers and bar owners since drinkers cannot drink and abstain from smoking. Knowing this fact, bar owners argue that smoke-free policy means the end of business.

In addition to the physiological variability, the psychological effects of alcohol of the same dosage also differ from one user to another. Even a small dose of ethanol is known to cause behavioural complications in some people. The psychological reaction to alcohol intake is diverse among drinkers mainly due to different psychological make-up. This diversity is the result of external environmental circumstances, and is also due to varied inborn and acquired behavioural tolerance levels. Behavioural augmented tolerance develops when a person is socially conditioned to behave in a certain way the moment one starts to drink. Furthermore, alcohol has various psycho-physical effects on the drinker which are not identical in everyone—a given dose of alcohol may affect different people differently. For example, one may quickly fall sleep, or start crying after having a couple of glasses of wine, while someone else may get boisterous and violent. People do not, in a like manner, react or become tolerant to all effects of alcohol at the same pace. It has been discovered that individuals may display a high degree of tolerance to some effects of alcohol and no tolerance to other effects. It is usually the case that the initial exposure to alcohol is associated with sedation and depression. Some have erroneously interpret this as their individual “harmless reactions”, being exceptionally immune to other side-effects. However, with continued drinking, these “harmless reactions” tend to dissipate, while the other activating ill effects persist or appear. Therefore, considering the variability and the nature of the adaptive process of tolerance, ‘moderation’ in consumption of alcohol becomes an immeasurable concept.


4. The Degree of Vulnerability

From the above-mentioned facts, it can be extrapolated that the degree of vulnerability of the same dose varies from drinker to drinker. Women, for instance, are among highly vulnerable groups. They have dramatically lower threshold for psychoactive substances of any kind. There are many reasons for their vulnerability. For instance, women metabolize alcohol much slower than men. They produce much lower amounts of a protective stomach enzyme and alcohol dehydrogenase than men do. Women have proportionately more fat tissue and less body water. Body water would dilute the same amount of alcohol to a greater extent. The insufficient liquid in body, results in a quick entrance of alcohol into the bloodstream. This increases the potential liver and brain damage. Consequently, over the time, they develop cirrhosis of liver and brain disorders at a much lower level of alcohol consumption.

Women not only get tipsy quicker than men, they also reach a peak level of intoxication faster and remain intoxicated much longer than men. On average, it takes much longer for a woman to reach sobriety than a man of the same weight, race and age matching her drink for drink. Women have the disposition to reveal more signs of physical dependence and severer withdrawal symptoms earlier on in their drinking history and at lower levels of alcohol consumption.

In general, drinking holds numerous special risks for women. Drinking easily disables the immune system of women who are under stress. They are more susceptible to tissue damage. Women would reach a higher blood alcohol level even with a smaller dose of alcohol. They will absorb about 30% more alcohol into their bodies than men of the same weight, age and race who have drunk an equal amount. And if they happen to take oral contraceptives, they would absorb alcohol much more rapidly. In addition, the blood alcohol level of each menstruating women, depends on stages of menstrual cycle in which drinking is occurring. Alcohol tolerance drastically drops during the premenstrual phase. Studies indicate that women show higher blood alcohol concentrations premenstrually than other times throughout their cycles. That is because, around this time their tissues act like a dry sponge. Just as they are

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more ready to retain water, so they are equally ready to retain alcohol. Further on, alcohol is absorbed much more quickly and fully, with increased effect. Particularly, women get more inebriated, right before onset of their periods, when the levels of hormone estrogen and progesterone in their bodies are high. This is exactly why, apart from an immediate intoxication, women who drink alcohol have a higher chance of developing breast cancer. Studies linking alcohol to breast cancers are overwhelming.\textsuperscript{55} Studies have shown that around the time of ovulation, and in the late luteal phase, levels of estrogen in the drinker’s blood and urine were 30 percent higher than non-drinkers,\textsuperscript{56} which is said to contribute to the development of breast cancer, even with “modest” drinking. Women who are undergoing Estrogen Replacement Therapy show more susceptibility to alcohol effects. The blood levels of estrogen shoot up among those who consume even small amount of alcohol, a point of concern since hormone is linked to breast cancer.

Alcohol is also known to trigger PMS (premenstrual syndrome) and cause irregular periods. It alters natural hormone production by causing hormones controlling the menstrual cycle to lose their balance, thereby creating numerous physical and psychological complications for women.\textsuperscript{57} Alcohol interferes with vital formation of GLA (gamma-linolenic acid), an essential substance in a healthy metabolism. Lack of it is another basic defect underlying the premenstrual syndrome.\textsuperscript{58} Women who drink regularly are known to reach menopause at much earlier time.

Harvey, E.B. et al. (1987), “Alcohol Consumption and Breast Cancer.”
Rosenberg, L. et al. (1990), “A Case-Control Study of Alcoholic Beverage Consumption and Breast Cancer.”
Williams, R.R. et al. (1977), “Association of Cancer Sites with Tobacco and Alcohol Consumption Socio-economic Status of Patients.”


\textsuperscript{57} Norris, Ronald V. & Colleen Sullivan. (1984), \textit{Premenstrual Syndrome}, Ch. 7.

\textsuperscript{58} Shreeve, Caroline. (1984), \textit{The Premenstrual Syndrome: The Curse that Can be Cured}, Ch. 10.
Studies indicate that female heart is more alcohol-sensitive than male heart. Women have a greater propensity to alcohol-induced cardiac damage. The risk is higher among menopausal women. In any event, should one suffers from most alcohol-related cardiac complications, for instance, cardiomyopathy, treatment consists of “complete abstinence from alcohol”.

In addition, female drinkers are more likely to experience memory loss, brittle bones (osteoporosis), ovarian atrophy, infertility and spontaneous abortion. Alcohol accelerates the aging process faster in women than men. Female drinkers tend to have lower life-span than their male counterparts. Women who drink are more likely to abuse prescription drugs.

Apart from vulnerability, as explained, there are so many variables involved in determining the blood alcohol level of women to the extent that many experimenters in alcohol related studies avoid using female subjects. That is because although the given alcohol dose to female subjects can be standardized, the effects due to different variables involved cannot, thereby there is no identical frame condition.

Homosexuals are also another category considered as ‘risk group’. Two other high risk groups are the youths and seniors. In both groups, it does not require a lot to get drunk. The elderly people are more susceptible to intoxication. This is due to deterioration of health and the fact that the proportion of body fat changes with age. The aging brain, in particular, is far more vulnerable to damage from alcohol than the rest of the body. On the other hand, youths have much lower or zero acquired tolerance level. They are especially vulnerable to the adverse effects of alcohol consumption, even at a relatively small dose. A little higher dose would release their inhibitions and could lead them to unwanton acts of debauchery. It takes a short while before the total alcohol consumed is fully absorbed into the bloodstream. Inexperienced young drinkers tend to drink too much before they feel all the effects; but by then it is too late. The nervous system is severely depressed, senses are impaired, the ability to maintain balance is handicapped, consciousness is considerably diminished and speech is slurred.

Moreover, patients with chronic illness such as diabetes, epilepsy, raise blood pressure, some gastro-intestinal conditions, peptic ulcer and individuals with mild mental retardation are also more susceptible to small doses of alcohol. There is also a synergism between drinking alcohol and many other intakes, such as smoking, taking medications, oral contraceptives, etc. For example, when it comes to cancer, each acts to promote the risk factor of the other quite substantially. Furthermore, recovering alcoholics, individuals with volatile type of personality, people with psychological conditions such as anxiety, hopelessness, depression and those who are fatigued, under stress, angry, upset, and unemployed will be affected differently by the same dose of alcohol consumed. Alcohol is a mood-altering drug. For someone who is already depressed, alcohol usually fuels their despair and sense of hopelessness. It is then no wonder that


suicide and alcohol are so closely linked. A prime example is that of North American Indians, in which 75% to 80% of all suicides among them are alcohol-related.

The existence of the degree of vulnerability for the same alcohol dose is yet another solid proof for the lack of existence of ‘moderation’ as the universal guideline delineating a safe level of consumption of alcohol.

The same argument similarly applies to the notion of “controlled drinking”. It is a profound fallacy to assume that what might be “controlled” drinking for one person is universally applicable to all. As the myriad evidences indicate, what is “controlled drinking” for one individual, might be pathological for another, even though their intake might be exactly the same.

5. Multiple Reinforcers, Diversity and Unquantifiability

Let us set aside the relative nature of ‘moderation’ and the complex nature of alcohol tolerance level. Furthermore, let us assume that all physiological variables can somehow be brought under control. If the measure of ‘moderation’ could ever be universally standardized, it certainly cannot be applicable to the consumption of comestibles such as alcohol for another unique reason. That is because, alcohol is not like water that we all drink solely to quench our thirst. The reason why mankind drinks water is universal. Furthermore, the amount of water that one consumes predictably correlates with a few known variables such as: body weight, the degree of dehydration, the amount of food being digested and etc. However, with respect to alcohol, there is no universal reason behind drinking. Drinking is result of a complex cluster of influences. Different people tend to drink alcohol for different reasons. Drinking is certainly not an isolated act. It is always accompanied by a variety of external stimuli and is said to be maintained by multiple reinforcers and in multiple schedules. Therefore, it can never be brought under a fixed model of consumption. Further, there are a variety of subjective and circumstantial effects of alcohol consumption, which would have a unique correlation with its ‘abuse’ potential.

In the assessment of drinking patterns, and its concurrent and concomitant damages, our attention cannot be focused only on physiological and genetic reasons behind drinking. Considering all cognitive, socio-environmental and circumstantial contingencies is also not enough. There is further an element of personal trait and individuality, which must also be adequately accounted for. For instance, consider fraternal twins with distinct individuality so

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unique to themselves. The fact that they were raised together under identical conditions, does not mean they have an identical and consistent drinking pattern. Moreover, we can never assume that under the same circumstances people would always be consistent in the ways in which they usually drink. Psychologist Walter Mischel believes that the traits that an individual possesses lie as much in the eye of the beholder as in the psyche of the beheld. The beholders are prone to many irregular undetermined perceptual effects. The error would be in the tendency to see people in only one role and then tend to make predictions upon that expectation. If this is how an individual psyche works, things would obviously be more complex, when dealing with the larger drinking population. David Faust makes the following comment on the complexity of this issue:

The stimuli are nearly infinite; variations in possible observations and observational procedures are infinite. To achieve constancies or reliable scientific facts, one must thus eliminate entire worlds of possibilities, in the process making numerous judgements and decisions that substantially influence outcome.

Thus, in order to narrow down people’s consumption of alcohol to a ‘moderate’ level (whatever that means), we also ought to have full control on external stimuli, internal perception, as well as people’s intrinsic motivational reasons for drinking, some of which may be circumstantial, subliminal and unknown to the drinkers themselves, let alone to the observer. Here we are talking about a set of variables, which are either unconscious or conscious, but immeasurable, such as, for instance, impulses. In fact, ‘moderation’ not only might be an incompatible concept with an individual’s underlying known reasons behind drinking, but also might be incongruent with the unknowns. In any scientific study, if variables are not identified, controlled and quantified, then they cannot be accurately analysed. Consequently, the end result of the study cannot be totally conclusive.

With respect to ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol, all the variables which affect the level of intoxication are sporadic, then there are multiple reinforcers, multiple schedules, multiple factors affecting blood alcohol concentration, and there is an element of individuality and circumstantiality. Thus, given the inherent complexity of this problem, it is then utterly impossible to come up with a single universal prescription for the ‘moderate’ measure in the consumption of alcohol. Thus, it seems that the notion of ‘moderation’ is indeed too simplistic and naively defended.

6. Intoxication and Performance

Many have attempted to measure ‘moderation’ against performance. One’s capability to conduct daily business and duties discreetly after drinking is generally seen as an indicator that the individual had “moderate” intake of alcohol. However, this assertion is indeed groundless, since there is no definite one-to-one universal correlation between consumption and intoxication, just as there is no definite one-to-one universal correlation between pain and exercise. There are numerous variables which act as catalysts.


Consider the following case: As alcoholics ingest increasing amounts of alcohol, they develop metabolic endurance and neuro-adaptation. That is to say, their cell membranes are concomitantly altered so that less and less alcohol percolates the membranes. The more one continuously drinks, the more slowly alcohol permeates the membranes. This is because, for an alcohol addict, alcohol consumed is either deactivated and/or excreted rapidly. If less alcohol is actually penetrating the cell membrane, an alcoholic may have less alcohol in his or her cerebral cells than a first-time drinker of similar physiological characteristics with the same blood alcohol level would. This phenomenon of adaptability is misleading, in view of the fact that some alcoholics who have developed a high tolerance level, are capable of performing adequately in both cognitive and physical tasks. For instance, they manage to score satisfactorily on vigilant tests after consuming an amount of alcohol that would cause a non-alcoholic person to pass out, put into a coma, or may even cause his/her death. Thus, even after consuming prodigious quantities of alcohol an addict may think that he has only been drinking “moderately”, since he still appears relatively functional. Some heavy drinkers would erroneously interpret this illusion as being immune to incapacitation — a deceptive misconception that still lingers and refuses to fade away. The drinker assumes that he has everything under control and repeatedly claims — “I will never get drunk. I have developed a mental control over liquor’s effects.” However, in reality this is a serious sign of advanced dependency, meaning after a certain stage his brain’s ability to adapt to alcohol has been lost due to alcohol-induced complications and his liver is also severely damaged to the degree that it has lost the capacity to metabolize alcohol, even though he may still appear sober.67

In addition, another vandalistic effect of increased tolerance or in actuality alcohol dependency, is that a ‘vigilant drinker’ would only be ‘vigilant’, if he has consumed enough alcohol before performing any task; this is due to the fact that vigilance would be diminished due to severe withdrawal syndromes. This occurrence gives rise to an odd myth. Not knowing the full story, it is generally argued that some people can be more efficient after drinking. “I can do it better with a couple of drinks”, is a statement which is often uttered by such individuals. However, there are cases that this may be all true, but this improvement in performance has nothing to do with alcohol intake. The fact of the matter is, that nothing can be done better after binging, from the crudest muscular effort such as movement of arms and legs to the most simplest thought process. The left impression is either due to the placebo effect or direct avoidance of withdrawal syndromes. This is, in fact, so well known to some drinkers who would frankly admit: “I need a quick fix”. If he drinks, he can perform, if he stops to drink, his performance will severely deteriorate. Thus, the drinker is compelled to drink continuously, in order to keep himself up and avoid the irritations of withdrawal syndromes. Needless to say, in this vicious circle, continued drinking is not without escalating physical and psychological consequences, which take their toll, despite the surficial endurance of the particular individual to a given level of alcohol consumed.68


Moreover, there is another interesting phenomenon with respect to relationship between intoxication and performance, which is called \textit{alcohol-induced blackouts}. This refers to the periods of time during alcohol intake, in which the drinker appears to be functioning normally, but later on, when he or she gains sobriety, the events cannot be remembered. The individual has no recollection of the main events in his or her short-term memory. Significant things such as meeting certain people, going to certain places, saying certain things or doing certain activities cannot be recalled due to the paralysis of certain brain-functions.

In conclusion, it can be strongly argued that the fact that an individual drinker appears to be functioning normally is not at all an indication of “safe-level” alcohol use.

\textbf{7. Maintaining Conscious Awareness}

Similar to the performance argument, some have argued that the demarcation between ‘excessive’ drinking and “safe-level” of alcohol consumption lies in the preservance of conscious awareness and the maintenance of a good ethical record while one is under the influence. It is said that, if you know what you are doing while drinking, can well remember what you did after drinking, never caused any problem such as disturbance or were involved in shameful deeds while or after drinking, and have always been in total control of yourself and situation, then your drinking habit is “safe” and “moderate”. They insist pervasively: “I have been drinking X number of drinks for Y number of years and nothing ever happened. Therefore, having X number of drinks constitutes harmless ‘moderate’ consumption. So long as I don’t experience any problem, my drinking habit must be safe.”

Like the previous argument, this argument is also a result of poor thinking. In both cases, one narrowly assesses the situation only in terms of how it affects ‘me’ personally, ignoring the fact that ‘me’ in a given span of time is not the whole world for everyone, nor is the ‘me’ confined to a narrow timespan, ignoring the vicissitudes of the future.

‘Maintaining Conscious Awareness’ argument suffers from two problematic reasoning: the ‘problem of induction’ and ignoring the ‘law of the mutually exclusive’.\textsuperscript{69}

Firstly, the argument resembles saying: my driving skill is sound, since I never had any accident, never got any ticket or problem with the law. Therefore, I must be a worthy driver. This may be so, but one certainly needs a better rationale for such a judgement. One’s good driving record in no way entails that one will always be immune from road and highway accidents caused by oneself, traffic fines or will continue to drive safely in future.

This faulty argument is sometimes referred to as the ‘problem of induction’, or ‘unwarranted generalization’. The fallacy is committed by an illegitimate move from a few specific cases to a universal law. In this particular case, one’s regular past experiences cannot necessarily assure a similar future experience. Just because, so far, one has been able to control oneself during and after drinking sessions does not necessarily mean that one will always be able to keep this up. Flawlessness of the past records do not guaranty a similar future, there is no assurance here. Those first-time offenders who have been charged with various crimes due to alcohol intoxication are cases in point.

Another flaw with this argument is in the assumption of maintaining conscious awareness. The fact is people do not drink alcohol for its bitter taste, but for its loosening effects. The sensation of euphoria which is created by the consumption of alcohol or the so-called good effects do not come without their associated bad effects. This has been the subject of investigation for some scientists, who wished to manipulate the molecular structure of alcohol in a way which only provides the “good” effects and eliminates the detrimental effects. One cannot claim that I feel high on pleasurable effects, yet have not been touched by its downsides. No matter how long a person practices drinking, there can be no escape from the depressant effects of alcohol on the central nervous system. Just as an injection of norepinephrine depresses heart rate, likewise, an injection of alcohol depresses the brain. In a nutshell, you cannot eat your cake and have it too. This is the law of the mutually exclusive. If one has obtained the feeling of giddiness, one’s conscious awareness is no doubt impaired. As a matter of fact, analytic reasoning can often be supported by empirical reasoning. The truth is, alcohol is an anaesthetic like chloroform, and as little as 0.05 of 1% of alcohol in the blood affects the brain. It lowers the efficiency of the cortex, numbs nerve cells and slows down their messages to the body, it affects co-ordination and mental acuity. People with as little as 0.05% alcohol in their bloodstream say and do things that they would not ordinarily do. Studies show that at 0.08% blood alcohol level, an amount considered as “moderate” drinking by many, the ability to perform critical driving functions is decreased by as much as 60 percent, which is the newly adopted national standard passed by the United States Congress. Then, how could one possibly, by imbibing a few drinks, have one’s conscious awareness remain intact? This is certainly not an argument, but unintelligent wishful thinking.

The proponents of the above view basically assume that personal experience is the ultimate demarcation between valid and invalid propositions. To these sceptics, truth is always subjective. Thus, the answer to every question of truth or falsehood is based on introversive empiricity of the given proposition. For them, so long as one never had any unpleasant experience of intoxication — after having consumed a few glasses of alcoholic beverage — then one must surely have been drinking “moderately”. They insist on saying: “I personally never got intoxicated by X number of drinks — up to X number of drinks one is still unaffected.” This judgement is indeed erroneous. First of all, just as we cannot remove ourselves from our experience, we cannot also confine ourselves to our personal experience. It is erroneous to dismiss things, just because we have not personally experienced them. Second of all, if anything, objective empirical data, self-reports and statistics all tend to support the position defended here, not of the sceptics. This book is abundant with references leading to this conclusion. However, that is beside the point, because, we do not need a personal experience, in rather an a priori analysis. Further, the measure of truth is not an empirical experience, but a logical relation in the web of “cause and effect”. An


experience at first, requires logic for its validation, not vice versa. It is the logicality of a proposition which justifies it, not its experientiality. One would only use experience, if one seeks to confirm the trustworthiness of a logical conclusion in practice. For example, we can tell deductively that water, by its innate property, wets, fire, by its intrinsic mechanism, burns. It is foolish to jump into water or fire in order to establish or deny the consequence. Similarly, we can deduce that alcohol too, due to its inherent property, intoxicates. If it does not, then the drink consumed is not really alcoholic. We know a great deal about the reaction between alcohol, and living tissues and cells. We know that such a reaction is universal. We are also aware of the destructive effects of alcohol on the central nervous system, bodily organs and how it diminishes our senses. We know these for a fact.

Therefore, compatibility or incompatibility of one’s personal experience cannot absolutely be chosen as a point of reference for validity or invalidity of a judgement. It is indeed fallacious to assume that the criterion of the truth is in subjective experimentation, and subjective experimentation could come before logical deduction.

The seeming ability to perform daily duties and being able to maintain conscious awareness are two of the most deceptive and costly assumptions that deceive alcohol consumers, misleading them to think that they are not subject to any incisive problems. And by the time they do realize the truth, it is usually too late.

8. Conceptual Vagueness of Terms

‘Moderation’ is often attempted to be established by obscure claims such as: “I only had one drink, therefore I am okay.” The emphasis here is explicitly on the notion of one drink. However, if it is said that one or two glasses of alcoholic beverages once in a certain period of time is ‘moderation’, what is being neglected, apart from how long that certain period of time is, is the size and the percentage of alcohol in that glass. For example, the amount of alcohol contained in a large glass of beer is incomparable with the amount of alcohol contained in a small glass of any popular drinks such as Vodka, Rum, Gin, Brandy, Scotch or Whisky. The percentage of alcohol content varies even within the same brand of beverage. Most distilled liquors contain around 40% to 50% alcohol, while beer for instance contains 3 to 7 percent, and wine 12 to 25 percent alcohol by volume (the limit depends on state regulation). Therefore, when one refers to ‘moderation’ as having a glass of wine with meal, what size glass and what kind of wine is being referred to? The point is, a ‘drink’ is not a scientific quantification, never mind the content. In some literature the term “standard drink” is repeatedly used to overcome this objection. However, there is nothing standard about the “standard drink”. The standardized proportion of alcohol in a “standard drink” varies from country to country. For example, for Japanese a “standard drink” has nearly twice the alcohol content of a typical North American drink (13 grams), while the “standard” British drink has slightly less alcohol (8 grams). A glass of beer in Germany contains a totally different amount of alcohol than in North America. “Standard drink” in Australia is defined as 10 grams of ethyl alcohol. In Iran and Saudi Arabia, it

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is 0 gram alcohol. In places like Sub-Saharan Africa and Polynesia, where most alcoholic beverages are home-made drinks, extracted out of local ingredients, the idea of ‘standard drink’ is unheard of.

My Doctor said "Only 1 glass of alcohol a day". I can live with that.

Standardization of alcohol content is totally an arbitrary matter with no sound criteria. In this respect, one cannot fail to notice the obtuse manner in which an utterly vague concept is sightlessly used to defend another vague concept.

The third crucial variable in this respect, is the frequency or time interval between each ‘drink’. Does ‘moderation’ mean having one ‘drink’ once in a lifetime, once a week, once a day

73. In Iran, for instance, there are a few dealcoholized drinks legally available, in which alcohol is removed after fermentation or brewing, leaving a similar taste and appearance, but not much calories and no alcohol. Like Molson Exel, it has the taste of beer, but not the affects. The drinks are sold as purely dealcoholized beer, wine, etc.
or one ‘drink’ per every single meal? Needless to say, the impact of consumption is different in each case. Having one ‘drink’ each day of the week has a different consequence than having seven ‘drinks’ on Sunday afternoon.\(^{74}\)

Therefore, so long as the notions of size, alcohol dose and time intervals are vague, the notion of ‘one drink’ remains ever so nebulous. Thus, just as physical and past conditions of drinkers cannot be standardized, the notion of ‘one drink’ can also never be universally standardized. These factors are repeatedly ignored when people start to drink, because apart from all variables related to the drinker’s physiological condition, the measurement requires both quantification and qualification. Once again, if one tries to justify consumption of alcohol at the so-called moderate or safe level, using ‘one-drink’ argument, what is the amount of alcohol that is being referred to and how is it measured? How much can be consumed without incurring any adverse effect? How much is too much? What is the cut-off point between ‘moderate’ drinking and ‘heavy’ drinking? These are legitimate questions which have not yet been convincingly answered by all those who ubiquitously campaign for ‘moderate’ consumption, without clearly specifying the “safe amount”. The use of the notion of ‘standard drink’ is no remedy for this ongoing contentious debate. So it is, that the vacuous categorization of people’s drinking habits is crude with no attempt at verification.

Of course, one cannot conclude that it is now fine and dandy to drink a small quantity of ‘light’ beer or ‘light’ wine as opposed to a large quantity of a stronger drink. This is because some of the irreversible effects of alcohol are that it kills brain cells and destroys the liver.\(^{75}\) To put it more graphically, alcohol clogs the brain and turns the liver quickly from yellow to green to black. The damages done are directly proportional to the amount consumed, the individual’s susceptibility and a handful of other factors hitherto elaborated upon. It can be said, that the so-called ‘moderate’ consumption causes a ‘moderate’ damage.

Another misleading example of vagueness can be seen in the concept of ‘social drinker’. It is too obscure to have any value. The notion of ‘social drinker’ has many ramifications. For instance, it could mean the consumption of the amount of alcohol, which is socially acceptable. But, what is that amount? Considering the degree of variability in alcohol consumption in various cultural settings, the socially acceptable level may not necessarily be a “moderate level”. Secondly, there are various cultural attitudes towards the consumption of alcohol. For example, the Australians have utilitarian attitude, the Jews have ritualistic approach, the Japanese have developed a convivial attitude, the Chinese have adopted a semi-abstinent attitude.\(^ {76}\) For the middle class East Indians the presence of alcohol in social settings is non-essential. Scots and Irish are, however, well-known capacious drinkers. Heavy drinking has become established tradition among the Scandinavians. For many Russians, if your guests were able to leave your place on their own two feet, then the evening was not a success. Russians drink vodka, their

\(^{74}\) Parker, E.S. and Noble, E.P. (1977), “Alcohol consumption and cognitive functioning in social drinkers.”


cherished national drink in voluminous quantities. Surely the notion of ‘social drinking’ differs among all these groups. The amount of alcohol the Irish or Germans drink during their cultural and social settings such as on the St. Patrick day or on Oktoberfest is no match for the amount of alcohol Jews drink at their family gathering during Jewish Passover ceremony. Yet, both participants are labelled as ‘social drinkers’.

In North America, a woman is considered a ‘social drinker’, if she drinks occasionally, such as on weekends and in a social settings with a group of friends. However, after a certain period of time, having a cocktail now and then is followed by an increase in ‘party quota’. Then, she may start to drink for every occasion and mood: one to celebrate, one to relax, one to cheer up, one to digest meal, and one to quench thirst. Aside from addictive property of alcohol, behaviourists can elaborate a great deal on how her drinking sprees can be habit-forming. Consequently, due to a gradual increase in her acquired tolerance level, her private drinking pattern might also change. For example, she may start drinking at home periodically, all by herself. In this case, by definition she is, then, no longer a ‘social drinker’, if she is drinking alone. This pattern, if continued, would be a possible indication that this individual is bit by bit advancing on the road to alcoholism. If so, unless she is clinically diagnosed as an alcoholic, she cannot be distinguished from the general population of ‘social drinkers’. The ‘social drinker’ is a vague label, which is indiscriminately used to describe everyone, while the description may not fit many.

9. Rate of Consumption and Absorption

Added to alcohol content in a drink, is the rate of consumption and absorption. That is, how quickly an individual finishes up his or her drink and whether drinking is accompanied by having a snack, drinking before meal or after meal. The blood alcohol level sharply rises if drinking is done quickly and in a fasting condition. Consuming food rich in protein and carbohydrates prior to drinking reduces the absorption rate. Sugar content in food would slow down absorption.

In addition to concentration of alcohol, it is also important to consider what is mixed with alcohol. For example, plain water decreases the concentration and slows down the absorption, while carbonated liquids speed it up. There some studies which suggest that beer, champagne and any other drinks with carbonated mixers may cause more rapid intoxication than those drinks of the same alcohol content which lack carbon dioxide. That is because carbon dioxide triggers the stomach to pass its contents more rapidly on the intestines, thereby leaving it empty while one is drinking. Diluting the alcohol with lots of ice slows the absorption process. Illness and diseases can alter alcohol absorption. Drinking early morning produces a much higher peak level of alcohol in the blood than drinking in the evening. In general, a higher rate of absorption means a higher blood alcohol concentration. The outcome of all these variables, are well known to experienced drinkers. In fact, in some cultures or social settings, drinkers are urged to chug-a-lug, gulping plain hard liquor on an empty stomach as a sign of machoism and high endurance.

Some drinks such as various kinds of wines and beers have various rates of absorption. This consequential factor is due to the amount of tannin in the drink. Red wine in particular has a significant amount, while white wine has none. Tannin spreads readily over the mucous
membranes of the stomach and intestines, which results in slower absorption. Lack of it means a higher rate of absorption.

The relationships between intoxication and differences in consumption and absorption time are most significant, particularly when it comes to a strong drink. Added to, even a small dose of alcohol may absorb faster and more menacingly when it interacts with more than 100 different medications, thereby causing different psycho-physical reactions. In fact, in combination with most medications, alcohol’s affects are magnified—a phenomenon called potentiation or synergism. However, how and who would consider all these crucial variables when ‘moderate’ drinking is unqualifyingly urged? When the so-called experts have missed these crucial variables in their assessments, how could an average layman bring them into consideration?

10. Inapplicability

The concept of ‘moderation’ may be applicable to some other intakes or human activities, provided the point of reference is firmly established. There can be ‘moderate’ consumption of red meat, for instance, eating steak once in a month or two. Here, one will never develop a fluctuating tolerance level, since the limits are recognized and controlled. Secondly, in order to exercise control, one’s mind must be freely at one’s service; only then can one claim that the limits have not been violated.

However, when it comes to consumption of an intoxicating addictive substance, which immediately interferes with human reasoning, the limits—if there are any—cannot be identified and respected, because identification and the respect of limits require a sound judgement and objectivity; essential requirements which the drinking individual becomes deprived of as soon as drinking begins. Alcohol consumed affects higher order thinking, motor functions, makes drinker light-headed, gives false sense of courage and satisfaction. The pleasure of drinking makes most people not to interrupt the incoming sensation, and ignore the signs of intoxication, particularly when many have no way of measuring the degree of intoxication and their own blood alcohol level. There is at least one study, which suggests that many drinkers are likely to overestimate the amount of alcohol which can be drunk safely and without harm.

Harold Holder, director and senior scientist at the Prevention Research Center in Berkeley, California states:

Drinkers may not accurately perceive their own risk of incurring a drinking-related outcome. Drinkers typically underestimate their risks of drinking-related outcomes and of personal risk associated with drinking in general. Although drinkers may recognize the risk of an event at high BACs, they tend not to recognize risk at lower BACs. This tendency is illustrated in Fig. 7.3, which shows an empirically based risk curve along with an example of a potential “perceived risk” curve. The actual risk increases substantially as BAC increases. While there is risk at lower BAC levels, the drinker may not recognize this risk.


In this illustration, drinkers may not perceive any risk until reaching a fairly high BAC, e.g., BAC>1.0. Then even when drinkers begin to perceive risk, this perceived risk is substantially below the actual risk. So it is we may hear over and over: “I can handle the situation; I know what I’m doing, I don’t lose control.” The drinker overlooks the fact that alcohol is a hallucinogenic substance which temporarily distort the way one perceives reality. How can one make sound judgements when the apparatus for making such a judgement — the mind — is no longer fully operational for the purpose of reasoning and judging, not to mention the impairment of all other senses and loss of inhibitions? Since alcohol is a hypnotic substance, it would act like a general anaesthetic, thereby putting the mind in a state of siesta. Greenberg describes the reason:

Alcohol ... depresses the uppermost level of the brain the center of inhibitions, restraint and judgement ... the drinker feels that he is ‘a free human being’; many of his normal inhibitions vanish; he takes personal and social liberties as the impulse prompts.

It is, therefore, no surprise that people who think they are drinking ‘moderately’ often fail to make rational decisions or behave appropriately while are intoxicated. These decisions vary from sleeping around, to abusing one’s own children and spouse, or the very notorious case of the failure to recognize that one is not fit to drive. One particular study conducted on university students, indicate that 22% of students had done something while under the influence of alcohol, which they regretted when they sobered up. Sure enough, such unfortunate misbehaviour can easily be avoided, if only the individual remains sober. So much for the manufactured concept of “sensible drinking”, where drinking and sensibility are wholly oxymoronic. How can the intake of a toxic substance make sense, if making sense is what intellect truly attains? If we all agree that alcohol is a drug, then the notion of “sensible drinking” is a contradiction in terms, just as the notion of square-circle is contradictory, and has no logical and conceptual basis. Besides, in whichever way we come to argue that sensibility, that is, an approach supported by rational reasoning, is compatible with the intake of a protoplasmic poison, then the same argument can equally well be used to defend the sensible intake of all narcotic, psychotomimetic, psychedelic and hallucinogenic drugs. And therefore, there can be ‘sensible’ doping habits. Likewise, the notion of “responsible drinking” is another oxymoron. “Responsible drinking” means not drinking alcohol at all. To be truly responsible, means to stay away from alcohol for all time. There is more into the notion of responsibility than just taking a cab.

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11. Unjustifiability

Try to argue with a vegetarian by granting that all animals are sentient beings and the consumption of meat is immoral, cruel, barbaric, and unhealthy. However, its ‘moderate’ consumption is permissible. No doubt the immediate contra-argument would be that, it is the principle of killing and consuming meat which makes flesh-eating an unacceptable diet; its quantity is irrelevant. All vegetarians would unanimously profess this assertion. In this respect, if the given premise is valid, then the conclusion is certainly well-founded. Most people would even admit that when it comes to certain activities and intake, there is no admissible or safe level at all. Take for example, smoking: It is quite clear that smoking any amount is harmful to one’s health. There is no safe level of tobacco consumption for anyone.

Some moderationists are under the illusion that ‘moderate’ consumption, could apply to everything. They fail to consider the inherent property of that which is being consumed. For instance, Moraji Desai, the former Prime Minister of India believed that the ‘moderate’ consumption of one’s own urine would contribute to good health and prolong life. He emphasized on ‘moderation’ and practised this bizarre belief on a daily basis. It is no doubt that due to the inherent nature of this substance, for the overwhelming majority of people, such an intake is justifiably appalling irrespective of quantity, no matter how presidential.

Similarly, if it is determined that consumption of alcohol is biologically, psychologically and sociologically harmful, then one cannot argue that, however, ‘moderate’ drinking is harmless and hence justified. If something is established to be wrong, anti-commonsensical and harmful, then that act or behaviour is inherently wrong by its very nature, regardless of its quantity. In this respect, just like the previous examples, the issue of quantity is always completely irrelevant to say the least. It is the universality of the law of consequences which is based unconditionally on ‘cause and effect’ relationships, ‘action and reaction’, ‘stimulus and response’ (innate not conditioned) that makes something harmful or beneficial. Since such laws are operating on an absolute principle, they recognize no artificial, arbitrary or relative boundaries in their interactions and functions.

Therefore, there is no justification in the ‘moderate’ practice of any act in which destruction is its inevitable consequence. As such, the inevitable consequence transcends man-made laws, and time & space dimensions. This phenomenon is common in both the natural and social domains. In the social domain, for instance, if it goes without saying that wife assault or child abuse are inherently wrong, then one cannot justify physically and mentally keep abusing his family by saying: “Well I only beat them up ‘moderately’, at the socio-culturally acceptable level. It is ‘controlled beating’. What’s the big deal!” The crime here is not “immoderate” beating, but the act of beating itself. That which is inherently iniquitous by its nature, is also iniquitous, even in small quantity. The second point here is, if one problematic behaviour can be justified through the ‘moderation argument’, then this defence is rightfully applicable to every single problematic act, such as ‘moderation’ in lying, ‘moderation’ in theft, ‘moderation’ in fraud, ‘moderation’ in adultery, ‘moderation’ in heroine use, ‘moderation’ in you name it. After all, as a general rule, it seems everything is good in ‘moderation’.

Another example of unjustifiability appears in the ubiquitous excuse that ‘it is only wine’, or ‘it is only beer’, therefore, there is no reason to be concerned. However, what is ignored, is the fact that alcohol is alcohol, whether it comes in wine, beer, punch, mouth-wash or chocolate-rum
makes no difference. There are many ‘problem drinkers’ who never drank anything but beer or wine. The effects of all alcoholic drinks are always the same. It is like arguing with vegetarians, that ‘it is only chicken’.

12. The Precariousness of Accumulated “Moderation”

Moderationists, Darby and Heinz, believe that toxicity of alcohol is dose related, thereby concluding ‘moderation’ is definable and harmless. They state that:

Health warnings are often presented out of the context of a very important toxicological premise: the dose makes the poison... A poison is a substance that, in a certain concentration, has adverse effects on body chemistry. Some substances are poisonous in small amounts, others have significant effects only in relatively large amounts.83

However, the adverse effects of poison are not merely dependent upon the dose, but also on the condition and vulnerability of the consumer. Thus, the effects are in the condition of the beholder, which means, even a small dose can be detrimental. Arguments 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 have established this point, which demonstrate that defining fixed parameters of ‘moderation’ are impossible. Darby and Heinz view is the same old belief, which stipulates, as a general rule: ‘excess is harmful, but moderation is always harmless’. However, this is not a general rule, and particularly inapplicable to toxic substances. To view that, “for nearly all substances there exists a dose below which they do not cause adverse health effects”,84 and then allow its consumption is a narrow perspective. The environmental nightmare that we are facing today is precisely because of such erroneous outlook which totally ignores incremental effects of insignificant quantities. For centuries, we hypothesized that there is no harm in polluting rivers, oceans, atmosphere and upsetting the ecosystem, so long as it is done in ‘moderation’. We believed there is no harm in dumping a little bit of waste in our vast oceans, releasing poisonous gas in the atmosphere, eradicating just one or two species, however, we learned the truth in a hard way. We missed the precariousness of accumulated effect. Although, it is true that what makes a substance poisonous, depends upon the existence of a sufficient concentration, the adverse effects can also appear as the result of gradual accumulation of insignificant amounts, a point overlooked by Darby and Heinz. For instance, a few drops of acid rain in rivers and lakes can cause no harm, but certainly, if this trend continues, disaster awaits. Take the example of the Ebbw, a river in South Wales. This river is so badly polluted that it has no fish for about 90% of its length. Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, in southern Canada, once were profuse with lavish marine life, suffer from a similar predicament. This is all because of years of acidic rainfall both now and then. The damage to these regions did not occur overnight by a monsoon of acid rain, but rather by a ‘moderate’ built up of low acidic concentration.

The short-sightedness of this view and subsequently its concomitant devastation can be demonstrated in another example. It is often loudly said that an atomic bomb can do more damage than the ordinary conventional bombs. Based on this thesis, the use of the former is


84. Ibid., p.1.
prohibited, the latter is legitimized. The non-nuclear proliferation treaty is expected to be complied by signatories. However, the truth is quite the opposite, considering the fact that in the history of warfare more conventional bombs have been dropped than atomic bombs. It is then utterly witless to make such a reductionistic assumption. In a like manner, it is acknowledged that only ‘excessive’ drinking is unsafe, but that the so-called ‘moderate’ drinking, as a whole, is safe. Most “social drinkers” may never come home dead drunk, but would imbibe a ‘moderate’ amount of alcohol on a regular basis. The end result of this faulty practice could be even worse, due to a higher level of alcohol consumed in their lifetime.

Apart from quantity, frequency, duration and pattern of administration, alcohol intake over time must also be brought into consideration. A person may ‘moderately’ drink an equivalent of tanker of alcohol in his lifetime. How can we assume that this would not have any side-effects? On the contrary, evidences show, a high alcohol load over a long period of time could lead to an insidious build-up of permanent mar. While the dizzying “satisfaction” of champagne is transitory, the pernicious effect on the liver is not. The liver does not know what a socially acceptable level of ‘moderation’ is. All it knows is that it has to metabolize a corrosive and poisonous substance. Sip by sip the poison does its damage and the damage accumulates with time until it slowly undermines the health of the imbibing body. Thus, the uncared-for truth is, that accumulated ‘moderation’ is no longer ‘moderation’; rather, it is a hard-core ‘excessive’ drinking habit, under the beguiling guise of ‘moderation’ (whatever that means). The idea of ‘safe’ drinking may apply to here-and-now, but not necessarily later.

13. Projecting a Positive Image by Artificial Dichotomy and False Labelling

A common trick to mislead a callow populace is to divert their attention by artificial dichotomy, false labelling and association. Hence one can obtain approval or disapproval of an idea either by associating with its manufactured positive image, or by dissociating from its projected negative image, while in reality there may be no differences in essence. The point here is that the perceived reality influences one’s parameters of do’s and don’ts. Moreover, it can also ease off the guilty conscience of the perpetrator and make him or her enable to carry on with the nefarious act that one is engaged in. So we hear: “We did not commit adultery, we were just having a romantic love affair, this is different you know.” Or, “I did not steal it, I just borrowed it.” Similarly, by an insidious choice of labelling an issue can be easily sabotaged to influence the public opinion in either direction. The choice of label all depends on the vested interest and goals sought. It is no coincident that gambling is all of a sudden called “gaming”, and prostitution replaced by “hostessing”. The ploy is the beautification of ugliness.

Likewise, it is often heard on the headlines: “We are not persecuting resisting freedom fighters, we are prosecuting brutal terrorists and rebels.” Or, “It is not freedom of expression, it is spreading propaganda and hate literature,” or vice versa. In all cases, a skilful PR scheme can easily create the required illusion in a most subtle way. Before you know it, the idea is firmly germinated into the nucleus of the subconscious. Thereupon, not even psycho-surgery can remove it. This fraudulent construction of reality is so widespread in our post-modern society, where nonsense, illusions, fallacies and lies do easily pass for truth and wisdom.

On this note, consider the parable of pornography, where the same scheme of association and labelling is employed. There are many individuals who rigorously argue that, for instance, “hard
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Porn” is degrading, exploitive and detrimental to society. Their condemnation of such materials arises from the belief that there are “extreme” and “mellow” versions of pornography. They view that the position of “hard porn” on the evaluative spectrum of such materials is the endmost. While most people may avoid viewing “Adult” “X” rated blue movies, they would have no objection in viewing “R” rated movies (meaning that the viewer has to be 18 years old or over). Society generally believes that hard pornography is disgusting, but dim the light a little bit, pick a fancy hallmark, then the product is no longer disgusting. A new concept is introduced, it now becomes artful. The acceptance of the latter form happens because the vast majority have come to believe that “soft porn”, “erotica”, “Valentine Videos” and the use of human sexuality as a means of so-called “artistic expression” is completely a harmless innocent activity. To them, viewing such materials is perceived as “moderate” exposure to nudity for a worthwhile cause, that is the promotion of ‘art’, not lust or greed. Here, given the fact that many individuals may never attempt to view live sex shows due to its social stigma, they could be regularly exposed to what is referred to as “soft porn” or “erotica”, since it seems to fit into a different category. However, comparatively speaking, in reality the continuous exposure to what is labelled as “soft porn” might be even worse than or just as bad as the occasional shot of “hard porn”. Or, at least, how is it established that what is arbitrarily referred to, as “soft porn” is not problematic?

In this respect, the similarities between the two cases: pornography and consumption of alcohol are scrupulous. There are stigmas attached to viewing “hard porn” and “excessive” drinking that results in being drunk and comatose. Both are considered as social ills. At the same time, “moderate” drinking and “erotica” are both presented and perceived as prestigious, exquisite, classy and socially acceptable modern norms. Just as concepts such as “soft porn”, “erotica”, “Valentine Videos” serve as false labels to disguise obscenity, so too are the fabricated concepts of “moderate drinking”, “social drinking”, “sensible drinking” and “responsible drinking”, in order to make an unjustifiable act appear less abhorrent. The images conveyed by words are very significant in creating a positive cognitive atmosphere of acceptability. ‘Excessive’ drinking is more often than not associated with frequenting downtown smoky taverns, whereas ‘moderation’ is always associated with posh uptown clubs and fancy piano bars, while inside the activities and their consequences are truly consimilar. The bottom line is, in reality they are all intox centres.

Furthermore, the acceptability of an image is not so much in the place where one drinks, but also in what one drinks. Consumption of some beers, vodka and whisky are somewhat downgraded by the showy consumers, since such are said to be the drinks of ‘excessive’ nature, for alcoholics and those from the ‘lower socio-economic class’. Only these drinks could cause intoxication resulting in appalling behaviour. But, expensive imported wine, champagne, strawberry daiquiri and Martini (‘shaken not stirred’), served with Iranian caviar on silver platter are always appealing to the pretentious, for such are said to be the beverages of romance, distinct class, sophistication and definitely of harmless ‘moderate’ nature. Don’t anyone dare to call the latter consumers, boozers; they are the dashing “social drinkers, just having a few cocktails”. Acceptance all boils down to created perception, association and positioning. The idea is to

85. See the New Classic Cocktails by Gary Regan and Mardee Haidin Regan, (1997).

create an upscale culture of drinking, where by refurbishing a high-class image, all associated problems can be disguised. Yet, the simple rudimentary fact is, all the alcoholic beverages consist of certain percent ethanol \((\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{OH})\), certain percent water \((\text{H}_2\text{O})\) and some inorganic ingredients. And they are all drugs and carcinogenic regardless of their given name, shape of bottle, shape of glass, their manufactured image or where and with whom you have them. When the mind is intoxicated, the liver and brain are adversely affected, it then makes no difference whether one had wine or vodka, in an elegant ‘high-class club’ or in a dingy smokey tavern, during a football game or during a romantic candle light dinner. The damaged organs do not differentiate between settings or fancy verbal descriptonal differentiations. So it is, that ostentatious people often pay a big price for trying to be ‘stylish’. Indeed, what a hilarious theatrical self-delusion that some people engage in; denying reality even when their own health is at jeopardy. Talk about the Emperor’s new clothes: it never ceases to amaze an active sober mind, as to how obtuse be those deluded by such cheap artifices.

The fact that alcohol is so widely promoted and its ‘moderate’ consumption glamorized in such a way, that it has created an artificial distinction with all other drugs. It is perceived not to be a drug. Considering the above, it could be said that the notion of ‘moderation’ is nothing but a deceptive concept used as a Trojan horse, which in turn contributes to an error in judgement and behaviour. The subversion transposed onto the psyche of the moribund by the word ‘moderation’ hides the filth under an attractive camouflage serving as the icing on the cake to lure the unwary.

14. Special Pleading: “Alcohol the Heart Medicine!”

Another popular strategy used to defend the ‘moderate’ consumption of alcohol is the one that promotes sinking the ship in order to put out the fire. The supporters of such an absurd approach often cite certain studies which conclude that the ‘moderate’ consumption of alcohol is beneficial for our health and ought to be adopted. These individuals would refer to a few correlational studies which seem to indicate that the French and other Mediterranean people have, comparatively, less instances of heart disease than the North American population, thereby concluding that among all possible factors, it ought to be their wine drinking habit which has directly something to do with their good fortune. Based on such studies, alcohol has gone from becoming an addictive and harmful drug to becoming a popular heart medicine. They, however, seem to be sightless to the fact that correlation is not causation, and to the opposing comprehensive follow-up studies which show no health benefits whatsoever from a ‘moderate’ alcohol consumption.

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87. Banerjee, Neela. (1999), “Not just for passing out anymore: refining Russian habits.” In this article, Banerjee elaborates on how Russians are using the aforementioned approach to salvage the image of vodka. Smirnov, the biggest distiller in Russia, is using this technique to distance the image of vodka from alcoholism. Vodka and alcoholism are closely associated with each other in Russia. Smirnov is trying “to protect its image as a brand to be savoured rather than guzzled.”


For the sake of argument, even if we assume that the pro-drinking studies are indeed flawless and valid, their overall conclusion is nonetheless flawed and invalid. For example, there are many who claim that smoking is justified because it supposedly helps one to lose weight, never mind if it causes lung cancer, emphysema, bronchitis, stroke, facial wrinkles, etc. However, considering the overall case, there is no net benefit in smoking. One cannot reach any logical conclusion in total isolation; rather, our conclusions always ought to be in conjunction with all other relevant data. That is to say, while consumption of red wine, for instance, may be good for digestive system and bowel movements, or perhaps may reduce the risk of heart disease by X%, one cannot ignore the indubitable fact that the inevitable harm arising from drinking greatly outweighs any possible benefit. Such inconclusive judgement emanates from sloppy thinking which defies plain common-sense. It is well established that alcohol destroys body tissues and brings with it many other immediate and accumulative damages. Therefore, the one who claims that ‘moderate’ consumption of wine is beneficial is not stating the entire story. One is being selective only to that which is supportive to one’s linear argument. In logic, this fallacious argument is known as “partialism”, “special pleading” or a “half truth”. What is left out in their deliberations is that there is an increased risk of impaired renal tubular function, an increased danger of liver problems, an increased danger of hypertension, an increased risk of thrombosis, an increased danger of cancer of the digestive tract and larynx, mouth and tongue, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, liver, lung, pancreas, prostate, colon and rectum, an increased danger in bone disorder, an increased danger in chemical pathogenesis of alcohol-induced tissue injury, an increased chance of developing high blood pressure, an increase in body weight, an increased danger in many other alcohol-related disorders such as: posterior subcapsular cataract, esophagitis, oesophageal carcinoma, gastritis, malabsorption, chronic diarrhea, pancreatitis, fatty liver, alcohol hepatitis, cirrhosis, arteriosclerosis, alcoholic cardiomyopathy, skin irritations, broken capillaries, rosacea, telangiectasia, encephalopathy, rhinophyma, cutaneous ulcers, peripheral neuropathy, convulsive disorders, alcoholic hallucinosis, delirium tremens, Wernicke’s syndrome, Korsakoff’s psychosis, Marchiafava’s syndrome, ventricular enlargement, alcoholic myopathy, megaloblastic anemia, niacin deficiency, protein-calorie malnutrition (PCM), vitamin deficiency disease: beriberi, pellagra, scurvy, and metabolic disorders: hypoglycaemia, hyperlipemia, deterioration in the performance of the human sexual function.

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And, disturbance in sleep pattern. These are only the tip of the iceberg, the list goes on and on, if the drinker happens to be woman and pregnant or a breast-feeding mother. In fact, in case of women they need not to take any alcohol to protect themselves from heart disease. Their monthly menstrual cycle would already immune them from any possible heart attack. The point is, even if one drinks ‘moderately’ to avoid heath attack, the potential of ending up with one or some of the above complications increases. To defend the idea of drinking for health benefit would make sense, if and only if one produces studies which conclude that the benefit outweighs the harm, which to this day there are none produced.

Another unravelled truth here is that the risk of heart disease mostly applies to a very small population of stressed out, inactive obese people over 45 years old, when heart disease becomes a more common cause of death. Heart disease is very uncommon in younger populations. There is no evidence that drinking alcohol in the twenties and thirties will increase longevity. All to the contrary, alcohol increases the mortality rate of younger consumers. Yet, ironically they are the ones who are targeted to drink for the sake of a better health. Similarly, in many regions of the world, such as in the developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa and Orient, heart disease is very rare; in contrast, alcohol’s contribution to death and disability from related injuries is far more significant. The point is, why sink a fine ship which is not even on fire?

Evidently, alcohol takes more out of the drinker, than the drinker out of alcohol. It is inconceivable to picture that one is willing to drug his mind in order to decrease the risk of heart disease. After all, man is not just a piece of heart. What is the use of having a good heart, when the rest of the body, particularly, the brain and liver are ravaged? Those who advocate consumption of alcohol for a better health are incapable of computing a simple utilitarian equation. Taking alcohol for medicinal purposes is a clear violation of the Nevada Rule of Probability, which stipulates not to risk a lot for a little.

In the cited correlational studies, the researchers have ignored the fact that the French and other Mediterranean people have completely a different diet, lifestyle and culture, therefore, their low rate of heart disease may not at all be because of the wine, but for a host of other factors. The slippery slope does not end here, for some go even further, by over-extrapolating that it is not actually the wine, but the alcohol itself which is cardioprotective; therefore, the same benefit could also be obtained from beer and all spirits. Such a significant overlook would make their conclusions invalid.

It is further interesting to note that even though alcohol is said to reduce the risk of one form of stroke, its ‘moderate’ use can increase the risk of another heart complication. For instance, alcohol poisons heart muscles and increases the chances of having arrythmias (abnormal heart

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Bush, Patricia J. (1980), *Drugs, Alcohol and Sex*, Ch. 9.


rhythms). Another interesting study indicates that, while, French citizens have a lower rate of heart disease, they have by far a higher rate of liver disease; a rate which is said to be roughly twice more than that of Americans.\textsuperscript{97} Surely, by considering all the above-mentioned facts, in which alcohol is identified as a causative factor, the one who suggests that the consumption of alcohol improves health is certainly not living in the real world. In fact, the American Medical Association and the Red Cross, renounce all internal medical uses of alcohol. They reject the use of alcohol as a medication, even for snakebite and common cold. Many critics such as: Dominique Gillot, the French secretary of state for health has said: “There is no scientific consensus today over the protective effect of alcohol.”\textsuperscript{98}

More to the point, even if wine appears to reduce the risk of heart disease, it certainly does not result in greater longevity. There are no studies to prove any benefit of wine in relation to mortality. All to the contrary, there are more people dying annually from alcohol related accidents and violent crimes that involve drinking, rather than heart attacks. How is it that in the analysis of a marginal benefit, this huge cost is completely ignored? How and why are our “experts” so myopic? Moreover, there are numerous other beverages such as soft drinks, fruit juices, or even water which can also help one to digest more efficiently and be beneficial to one’s health, none of which are addictive or have any side-effects — in fact they can promote one’s health. Or, the occasional intake of coated aspirin, garlic, onion, vitamin E and regular exercise are well known to reduce the risk of heart attack more effectively than anything else. Why should one choose a surely harmful substitute, when a wide range of harmless alternatives exist?

Furthermore, when the notion of ‘moderation’ is such a dilapidated concept, its promotion is indeed an imprudent exercise. Considering biological variability and fluctuating alcohol tolerance, it is indeed a crime to advise people to drink ‘moderately’, when their biological make-up may not permit them to do so, and subsequently maintain that consumption level steadily throughout. This is particularly so, when you are dealing with a vast general population consisting of men, women, youths, elderly, different races, recovering alcoholics, etc.; and there are no evidences that people remain within their original drinking category.\textsuperscript{99}

Indeed, what makes it even more agonizingly pathetic to face, is the fact that it is the overwhelming majority of professional clinicians, physicians and academics who have heedlessly adopted this unattainable concept, when they, of all people, should know better that it does not exist and should, moreover, be very mindful of the consequences of its rampant promotion. As a result, the average layperson comes to blindly embrace that which he or she loves to hear and is approved by the so-called medical authorities. The publicity surrounding ‘moderate’ drinking and a healthier heart creates a fertile ground to call for everyone who is ready to jump on the band wagon to oblivion. Irresponsible and careless promotion of alcohol as a heart remedy is an ineludible invitation to start or continue drinking. It overlooks the fact that if

\textsuperscript{97} Dolnick, E. (1990), “Le paradoxe francais”.


you give most people an inch they are ready to take a mile. As a general rule, most people, especially those who seek easy fixes to problems believe that if a little of something is good for you, then a lot must be much better, thereby establishing a pattern of regular consumption. What is even more poignant is that in almost all cases, those who use this obsequious defence, do not really employ their own ideas, emanating from their own intellect, inquiry or out of being concerned for their health; such erroneous ideas are grafted onto their cerebrum by the unquestioning adsorption of regurgitation. They hear this pretext here and there. It seems to be a specious excuse to justify an irrational and indefensible desire. How naive and gullible are those who adopt such over-simplified reductionistic ideas.

15. The Genetic Theory and the Disease Model

A nother predominant defence for the consumption of alcohol comes from the ragbag of farfetched likelihoods. The proposition is based on the genetic makeup of drinkers and the perception that one drinks by virtue of inherited sickness. “It is in the man, not the bottle,” proclaimed. The proponents of this view argue that the underlying reason behind one’s drinking habit and what would happen to the one who drinks, is due to “genetic determinism”, an inherited predisposition towards alcohol.\(^\text{100}\) It is said that the children of alcoholics have a one in X number of chance to become alcoholics. Therefore, based on these studies, the desire to drink is not socially learned nor culturally conditioned. It is genetically predetermined. It is the view of some medical practitioners that alcoholism, is a disease just like cancer.\(^\text{101}\) The intermixture of Jellinck and Goodwin views, as most people see it, has provide a plausible excuse to indulge, but how true is this perspective?

The genetic theory of alcoholism is rather peculiar among other theories in that the appeal for its acceptance is not that there are any evidences for its support; indeed, the theory is wholly speculative. It is based on the interpretation of the scattered pieces of information here and there. The acceptance of this theory is an error in scientific methodology. There is a big difference between observation of certain facts, and drawing specific valid conclusions from those facts. The genetic theory coupled with the disease model have a number of pitfalls emanating from this confusion.

Firstly, be aware of the fallacy of false cause, meaning, that which is usually associated with chronic heavy drinking should not be regarded as the cause(s) of heavy drinking.\(^\text{102}\) In general, if ‘B’ usually appears after ‘A’, this would never prove that ‘A’ is the cause of ‘B’. Drinking is merely a behaviour, what happens subsequent to this course of action is the outcome of such behaviour. Therefore, the act of drinking is not a disease; but rather, the emanating degenerations such as cancer, cirrhosis, etc. are diseases arising from this self-destructive mode of conduct.

\(^\text{100}\) Goodwin, Donald. (1976), *Is Alcoholism Heredity?*

\(^\text{101}\) Jellinek, E.M. (1960), *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism.*

\(^\text{102}\) Fingarette, Herbert. (1988), *Heavy drinking: The myth of alcoholism as a disease.*

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While there is no doubt that the one who drinks ‘excessively’ becomes sick, but the drinking behaviour itself cannot be regarded as an inherent disease, the very cause of drinking.

Furthermore, awareness of the fallacy of false cause, particularly in the context of the nature verses nurture controversy requires that not to consider just biological factors and completely overlook environmental factors and personal choices. For example, speaking English runs in British families, does this mean that learning and speaking English is genetically determined? Or, can we say that, due to inherent differences in genes, Canadians are genetically predisposed to play ice hockey, when compared with Saudis? The answer to both questions is obviously negative, when all socio-cultural circumstances are considered.

Furthermore, awareness of the fallacy of false cause, dictates that we ought to be careful not to confuse explanation with proof. To say that such and such happens based on certain course of action is not at all same as having proven that indeed this is truly the case. Has the given explanation exhausted and eliminated one by one all other possible alternatives? A careful examination shows that most often this is not the case. This leads us to the crucial issue, which is that psychologists and sociologists have always had difficulties in attributing human behaviour solely to one specific determinant, particularly, to genetic cause. For instance, so far scientists have not been able to prove that intelligence, aggression, suicide or deviant sexual behaviour have any genetic basis. That is basically because human behaviour is a complex phenomenon, and often results from an interaction of multiple factors. In the midst of uncertainty surrounding heredity and behaviour, how is the genetic cause of alcoholism conclusively established? Psychologist Glenn Walters cautions us candidly:

Demonstrating that a relationship exists between heredity and drug abuse is one thing; explicating this relationship is quite another...Common sense dictates that the genetic features of drug dependency and abuse should not be considered independent of environmental factors.

While, genes could have something to do with certain human attributes, we should clearly know what is the underlying mechanism behind them, how does it work, and more importantly, if the genetic explanation is all there is to it. In objective biobehavioural studies, it is often acknowledged that there is more than one particular component involved to make one behave in a certain manner. For instance, it has been established that there is no conclusive proof that homosexuality is solely genetically or hormonally caused, and such a behaviour is totally involuntary. We should, therefore, not overlook this important consideration in the study of alcoholism, because there are other valid alternative explanations. For example, one can

   Fingarette, Herbert. (1990), “Why we should reject the disease concept of alcoholism”.


rightfully postulate that parental example is a potent influence on one’s drinking habit. Let us not forget that those who provide our genes are the same people who raise us and influence to shape our behaviour, norms and values. Like other children, the children of alcoholics also tend to use their parents as role models. Just as children of educated parents seek to obtain higher education or tend to take up parent’s profession, children of alcoholics may show a greater propensity in the consumption of alcohol, simply because that is what they have observed their parents doing all along, not because they carry ‘drinking-genes’. The trend runs in the family, so to speak. As a matter of fact, numerous studies conducted on youths and drugs seem to indicate that adolescent drug use is more associated with parental drug use and poor familial interaction.\\(^{106}\)

Furthermore, convenient supply is the parent of opportunity. The reason that children of alcoholics start to drink at an early age could also be due to the fact that alcohol is always available at their home, not for any innate magnetism. The drinking habit of this group is shaped by a cognitive appraisal of environmental events. The available data are inadequate to conclude that for genetic reason drinkers beget drinkers. Peele notes:

> The disease theory of alcoholism has the merit of bringing troubled people into the care of hospitals and doctors, an advantage appreciated particularly by physicians themselves, who tend to see human problems in terms of the medical model: disease, treatment, cure. Yet, it posits an inborn organic cause, a bodily deficiency, where there may be none, and for this reason the theory is troubling. Alcohol may at its roots be a social and cultural problem, not a medical one.\\(^{107}\)

Some other critics bring the notion of free-will and individual choices into the discussion and argue that drinking is an outcome of ones personal choice more than any biological or environmental factors.\\(^{108}\)

The hazard of pushing this weak *theory* as though it is a *fact*, is that, it strips off one’s the power to change. It would make one feel totally helpless to fight that which is mistakenly

\(^{106}\) Boyle, M.H. et al. (1993), “Substance Use Among Adolescents and Young Adults: Prevalence, Socio-Demographic Correlates, Associated Problems and Familial Aggregation”.


\(^{108}\) Schaler, Jeffery A. (2000), *Addiction is a Choice*. 
perceived to be beyond one’s control, leading one to learned helplessness and chronic depression. The depression in turn, makes the vicious cycle of alcoholism inescapable; in fact, it fuels the flame of alcoholism, leading to the erroneous conclusion that the reason behind one’s failure is entirely due to an inherent neurophysiological defect, not learned helplessness. It further makes the alcoholic feel like he or she does not have to do anything to recover. The problem, since it is a disease, can only be treated with proper medication. Unfortunately, this conjecture appears gaining acceptance and an undeserved credit.

Herbert Fingarette cautions us of another looming repercussion:

Emphasis on heredity as the “cause” of alcoholism may give a false sense of assurance to the far greater number of people who are in fact in danger of becoming alcoholics but do not have an alcoholic parent. These potential alcoholics may feel free to drink heavily, believing themselves genetically immune to the “disease”. In many ways, the genetic theory of alcoholism parallels the theory of evolution and biological determinism in its utter inability to provide an universal explanation. Both theories are unable to provide the branching-out mechanism. In the theory of evolution, speciation and overlap still remain a mystery. In the genetic theory, the mechanism by which an inherited tendency for alcoholism ends up being expressed, has not yet been established, nor is it established as to why some individuals with a long history of ‘alcohol abuse’ in their family do not develop any dependency to alcohol. Or, why there are many individuals who do not come from an alcoholic family, but get hooked on alcohol, if inherited genes are predominantly the prime determinants of ‘alcohol abuse’. What is the ‘alcoholic gene’, which somehow regulates one’s will to keep on drinking, has it been identified? The truth is scientists have not yet been able to link a single gene to sensitivity to alcohol. Thus, we cannot speak of the disease model of alcoholism with certainty, so long as the etiology of the disease is not fully understood. Nick Heather and Ian Robertson, reject Blum and Nobel, (1990) study, which suggests a genetic base for alcoholism. Heather and Robertson state that:

Since the original publication in 1990, at least 21 studies have examined the theory, with replications and refutations in about equal measure. There have been two attempts at meta-analysis (a statistical technique that combines data from a number of different studies), with dramatically opposed conclusions. Moreover, a linkage between the A1 allele and alcoholism has failed to emerge from studies of families with a pedigree of alcohol problems, a finding which would be an absolute requirement for a valid theory of this sort.

In addition to all above unanswered questions, what is so different about addiction to alcohol that makes it genetically determined? What about other forms of addictions like: cocaine, gambling, cigarette, caffeine; and even compulsive pathological disorders such as overeating, overspending, lying, shoplifting, infidelity or repeated sexual offences? The patterns of behaviour of people with these ‘dependencies’ are somewhat analogous to alcoholism. So, are they all genetically pre-determined? Are addicts passive victims of their biology? If so, then the disease explanation

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should be a plausible cause in every case, yet all except alcoholism are considered as “willful misconduct”. We cannot arbitrarily classify drinking as disease, but other dysfunctional behaviours as bad habits. On the same merit, all compulsive liars, serial sexual offenders, chronic gamblers and those who frequently use coarse language must be sick due to genetic deficiency. Criminals cannot help, but to commit crimes, prosecuting them is inappropriate course of action. Like other sick people, they did not choose to be sick. Thus, they too, must be approached with sympathy not antipathy.

Secondly, if beyond any reasonable doubt, the hereditary theory is proved to be well-founded, it can only serve as a premise underlying the reasons for alcoholism. It cannot account for ‘moderate’ drinking, since the inborn inclination is to drink heavily. Therefore, the proposed argument in support of ‘moderation’, is a case of ‘fallacy of irrelevant reason’, when used to justify casual drinking.

Moreover, for the sake of argument, even if the genetic theory coupled with the disease model is taken to be true, it does not at all support the consumption of alcohol. If anything, it calls for its prohibition. Simply because, if alcoholism is a disease which one is suffering from, then one becomes progressively more sick unless one completely stops drinking. Further, if it is true that the offspring of alcoholics have a pre-existing biogenic tendency to “loss control” over drinking, they ought to not to go near the bottle, by any means necessary, otherwise they would, for sure, end up being like their miserable parents. Due to the fact that children of alcoholics are vulnerable to alcohol, the practice of ‘moderate’ drinking among them should, therefore, be automatically dismissed in order to avoid a forthcoming misery. Just like those children who are fatally allergic to peanuts, in this case too, total abstinence is the necessary solution if one is truly allergic to alcohol. However, as pointed by some critics, if according to the disease model of alcoholism the “loss of control” over drinking is truly one of the primary reasons for the “disease”, why then in clinical treatment, “controlled drinking” objective is being sought out as opposed to total abstinence? There are at least a few studies, which indicate that the patient would again and again “loss control” over drinking. Thus, this solution, seem to contradict the major underlying assumption of the disease model. Common sense dictates that one ought not encourage the impending phenomena, if there are good reasons to be concerned.

Thirdly, the genetic theory coupled with the disease model diverts the focus on the cause of drinking and the required preventive measures from the bottle to the drinker. It makes the problem appearing to be in vulnerable individuals with genetic defects who inadvertently crossed the border of ‘moderation’ and got sick. Richard Garlick, director of communications at the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse rejects the disease model for he states: “Addiction is not a disease.... If it were simply a disease, then we could come up with a pill and cure it.”


medical profession adamantly regards alcoholism as a disease, it is certainly not a disease like the common cold or flu that one catches an invisible virus by unknown contact. Nor does anyone acquire so-called sickness by carrying parasites, germ, bacteria, fungus or even by some bad accident. Alcoholism develops only through years of drinking and neglecting one’s health. In medicine, there is such a thing called preventative measure. In fact, according to disease model, if something is hurting our body and make us ill, we ought to stop ingesting it. Therefore, if alcoholism is a disease, then abstention is the only logical cure. Let us not forget, that one is not totally powerless at the outset to hand over one’s life to the bottle — perhaps so by the end, but definitely not at the beginning. The bottom line is, one can consider the end result of drinking as a disease, but this does not at all undermine what has caused this ‘disease’ and how it developed. If alcoholism is a disease, it is certainly the only disease that has licensed outlets to spread it. It is the only disease that its vigorous promotion raises no objection.

Besides, if one’s ‘excessive’ drinking habit can be passed generationally through genes, it requires that the initial parent at the top of the chain should stop drinking for his or her children’s sake. This is another incentive to give up drinking — for the child’s sake. This case is similar to that of a pregnant mother, who ought to stop drinking in order to avoid infantile mental and physical deformity. ‘For-the-child’s-sake’ consideration then does not only apply to a pregnant mother, but to both sexes, the fathers as well as the mothers, since according to the genetic theory all children of alcoholics can fall victim to undeserved misery.

Finally, what also challenges the notion of inherited tendency and the disease theory is the fact that there are many alcoholics who control their consumption on a temporary basis. They may not touch alcohol for a considerable period of time, but then start all over again. Or, those who have completely recovered through self-cure, Guided Self-Change program or attending support-group therapy without any medical treatment at all as, for instance, through attending Alcoholic Anonymous meetings. Some others through their determination, will-power and family support quickly give up the habit. These cases seem to bring the involuntary notion of alcoholism and the genetic predisposition under serious doubt, since the genetic means seems to be unchangeable. On the whole, the idea which assumes the addict is not responsible for his condition and ignores social factors and personal choices seems to go too far. It is interesting to note, when things go regularly well in one’s life, then the individual tends to claim all credit for the outcome. The skills are said to be rigorously acquired and the results intelligently planned. However, when the consequences of one’s actions are undesirable, the outcomes are usually attributed to the external circumstances beyond one’s control, in this case, to the genetic factor.

It appears that the use of genetic theory in promotion of ‘moderate’ drinking is an example of the ‘genetic fallacy’, which seeks to justify determinism as the underlying cause.

16. Inherent Contradictions

The notion of ‘moderation’ is explicitly abjured by the public and state when it comes to driving. It is further most interesting to observe that such condemnation is a worldwide attitude towards driving under the influence. “Don’t Drink and Drive”, is an ubiquitous slogan seen along the urban highways, on bumper stickers, exit doors of bars and liquor stores, liquor store’s shopping bags, etc. The underlying message is, that these two are mutually exclusive activities. However, given the values and attitudes of society with respect to drinking, there seem to be multiple contradictions in this outlook. To begin with, why should drunk driving be a crime, when many specialized establishments, as for instance, the American Medical Association, insist that alcoholism is a ‘disease’ and drinking is an involuntary act? Consider the notorious case of a Coca Cola executive who was fired for “violent and threatening behaviour” due to alcohol abuse. His lawyer argued that, since under the Americans with Disabilities Act, alcoholism is considered a disability, his client was discriminated. The jury voted in his client’s favour, and awarded the plaintiff with $7.1 million compensation. The Ontario Human Rights Board of Inquiry classifies alcoholism within the Code definition of handicap. If an employee is found to have reached a stage of dependency, his or her dismissal is discriminatory and against the law. The employer, not only is unable to fire the drinker, but also is obligated to fulfil its duty to accommodate the special needs of the “handicapped employee”, up to the point of sustaining “undue hardship”. The question is, if alcoholism is considered as disability, and firing an alcoholic is discriminatory; based on the same logic, how come penalizing a drunk driver, is not discriminatory? He too is just a victim of an involuntary act.

The intoxication defence has also been successfully used in cases of wife beating and sexual assault such as that of Queen vs. Daviault in Canada. The assailants argue that at the time of crime they were in a state of automata, not capable of thoughtful control over their actions. The alcoholic wife beaters and drunk rapists usually plead that their drinking habit prevents them from forming the mental intention not to abuse their spouse, or to realize that ‘No’ really means ‘No’ — beating or rape takes place only when one is totally drunk. Their defence insists that since they are alcoholic and alcoholism is a disease, it should make their client unfit and not liable to stand for prosecution.

Considering these rulings, it seems that courts should also excuse all drunk drivers for the allegation of criminal conduct. The same logic equally applies here. The act committed is the product of the disease or caused by the temporary state of intoxication, not by the drinker per se. It is the bottle or the ‘drinking gene’, certainly not the driver. Therefore, the disease explanation, chronic or non-chronic, should be an acceptable alibi in every case involving alcohol and other forms of substance use. However, though inconsistent, fortunately we find that it is not the case. Society firmly acknowledges that when it comes to driving, the “zero tolerance” policy is in effect. The official position of the Canadian Government, for instance, is that “there is no safe


117. See Entrop vs. Imperial Oil Ltd.
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limit for drinking before driving”. The same attitude is prevailing in the aviation and medical professions. Pilots and surgeons are strictly prohibited from consuming alcohol prior to their shifts. In the United States, FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) rigidly monitors commercial pilots; in fact their tough restrictions apply to the entire commercial aviation crews including the flight attendants on board and maintenance engineers on the ground. Likewise, scuba divers are required to abstain from consumption of alcohol at least 12 hours prior to dive. It is even recommended by NAUI not to consume alcohol at all within 24 hours of a planned dive. That is because, even a small dose of alcohol can diminish vision, lessen mental co-ordination, create difficulties in controlling simple movements of arms and legs, reduce reaction time and ability to gauge distance. That is why, it is number one cause of motor vehicle and other accidents. There are stiff penalties for driving, piloting or performing surgery under the influence of alcohol.

Furthermore, no amount of alcohol is allowed on board of submarines and other vessels of the U.S. and British Navy. In most Western countries, police officers are not allowed to drink any amount of alcohol while on duty. The British Sporting Events Control of Alcohol Act bans selling alcohol on trains, including luxury trains, transporting fans to football matches, no matters how lofty their status. Anyone on the Orient Express found with alcohol would be ejected. In prisons, consumption of alcohol is absolutely forbidden for inmates. The burning question is, what happened to the ‘moderation’ perspective in all these cases, why is ‘sensible’ drinking devalued here and not there? What’s good for the goose, is it not good for the gander? Is ‘moderation’ the way to tame undesirable alcohol’s effects or not? Evidently not, the above dry policies seem to indicate the belief that the damage of alcohol starts only when drunkenness sets in, is mythical. Indeed, if the hazardous connection between drinking and above activities is so well recognized and highly publicized, why is it denied elsewhere? Why is it the case that drinking ‘moderately’ is only incompatible with performing surgery, operating automobiles and jets, police work and scuba diving? What about don’t drink and walk, don’t drink and think, or don’t drink and raise a family? It can easily be extrapolated that if alcohol impairs judgements and affects one’s ability to drive, it should certainly affect one’s ability in doing everything else. It is not just driving which requires thinking, concentration and alertness, but so does every facet of life. For instance, take a task as simple as walking and crossing street. There are no laws anywhere against walking under the influence of alcohol, while in the United States one of every five traffic fatalities is a reckless pedestrian. Among those who are killed each year, half of them have been drinking. Therefore, by the same logic drinking and walking should also be a crime.


119. In the United States, Federal regulations prohibits pilots from flying, if they had consumed alcohol less than eight hours prior to flight or have blood alcohol level as low as 0.04%. See: Modell, J.G. and Mountz, J.M. (1990), “Drinking and flying — The problem of alcohol use by pilots”.


121. See the Canadian Criminal Code, Sections (219), 253 (a), 255, 258.

122. See the Metropolitan Toronto Police Rules, (1993), Rule number: 4.2.7.

The condemnation of drinking and driving becomes more hypocritical, when we further notice the presence of alcohol closely associated with driving. For example, alcohol industry is the major sponsor of auto racing in the world, for instance, the annual Molson Indy in Canada; and Budweiser, Miller and Coors provide regular sponsorships in the United States, and Heineken in Europe. Corporate alcohol’s sponsorship of auto racing and the customary Champaign celebration of winning drivers at the end of the race certainly give a contradictory and confusing message to the general public who is told that alcohol and driving are mutually exclusive. The fact is, the alcohol industry’s sponsorships aim to promote drinking and increase the overall sale of alcohol among the targeted population, particularly here aiming at auto drivers and car lovers; the auto racing events, on the other hand, also promote sport cars and fast driving. The combination of the two creates a culture that drinking and driving emanates from. The cultural foundation of impaired driving cannot be divorced from these two, put together with approval and distinctive alluring appeal. James Jacobs, a professor of law and director of the Center for Research in Crime and Justice at New York University directs our attention to the following facts:

Per capita, Americans consume more alcoholic beverages than they do milk. On average, each person over fourteen years of age annually consumes the equivalent of 591 twelve-ounce cans of beer or 115 bottles (fifths) of table wine or 35 fifths of 80-proof whisky, gin, or vodka.\(^\text{124}\)

At the same time:

There is nothing discrete about Americans’ love affair with the automobile (Meyer and Gomez-Ibanez; Lewis and Goldstein 1983). The car is a symbol of social status and personal life-style; for many people it fulfills deep psychological needs for power, aggression, fantasy, and control. There are more registered vehicles (171,690,733) and more miles of roadway (3,861,934) in the United States than in other nations. Americans show less interest in public transportation and drive greater distances between home, work and play.\(^\text{125}\)

As stated repeatedly, the alcohol industry advertises aggressively and subtly by linking its products to positive cultural symbols and psychological needs,\(^\text{126}\) such as the manufactured ‘need’ to cruise with a nice car. This linkage and association is certainly not without adverse effects. The concurrent intertwined promotion of drinking culture and driving culture will inevitably have an overlapping effect at one point. Evidently, the intersection of these two popular pastimes is impaired driving – where a head-on collision is imminent. The outcome of drinking and driving is not accident, it is an inevitable consequence. Knowing clearly what the intersection and consequences are, there must be every effort to avoid or minimize the tragedy of impaired driving, to say the least. Yet this vulnerable situation is left loose for the corporate alcohol to exploit. The exploitation of such sporting events would actually promotes drinking and driving even though the intention of the corporations is not to encourage this, but just to take


\(^{125}\) Ibid., p. xiv.

advantage of any situation where a lot of sales can be made, irrespective of what the consequences might be.

As pointed out by some critics, it is further interesting to notice that our society glamorizes the use of alcohol, promotes its economy, builds a flashy ‘culture’ around it, yet when something goes wrong, it only condemns the action of people who are intoxicated. The producers, merchants, advertisers, policy regulators and the cherished drinking culture are all off the hook. The irony is that many lobby groups, healthcare agencies and governments are on a mission to promote sober driving, impose a heavy penalty for driving under the influence, but turn a blind eye to glorification of its consumption. This contradictory stance is pathetically hypocritical. Indeed, why is it that when something goes wrong, it is only the drinker who is blamed, and not other collaborators? For instance, a drunk driver whose reckless impaired driving causes one to die in a car crash, is automatically charged with “involuntary manslaughter”, but the corporate alcohol is not liable, or blamed for the crime committed. The horrendous corporate wrongdoing in this instance is not in any way included in allocation of the blame or as a contributing factor for such incidents. On the contrary, while the impaired driver is stigmatized and ruined, all others involved are financially rewarded for their insidious participation. In all cases of impaired driving, the alcohol industry in particular seems to enjoy a diplomatic immunity against product liability lawsuits. Is this a fair course of action? What is the difference between the alcohol industry and tobacco industry in this regard? For the legislators and the industry responsible for the production of a potent intoxicating drug, these incidents are treated as a mere unfortunate “accident”, unrelated to this business. Yet far from being an accident, the cases of impaired driving are not accidental, but predictable consequential outcomes of our social attitudes and alcohol policies. In fact, it could be argued that a drunk driver should not at all be held accountable, or at least not solely accountable, when one is manipulated to drink by deceptive advertisements, when a drug is introduced to one as a licit “drink”, and drinking is socio-culturally reinforced and glorified. Impaired driving is imminent and rampant in cultures where drinking is glorified and commercialized. Consequently, under such circumstances one should not be blamed for drinking a permissible “drink”. In fact, by targeting drunk drivers, organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) are barking at the wrong tree; such groups seem to have problem with consumer of alcohol, but not with the producers. They should extend their critical energies towards the drinking culture and the corporate conglomerates that have manipulated the masses, driving or not driving, into the consumption of alcohol. MADD should not limit its concern to only intoxicated drivers, but all those who drive them into intoxication.

When it comes to alcohol, our society is just sensitive to impaired driving, for although it chastizes the drunk driver, it is totally blind to the fact that impaired driving and alcoholism are not the only serious problems that emanate from alcohol. The same sensitivity with regard to the other problems that flow out of its consumption is absent elsewhere.

Another interesting example of contradiction took place in Canada a number of years ago. The Canadian customs seized a large shipment of alcoholic beverages smuggled into Canada from the United States. The law did not allow the seized goods to be sold, since no duties were paid for. The authorities initially decided to get rid of the beverages by dumping them into the sewer. However, this decision was later on aborted, since it was argued that the discharged alcohol would eventually be released into the natural environment, and since alcohol is a toxic
substance, it is harmful to the ecology. One may wonder, if alcohol is detrimental to the natural environment, that is to the fish, animals, trees and so on, how come its direct consumption is taken to be safe with respect to humans? If it is acknowledged that alcohol degrades ecology, why is it neglected that man, being on the top of food chain, is inseparable from the rest of ecosystem? If ‘moderation’ is the solution with respect to alcohol consumption, why then we did not dump the drinks into the environment ‘moderately’, that is by way of gradual discharge, such as, for instance, two or three ‘standard’ drinks per day? It is beyond comprehension, that the state law, prevent us from dumping this product into our sewer, but we can dump it in our throat.

Moreover, from time to time the United States Food and Drug Administration, Health and Welfare Canada, and the other countries’ equivalent ministries order the removal of an item from supermarkets’ shelves. In the past few years, we witnessed to a sudden ban on certain type of products. For instance, a particular brand of tuna and Perrier water were removed and destroyed due to existence of certain substance which was said to be detrimental to human health. The authorities declared that the above products were unhealthy and are “not fit for human consumption”. Keeping this perspective in mind, consider alcohol and its effects. Due to its chemical and physical property, alcohol is most useful in industrial and manufacturing processes. It is widely used as a solvent, since is capable of dissolving numerous substances. Pure alcohol is a volatile and flammable liquid, which is even sometimes used as a fuel and anti-freeze. It is also a starting material for many chemical products such as acetic acid, lacquers, varnishes, dyes, artificial fibres, and certain types of steriliser due to its antiseptic property. Thus, it is unthinkable to see, an antitoxin substance, which has such a potent dissolvable property is consumed by humans as though human organs are tougher than some industrial products. It is, therefore, no surprise that the liver of an alcoholic, after years of drinking, resembles decomposed mixed ground beef. It is for similar reason, that pharmaceutical use of alcohol as disinfective is avoided, because it is known to kill tissues, if it is applied to cleanse wounds. It is indeed unimaginable that people serve this toxic substance with dinner and give it to each other as a gift. When it comes to alcohol, the standard adapted by healthcare officials and their silence is surely inconsistent with their original mandate. How on earth can a poison be classified as beverage by healthcare authorities?

The last inconsistency is in the area of litigation, which was briefly mentioned earlier. In recent years, the tobacco industry and, to a lesser extent, the gun manufacturers industry have been entangled in a myriad lawsuits. The tobacco industry particularly has suddenly found itself hard pressed in long arduous court battles. Lung cancer victims, who have claimed that smoking has cost them their health, filed one after another, many product liability lawsuits against the tobacco industry. Despite the fact that many earlier cases were tossed out of the court, later on, due to gradual increased attention in public health, and the proven direct causal connection between smoking and lung cancer, the recent class-action lawsuits have become unprecedentedly successful. Soon after, a number of governments got involved including the U.S. government, all demanding that the tobacco industry must reimburse them the healthcare money spent on sick smokers. So far, tobacco companies have offered some $246 billion to settle down certain claims. For instance, recently, a California jury has awarded an ex-three-pack-a-day smoker $50 million in punitive damages. In another unprecedented case, a Florida jury awarded the victims of cigarette smoking $145 billion dollars. This precedent has prompted other claimants who hope for a piece of the action to join in. The list of individuals and states suing the tobacco industry is
rapidly growing; the governments of Venezuela, Guatemala, Bolivia, Panama, Italy and the provincial governments of Ontario and British Columbia are a few recent plaintiffs. Subsequently, the fear of reduced profit, has forced the tobacco manufacturers to pass the cost of punitive damage to the consumers by jacking up the price of each package of cigarette by about 10 cents. The point raised by many is that on the same legal ground, the alcohol industry is also liable to all victims of cirrhosis of liver, alcoholism, etc. It is hypocritical to award victims of cigarette-induced diseases and once again turn a blind eye to the victims of alcohol-induced diseases. The defence of “if tobacco, then what about alcohol” is perfectly valid and there is indeed an inconsistency in the law. Although the defence is justified, it is hardly brought up by the tobacco industry, since many punished corporations like the Philip Morris, for instance, are in business of both alcohol and tobacco manufacturing. They would obviously avoid any suggestion that their alcohol subsidiaries should be penalized just as their tobacco subsidiaries.

The inconsistent policy towards alcohol is also evident when alcohol is compared with similar products such as tobacco. For instance, by law all tobacco products must have warning labels, advising consumers about hazards of smoking, such as: lung cancer, heart disease, etc. Yet, in most states, alcohol manufacturers are not required to warn drinkers about liver disease, hypoglycaemia and other potential damages. It is further most interesting to notice that unlike any other chemical substance, alcohol is the only drug that its consumption is officially okayed if it is taken ‘moderately’. No government or healthcare institution ever claims that it is okay to take cocaine, heroine or even tobacco, if it is taken ‘moderately’, while, when it comes to their destructive effects and the end results, they are all similar.

Such inconsistencies and contradictions are indeed characteristics of a problematic outlook, and their denial is a truly insane double standard.

17. The Cover-Up Scheme

The reluctance to expose the superficiality of the concept of ‘moderation’ is generated by oppositions from two different sources: the internal and external forces, both of which combined together, prevent the creation of a drug free society.

The internal factor is nothing but undisciplined human desires. We have become totally pleasure-centered individuals, constantly seeking self-satisfaction and look for that which is going to give us most pleasure. Drinking, smoking dope and other legalized or illicit drugs are a very popular source of pleasure in most societies. Studies have related drug use to “sensation seeking” and to sensual and pseudo-philosophical hedonism. Alcohol, for instance, is closely

127. See Argument 17.


Segal, B. and Merenda, P.F. (1979), “Locus of control, sensation seeking and drug and alcohol use in college students”.


Zuckerman, M. et al. (1972), “What is the sensation seeker? Personality trait and experiences correlates of the sensation-seeking scales”.

associated with the idea of having a “good time”, liveliness, sporty lifestyle, adventure, etc. This pattern is distinctly visible in all beer commercials. Their explicit message is: ‘you don’t have a life if you don’t drink’. Consumers are made to think: ‘I drink, therefore I am’, as a proof for one’s existence. Advertisers create and promote an erroneous belief that one needs to take drugs in order to relax, enjoy oneself, to be sociable and sexy. Drink and be merry, never mind the consequences. This approach is certainly effective, especially for the younger generation, who is systematically taught to put sensation above cognition. For most of them, today is what counts, tomorrow is light years away, if it ever comes. For others the motivation to drink may manifest itself in another form. But, nonetheless, it is part and parcel of a desirous trap. Consequently, since drinking is universally unjustifiable by rationality, pseudo-reasons, using quasi-rationality is employed to evade the issue for the drinker himself/herself. Such self-justification is nothing, but sheer desire laminated by illusory mental concoctions. In this case, all you have is a mental concoction supporting a liquid concoction. There is not a single rational argument, which can justify drinking on its own merit without any appeal to false association and misrepresentation, or attachment to downright desire.

Consider the former, alcohol is keenly associated with romance, while in reality it diminishes sexual performance and has contributed to countless marriage break-ups. Alcohol is presented as quencher, but it never satisfies thirst or has any cooling off property, as a matter of fact, it does quit the opposite. The more one drinks, the more one dehydrates. Alcohol far from being a stimulant is in essence a depressant. Alcohol does not warm up the body in a cold environment; on the contrary it takes heat away from the body. Alcohol does not improve heart’s functioning, but impairs it. Yet, all such lies are the message of alcohol advertisers or the drinker’s excuse for consumption.

Consider the latter, the notion of desire, which is predominant in the self-justification for drinking, whether the drinker is conscious of it or not. It is the desire for alcohol, which kills people’s objectivity and consistency of thoughts. One example of this can be found among Canadian university students. Canadian students are generally sensitive to unjust distribution of justice and the idea that their university campus is being taken over by giant financial institutions and corporations, particularly by the American corporations and financial institutions. There have been numerous objections raised against presence of Coca-Cola vending machines or Starbucks coffeeshops on Canadian university campuses, particularly when these companies are given exclusive rights. To express their disapproval, most students would refuse to deal with such companies. Yet surprisingly, the presence of Budweiser, Miller, Coor and other big breweries as event sponsor or product provider is unnoticed by politically conscious and even by radical hard-line students. This gross oversight is due to their staunch drinking habits. Canadian students enjoy drinking beer. University campuses have long been among the most alcohol-drenched communities in Canada and students have long enriching drinking tradition on university campuses. Social life on and off campus is synonymous with alcohol-lubricated gatherings, where binge drinking frequently takes place. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights are designated as “pub nights” on campuses and pubs have longer drinking hours. The same students, who would boycott certain corporate products due to their anti-

corporate convictions, seem to have no problem with corporate alcohol, because they somehow believe that they cannot have a fulfilling university experience without drinking beer. When it comes to alcohol industry, consistency of thoughts and principles disappear, and students’ political conviction seems to diminish to a vanishing point.

I cannot help but not to point out to another oversight example, that is in the valuable work of Joel Bakan, a law professor at the University of British Columbia in his acclaimed scholarly work titled: *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*, 130 as well as in Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman fascinating book titled: *Corporate Predators: The Hunt for Mega-Profits and the Attack on Democracy*. 131 These authors indeed have done a superb job in exposing the dirty hands of corporations, reveling the way corporations prey on their victims by manipulating their mind through deceptive advertising and assaulting on their body by selling harmful products, all in the name of making profit and maximizing shareholder’s value. In their books, from pharmaceutical giants to toy companies are discussed, yet it is surprising that there is no mention of corporate alcohol anywhere, perhaps the most applicable area in this discussion is left out. This oversight may be due to the popular drinking culture that blurred the vision of these thinkers.

The external factor boils down to nothing but dollars and cents not sense. It is no secret that manufacturers of legalized drugs, such as tobacco and alcohol, make enormous amounts of money. Governments in turn, collect large taxes from producers, distributors and consumers. Here is the position of the British Government on this issue:

..., while the misuse of alcohol may cause serious health and social problems, the production of, and trade in, alcoholic drinks form an important part of our economy in terms of jobs, exports, investment, and as a source of revenue for the Government — all of which could be adversely affected by any measures designed to restrict consumption. 132

In the United States, the sale of beer, wine and distilled beverages for 1984 was more than $64.1 billion. 133 In the same year, more than $232 million was spent on alcohol advertising. 134 In 1995, the net profit of Seagram was $3,406 million, while Guinness, its British counterpart


131 Mokhiber, Russell and Weissman (1999), *Corporate Predators: The Hunt for Mega-Profits and the Attack on Democracy*.


133 The United States Brewers Association, (1985).

enjoyed net profit of $1,429 million. The global alcohol market is estimated to be $170 billion. The income generated in this business is in the same class as arms business.

In addition to the revenue earned directly from alcohol sale, most alcohol corporations are full or part owners of sport networks, sport clubs in major and minor leagues or have numerous diversified subsidiaries. Practically each company has converted from a tiny liquor firm once used to be, to a well-expanded powerhouse, and continues to take further steps onward. Through rapid expansion and diversification, many other unrelated economic interests are allied with the alcohol manufacturers or they are in fact the two sides of the same coin. For instance, in Canada, Molson brewery, a company in operation since 1786 is the sole owner of the Montreal Canadiens hockey club and the Molson Center, the home of the Montreal Canadiens. The company is the holder of the broadcast rights for CART and Formula One races in Canada, Molson has the rights for all but one of the Canadian-based NHL team. The popular Hockey Night in Canada is the most watched television broadcast in Canada. Molson owns Kaiser, the second largest brewer in Brazil. In addition, Molson has holdings in the entertainment business (50% ownership in Universal Concerts Canada), home hardware companies, building suppliers, lumber firms (i.e. Beaver Lumber), chemical manufacturers, warehousing companies, lighting and kitchen systems, cleaning and sanitizing products, dispensing systems and trucking firms. Molson has 25% ownership of Home Depot. By thoroughly diversifying in these sectors, is it than coincidental, that drinking is so prevalent among sport fans and blue-collar workers in Canada and the U.S.?

Labatt, operating since 1847, has a 90% interest in the Toronto Blue Jays baseball club, 70% interest in the SkyDome Corporation, owns The Sport Network, and has interests in broadcasting, entertainment, food and agricultural products. Carling O'Keefe, another Canadian brewery which is 50.1% owned by Rothmans of Pall Mall Canada Ltd., was up to, not long ago, the owner of the Quebec Nordiques hockey club and the Toronto Argonauts football team. The Toronto Argonauts football club is currently owned by Labatt. Indeed, for companies like Molson and Labatt, brewery is just the tip of a huge iceberg. As such these


corporations have a tremendous financial power to control public opinion and governmental policies.

Sleeman Breweries Ltd., operating since 1834, is one of the fastest growing companies in the Canadian business arena. It has recently acquired Upper Canada Brewing Co. and the rights to Stroh’s brands in Canada, which include Rainer, Colt 45 as well as Old Milwaukee.

Seagram is another Canadian super giant which is owned by the Bronfman family. This company has interests in oil and gas, dairy production, real estate, computer firms, film, recording, entertainment and fashion industries. The Bronfman Group is also in communication, theme park and restaurant business. They also own the Cineplex Odeon corporation and Roslyn Petroleums Ltd. Cadilllac Fairview Corporation Ltd. is one of the Seagram’s holding companies, which is in fact one of the biggest commercial and residential landlords in the North America. Seagram has recently sold two of its subsidiaries: the Tropicana Products juice division to Pepsi Co Inc. and its entertainment film library to MGM. It has then acquired PolyGram for $10.6 billion. In June of 2000, this Canadian giant merged with French conglomerate Vivendi SA and Canal Plus SA, the three formed a new global media and communications powerhouse called Vivendi Universal which has interests in alcohol industry. What is the function of media, but to mould public opinion in favour of corporate goals? Such mergers and acquisitions in the corporate world are akin to drug warlords swapping turfs for the furtherance of their illicit businesses.

Allied Domecq PLC is a dynamic British marketing-led brands business. According to the information cited on their web site, they are the second largest Spirits company in the world and a leading global Quick Service Restaurant business. Approximately 11,000 employees operate globally building powerful, exciting brands that drive profitable growth and strong consistent cash flows. These brands include: Ballantine’s, Beefeater, Kahlúa and Sauza and Dunkin’ Donuts, Baskin-Robbins ice cream and Togo’s. Their proforma trading profit for the year to August 1999 was £443 million from a turnover exceeding £2.4 billion. In the first six months of the financial year 1999-2000 Allied Domecq achieved a profit before tax of £252 million. Allied Domecq recently acquired G.H.Mumm and Perrier Jouet, two of the world’s best-known champagne houses in a £575m cash deal.

Miller brewery of America comes from the Philip Morris progeny which ranks 31st among all global corporations. Philip Morris owns Marlboro, Virginia Slims, Merit, Benson & Hedges cigarettes, Miller Lite, Celis, Foster’s, Lowenbrau, Nabisco Holdings, producers of Oreo, Ritz crackers, LifeSavers candies and the whole of Kraft Foods Inc., the world topmost company in the food industry. Kraft as one among many subsidiaries of the Philip Morris, has over 50 leading brands including: Kraft cheeses, Kraft salad dressings, Kraft peanut butter, Kraft Dinner, Tobler’s chocolates, Baker’s chocolate, Jell-O, Maxwell House coffee, Nabob, Minute Rice, Kool-Aid, Miracle Whip, Raisin Bran cereal, Post cereals, Shake ‘N’ Bake and much

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more. Philip Morris also operates financial services and the real estate investment business. Recently Philip Morris refurbished its corporate image by renaming its holding company to Altria, using an altruistic-sounding name and putting their food subsidiaries in forefront, Philip Morris obscures the fact that they are indeed in killing business.

With an astronomical revenue, political connections, influence in the media and effective PR campaign, each alcohol corporation is essentially an untouchable autonomous entity within society, answerable to no one, and well capable of dictating the rules and policies. Under corporate capitalism the largest and most powerful corporations are the least sanctioned one, and the government is obligated to protect and secure capitalist relations of production and facilitate maximization of consumption. Let’s have no illusions about who it is that we are dealing with here. They are well prepared, capable and willing to play dirty in order to protect their self-serving interests by any means necessary. The compiled documented evidences of their guilt are incontrovertible.

Many of today’s multinational corporations have garnered vaster politico-economic power than nation-states, and their company’s annual net income exceeds the gross national products of some OPEC states. 51 of the world’s biggest 100 economies are corporations, not countries. For instance, Royal Dutch Shell has assets higher than the capital worth of oil producing Iran, Venezuela and Turkey. This would subsequently translate into higher wealth for Shell over and above that of these nations. Exxon’s sales in 1980 were larger than the GDP of ninety-six countries, well ahead of many ‘developed’ nations with a vibrant economy like: Austria, Denmark and Norway. If General Motors were a country, it would have the world’s twentieth


    Hilts, Philip J. (1996), Smoke Screen: The Truth Behind the Tobacco Industry Cover-up.
    “Death in the West: The Marlboro Story” (1976), in 1976, Thames Television of the Great Britain produced and broadcast the “Death in the West”, a powerful exposé of the most successful cigarette advertising campaign in history: “The Marlboro Man”. This documentary also exposes the lies told to the general public by the Phillip Morris management. Shortly after the broadcast, Phillip Morris manufacturers of Marlboro cigarettes sued Thames Television in a British court. Following a 1979 secret settlement, all copies of the film were suppressed. In early 1980s a leaked-out copy was started to circulate and shown by a few independent anti-smoking lobby groups.


largest economy. General Motors, Ford, General Electric, Disney, Exxon, Esso, Coca-Cola, AT&T, IBM, Microsoft and hundreds of other corporate giants have annual sales much higher than the GNP of Switzerland, South Africa and Pakistan. The chief executives of major banks, insurance companies and the corporate CEOs of dominating conglomerates exercise a degree of control over national and international affairs that only a few heads of state and religious institutions can tally. They often make decisions with crippling effects without the consent or knowledge of the millions of people whose lives would be directly affected. Political scientists, Richard Barnet and Robert Muller state:

> In the process of developing a new world, the managers of firms like GM, IBM, Pepsico, GE, Pfizer, Shell, Volkswagen, Exxon, and a few hundred others are making daily business decisions which have more impact than those of sovereign governments on where people live; what work, if any, they do; what they will eat, drink, and wear; what sorts of knowledge, schools, and universities they will encourage; and what kind of society their children will inherit.

In fact, just as the heads of the “Banana Republics” are being controlled by the drug cartel, and as such, are their docile puppets, so too, in the West, are the governors and governments totally controlled by some of the major corporations, whose behaviour is no different than Mafia gangsters. These governments, being psychophantically subservient to the all-mighty corporations and financial institutions are set to cater to the ravenousness appetite of avaricious conglomerations, than to the basic needs of their citizens, often by any means necessary. Major General Smedley D. Butler of the U.S. Marine Corps proudly attest to this assertion:

> I helped make Mexico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenue from. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers… I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras “right” for American fruit companies in 1903. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints.

Such jingoistic conspiracies are not isolated cases of some decades ago, as this imperialistic attitude continued to modern post cold-war era. Would the Vietnam War have occurred, if the American corporate interests in the region were not at stake? Would the United States have moved into the Persian Gulf, if the national product of Kuwait was potato rather than oil, and Saddam Hussien’s claim over the Kuwaiti oil would have made no difference to the U.S. oil companies? Would the United States government keep puppeteering with the internal affairs of the ‘third world’ countries, if it were not because of the fear that, if they do not interfere and manipulate, the American corporate profits would then be curtailed? Historian of science

149. Ibid.


Brian Easlea gives three other documented examples where American corporations altered the course of history to their advantage:

1. In Persia [Iran], in 1953 Prime Minister Mossadegh was overthrown by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Some relevant information: Mossadegh had nationalized the country’s oil resources. Subsequent arrangements gave 25-year leases on 40% of the oil to three United States companies.

2. In Guatemala, in 1954 the constitutionally elected Arbenz was overthrown by an invasion backed by the CIA and the United Fruit Company. Some relevant information: Arbenz had initiated a land reform programme involving the nationalization of 200,000 acres of land owned by the United Fruit Company.

3. In the Dominican Republic, in 1963 the constitutionally elected president, Bosch, was overthrown by a military coup. Some relevant information: Bosch had been opposed to United States economic control of the Dominican Republic and had threatened to cancel molasses and sugar contracts negotiated with the United States. Two years after the coup, when some Bosch-supporting military leaders attempted a counter-coup, the United States government sent 20,000 Marines to the island. The attempted [so-called] rebellion was crushed. United States investment in the island’s economy flourished.

In 1972, *Newsweek* reported direct involvement of ITT in the political affairs of a sovereign Latin American nation:

Against this background, the recent charges that officials of International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation had conspired with the CIA to block the election of Chile’s Marxist president, Salvador Allende Gossens, seemed… evidence that, for all their low profile and talk of corporate good citizenship, some multinational corporations of 1972 may operate just as cynically as the United Fruit of 1928.

Consider the case involving General Motors and its collaborators: back in 1949, GM was convicted of conspiracy to destroy America’s mass transit systems by purchasing and dismantling electrical transit systems in more than 45 major U.S. cities. “A jury convicted GM, Standard Oil of California, Firestone, and E. Roy Fitzgerald, among others, for criminally

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152. See: Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam. (1988), *Manufacturing Consent: The Politics of the Mass Media*, Ch 1, entitled: “A Propaganda Model”. This chapter reveals how the large corporations exercise power in ‘democratic’ states and beyond. For instance, Herman and Chomsky report that in 1985, WNET lost its corporate funding, after this station aired a notorious documentary entitled: “Hungry for Profit”, which contained conclusive information disclosing detrimental corporate activities in the so-called Third World countries. This action was intended to punish the TV station for being: “virulently anti-business if not anti-American,” and the station’s airing such a documentary was not expected “of a friend” of American corporations. Since then, the station is forced to rely heavily on the general public’s financial contribution.


conspiring to replace electric transportation with gas-and diesel-powered buses and to monopolize the sale of buses and related products to transportation companies throughout the country.\textsuperscript{155}

In 1999, the Canadian government filed a lawsuit in New York court, against R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Holdings Inc., RJR-MacDonald and several other related companies for fraud and racketeering. These companies participated in a multimillion-dollar massive smuggling operation, which brought tons of tobacco and liquor into Canada. The Canadian Justice Minister publicly argued that during the late 1980s and early 1990s these companies established an “elaborate network of smugglers and shell companies”. Their aim was to saturate the Canadian market with cheaper smuggled tobacco, and undermine Canada’s policy of reducing tobacco use by increasing the tobacco taxes and cigarette prices. Eventually, the adopted policy was frustrated by tobacco smuggling and the Canadian government was forced to reduce taxes and duties. Not surprisingly, an American judge dismissed this lawsuit in July of 2000. Nevertheless, the corporate tobacco smuggling scheme continued, in February 2003, the RCMP charged RJR-MacDonald Corporation and several of its subsidiaries with six counts of fraud and one count of conspiracy.

It is therefore monumentally naive to think that popular myths in favour of alcohol consumption are not pushed due to corporate interests or such myths could ever be cleared up by sheer education. It is indeed monumentally naive to think that we live under a just democratic system based on the principle of: of the people, by the people, for the people and that the masses have saying equal to corporations in policy-making. It is monumentally naive to think that such powerful corporations would actually allow state legislators to promote abstinence instead of indulgence. In reality the situation is such that the so-called democratic system is based on the principle of: of the corporation, by the corporation, for the corporation, where the masses have an injected illusion of liberty and of having an equal saying in policy-making. As one critic puts it, it is highly unlikely that corporate globalization, or rather global corporatization would allow a world based on fair democratic participation, global social justice, robust public health, non-violence and ecological sustainability. Jeremy Rifkin, who has emphasized the role of multinational corporations in the destruction of environment and their blatant disregard for human and non-human welfare, states:

The power of the multinational [corporations] is quite ephemeral compared with the spatially bound empires of the past. It rules not by force of arms but, rather, by force of communications. Its chief tool is efficiency, the ability to manage production by controlling vast areas of the earth’s commons – the land, sea, atmosphere, electromagnetic spectrum, outer space, and gene pool. Its domain is the entire globe. The multinational corporation seeks to be everywhere, simultaneously – to assume unchallenged commercial control over the entirety of the global commons. The temporal imperialism exercised by the multinational corporation is far more ambitious and far-reaching than the spatial imperialism of its nation-state predecessor.\textsuperscript{156}


Others such as Vandana Shiva, Susan George and Joshua Karliner have endeavoured to expose the temporal imperialism, the corporate greed, the corporate colonialist agenda for control and their clandestine domination over world resources, market and dictating national and international socio-political policies. In fact, it is hardly realized that most contemporary monolithic corporations are tantamount to being modern feudal lords, where the masses in the so-called democratic West are akin to contemporary serfs. In the medieval times they had to pay the tithe to the tyrannical overlords, but the price the masses have to pay today is not only financial, but social, psychological and moral, as the pernicious effects of ‘pleasure-giving’ products wreak havoc on the societal and psychological landscape as never before. Indeed, the situation is much worse than before, since the masses think they are truly free, sophisticated, debonair, advanced and so on, through the notion of relativism, advertising and propaganda.

The alcohol industry and its invisible network of unrelated economic allies have enough power to define the law and the parameters of the law under which they operate. The existence of such powerful interest groups and the absence of sentiment against alcohol from the general public, which is systematically conditioned to value pleasure above reason, are the two primary sources behind the formulation, promotion and defence of illusory concepts such as ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol. Once the use of a particular substance becomes socially, economically and politically entrenched in the fabric of society, then even the most reasonable voice of opposition cannot earn any deserved credit or attention. The external constraints on the general opinion are insidiously exerted to form prevalent attitudes and beliefs to pursue a particular cherished goal — a goal which may not necessarily be mutual among the participants, but could be symbiotic, leading to the marriage between pleasure and vested interest. On one side, there are those who attempt to justify drinking simply because they like it, ignoring the vital logic that satisfaction cannot be the criterion for dos and don’ts. The universal law of consequences does not allow this luxury. On the other side, there is the elite that seem to be only concerned about the generated income, ignoring the degenerative outcome. This, in turn, creates a fertile ground for both the public and the elite to bury their head in the sand like an ostrich. Ironically, like most drinkers, the world is in denial of having any alcohol problem, despite the rampant warning signs. Take the notorious and close relationship between alcohol and crime. In fact, some crimes are, by definition, alcohol related, like impaired driving, underage drinking and trafficking.

Two prominent American psychologists, Oakley and Ksir after reviewing extensive data report that:

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158. Herman, Edward S. (1992), Beyond Hypocrisy.
Chomsky, Noam. (1989), Necessary Illusion: Thought Control in Democratic Societies.

“Moderation” in the Consumption of Alcohol: Nonsense upon Flimsy Stilts

If there is some question as to whether the direct influence of illicit drugs is to produce a person more likely to engage in criminal or violent behaviour, there is little question about a commonly used substance: alcohol.

A large number of studies indicate that alcohol is clearly linked with violent crime. In many assaulitive and sexually assaulitive situations alcohol is present in both assailant and victim. You may not appreciate that most homicides are among people who know each other — and alcohol use is associated with over three fifths of all murders. Of all reported assaults, 40% involve alcohol, as do one third of forcible rape and child-molesting cases. One 1981 study of adolescents in prison for assault reported that alcohol was involved in 61% of their assaults resulting in tissue damage and in 67% of assaults resulting in death...160

Furthermore, in the first national survey of Americans on probation, it was found that almost half of probationers were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs when they committed their crimes. This recent survey which was conducted for the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, showed that 46.8% of probationers had used alcohol, other drugs or both at the time of their offences. The researchers discovered that alcohol consumption was more prevalent than use of illegal drugs.161 Yet, proponents of wet economy are of the opinion that alcohol is not responsible for incidents of violence. The blame is on the individual’s character and his or her propensity in engaging in aggressive behaviour. However, such opinion is contrary to findings of a large body of studies.162 In fact, “in both animal and human studies, alcohol, more than any other drug, has been linked with a high incidence of violence and aggression.”163 Researcher R. Hauge reports that in 1988, when an industrial labour strike interrupted the flow of wine and spirit production in Norway, domestic disturbances fell by 22% and interpersonal violence by 15% in that country.164 Albert Camus, a well-known French literary figure who was very critical of French Government involvement in the wine industry, once remarked that: “The state that sows alcohol cannot be surprised to reap crime.”

According to a World Health Organization report, alcohol is the main cause of death among young people. About 2.5 million people world-wide die annually from various alcohol-related injuries. Approximately 1 million people are murdered or commit suicide every year. Alcohol-related accidents cost 500 billion dollars a year in medical expenses and lost productivity. Statistics and empirical studies indicate that alcohol consumption increases the likelihood of engaging in aggressive behaviour. Beer glasses are the most common weapon of assault used in Britain. The extent of serious injuries caused in fights, which frequently occur in British pubs, has forced the British Government to reduce the damage by replacing traditional mug with tempered glass. According to the British Home Office, there are 3,400 to 5,500 injuries a year caused by use of shattered beer glass in fights, which regularly occur by proclaimed ‘social drinkers’ in pubs. Data gathered from every field indicates that alcohol is clearly a menace to society.

In reaction to alcohol-related crimes, such as in well-known cases of date-rape, drinking and driving, how is it that it is only alcoholism that is being condemned and ‘moderate’ drinking applauded, when in reality it is clearly not always alcoholism which is behind crime scenes, but mostly ‘moderate’ consumption — the amount which is sufficient enough to release inhibitions and impair judgement. If anything, for an addict, it is the absence of a drug which contributes to criminal behaviour, not when the addict has obtained his desired goal, that is, high inebriation. Comparatively speaking, ‘excessive’ drinking does not often lead to crime; since the one who drinks ‘excessively’ would soon be incapacitated and passed out, unless the alcoholic’s consumption during a given time was not so ‘excessive’. Alcohol’s sedative effect is so strong that once taken in sufficient amount, it will render a man unconscious or make him unenergetic. In fact, there are so many chronic alcoholics with consistent heavy drinking pattern throughout their lives, who have never experienced alcohol-related encounter with the police and law. Thus, we cannot assume that it is only heavy drinkers who are menace to law and order, and ‘moderate’ drinkers, by virtue of ‘moderate’ consumption are the adorable self-conscious, self-controlled law-abiding consumers. This is indeed an important fact, which is hardly ever brought up in consideration of the relationship between alcohol use and crime. Why is there so much silence?

Indeed, if as records unanimously indicate, most crimes in society involve drinking, then, drinking itself is a criminal act and ought to be systematically abolished. If the relationship between alcohol and crime is established, then marketing a substance which induces criminal behaviour is itself a crime. Russell Mokhiber, a lawyer, consumer advocate, author and the editor of the Corporate Crime Report asks:

Why is it that despite the high numbers of victims, when people think of crime, they think of burglary before they think of monopoly (if they think of monopoly

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As a trained lawyer, Mokhiber urges the need to curb this type of crime. Yet, no politician would dare to speak up in favour of such disliked facts. The prevailing system has created an artificial reality. Consequently, rather than dealing with the root of the problem, society chooses to come up with a band-aid hodge-podge approach that deals with symptoms, thereby resolving nothing substantial.

Factors like traditions of alcohol use, glamorization of consumption, easy and affordable access, and inadequate exposure of interconnected information would all converge to enhance the rate of alcohol-related illnesses and crime. Looking at relationships between alcohol consumption, availability & affordability, alcohol-related offences, number of alcoholics admitted to psychiatric hospitals and treatment centres, loss of productivity and absenteeism, death from alcoholism and cirrhosis, correlation is always positive. This trend is common in each country where consumption of alcohol is a popular pastime. Yet, public opinion is still mute.

Often the lack of effectiveness in creating a new satisfactory public attitude and belief does not very much depend on whether what is being constantly said is effectual or not, but rather, perhaps due to what is being left unsaid. That is to say, while much has been argued against alcohol abuse, what has been left out unsaid about its use? In short, the concealed information, if finally revealed and properly presented, would force a completely different conclusion and repercussions. This is certainly the case regarding the campaign against alcoholism. We only hear arguments against “alcohol abuse”. What is left out is, that when it comes to drugs, to use is the abuse. If this is the case, then what is the meaning of ‘moderation’?

As stated earlier, it is now proven, though not publicized, that even a few sips a day will alter and inhibit normal neural activity and the liver in an adverse way, let alone the cumulative effects over a longer period of time by imbibing in such ‘moderate’ practices. All to the contrary, we are made to believe, that the so-called moderate drinking is in fact harmless. Having a bottle of wine at the dinner table is considered a necessary ritual. As a result, the ever-increasing ‘moderate’ consumption of alcohol is regarded as one of the socially acceptable norms in most societies today — a standard which is pushed to the public’s throat by governments (tax collectors on booze), producers, retailers, night-club owners and anyone else who is involved in the process of profit-making from alcohol, at the expense of ruining human lives and potentials. Such dubious, nefarious, expedient and unjust business, and marketing structures will always be

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169 Fingarette, Herbert. (1988), Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease, Ch. 7.


Lenke, Leif. (1984), Total Consumption of Alcohol and ‘Heavy Use’.


propped-up so long as there is a huge profit to be made without due regard for the welfare of humanity. It is no longer a secret that the production of alcoholic beverages is a multi-billion dollar industry, whose lifeline depends on mass consumption. Therefore, so long as there is a lucrative market, the deceitful concept of ‘moderation’ will never be exposed, but will be regularly promoted.

The consumption of alcohol is justified on another increduleous ground. This defense is based on invalid assumption and misrepresentation of facts that alcohol enhances economic growth across-the-board. The highly publicized view pretends that in a wet economy, there is a piece for everybody; therefore, production of alcohol ought not to be jeopardized. If we agree that economic growth has precedence over the welfare of society, this view at the surface may appear to be somewhat valid. However, a careful analysis shows quite the opposite. It shows another example of insidious half-truth presentation by alcohol industry. It further exposes that their logic (corporate alcohol) is indeed as twisted as their morals. Any economist would acknowledge, that the loss of productive power and high incidents of absenteeism due to alcohol related complications weakens the economy. Professor Mary E. Clark of the Centre for Conflict Analysis at George Mason University comments:

… problem with prices as indicators of [economic] well-being is the equating of “junk” with “life-serving” goods and services. In the economists’ calculus, sales of alcohol and tobacco are just as beneficial as those of milk and antibiotics. A single-value system – in this case, money – has the effect of making moral distinction impossible, yet failure to do so can create economic “costs” to the community as a whole down the road, such as alcoholism, lung cancer, unhealthy children and unnecessary deaths when wrong choices are consistently made. Closely allied to this is the problem of algebraic signs: the price of curing a social or environmental problem is added to our calculation of total annual income, rather than subtracted from it.\textsuperscript{171}

The proponents of wet economy constantly maintain that, alcohol sales generate substantial revenue. True, this is undeniable, but who is the recipient of this revenue: the nation or the alcohol industry? Here, as the fundamental rule of capitalism dictates, profits are always privatized, but the costs are socialized. Just like the military-industrial complex, you have public subsidy and private profit. Likewise, manufacturers of alcohol collect the revenue, but the state, or rather the taxpayers pays the bill for all alcohol related losses, while the taxes collected on alcohol sale hardly cover the cost of health care, crime, pauperism, etc. A simple subtraction can demonstrate this fact. As stated, alcohol-related injuries cost 500 billion dollars a year in medical expenses and lost productivity.\textsuperscript{172} There are also many other additional expenses such as, for instance, the impact of alcohol use on the cost of insurance. This cost in the United State was estimated to be above $50 billion dollars by 1986,\textsuperscript{173} however, since the global figure is not known, it will not be considered in this calculation. The global alcohol market on the other hand

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\item[172] The Boston Globe, Wednesday, April 7, 1993.
\end{footnotes}
is $170 billion.\textsuperscript{174} There is at least a net difference of $330 billion, which is put on the taxpayers’ tab. Therefore, what on earth is the economic benefit of alcohol consumption for the nation? There is only one thing that can be said in favour of alcohol’s contribution to economy — it fills hospitals, morgues, jails, and keeps social workers busy. It boggles the mind as to why the two mentioned figures are never fiscally juxtaposed to give the whole picture and why the glorious wealth of alcohol’s contribution to the hospitals, morgues, jails and social workers is consistently given the blind eye. Should alcohol’s impact in job creation in these sectors be deemed a meritorious preoccupation and policy — something to be proud of, something worthy of a civilized society that considers itself at the zenith of intellectuality?

There is yet another subtle and vital reason for the rapid promotion of ‘moderation’. This is to boost up the sale of alcohol and maximize profit. Though it is not so apparent, the primary factor here is the preservance of the economic health of the alcohol industry, not for the protection of consumer and societal health. The whole idea behind the promotion of ‘moderation’ is to increase alcohol consumption, not to reduce it, while we are insidiously made to believe in the latter.

Market specialists would tell us that there are two ways to do retail sale. One could be by keeping the price high and making a few sales with a large profit margin, such as in the antique business, in renowned art paintings or fine silk Persian rugs. In this strategy, a few sales per year can pay-off rather well. The other option is volume-oriented objective and maximization of market share. In this approach, profit can be maximized by keeping the price down, with a low profit margin at a mass production with a high volume of sales and turnover, as for example, similar to discount stores or MacDonald’s sale of burgers and soft drinks. Most corporations are shifting towards adaptation of this latter approach. For instance, many products such as VCRs, personal computers, cellular phones which at one point were expensive and considered luxurious items are now very affordable and accessible to the majority of people. Consequently, their sales have drastically increased.

Now having the latter business scheme in mind, consider the way the human psyche works: If by a massive campaign, we are made to believe that ‘moderate’ consumption of lead is not only harmless, but beneficial, mankind starts consuming lead ‘moderately’. This reaction is perhaps due to human nature and would be no different, with respect to other toxic substances such as alcohol. The point is, a good sales pitch and marketing gimmicks can make most people buy things that they would not even need. We are told by health promoters, government agencies and alcohol industry, over and over again, that the ‘moderate’ consumption of alcohol is safe and beneficial. What we are not told, is that no universal criterion for ‘moderation’ as a rule of thumb exists, and given the wide variety of consequences in response to alcohol, no definition of ‘moderation’ can be a simple, exact and zero-tolerance approach to risk, and above all, universally applicable to everyone. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, any arbitrary approach in the promotion of ‘moderation’ for setting up, supposedly, a valid universal norm for drinking, could cause those who do not drink at all to start drinking and those who drink, but below the given standard amount, to increase their consumption rate once the prescribed standard is perceived to be a harmless universal norm. This consequence is the result of such an educational approach.

\textsuperscript{174} Cavanagh, John and Frederick F. Clairmonte (1985), \textit{Alcoholic Beverages: Dimensions of Corporate Power}, p. 1.
Seemingly, the ‘moderation’ campaign has a sure genuine potential to increase per capita consumption, rather than reduce it. If ‘moderation’ is safe, it would encourage abstainers to drink, and the low risk drinkers to increase their drinking allowance to the maximum “safe moderate level”. Consequently, this in turn, would increase the alcohol sale and per capita consumption. The giant alcohol industry being well aware of this psychological phenomenon and best marketing strategies has chosen the second approach: Brewers and distillers would rather see many drink in small quantities, than having fewer customers who drink in excessive quantity. They know that, if drinkers drink heavily, they will soon perish. As a result, there will be no one to buy the drinks. Who seeks dead customers? The security of the market must be maintained. The alcohol industry acts like predators of wildlife. For example, in the dynamic balance of nature, predators do not eat up all the preys, for if they did, they would soon starve. The killings are hence always limited.

Therefore, it is best to adopt the strategy which prolongs customers’ life, extend their ongoing patronage, disguises devious plots and creates a caring image. In fact, since the other alternatives in the sale of alcohol lead to societal defabrication with a strong backlash against a burgeoning alcohol industry, such as the Prohibition movement of 1920s, it would leave this industry with no choice, but the best choice, that is, to promote ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol. By this strategy, even though their profit per customer is low, the alcohol industry can, with a huge volume of sales, enjoy a large total profit. Yet, this is done so, not merely as a strategy to boost their present sales, but also to secure their future interests against any possible backlash from the dry movement. It is then no wonder that the Association of Distillers and Brewers Association are two of the most outspoken and diligent bodies which promotes ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol in both the United States and Canada. Gene Ford, a leading promoter of drinking culture, champion of good health acquired by bottle, has written a number of books to promote drinking. He has views completely contrary to the thesis of this book. Ford, in fact, claims that there is government involvement in “neo-prohibition movement” and “anti-drinking advocacy”. It is not hard to guess who sponsors the research and publishes the work of a man with such a view — the answer is: Wine Appreciation Guild Inc.175 Another similar example to push ‘moderation’ is the work of Lawrence Robert De Traville, published by Vinifera Wine Growers Association, these are alcohol trade groups that their vested interests require them to urge ‘moderation’ and fabricate myths.

The promotion of alcohol through the ‘moderation’ campaign is truly a very nifty brainwashing attempt, excellently designed, well crafted, with plenty of thought behind its formulation and co-ordination. It elegantly serves its first and foremost corporate objective: To maximize the sale and protect alcohol industry’s interests at the expense of their customers’ health and societal stability, while at the same time projecting a Mr. Nice Guy image. It is through the use of such a scheme that their deceitful criminal activities would look virtuous. Alcohol production is a business in which, its producers are getting rich at the expense of the decimation of social health, and yet have also managed to maintain a popular place among their


victims. It is amazing to witness the inordinate penchant of human beings to be conned by such diabolically contrived machinations. Such activity falls nothing short of fraudulent.

Therefore, it can be seen that unlike what we are made to believe, ‘moderation’, disguised as the ‘harm reduction’ model, is nothing but a slick promotional tactic for callous profit maximization. All talks in favour of ‘moderation’ are not for its conceptual validity, but for the promotion of alcohol through the only feasible approach which ensures the highest profit margin. Furthermore, it obtains support from, and the assistance of, many healthcare groups to execute the laid-out goals, and above all, it maintains a caring and concerned image in the sight of the public. This strategy has all the necessary ingredients required for a successful business of this nature as the outcome well attests.

It is further interesting to note that with respect to illicit drugs, the above argument is pointed out in most literature. There is a general criticism against ‘harm reduction’ model, particularly with reference to the needle exchange project, which states that this program actually helps drug dealers sell their “lethal stuff”. Thereby, by adopting this approach we are buttressing their business, the end result of which is continuation of fade-out. The question is, why when it comes to alcohol, which by far has more casualties, there is absolutely no discussion of this point? Why is there objection in the former case, but approval in the latter case? This hypocrisy reminds the account which: St. Augustine once told the story of a pirate who was captured by Alexander ‘the Great’. The captor tells the pirate: how dare you molesting the sea, to which the pirate replies how dare you molesting the whole world? He adds, we are both buccaneers, the difference is, I do it with only a little ship, I am called a thief. You on the other hand, do this with a great navy, you are then titled an Emperor. The comparison here is that the one who sells drugs in inner city ghettos is immediately condemned and labelled as drug dealer, a pusher. But the one who sells astronomical quantities of a liquid drug, which by far causes more destruction is called a businessman, corporate executive, CEO, CFO, etc. Why should the facade of alcohol be maintained when it comes to the posh trappings of the alcohol industry executives?

Another subtle deception appears in the area of medical treatments prescribed to alcoholics. These treatments are considered as a precautionary measure against the spread of alcoholism and health recovery of the affected individuals. Based on the increasing acceptance of the ‘harm reduction’ model and the notion of the disease model of alcoholism, there has been a proliferating treatment industry built supposedly to assist those with drinking disorders. ‘For-profit’ hospital corporations such as CompCare, Koala Centers, Humana and countless private rehabilitation clinics across the world have been established. Yet the goal of these institutions and the treatment industry itself is not at all to eradicate the problem from its roots, just the way, for instance, we have eradicated smallpox or are trying to eradicate malaria from the face of the earth, once for all. As stated before, what is wrong with the harm elimination and prevention model? Why should the objective of a recovery program stop short at harm reduction, when much more can be achieved by total elimination? We have never adopted the ‘harm reduction’ model with respect to any other diseases — what is so different here? Why are we not going for complete eradication as opposed to merely “reducing risks”? There are a few underlying reasons for such a double standard. One is that the notion which stipulates that the cause of alcohol disorder is the drinker not the bottle; this takes the blame away from alcohol industry and passes the responsibility onto the medical profession. The medical profession has already willingly accepted to assume the responsibility for their vested interests. The treatment industry has in fact
an ongoing symbiotic relationship with alcohol industry. Both industries are truly intervolvingly dependent upon one another; one sells addiction, the other sells addiction treatment. Mark Chapin, has the following view on this symbiotic relationship:

The alcohol beverage industry and alcoholism treatment industry need each other. Although they represent opposing sides of many conflicts – from warning label laws (like the SAFE Act) and increasing the federal exercise tax on alcoholic beverages to limitations on alcohol advertising targeted at minorities and underage consumers – each provides valuable support to the other’s existence. The alcohol beverage industry provides the major substance for which alcoholism treatment centers offer help. If there was no alcohol, there would be no alcoholics and no need for the alcoholism treatment industry, and many health professionals would be without work. Even with alcohol being legal and available, if the treatment industry succeeded with primary prevention efforts and the social drinker never became an alcoholic, it would still be eliminating the larger part of its own industry.\(^\text{177}\)

It should come as no surprise that adamant supporters of the disease model and harsh critics of abstinence model are from medical professions. Chapin further adds that “maintaining favourable market conditions generates enough motivation to balance competitive drives with mutual self-interest. This also is seen ideologically when members of both the beverage industry, treatment industry and event the government have rallied around the disease model’s popular truths, despite contradictory research findings.”\(^\text{178}\)

The Government is also another benefactor of popular genetic theory and the disease model, since it reduces the governmental responsibilities and obligations, and their continuous collection of sales tax. Indeed, what a way to explain the bitter reality of social decay: family breakdown, drug epidemic of inner cities and poor environments, by eliminating all socio-environmental factors and conveniently dumping everything on genes.

It appears that the drinker who is trying to solve his or her alcohol consumption problem is oscillating between the addiction centres and the addiction fosterers, who are fleecing the pockets of the victims of alcohol directly, or of the taxpayers indirectly. If these rehabilitation centres were focused on total abstinence as opposed to “controlled drinking” and other band-aid solutions, then this yo-yo effect would eventually end up being eliminated, once and for all, since people would stop drinking and therefore have no need to attend ongoing treatment. Ultimately, all rehab centres would then become otiose and some members of the medical profession would be relegated to the ranks of the unemployed. In addition, the alcohol industry and these centres are tremulous of dealing with consequentialists — the real opponents of a farcically mediocre approach to the problem of alcohol — since corporate alcohol fears that such individuals and lobby groups would seriously be harmful to their insidious schemes and artifices.

The symbiotic relationship between the healthcare industry and alcohol industry, and their interdependency upon one and another is not unique between these two groups. The same exclusive relationship exists between the tobacco industry and healthcare industry. Take the


\(^{178}\) Ibid., p. 176.
example of Imasco, one of the largest corporations in Canada. Imasco owns the Imperial Tobacco, Canada’s largest tobacco company, with 68.4% of market share. Imperial tobacco is involved in tobacco buying, processing, the manufacturing and distribution of a wide range of tobacco products such as Player’s, du Maurier, Matinee cigarettes, and the House of Lords, Reas, White Owl and Old Port cigars. Imasco also owns among many, the two largest retail drugstore chains in Canada: Shoppers Drug Mart and Pharmaprix, each specializing in prescription drugs, healthcare products, quit-smoking products, etc. One is in the business of making people sick, the other is in curing; here the ugly side of capitalism shows its utmost ugliness. Just like the alcohol industry and alcoholism treatment industry, here too, the lifeline of each side depends on the vitality of the other. In fact, interestingly enough, in Canada up to not too long ago, these pharmacies were actually allowed selling cigarettes directly to consumers. In all Shoppers Drug Mart and Pharmaprix stores, cartons of cigarettes were piled up behind the cash registers from floor to the ceiling. In the United States today, the drugstore subsidiaries of American tobacco conglomerations, are still in such a bizarre symbiotic relationship under the same roof. Ironically, they sell cigarettes at the front of the drugstore to healthy people, while making the sick customers walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions.

Indeed, despite the popular endorsement of concept of ‘moderation’, in essence, it is nonsense upon flimsy stilts. It is as fake as a scarecrow on the prairie, as such it would only deceive a bird like cognition. It only deceives those who do not see beyond mere appearance, those who fail to think and analyse ideas objectively, those who are blind to detect hideous and fiendish lies, those who are sightless to notice the ubiquitous reality of alcohol in action, those who easily fooled by alluring projected images of villainous advertisements, those who strangely perceive a toxic substance as “a pleasant social lubricant”, those who cannot see the sordid endings of drinking parties, those who cannot see shattered glass, twisted metal, smashed cars and dead bodies, those who cannot see torn-up homes, displaced lives, tarnished dreams, deteriorated personalities, broken families, pathognomonic birth defects, dysfunctional and antisocial children, ruined careers and lost souls, wrecked lives, those who cannot see the dead drunk alcoholics lying anonymously in filthy gutters and alleys having lived like urban nomads. Those who cannot even smell the connections. Those who fail to recognize that alcohol is a juggernaut menace that looms over an obtuse society. This may seem like a harsh and unpopular thing to say, but surely we cannot say anything different without being dishonest or illogical.

Yet, the tragedy is that the convoluted thinking of the intellectually inebriated minds of both consumers and healthcare agencies is an outcome of subtle and insidious brainwashing, which has rendered the spouting of a reflexive position, defending the ‘moderation’ view as the dominating catchphrase that allows the ubiquitous promotion of the robber, crippler and killer — alcohol. This whole invidious scenario is tantamount to a victim allowing the victimizer to repeatedly attack him, while the victim himself with the approval of authorities is blindly seeking abuse, promoting the assaults and defending the vicious assailant. All for the sake of a malicious passion for a manufactured desire.
Another frequent attempt to justify ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol is through a subtle use of egocentric philosophy of individualism and the protection of personal liberty. For instance, the British lobby group FOREST (Freedom of the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco), operates purely based on this principle. The defence states that consumption of tobacco or alcohol is a personal choice. To say no to drugs, is to put a limit on one’s choice. Even if consumption of a “small dose” of alcohol is proven to be harmful to the drinker, it is the drinker’s prerogative to drink, since drinking ultimately harms none, but the drinker. That is, so long as one’s consumption is ‘modest’ enough not to affect others, and is done either in the privacy of one’s quarters or in “regulated” social settings, the act is justified and concerns nobody. From this course of thought, the demarcation between ‘excessive’ drinking and ‘moderate’ drinking is supposedly set on the balance between the individual’s pleasure and mutual respect for collective well-being. Therefore, ‘moderation’ is indirectly defined in a circular argument as the ‘modest’ amount which does not harm others or the community at large. Therefore, having set the guidelines, one should be able to drink, if one chooses so.

There are serious problems with this line of tautological reasoning, apart from the fact that it does not resolve anything. Firstly, the use of individualism is truly a profound fallacious argument which has been regularly made to defend every nonsensical indefensible practice when the use of reason becomes exiguous. From defence of smoking to one’s rights to commit suicide and abortion, the central issue is invariably “me” or “mine”. The proponents of this view always look at the issues in total isolation, from a purely egotistical point of view of the “me culture”. With respect to alcohol or tobacco, the drinkers and smokers ought to be reminded that drinking or smoking cannot be left as a personal choice and entirely up to the person in question, if the state is going to pay for their medical bills and related court costs. This argument is still valid even if there were no public funding involved, but everything was paid by one’s personal insurance benefits. The reason is because, then everyone of us is obliged to pay high insurance premiums due to the high rates of alcohol-related accidents. The exorbitant amounts of money spent by private sectors for alcohol-involved property loss, health coverage, auto and life insurance settlements is passed down to responsible consumers in form of across-the-board increased premiums, meaning that abstainers pay more for the sake of indulgers. Consequently, this means that taxpayers and insurees certainly must have some say in this matter.

The truth is, for eudaemonists who operate base on pleasure principle, the respect for community rights is never in the picture if it is in direct conflict with one’s base desires. That is because from very beginning one’s reason to imbibe alcohol is set to further self-interest and to gain exclusively personal satisfaction — one does not drink or smoke for his or her country’s sake.

Secondly, the guidelines for reconciliation between individual rights versus community rights is partially valid, but always ignored. That is, the individual’s drinking habit, no matter how “modest” it may seem, is indeed harmful to the global society at large. It is utterly wrong to assume that all the harms are done solely to the drinker, though it is pleasant to hear that, at least, this fact is sometimes admitted.

While individual freedom must be respected, it should also be acknowledged that our “moderate drinker” is not living in the vacuum, but in a world which is tightly interconnected by natural and social laws of cause and effect. We are connected to all those around us and are part of a larger community. As such, our misconduct adversely affects the general public and our problems are shared by the community as a whole. The narrow-minded assumption of individualism completely ignores ripple effects in the concrete world of interconnectivity, not to mention the global damage done from the ultimate outcome of a potent domino effect when things are running towards a noxious direction.

There is not a single wrong action that one does, which does not have a wrong affect on other right things that one does or on that which others do in a proper manner. Man behaves according to what he is convinced of. Wrong beliefs lead to wrong actions, each being a piece in the intricate chain of a cause and effect network. Nothing is above this universal law of interconnectivity. For instance, the one whose behaviour and values are problematic may be a role model for others, such as in the case of parent and child. The problematic behaviour may be adopted by children and other observers with low self-esteem. Teens usually emulate adults who appear to be ‘cool’, ‘hot shot’ and embellished images, which are attached to drinking and smoking. Therefore, one cannot assume that nobody else will not be affected by one’s personal behaviour.

In addition, the drinking habits of one could often have a serious affect on the health of many around one. Virulent traffic, home and industrial accidents are well noted, but there are more less-noted cases. Consider the rising cases of “foetal alcohol syndrome” (FAS), where an innocent child pays a high price for a misdeed of someone else. When a pregnant woman drinks or smokes, her fetus is also forced to do the same thing. Unlike mother, the fetus is extremely defenseless in managing the imposed intake. Consequently, this would adversely affect his/her prenatal and postnatal development. The unborn is practically robbed of his/her potentials by mom’s drinking habit. Foetal alcohol syndrome consists of a wide range of deficiencies, from poor sucking reflex and lower IQs, to severe mental retardation and stillbirth. Unfortunately, there is no treatment for FAS. Here it is evinced, that the assumption that one’s drinking habit does not hurt others, is utterly groundless.

Another example, from social perspective, is that no matter how little a person may drink, it is the per capita consumption, which has an impact throughout a wider spectrum, not a single glass of beer on Saturday nights. It is the overall cost to the global society that matters here, not an individual’s superficial enjoyment. When one drinks, one is supporting an industry which kills. When a piece of agricultural land can be used to grow crops to feed the starving population, it is unjustly being used for vineyard or to grow tobacco because there is more profit involved in such cultivation. When the taxpayer’s money should be used properly on genetic and contagious diseases, most often it is being used on the preventable and predictable complications arising from the consumption of alcohol and tobacco of the self-indulgent individuals. Newspapers are filled on daily basis with reports of some accidents or violent crimes that involve drinking, while innocents pay the price. Furthermore, the production and consumption of alcohol have always

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been keenly associated with many underground crimes, from smuggling to gambling and prostitution.

Individualism cannot justify paltry desires, when the consequences of drinking’s ripple effects are contrary to the welfare and stability of society. When it comes to alcohol, making policies is everyone’s business.

19. Fallacy of Two Wrongs

There are those who acknowledge that the intake of alcohol at any dose is hazardous to one’s health. Nevertheless, by improper analogical deduction, they would still argue that its ‘moderate’ consumption is justified. The argument brought forward states that there are many things whose consumption is detrimental such as: radiated chicken, coffee, drinking tap water, homogenized milk, the polluted city air we breathe, eating too many apples, and so many other similar examples. Therefore, alcohol is just another item on a very long list. The following is typical squawkish diatribe in print, expressed by Jerry Fite, a self-proclaimed alcohol lover:

Why is it that everybody seems to focus on the negative aspects of alcohol? Other products are at least as dangerous, maybe more so.

Walk into almost any store that sells food and you are confronted by an awesome array of items teeming with sugar and salt. Millions of people suffer from obesity and sever illnesses because of these products. But where is the movement to ban sweets and salt because some people misuse them?

This fallacious pseudo-argument, at first, is suffering from an over-inflated exaggeration. How could sugar and alcohol possibly be put in the same category, in terms of degree of damage that they would afflict on the individual and society? Where is the data which supports this assertion? Such an unequal comparison is so absurd and intangible, to say the least. Talk about a severe stretch of imagination, imagination of an incompetent and desperate quack trying to justify the unlovable. Even if there was an element of commonality between these items, so what? The argument put forth is methodologically invalid. Far from being a proper analogical deduction, logicians have identified this line of approach as the ‘fallacy of two wrongs’.

If there is any validity in the above analogical deduction, then one can equally use this strategy to vindicate almost anything improper. The point is, how can all those aforementioned wrongs and all other wrong deeds in the world justify another wrong? Or, one may wonder, if two wrongs can ever make one right! What kind of logic could justify that if you do one, you can do all, particularly, with respect to those things that are seriously perilous and easily avoidable? Common sense dictates that anything which is harmful, ought to be avoided, not the other way around. Fite is guilty of making impaired reverse inference by reasoning backward.

The second problem with this line of reasoning is that, just because all of one’s wrong practices or intakes ‘cannot’ be avoided as one claims, this does not necessarily mean that the one practice or intake, which could be avoided, should be left out unleashed in order to maintain the uniformity of wrong doings consistently. Is there any prize for being invariably in error? Or,


is there any obligation to be faithful to error all the way to the end? That is to say, just because atmospheric pollution, exposure to the sun and ultra violet radiation or stressful work environment ‘cannot’ be avoided, or is difficult to avoid, is it then justified for the drinker to consume additional avoidable harmful products, just for the sake of keeping a perfect record of misdeeds?

Interestingly enough, some people surprisingly tend to allow consumption of deadly substances and avoid relatively trifling items. There are many self-proclaimed “health conscious” individuals who would strictly avoid eating, for instance, cheese, because the fat contained in cheese may increase their cholesterol level, or they would choose bottled water over tap water, since they believe such intakes would adversely affect their health, yet they fail to see anything wrong in drinking or smoking. These people would demonstrate classical disconnected thinking when they engage in such practices. A ‘fallacy of two wrongs’, reverse inferences or incomplete inferences, cannot be expected from a true health conscious and thinking individual who cares so much about his/her health, to the point that cheese, tap water, salt or sugar is avoided. On the contrary, what is expected, is consistency and rationality in outlook, in all areas of thought. This means, by a proper analogical deduction, rather than trying to justify one wrong by common practice of another wrong, one must consistently make sound inferences and move from one right to another right. If salt, sugar, cheese and tap water must be avoided for valid health reasons, obviously the same principle is more applicable to alcohol and tobacco. However, the strong desire for drugs, makes one blind to such a profound contradiction.

20. Inappropriate Appeal to Practice

In a similar fallacious manner, ‘moderate’ consumption of alcohol is defended by an improper appeal to common and popular practice of drinking throughout Man’s history. It is said that cross-cultural studies indicate that mankind has been drinking alcohol for millennia, therefore the practice must be well-founded. Consider the following statement by Chafetz and Chafetz:

The fact that people go on drinking as they have done for thousands of years convinces me that alcohol—or something pleasurable like it—would have had to exist. [Gathered materials] show that alcohol came before civilization, and they helped to shape my opinion that civilization may not have evolved without it. Drinking alcohol is an integral part of human behaviour in which humankind has indulged forever.¹⁸³

So what if people have been drinking for thousands of years. Is this an argument? Most certainly not, once again this is another example of an argument which is methodologically invalid, irrespective of what one strives to prove. Cross-cultural studies also indicate that racism, prostitution, infidelity, pre and extra-marital sex, child molestation, larceny have been practised for much longer than drinking booze. And no doubt they will continue to persist. Therefore, are they all justified? It is so naïve to ascertain that the commonness of a practice makes it all right. Furthermore, on the whole, a proposition in question can never be deduced as conclusion.¹⁸⁴


cannot prove something to be valid by appealing to the practice of the thing whose validity is to be determined in the very first place. If the issue in question is to justify the validity of drinking, then to establish its legitimacy by common practice is a circular argument. It fails the purpose by begging the question.

21. Dubious Assumption

Some critics would wrangle that if alcohol is as detrimental as it is projected in this book, then the impact on drinker’s health must be universally consistent. They often argue that: “I know so and so who drank everyday and lived to be 100 years old, then how can alcohol be maliciously maleficent?”

The above view is another faulty argument operating on an insufficient premise and dubious assumption. Using this approach to justify drinking, is a defence which is not well thought out. The given premise here does not support the conclusion and involves an assumption which is not legitimate. The response to this objection is, the more one drinks, the more it increases the likelihood of medical complications for the consumer, and the more it contributes to depreciation of his or her body. If a man drank and lived for 100 years we cannot assume that he never suffered from alcohol related complications. There are those who have smoked two packs a day and lived a long life; does this, however, mean that smoking is harmless? Perhaps if such fortunate individuals did not drink or smoke, they could have out-lived Noah. Conversely, there are also people who have lived on a healthy calculated diet, exercised regularly and have avoided the intake of anything harmful, yet unfortunately lived a short life. There are exceptions in almost everything.

Furthermore, there might be wet communities where many individuals live a long healthy life. But are those communities also immune from all social ills of alcohol consumption, i.e. impaired driving and other accidents where alcohol is directly involved? Dubious assumptions are an indication of one-dimensional thinking.

22. The Position of Absolute Authority on “Moderation”

There are many individuals who claim to be ‘religious’, ‘spiritual’ and obedient to God, who would adamantly condemn bingeing and drunkenness; yet they claim that ‘moderate’ drinking is justified by non-secular standards. Benjamin Franklin once said that “alcohol is the proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.” But, for a believer, if God has any saying in this matter, would He approve or disapprove ‘moderate’ drinking? What would various scriptures say in this regard?

It is generally assumed that alcohol plays a major role in most religious rituals. The idea that alcohol and most religious doctrines are compatible with each other is widely assumed and propagated. The assumption here is very much true with regard to cults, but not with most religions. On the contrary, in a thorough study of major world religions, there is one apparent compelling theme with respect to alcohol. The majority of them strongly denounce it, the most noteworthy being: Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. The general view is that alcohol impairs judgements and leads to suffering, and therefore it must be completely avoided.
The ‘no-compromise-policy’ of prohibition of alcohol is not an idea unique only to these three religions. The condemnation appears to be unanimous in other major world religions. For example, despite popular supposition, the repulsiveness of the consumption of alcohol is also echoed in numerous verses in the Bible. Some Christian denominations, mainly: the Seventh Day Adventists (Mormons), Methodists, Baptists and Christian Science as well as most Eastern religions, such as: Taoism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism all find the consumption of alcohol an undesirable act not ordained by God.

For the real followers of the theistic religions, it is presupposed that the One who created mankind knows better what is best for mankind. They argue that: Who knows the physical laws of the universe and the relationships between cause and effect better than the One who originated the universe and set those very laws in motion? Who is the One who has the Absolute Authority in all matters? Indeed, what is this Creator’s position with respect to the consumption of alcohol? Consider the Quran, which is the principal revelatory source for Muslims. It states:

> When they ask you [messenger of God] about intoxicants and gambling. Say: In both there is a great harm as well as some benefit for humankind; but the harm outweighs the benefit. [Therefore], ... Do not go near them.

(Quran 2:219, 5:90)

Buddhism, a religion well known for its disciplinary requirements and rejection of harmful worldly desires, cast-offs the desire for alcohol unequivocally:

> From craving arises sorrow and fear. If a man is free from carving, he is free from fear and sorrow.

(Dhammapada, 197, 216)

These belief systems have one common message: total abstinence, not ‘moderation’. In particular, the devoted followers of theistic systems hold that if in reality, there was such a thing as ‘moderation’ in the sense of an absolute concept, perhaps then there would be no need for the all-knowing Creator to emphatically emphasize that one should not even go near it, let alone drinking ‘moderately’. The cited verses are undoubtedly calling our attention to total abstinence, a common advice in all purported divine revelations. This prohibitionistic position against alcohol is not because it is arbitrarily blacklisted, nor is it because there is a jealous Creator up there who does not like to see man enjoying himself. On the contrary, it is all for man’s benefit and happiness. Consumption of alcohol is forbidden for mankind, simply because it is harmful.

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185 Numbers 6:3, Judges 13:4, Isaiah 5:11,22-23, Isaiah 28:7-8, Proverbs 20:1, 23:29-35, Romans 13:13-14, 14:21, Colossians 2:21, 1 Corinthians 10:7, I Peter 5:8-9, Habakkuk 2:15 and Luke 7:34. Raymond J. Jeffreys (1953), asserts that: “There are more than sixty places in the Bible condemning strong drink and those who condone it” (p. 69). However, according G.I. Williamson (1976), there are also numerous other verses in the Bible, which unequivocally approve the consumption of alcohol. The outright inconsistency here is no point of concern for me. Like many other Biblical contradictions, it creates an unresolved dilemma for Christian theologians. It is fair to say that when it comes to total abstinence, the Bible is inconsistent and Christians are divided on this issue. Some Churches officially moralize abstinence, while some others only condemn drunkenness and justify “moderation”. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox and most Lutheran traditions, not only allow ‘moderate’ consumption, but also are quite active participants in the production and sales of wine and liquor. It is hard to imagine a Christian monastery without its vineyard and wine cellars. The Episcopal Church has even developed its own guideline for ‘moderate’ drinking. On the other hand, the Seventh Day Adventists (Mormons), Coptic Orthodox, Methodists, Baptists and Christian Science are dedicated abstentionists. It was primarily due to their efforts that the U.S. government adopted dry policies at the beginning of the 20th century.
for mankind. The believers ask: Is this simple logic a difficult concept to grasp? The Creator of universe knows mankind more than we know ourselves and He wishes the best for us always. Thus, when He decrees that we should not go near alcohol, it is surely for our best interests. The bottom line is that God is with the dry movement.

23. Unfalsifiability

In conclusion, if after reading the above twenty-two arguments against the existence of ‘moderation’, one still thinks that the arguments presented here are not satisfying, and hence there is indeed such a thing as ‘moderation’ in the consumption of alcohol, then there is only one way left to settle this issue, that is, to falsify the claim presented in this book, by establishing and validating the measure of ‘moderation’. For the sceptical moderationists, there is indeed a challenge to do so. In crude English, “why don’t you put your money where your mouth is,” and if it is proved, then one could put one’s mouth where the drink is. Philosophical and scientific debates must not be one-sided, the burden of proof out to be on both sides to establish whatever is being claimed. Moderationists have the task to establish logically the limit that divides ‘moderate’ from ‘immoderate’ consumption and draw a justifiable universal line between use and abuse — good luck.

However, if one still adamantly wishes to drink ‘moderately’ without taking the proposed challenge, this option is, of course, now legally available. Everybody has a right for self-destruction. With respect to one’s health, one can be as foolish and careless as one wishes to be, but it is best not to try to defend things that cannot be defended and better not try to rationalize an inherently irrational act. It is better not promote a false idea, that affects others, in an adverse manner, just to protect one’s base whims and vested interests.

Finally, it is crucial to be always mindful that all those who have “drinking problems” were at one point “light drinkers”, “moderate drinkers”, “average drinkers”, “social drinkers”, “sensible drinkers” and “responsible drinkers”. None of them was born an alcoholic, due to the fact that alcoholism is a gradual process, starting from the consumption of a tiny sip to a colossal number of bottles. As for those who eventually die from alcohol-related complications; it is certainly not the last glass which kills them, but perhaps the very first one which triggered the whole process. This is the time when “moderate drinkers” would finally, fully appreciate the insightful advice of “Do not go near it”. But, then, it is most certainly too late.
“The best way to prevent drug ‘abuse’ is to stop drug use. The use is the ‘abuse’.”

-Anonymous recovering drug addict
Is Total Abstinence Obtainable?

It is the legitimization, legalization, normalization, popularization and glamorization of the consumption of alcohol which have created the current worldwide problem of alcoholism and all its associated ills. What else can be blamed? When analyzing the alcohol advertisements, we can observe that they do not promote alcoholism, public drunkenness, on-the-job drinking, family breakdown, encourage ‘excessive’ drinking or drinking and driving, and etc. They just promote the sale. The end result of the sale is alcoholism and similar depravities.

In all industrial countries of the Northern hemisphere and some of the ‘third world’ nations of the South, alcoholism is a serious problem and its financial and human cost can no longer be ignored. In Canada, for instance, tobacco, alcohol and other illicit drug ‘abuse’ cost Canadian taxpayers $18.45 billion annually in health-care, crime, law enforcement, and lost productivity. Alcohol alone accounts for more than $7.5 billion, while illicit drugs constitute only $1.37 billion. In 1985, British taxpayers paid £1,846 million in lost productivity, absenteeism and health-care cost for alcohol related illness. In 1990, the social costs of alcohol in Finland was estimated to be 17,313.5 million Fmk (1 Fmk was equivalent to about US$0.25 in 1990). In 1986, in the U.S., a total of $50.7 billion was spent on insurance costs, arising out of events where substance use was involved. Figures in other industrial nations are along a similar staggering line. Such horrendously large losses cannot be left unchecked; something needs to be initiated to avert this degenerative madness.

To wipe out this problem it seems only logical to gradually and systematically reverse the process of promotion until total abstinence is attained—a course of action which is not only rational, but is most inexpensive. In words of Tryon Edwards: “preventives of evil are far better than remedies; cheaper and easier in application, and surer in result.” Yet, no one seems to openly support this practical option. Humankind is adamant in pursuing a mutual suicidal co-existence with alcohol and other drugs. Thereby, only a few other alternatives are left available: continued drinking under the banner of the ‘harm reduction’ approach, with restricted access to alcohol. Or, continued drinking with no or little restriction, followed by intense rehabilitation programs involving both medical and psychological treatments, that is to say trying to win a war by treating its casualties.

By and large, there are various theoretical and practical difficulties in the ‘harm reduction’ approach, which makes its implementation unattainable. There are many dilemmas at hand, which cannot be easily resolved. For instance, how can this approach create a meritorious balance between harm and benefit, between fewer deaths and more addicts? How do we choose

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188. Lehto, Juhani.(1995), The economics of alcohol policy, p. 25.

and measure one harm against another? Is there any guaranty that these policies do not improve conditions for one group in the population at the expense of harming another group? On what ground, do we come to establish a justifiable equilibrium between less crime and more ‘less problematic’ drug use? How can we prevent such a flexible and alluring philosophy from becoming “all things to all people”? Some critics admit, that the ‘harm reduction’ model would save taxpayer’s money due to less state control of the drug, but would claim that it cost us much more on healthcare expenditures. Government regulations, programs and control of drug use result in more state intervention into the lives of drug users. Then, what really is the financial gain here? It seems that this policy change would certainly make the health promoters and clinicians happy by securing their jobs at the expense of laying off law enforcement officers. What would be the overall cost of adopting ‘harm reduction’ policies and can we afford it? Is it worth it?

In the impoverished countries of the South, the ‘harm reduction’ proposal is not at all feasible due to its enormous cost. Restrictions such as the licensing system of alcohol sale is another band-aid approach. It basically involves regulating drinking hours, benefiting only the merchants. All countries that experience a high rate of alcohol related problems have some sort of licensing system in effect. Yet, the end result is not at all assuring.

In order to reduce the damage of alcohol consumption, in some states the idea of highering the drinking age from 18 to 19 and then to 21 was mandated. However, later on this attempt showed to be another ineffective band-aid approach, to the extent that the legislation was eventually reversed in many places. Dr. William Manning, the principal of Wayzata High School in Minnesota, who participated in developing a special program to deal with chemical dependency in American high schools made the following comment with regard to changing legal drinking age:

I think that lowering the drinking age has allowed eighteen-year-olds to provide booze for sixteen-year-olds, whereas before, twenty-one-year-olds provided booze for the seventeen and eighteen-year-olds. I think that the eighteen-year-olds were getting it from the twenty-one-year-olds... booze [is] there in the school and available elsewhere as well.190

Besides, highering legal drinking age, gives the wrong idea that drinking is only problematic for the underage. It makes drinking look like an adult activity, thereby, creating an illicit urge for young population, which already has the tendency to seek illicit thrills by imitating grown ups.

Medical treatments and rehabilitation programs suffer from the same predicament. In most western countries; however, millions of dollars are being spent annually to combat alcoholism and other chemical dependencies. Nevertheless, the desired result has not yet been accomplished. Some addicts would eventually recover, but, tragically, most will not. Practically, all drugs treatment programs have a high rate of relapses. Many rehabilitated addicts, soon after treatment will start taking drugs all over again.191 Or, they ought to carry

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through with ongoing aftercare programs. Some addicts get hooked on replacement drugs like methadone in order to give up the stronger drugs. Most countries suffer from a high rate of recidivism.

Rehabilitation in general, is not an auspicious solution, because what is common with most such programs is that they all attempt to treat addiction as an isolated phenomenon, curable by killing the individual’s craving for drugs. What they, however, fail to see is that addiction, be it alcoholism or something else, is only a symptom of a larger problem in society and its control is tightly connected to a number of other factors which are often left unleashed. Any approach, which does not deal with the sources of the folly and leaves the root cause(s) openly naked is bound to be futile. For instance, it is often neglected as to why people turn into drugs, what pushes them in the first place. Harold D. Holder, director and senior scientist at Prevention Research Center in Berkeley, California, points to ineffectiveness of all treatment and recovery programs:

We will never purposefully prevent nor substantially reduce alcohol-involved problems by simply treating heavy, dependent drinkers. Even if we are successful with the recovery of any individual dependent drinker, the system will continue to produce replacements. Treatment and recovery are not long-term prevention strategies for community level problems… alcohol problems will continue to occur, involving drinkers who are not dependent.\(^{192}\)

Secondly, as echoed while most treatment and educational programs are set up to fight addiction, at the same time there are many hidden strong influential factors which keep calling them back, and recruit new people to get involved into the drug culture. There is considerable social pressure to imbibe. People are literally conditioned to look into drugs, to solve every encountered problem. The ubiquitous ads further deceitfully promise them: emotional security, ego-gratification, sense of power, reassurance of worth, focus, achievements, excellence, exceptionality, immortality, passion, sexual fulfillment and transformation to love objects.\(^{193}\)

These contributing factors may perhaps be why most of rehabilitation programs are not as effective as they should be, and why there are high rates of relapses. For example, based on the social learning theory, a child can grow up thinking consumption of alcohol and smoking are harmless, because he or she continuously observes numerous drinking and smoking scenes during prime-time programs, not to mention the direct impact of enticing ads, television commercials and sponsorships. Bottles and glasses of various liquors are a permanent fixture of most scenes in popular television series like Dallas, Dynasty and daytime soaps, where every conversation ought to take place while characters are drinking. These senses generate the idea that we live in a natural ‘wet’ environment, where drinking is an essential part of everyday life, to the extent that to abstain from alcohol appears like a major character flaw. Indeed, while rehabilitation programs are set to assist drug addicts by governments, millions of dollars are being spent annually by corporations on alcohol and tobacco advertisements, particularly aiming at youths.\(^{194}\) In 1984,


in the United States alone, $232 million was spent on advertising for distilled spirits. $232 million was spent not to dispose off the surplus revenue, but simply because it surely pays off to advertise; a 10-second TV commercial effectively serves its purpose. Therefore, in this pent up irresponsible atmosphere of licentious laxity, socio-cultural pressure and bombardment of ads, how could it be possible to fight alcoholism and promote abstinence when drinking is so overtly reinforced? How can abstinence be considered, when alcohol is not only so easily available, but is also so insidiously promoted?

So it is that a successful rehabilitation program for alcoholics is not the one which kills the alcohol craving by the use of electric shocks or antiabuse prescriptions, but the one which creates a healthy society, the one which recognizes the interconnectivity of all factors and acts accordingly, the one which creates a wholesome cognitive understanding to ignore external cues for drinking and willingly choosing abstinence.

We have seen that ‘moderate’ drinking, as a means of vindication of the consumption of alcohol, if not the only one, is certainly the most frequent defence presented for drinking. No other argument has ever been put forward, ubiquitously, to defend drinking. The first part of this book has debunked supposedly the best argumentation for alcohol use. Subsequently, if ‘moderation’ is out-ruled, then abstinence deserves very serious consideration, particularly, when alternatives to abstinence are not very successful. In fact, abstinence happens to be like breast feeding — the most beneficial method and free of charge.

Abstentionism, however, is often mistakenly associated with the Prohibition experience. During the last century, prohibition was tried several times in a number of countries and each trial was unsuccessful. In some states, upon collapse of the dry system, there was rather a quick move from prohibition to legalization, privatization and finally to home delivery and online shopping for all kinds of alcoholic beverages. It is, therefore, erroneously concluded that abstentionism is not a viable solution and the consumption of alcohol can never be completely wiped out. However, those who take this position provide no explanation on how is it that prohibition and abstentionism is being comfortably practiced with regard to all opiate drugs, but when it comes to alcohol, both public and legislature seem to have problem with its practice? Yet, alcohol is by far the most menacing drug, by virtue of both its destructive potency and mass consumption.

In the remaining part of this book, at first, it shall be analyzed why prohibition failed in the past century. Secondly, it will be argued that abstinence is practical and in fact the only optimal solution, if and only if it is properly executed and if and only if, a fertile ground for its growth is provided. Just as grass cannot be grown in harsh barren deserts, abstinence too cannot be fostered in an atmosphere devoid of the preconditions conducive for the blossoming of the purity of thought, values, compassion and concern for the elements that comprise humanity and the environs.

Strasburger, Victor C. (1995), Adolescents and the Media, Ch. 4.

**Abstinence a Pragmatic Approach: Why did Prohibition Fail?**

The opponents of the ‘abstinence model’ are quick in rejecting this approach due to the failure of prohibitionary attempts, not realizing that there are fundamental differences between abstention and prohibition. The former is a volunteered act, out of personal conviction, while the latter is enforced by law. For example, one can abstain from voting out of one’s volition. One could vote, but chooses not to. It is completely a different matter, if one is prohibited from voting, while one strongly wishes to vote.

While prohibition can be assigned, abstention cannot be. As a result, even though prohibition has the potential to benefit the country where it is enforced by its legislators, abstention will remain totally dependent upon the will of citizens. Enforced abstention, on the other hand, by definition is a contradiction in term. And by definition it can not be abstention, if it is not willingful. With respect to the elimination of alcohol generated depravities, that which has been tried in the past and realized to be a failure, is prohibition, not abstention. The oversight and failure of ill-posed governmental policies, do not in any way account for rejection of the voluntary avoidance of alcohol intake.

Abstentionists recognize that the consumption of alcohol is detrimental to the individual and society as a whole. They, further, realize that prevention is proven to be better than cure, and in this case preventative measure calls for total abstinance. For them, the inescapable code of right or wrong is derived from this fact. Thus, alcohol should not be consumed. There are no deficiencies in this simple logic. There can be no ‘but’ here. Such rules of conduct are not arbitrary, but are, rather, wholly objective. Total abstinance, or, in essence, the abolition of alcohol from the face of society has no substantiative problem in its justification and implementation; on the contrary, its acceptance and its willingful practice firmly revolves around the orbit of common sense and necessity. The objective only has to be implemented properly. What is absolutely required prior to, simultaneously with, and continuously after its implementation, is a fertile ground, which could enable society to abstain favourably. The underlying reason for the failure of most prohibition tryouts in the past was due to the lack of a fertile ground which led to their socio-political abortion.

Take the American experience of 1914-1933, known as the zenith of ‘Temperance’ movement in the United States’ history. There are a number of reasons attributed to the failure of this project. Each factor on its own can hurt the formation of an alcohol-free society. All of them combined together, made the Eighteenth Amendment utterly useless. In fact, one could predict the undesirable consequence by just looking at the proposed blueprint. When a plan is theoretically flawed, its set up cannot be practical and functional. Likewise, the American encounter, although was sincere in its objectives, unfortunately, was not executed in quite the right way, for the following reasons.

Firstly, alcohol was, still is and probably will always be deeply entrenched into the American culture. Alcohol is a prime necessity in many American social and business activities. For many of them the idea of living without alcohol is inconceivable. In fact, in certain parts of the U.S. you are considered as a “deviant” by local norms if you abstain from drinking.

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Prohibitionists should not have ignored that drinking is an important part of the American culture; as such, more time and effort is required to make a necessary reformation of such a huge nature. Take the example of bullfighting in Spanish and some Latin American cultures. Animal rights activists from these regions, though are very critical of barbaric treatment of bulls, are of the opinion that due to the popularity and the long tradition of this brutal ‘sport’ in Spanish culture, it is not possible to outlaw bullfighting by sheer legislation. Despite, a noticeable environmental awakening in Spain during the last couple of decades, Spanish are still not ready to accept this monumental change. With the absence of a fertile ground, a hasty push to abolish bullfighting in Spain is equivalent to calling for riots and asking for serious troubles from bullfighting hooligans.

Furthermore, if it is decided to remove a harmful habit from society, there ought to be provided a harmless substitute for its replacement. This necessary provision was overlooked back in 1920s, when there was a strong rooted cultural and personal desire to drink. Therefore, under such circumstances, prohibition of alcohol only replaced licensed outlets with clandestine parlours.

Secondly, added to the list of downsides, the prohibition law was enforced overnight, while no attempt was made to desensitize the drinking habit. Elimination or decrease in undesirable behaviour with respect to a personal or social defect is a gradual process. More importantly, prohibition came into effect prior to giving the necessary proper mass education. Thus, its rational objectives were not yet comprehended from within by most citizens. Just as before, and even now, the majority of the general public are still ignorant of the seriousness of the short term and long term harmful effects of alcohol. One underlying reason behind drug use of any kind is ignorance and the lack of adequate awareness of cause and effect relationships in both social and natural realms. This in turn, leads to the destruction of the individual and community. To create a healthy society, the state ought not to implement drug free policies by swinging batons, but by effective dissemination and by simultaneous education of masses on the inevitable consequential harm caused by drug use. Compulsion cannot be used to deprogram or counter-condition a deeply precipitated social defect. Success of a reform program entirely depends on its logical teachings and the manner which it is implemented, not on a swift forceful execution.

Thirdly, there were many discriminatory loopholes in the legislation and there was a lack of uniformity across the country in the envisioned system. For example, even after the law came into effect, people could still openly consume whatever alcohol they had been able to stock up. However, only the rich Americans were able to store a large supply of liquors prior to enforcement date. After prohibition came into effect, once again, only rich could afford drinking in private clubs and speakeasies. This did create a noticeable discrepancy in how the poor and the rich were treated. It boiled down to a preferential treatment deeply resented by the poor during the recession of twenties.

Intoxicating beverage was defined as anything, which contains more than 0.5 percent alcohol. This was a major reduction from, for instance, 50% Whisky. However, permissibility of 0.5 alcoholic beverages in society does not tantamount to prohibition. In the light of the fact, that brewers were allowed to continue manufacturing beer as long as they would reduced its alcohol content to the required 0.5 percent. This entailed that you just have to drink more to obtain the desired effect.
The sacramental wines for religious rituals and medicinal alcohol were exempt by the law and easily accessible by certain groups, the demand for which increased drastically. These exemptions channeled alcohol into the black market, by which made alcohol accessible and affordable only to rich customers. The consumers in the black market were surprisingly immune to prosecution, because the prohibition law applied only to the bootleggers; there were no charges against drinking, purchasing or possession of liquor by the individual citizen. At the beginning, some states only prohibited hard liquors, but allowed manufacturing of beer and wine. Some others allowed people to produce their own beverage for their own personal use. Accessible supply is the mother of all opportunities. With such a rampant flood in the availability of alcohol through multifarious loopholes, where, indeed, was the Prohibition! It is exactly because of such loopholes, that many critics believe: “Prohibition did not fail; it was just never tried.” Some even ridiculed the system by saying: “Prohibition is better than no liquor at all”. These criticisms are indeed justified when we look at the actual wordings of the Eighteenth Amendment. Once ratified by all states, it only outlawed “manufacturing, sale and transportation of alcohol”, not possession, consumption and homemade production. The latter three are the most fundamental and crucial ingredients in the recipe for creation of an alcohol-free society. Surprizingly, all three were left out permissible. It is recorded that Al Capone, the notorious gangster of this era had, complained that: “When I sell liquor, it is bootlegging. When my patrons serve it on Lakeshore Drive, it is hospitality.”

Fourthly, prohibition was urged only by the prohibitionists. Those who were not involved with the temperance movement were neither in favor of it, nor had any sympathy for the new law. Even within the supportive political parties, government officials and the police force there was no commitment. Historian Norman Clark, points that “The sheriffs ... were forced, as it were, to develop delicate manoeuvers for acting dry while protecting the wet”. Some of the law enforcement agents were in fact working for the bootleggers, making far more than their government salary through ongoing bribery. The corrupt agents would rather be on bootleggers’ payroll than engaging in gun battles against them. Some other agents were just unwilling to enforce the law.

Basically, the United States established prohibition by law, but as one could expect, it was impotent to enforce abstinence by heart and by force. Charles Ellwood, a sociologist of the era, noted this profound deficiency. He said:

This was an idealistic law which required high social ideals on the part of our people for its enforcement and observance. It must be remembered that law is nothing but the habits and convictions of a majority of the people, and that in a democracy laws can be enforced only in proportion as they are generally observed. The difficulty of enforcing the prohibition law in the United States was chiefly connected with the habits of a large element of the American people who did not change their attitude toward drink. Believing that it was

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right for them to drink personally, they made it practically impossible to enforce prohibition laws, whether state or national.\textsuperscript{200} As Ellwood illustrated, in essence, prohibition was an imposition by external decree. There is always backlash against implementation of governmental policies, if it is forcefully executed, in particular, if the public is not better prepared for its adaptation. Given these circumstances, an act of defiance is inevitable.

Conflict and disintegration arise when goals and priorities are not aligned. A backlash becomes more imminent, if the society is sharply polarized by those who support an idea and those who strongly wish its dissolution for their vested interest. In such situation, the opponents are ready to take advantage of existing weakness and any future shortcomings. Thereupon, the antagonists will eventually get the upper-hand. There are many examples of this scenario, for instance, consider the case of having photo radar in Ontario highways. In the early nineties, the NDP government of Ontario introduced a new legislation and passed a bill to implement photo radar as additional measure to reduce highway accidents. The idea was backed up by thoroughly researched studies and had the support of the Ontario Provincial Police (highway patrol), insurance companies and many law abiding citizens who valued highway safety. However, this legislation was not without oppositions and formidable resisting lobby groups. Within a couple of years, in the next provincial election the photo radar was pushed by the oppositions to be an election issue. After election, the new PC government scrapped the law as soon as it took over the office. Their promise to repeal, and their decision to keep this particular promise among all others was purely for political expediency not of any care or necessity. Soon after, the issue of photo radar was graded with failing marks in the history books.

It appears extremely puzzling, as to why a sensible policy which contributed so much to highway safety was discarded with such dramatic thoroughness, particularly after spending millions of dollars for its evaluation and instillation? The answer is perhaps because it is somewhat in human nature to react against forceful compliance, even if the compliance is for one’s benefit. The resistance may be more spontaneous to the ignorant. In this case, not everyone came to see the logic of driving according to the speed guideline. Some citizens were unhappy because they were heavily fined for violating the speed limit. And as usual, there are those such as reckless drivers and trucking companies whose vested interests require them to push to abolish such a law.

Similarly, the American prohibition experience falls into an identical category. Anti-prohibitionist groups, who were without any reservation adversaries to prohibition, tactfully mobilized their forces and turned the public opinion and the political table against the newly passed Amendment. The Association Against the Prohibition was formed. Its objectives were to sabotage the dry movement and make prohibition inoperative by the use of propaganda, lobbing and political pressure. In time, drinking became romanticized on Hollywood productions. Deets Pickett in his analysis of the situation states:

\begin{quote}
Its sudden downfall was due to a shift in political power, to the coming into place and influence of new groups and new individuals, to the consolidation of this newly-established might in population centers, and the use of all of the
\end{quote}

sentiment-making agencies which were manipulated from those centers with the purpose of discrediting and sabotaging the law. Chain journalism, motion pictures, the theater, most of the magazines, all of the means of mass propaganda, poured upon the law, a furious attack. With these attacks were synchronized many particularly obnoxious manifestations of criminality, made possible both by incidental and organized support of law violation.\textsuperscript{201}

Here, it can be seen that the collective will of the people exerts a pressure against any imposed law, which is not internally grasped with acceptance. The end result turns to be, imposition of a law which the majority of people are quite determine to disobey openly. Historian, Alice Fleming reports that prior to prohibition there were approximately 15,000 licensed bars in New York, however, after prohibition there were 32,000 speakeasies.\textsuperscript{202}

Fifthly, in the 1920s and other past trials, not only the strong desire for consumption of alcohol was underestimated, but, also, no effort was made to minimize human greed. Greed and lack of concern for others are the big part of drug business; it plays a major role in the genesis of this malignancy. Once there is a lucrative market and a huge profit involved, it is very tempting for criminals to make a fast bundle, particularly when lawlessness, hypocrisy, bribery and corruption are the norms in society. As soon as the Volstead Act was passed, bootleggers, rumrunners, speakeasy operators, gangsters, graft-seeking politicians, corrupt judges and prosecutors, bribe-taking cops and coastguards discovered a new source of easy money, too good to be turned down.

In the past, the greed was not necessarily associated with petty crime or organized crime. It was also present at international level. The British government, for instance, was one among many, which recognized the profitability of smuggling and ignored the Eighteenth Amendment and the international law. From 1919 to 1923, Britain was shipping liquor to the United States via Bahamas.\textsuperscript{203} When the U.S. government realized that it could not keep up with the high cost of enforcement efforts and considered the huge revenue generated in selling alcohol, plus the revenue generated by federal taxes on its sales, it then decided to legalize alcohol and take over its control from production to consumption. Why facilitate others to make bundles, when you can make that yourself?

Sixthly, in order to avoid any leakage, prohibition ought to have been a Global Act and required international compliance, similar to the proposed global Environmental Protection Act. Just like environmental protection, prohibition as a feasible law, cannot be set up, if it is only enforced locally. For example, in the early 20th century in the United States, not all of American states were in favor of prohibition. There was no harmonization or cooperation between the federal government and local governments. At the beginning, while the liquor store and saloons could not be found in dry states, you only had to drive for some miles to resolve the problem. There were no difficulties for interstate travelers to bring liquors back with them. Eventually by 1919, all states ratified the Eighteenth Amendment with the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{201} Pickett, Deets. (1952), \textit{Then and Now: The Truth about Prohibition and Repeal}, p. 40.
\bibitem{202} Fleming, Alice. (1975), \textit{Alcohol: The Delightful Poison}, p. 83.
\end{thebibliography}
exception of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Nevertheless, even if all states were in favor of prohibition, and by ratification and proper implementation of the Eighteenth Amendment the entire country invariably had gone dry, this was still useless, since alcohol started to pour in from neighboring Canada, Mexico, West Indies and Europe.\footnote{Cashman, Sean D. (1981), \textit{Prohibition: The Lie of the Land}, Ch. 2.}

Seventhly, the elimination of consumption of alcohol, like most other social ills, is an interconnective multidimensional issue. Therefore, it is utterly ridiculous to attempt to fight a problem in a linear manner, while there are hundreds of other factors which are simultaneously at work to nourish and promote it. One aspect of interconnectivity is with respect to educational programs. Mass education on harmfulness of alcohol all by itself, is narrowly designed. It is doomed, if it is not accompanied with the creation of the fertile ground. Any effective educational campaign must be accompanied with reduction in the availability of alcohol and reduction in the socio-environmental factors which lead to alcohol use. For example, in American universities, a freshman goes through numerous orientation programmes on a variety of problems associated with alcohol consumption. Universities at the same time have adopted tougher policies to combat bingeing and ‘excessive’ drinking. Nevertheless, universities have long been among the America’s most alcohol-drenched institutions due to the existing enriching drink tradition in university campuses. The American drinking culture and direct advertising strategies make students believe that they cannot have a fulfilling college experience without drinking so frequently. Social life on and off campus is synonymous with alcohol-lubricated gatherings, where machoism is measured by the number of drinks consumed. To achieve sobriety on campuses as well as anywhere else, the pressure to drink ought to be replaced with a healthy pressure against drinking, not vice versa.

Educational programs set for blue-collar workers, another target group, underscores the larger issue behind drinking. Their aim is like trying to eliminate theft from the face of society by just teaching the thief that stealing is an appalling act, while he is left to starve. Just as the problem of prostitution cannot be removed as long as there exist pornography, shamelessness, unaccountability, undisciplined lust, unjust economic imbalance, so it is that the consumption of alcohol also cannot be removed when there are: idiocy, pleasure seeking motivations, social alienation, hopelessness, emptiness, etc. In order to create a drug free society, or the proper implementation of the so-called prohibition law, society ought to be reformed in every aspect: socially, politically, economically, etc. Abstinence cannot be promoted in vacuum. The prerequisite is a balanced society. The interconnectivity of all interrelated factors must be well recognized and acted upon. To eliminate drugs from society, is to create a healthy just society, where the need for alcohol would vanish. As history attests, any other approach to abstinence is doomed to failure.

Eighthly, the dominated dry advocates of the Christian background, the crusaders of prohibition movement, had a hidden agenda: they used abstinence to support their overarching ideological cause. The American historian, Richard Hofstadter, connects the Temperance movement to “rural evangelism” and its “drive for morality against the pleasure and amenities
of city life.” These fundamentalist Christian prohibitionists, in their efforts to convince the secularist American public the benefits of abstinence, adopted a campaign strategy, which included gross exaggeration and false promises. For instance, they promised that prohibition would eliminate poverty and crime; put an end to wife abuse, and bring appropriate codes of social behaviour. They erroneously narrowed down the Americans’ choice to: either “prohibition and prosperity”, or “drink and poverty”. However, years passed by and there was still no improvement on the economic scene; poverty and wife abuse persisted. Consequently, many of those who were initially in favour of alcohol-free society, for they wished to get rid of poverty and domestic violence, felt they had been cheated. The vision of a dry utopia turned out to be an unreachable mirage. Consequently, this faulty campaign backfired and resulted in loss of support for prohibition.

In short, it can be argued that the reason for the failure of “Prohibition law” was because abstinence was not a willingful choice. The prohibition law was not the product of conviction, but imposition. Most people did not adhere to the principle of prohibition. Social policies which have little public support can easily be circumvented. In previous attempts, in each case, the society was not prepared for such a drastic reformation. Man-made obstacles in the creation of alcohol-free society were left untouched. And above all, the webbed interconnectivity of cause and effect relationships in terms of socio-economic reformation were totally disregarded. All these factors contributed to repeal. In fact, with such major flaws in the system, the prohibitionists were so naive to think, that this plan is going to work in the long run. In short, it can be argued that the reason for the failure of “Prohibition law” was because abstinence was not a willingful choice. The prohibition law was not the product of conviction, but imposition. Most people did not adhere to the principle of prohibition. Social policies which have little public support can easily be circumvented. In previous attempts, in each case, the society was not prepared for such a drastic reformation. Man-made obstacles in the creation of alcohol-free society were left untouched. And above all, the webbed interconnectivity of cause and effect relationships in terms of socio-economic reformation were totally disregarded. All these factors contributed to repeal. In fact, with such major flaws in the system, the prohibitionists were so naive to think, that this plan is going to work in the long run.

Collective abstinence can only be achieved when people are truly and informedly committed to the principle of ‘No Alcohol’, not out of fear of punishment. This can be achieved when the higher meaning and purpose of life is fully grasped by all citizens. In fact, some rehabilitation programs hint that drug users ought to completely change their habitual way of thinking and living. This means a new start, a new life and a new outlook to life and the purpose of living in the overall scheme of things. There is an emphasis on being cognizant of the Creator and prayer. Some recovering programs openly teach rigorous honesty, obedience to God’s will and humility. Some experts believe what is needed here is a comprehensive unified social system, which eliminates the need for alcohol consumption. This is that which can be labeled as the optimal solution to combat the drug problem.

In any social analysis, a viable solution is more needed than just a mere identification of the problem. Thereby, in the course of the research conducted, it was intended to discover whether there is any integrated system already in existence, which has, as its precept, the promulgation of absolute abstinence, a system which has been put to trail and fortuitously passed it. Psychiatrist, Davinder Mohan notes that:

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206. With all fairness, Prohibition experience was not a total disaster, it had some concurrent and short-term benefits, such as: a drop in alcohol consumption, lower deaths from cirrhosis of the liver, lower alcohol related hospital admission, lower complains of domestic violence, lower arrests for public drunkenness, Kerr, Austin K. (1999), “American Dream”.

207. Alcoholic Anonymous World Services, (1953), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. 
The main religions and civilizations of Asia never accepted alcoholic beverages in their rituals. Hence, unlike Europe, it never became a part of individuals’ daily existence. The Chinese (2100-1600 B.C.), like the Indians (2000 B.C.) and the Greeks, knew the art of fermentation to produce alcoholic beverages from plant products. Both ancient Asian civilizations noted its adverse consequences fairly early, and developed different normative behaviour.

As mentioned earlier, religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam as well as Taoism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and some Christian denominations including: the Seventh Day Adventists (Mormons), Methodists, Baptists and Christian Science all follow the abstinence model. The distinction that there are two versions of alcohol-free set-up: imposed and volunteered has been made. The American experience of 1920s is an example of imposed prohibition, and naturally was not favoured, while in the above religions it is volunteered abstinence, and, therefore, successfully endorsed. Their position on drugs is adherence to the principle of ‘prepare and prevent’ as opposed to ‘regret and repair’.

Let’s discuss the basic teachings of three major world religions, which are well known to be intolerant of alcohol use. In each of the following religions, all intoxicants are viewed as pernicious and must be scrupulously avoided. There exist no drinking customs, because abstinence is the rule. Unlike some cultures where alcohol is viewed as inherently gleeful and a source of sociability and conviviality, by contrast, in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam drinking is an indication of disgust and repugnancy. Alcohol is unequivocally considered as a sign of misery. To allow its consumption in society, would have a fatal impact on the personality and values of citizens.

The reason for discussing the position of the fore-mentioned religions with respect to the consumption of alcohol is not at all to advocate their theology. The intention is to establish that, contrary to the claim made by supporters of wet culture, the idea of an abstentious society is not a far-fetched fantasy. Collective abstinence has been, and still is being practiced in numerous places. Once this assertion is demonstrated, the put-forth evidence has falsified the ubiquitous proclamation made by champions of ‘harm reduction’ model. It will prove that collective abstinence is not an outdated legacy from failed temperance movements.

Karl Popper, a philosopher of science, has proposed that in inductive reasoning, no number of observations can ever allow us logically to derive the universal conclusion that, for instance, in this case, because ‘prohibition’ was tried numerous times and failed, that therefore, the idea is inherently doomed. However, one single successful case of collective abstinence would sufficiently allow us to conclude with certainty that collective abstinence is not fallible by nature and not all ‘prohibition’ quests are futile. Furthermore, the following presentation is also intended to examine the abstinence model and its practicality under non-secular philosophies in contemporary world. Can we gain from their beneficial offerings? If so, we should value this opportunity and give credit where it is due. For instance, it would worth to study, not only the psychological and physiological benefit in individuals of these populations known to strictly adhere to the abstinence model, but also the overall social benefits of such

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prohibitions. In this respect, what these religions have to offer is well known to many of their own scholars and to those who are not even favorable towards theism and theology. Undoubtedly, the benefit of their doctrine, as a preventative remedy, deserves to be more thoroughly studied by all those who have an interest on the issue of alcohol related problems and other specialists in the field of addiction, just as in the same vein, cancer studies have been conducted on the Seventh Day Adventists and the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) of southern California and Utah. With respect to these groups, it has now been ascertained, that the reason for their low rate of cancer is due to their religious belief. That is because of the fact, that they neither smoke nor drink. This lesson has been highly publicized for the rest of American population. In a like manner, we can learn a lot from Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims.

**Hinduism**

The prohibition of alcohol and other mind boggling drugs in Hinduism is based on deterring man from gaining ‘spiritual dimension’. And since in Hinduism the goal of life is to attain ‘spirituality’, Hindus are strictly prohibited to take drugs. Narayana Pillai, a Hindu scholar points out that:

> Spiritual progress is the goal of human life. Anything that hinders it, puts obstacles to it, that weans man away from it, has to be avoided, shunned, rejected. There can be no compromise on this. Drinks and other intoxicants are dangerous temptations and obstacles to this spiritual path, which is the real path of man...

The basic Hindu position is clear: alcohol and ‘spirituality’ are mutually exclusive. A traveller on the path towards *Moksha* (ultimate spiritual liberation) must avoid anything which causes distraction and deviation. This rule of action equally applies to priests and laity. Mahatma Gandhi was one of the strong proponents of this decree. Today particularly Hindus of the Brahmin Caste strongly adhere to this view. The Brahman reformer Manu generally believed that:

> The Brahman who drinks intoxicants will be born again as an insect, an unclean bird feeding on filth or some destructive beast.

Alcohol is viewed as beverage of demons and other evil creatures. The intoxicated person should be cut off from all contact with society. In *The Laws of Manu* states:

> There are four sins which are mortal: killing a Brahman; drinking intoxicating beverages; stealing gold of a Brahman; improper conduct with the wife of one’s religious teacher... for drinking intoxicating beverages, a figure of a wine cup should be branded on the transgressor.

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211. Macfie, Jim. (1922), *The Laws of Manu*, p. 120.

212. Ibid., p. 88.
The gradual westernization of Indian culture affected the traditional Indian values, where the adoption of the drinking habit is only one among many imported conducts.

**Buddhism**

Buddhism is a religion of discipline. Buddhists do not operate by hedonistic motivations, where pleasure seeking becomes the prime goal of one’s life. In fact, anyone who knows a little bit about Buddhism and alcohol is easily able to extrapolate that alcohol and Buddhism are incompatible with each other. Buddhism is synonymous with man’s mastery over his worldly desire (Samsara). Human desire is viewed as stumbling block for his ‘spiritual growth’. There is tremendous emphasis in this religion against submitting to desire, whether it is with regard to food, drink or sexual intimacy, etc.

- Sorrow arises from desire, fear arises from desire. For someone free from desire, there is no sorrow; how could there be grief?
- One who aspires to the ineffable, who is pervaded with consciousness, and whose mind is unattached to desires, is called one who swims against the stream.²¹³

Faithful follower is the one who conquers desire in order to reach the ultimate inner peace and freedom (Nirvana). Therefore, if one must restrain his essential desires, then there can be no room for one to develop and fulfill any acquired desire.

Furthermore, Buddhism emphasizes greatly the importance of gentleness and peacefulness in one’s attitude and manners, since the consumption of alcohol leads to violence, it is therefore regarded as a hindrance to this goal and must be avoided.²¹⁴

Devout Buddhists are expected to hold fast to five fundamental principles: refraining from taking life, stealing, adultery, uttering falsehoods and consumption of intoxicating drinks. The fact that curbing oneself from drugs is one of the five fundamental precepts is in itself an indication that abstinence is a central issue in Buddhism.

Buddhism is a religion intolerant of alcohol, the consumption of any drug is a major evil, where intoxicants are comparable to snake venom. According to Buddhists, the world is permeated with suffering (Dukkha). Suffering is caused by man’s craving (Tanha) for things of this world. The cessation of suffering is possible by the removal of craving. Buddhists strive relentlessly to detach themselves from attachment to all that distracts one from the ‘noble path’, be they material goods, mental affection or alcohol. It is only then which Nirvana becomes possible. Taking drugs tends to cloud the mind and conflicts with the practice of self-awareness.

Buddha, in a number of discourses, for instance, in the *Advice to Sigala*, is reported to have clearly mentioned that the consumption of drugs is a way by which it brings ruin to man. To

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take drugs means to take false refuge and attain attachment which, unwittingly, but inevitably, leads to suffering.\textsuperscript{215}

In addition, Buddhists believe in the mutual interactive relationship between mind and body and recognize that a sound mind needs a sound body free from chemical defilement. For all of these mentioned reasons, in Buddhism, abstention is highly extolled and considered a virtue.\textsuperscript{216} This virtue is expected to develop in all believers, monks and layman alike.

When it comes to the consumption of alcohol, both Buddhism and Hinduism have a great deal of contributions to make, yet this area is unfortunately under-researched.

**Islam**

Unlike Eastern religions, Islam\textsuperscript{217} is totally incompatible with mysticism. Its rules are based on the application of common-sense and logic.\textsuperscript{218} For instance, in Islam one is not expected to abandon the world for spiritual gain. There are no emphasis on asceticism, where the goal of life is giving up the world to obtain \textit{Moksha}. Muslims believe that the purpose of life is to recognize that there is only one Deity worthy of worship. They are of a view that mankind is expected to worship his Creator in a balanced and pragmatic fashion. There is an emphasis on rationality,\textsuperscript{219} efficiency, optimality, fulfilling duty and work, all of which require a sound mind and sobriety. Other distinct differences can be seen in the inseparability of profane and mundane, or sacred and secular, where an individual or community can have selective double standards. Values and behaviour ought to be consistent throughout life. Islam is a complete and cohesive unified system, which claims to have optimal social, political, educational, legal and economic systems. As the result of its comprehensiveness, many western sociologists and historians believe that in comparison to other religions, Islam by far has a better track record of dealing with the problem of alcoholism, since it has not only managed to abolish alcoholism successfully, but in a systematic and effective manner all other social ills such as slavery, nationalism, racism, poverty, prostitution, promiscuity, etc. wherever it has been properly practiced.

In Islam when something is recognized to be harmful, then the community is required to block all the avenues which lead to it. Members are not permitted to take steps which lead to lewdness. Preventative measure is the Islamic approach in avoiding any vice. There is the famous saying of Mohammed that: “Allah did not create an illness for which there is no prevention.”\textsuperscript{220} As a matter of fact, in Islam, there is no such a thing as a ‘religiously-motivated-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{215}Groves, P. (1994), “Buddhism and Addiction”.
\item \textsuperscript{217}Islam literally means a voluntary peaceful submission to the Originator of the Universe.
\item \textsuperscript{218}See the Quran, verses: 2:44, 3:190-191, 4:82, 18:5, 31:15.
\item \textsuperscript{219}See the Quran, verses: 8:22, 16:90, 17:36, 67:10.
\end{itemize}
“Moderation” in the Consumption of Alcohol: Nonsense upon Flimsy Stilts

abstinence’. One takes the truth for the sake of the truth, and rationally submits to it and acts upon it accordingly. Muslims also believe, that nothing in this universe is evil in and of itself. It only becomes harmful by its misapplication or misappropriation. Therefore, alcohol is not considered inherently evil, since it certainly has some beneficial applications, though not drinking.

As elaborated, for Westerners, the term ‘prohibition’ always conjures up images of forceful imposition, the rigid enforcement of curfew laws, authoritarianism, coercion, domination, watchful ‘big brothers’ and so on. However, in the Islamic sense, alcohol is voluntarily boycotted out of understanding. For Muslims, the code of conduct which is said to be prohibited falls under the umbrella of what is referred to as Haram. Haram means to stay away from that which is harmful. The root meaning of the word is ‘restricted’. One is advised and expected to stay away from that which is restricted, and not to put things in wrong places; against the natural order. Staying away or willingful abstinence is out of free choice and necessity, not of coercion. In fact, the Quran clearly states that there is no compulsion involved, for the right is distinct from error. The Quran advises man “not to go near anything which is harmful.” Islam with its holistic approach, seeks to educate the individual and society on the harmful effect of drugs in conjunction with the totality of reality. Man is not viewed apart from the creation, but a part of creation. Therefore, the concept of individualism where one is free to engage in any activities, regardless of its personal and social consequences is rejected. A Muslim sees his or her existence as having a divine goal and purpose; thus, one does not bring harm to oneself and one’s community. The parameter of one’s freedom is measured by its consequences. The Quranic approach instills that only such an approach can create a required mental frame to reject all that which is detrimental to human health and well-being.

As seen in argument twenty-two, the book which Muslims claim as being a divine revelation, categorically ‘prohibits’ alcohol for human consumption. The term used in the Quran is khamr, which means to veil, cover or conceal a thing, and alcoholic beverage is called khamr, because it veils the intellect. Unlike the Bible, the Quran is not a malleable book and no opposing verses have ever been found in there to suit conflicting views. In addition, the Quranic verses which denounce alcohol are very clear and cannot be interpreted in any dubious manner.

When they ask you [messenger of God] about intoxicants and gambling. Say: In both there is a great harm as well as some benefit for humankind; but the harm outweighs the benefit.... [Therefore], Do not go near them.

(Quran 2:219, 5:90)

Do not let your very own hands contribute to your self-destruction.

(Quran 2:195)

Will you not use your reason?

221. (Quran 2:256)

The Islamic model of abstinence as envisioned in the Quran is pragmatic. This model has become an envy of the world, since the concepts were not only left on paper, but were also fully implemented and functionally successful. The influence of Islam on drinking habits of the Middle Eastern cultures is astonishing. Never in history of mankind, has total voluntary abstinence been exercised in such an effective way. According to Robert Bales, “One of the outstanding instances of the adoption of the attitude of complete abstinence, total prohibition on a large scale, is that of the Moslems.”

Reviewing the existing literature of those who are familiar with the subject, there appears to be a lot of admiration for the Islamic approach. Consider the following recognitions, in 1979, the report prepared by a special committee of The Royal College of Psychiatrists acknowledges that:

The traditional strategy that western society has employed to a reduce its anxieties is to pretend that alcohol is not really a drug, but that it is a beverage, a pint of this or a bottle of that. The Muslim world has always known otherwise.

Patricia Prestwich in the last page of her book on alcohol and social reform, concludes that “Specialists in public health have concluded that, with the possible exception of Islamic countries, prohibition is an unreasonable goal.” Frederick Jones Bliss is of the opinion that, “Total abstinence is the glory of Islam. It is as much a part of religion as prayer and fasting.” Here is what some other Occidental experts have to say:

The Islamic model of abstention and prohibition has been described as exceptional and almost unique in human history. Alcohol reform was only one aspect of a total reform programme, spiritual and social. The programme was implemented gradually, step by step. Over a period of 23 years, the Prophet Mohammed relayed Allah’s message, which was embodied in the Quran. The emphasis was on bringing about, in individuals, a significant change from their pagan ways and animistic beliefs to the shining light of Islam.

A complete new religious community, with close-knit human relationship was formed. The Quran contains not only religious doctrine, but codes of civil and criminal law and codes of social behaviour...

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227. Allah in Arabic refers to the Originator, Creator, Sustainer and Cherisher of the Universe (footnote is mine).

228. Rutherford, Derek. (1992), IOGT Cultural Conference on: Religion, Cultural and Society: “Responses to Alcohol Use”.
Clarence H. Patrick holds that:

The Moslems furnish one of the best examples of a people who give no place in their culture to the use of alcoholic beverages. It appears that they are justly regarded as being among the most abstemious peoples of the world. The 230,000,000 adherents of Islam inhibit many parts of the earth, but everywhere they interpret their religion as absolutely prohibiting the use of alcoholic beverages. The literature on the subject, fragmentary in nature though it is, indicates that the vast majority of Moslems abide by the prohibition. The few Moslems who use intoxicants apparently live in seaport towns or in cities with strong Western influences.229

Hirsch, a leading hygiene authority in the world states:

The Prohibition, which the civilized United States could not enforce for 15 years, has been successfully sustained by Islam for 14 centuries,...230.

Taha Baasher states that: “After fourteen centuries, the successful Islamic model of alcohol abstention and prohibition still stands out as almost unique in human history.”231 Historian, Arnold Toynbee similarly elaborates that:

This spirit [Islam] may be expected to manifest itself in many practical ways; and one of these manifestations might be a liberation from alcohol which was inspired by religious conviction and which was therefore able to accomplish what could never be enforced by the external sanction of an alien law.

Here, then, in the foreground of the future, we can remark...valuable influences which Islam may exert upon the cosmopolitan proletariat of a Western society that has cast its net round the world...232

On the issue of interconnectivity of contributing factors to alcoholism and in creation of collective abstinence, and Muslim’s recognition of this interconnectivity, Howard Blane makes the following comments:

Sociocultural factors may be seen as establishing the conditions that shape the incidence and prevalence of alcoholic disorders as well as the social boundaries or definitions within which such disorders are expressed. The production, distribution, and cost of alcoholic beverages and the sanction structure which accompanies them – in a word, availability – comprise some of these conditions. They are the product of complex and incompletely understood processes involving cultural and social values and beliefs and the interplay of political, economic, and religious institutions. A commonly cited example is the near complete absence of drinking and alcoholism in Muslim societies. The total or almost total non-availability of alcohol in these societies derives from religious


proscriptions against alcohol permeating all political, legal and social structures, thereby creating the extreme of a true abstinence society. Deviations from the near-universal norm are treated harshly without extenuation, but with popular approval. This example illustrates the power socio-cultural forces can exert in the determination of behaviour regarding the use, or non-use, of alcoholic beverage.\textsuperscript{233}

The key components behind success of the Islamic approach towards collective abstinence was implementation of proper technique. Contemporary psychologists acknowledge that the best approach in ‘behaviour modification’ is the one which is \textit{internalized}, rather than external manipulation. The whole process is initiated by the individual, the individual only receives supports from outsiders. In this approach, deleterious ideas, attitudes and values are purged out gradually, until individuals are prepared to support the new philosophy wholesomely. At the same time, the changing process must be a collective effort. People consciously ought to continue to modify their personal actions and their social environment, in order to encourage the desired behaviour and discourage relapse. In a short period of time, the new ideas will be firmly embedded in the mind of reformed individuals and the entire society. This \textit{internal} approach was well implemented at the time of Mohammed.

The second essential component behind success of the Islamic approach towards abstinence is that abstinence was never the goal, but one of the end results of social reform. Achieving an alcohol-free society was not the prime intention of Mohammed. This was only one of the concomitant benefits in transforming a society, which was deeply into superstitious and debauchery, to an ethical community functioning by the power of intellect alone. With the intention of creating a just society, free from erroneous beliefs and idol worshipping, the whole array of vices, one after another were eliminated. Islam aims to disinfect erroneous beliefs and values upon which all social disorder emanate from. Erroneous beliefs function like virus to breakdown family and society, and are the real source of the damage and social disruption. Using what psychologists refer to as ‘reality therapy’, Islam seeks to purify man’s faculty of thinking from any ill-focused and egotistical attachments. Consequently, everything automatically takes its natural place.

Muslims believe that, once a person realizes that certain activities are detrimental to ones benefit and displeasing in the sight of Allah, and there is an All-knowing Creator who watches man’s daily activities, no matter where he or she is, even in the absence of any detection, one would willingly abstain from engaging in restricted activities. In fact, any participation becomes against one’s principle, not to mention ones accountability to God. A result which is unattainable by any other means and is more effective than any policing system in the world. Such circumstances also create a healthy ‘social pressure’ not to engage in any abominal activities, thus, creating another reason to stay away.

As far as collective abstinence is concerned, the reason behind this achievement was also due to a particular strategy applied. This strategy involved a gradual educational process, a factor which is often overlooked. During the time of Mohammed, mass abstinence was achieved though developmental stages. To be precise, it took him seventeen years to accomplish this goal auspiciously. He made the bedouin Arabs first realize the meaning and purpose of life.

Subsequently, he taught them that the consumption of alcohol is sociologically, physiologically and psychologically detrimental. For Muslims abstention is totally a voluntary act. This crucial factor was ignored by Khomeini’s regime after the 1979 quasi-Islamic revolution. Unlike Mohammed’s method, within a few days, the new government attempted to impose abstinence upon Iranians with a push-button approach, while the socio-economic conditions were not conducive and the intention of establishing a just society gradually disappeared. As the record indicates, the outcome was another failure in the prohibition records.

This approach, or, in essence, willingful abstinence was so successfully set up in the city of Medina, when Mohammed was in charge of the affairs. His approach was not a fragmented go-toward-policies or that of imposition. Historians record that his educational teachings were so effective that, in fact, it was the citizens of Medina who came to their Prophet admitting that drinking is a demented act and asked him when the time would come that he would receive the revelation to ‘prohibit’ them from drinking. Indeed, just prior the advent of the final revelation pertaining to alcohol, many were actually drunk behind the Prophet in their daily prayers, but were on the verge of quitting alcohol. Soon after, their forethoughts were confirmed. By then, the fertile ground had been created. It is reported that, when the revelation came, the streets of Medina smelt of alcohol due to discharge of wine jars by its citizens. Likewise, the impact of the Islamic model was decisive on the Egyptian drinking culture. Egyptians were at one point in history, notorious for alcohol ‘abuse’. They were known to be full-time practicing drunks. Their drinking habit appears to have faded away around 640 A.D., upon the emergence of Islam.

In case of violation of the law, Islam punishes the perpetuator of a crime only after there can be no excuse for committing the offense. For instance, during the initial years, when Muslims were drinking, even when they were lining up behind Mohammed and praying while they had been intoxicated, no one was punished, since the fertile ground was not yet created.

Unfortunately despite the fact that the contribution of Islam to the abstinence model is so overwhelming, it has been surprisingly understudied by both Muslims and non-Muslims. In their cross-cultural study of attitudes toward drinking, Chafetz and Demone report that:

> When we come to our last non-drinking culture, the Moslem, we were surprised by the lack of published information available... Moslem religion prohibits the use of wine and thus offers investigators a rich field of study, to date sadly neglected.

Midgley has even a harsher criticism:

> It is indeed surprising that to date no research on drinking or attitudes in a Muslim society has been undertaken. That sociologists have not concerned themselves with the fact that five hundred million Muslims—one-sixth of the

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world’s population (Gallagher, 1968)—are prevented from taking alcohol by their religion seems a gross oversight.  

Theory vs. Practice in the Modern Era

Theocracy as the solution for creation of alcohol-free society is not at all being defended here. After all what Europe was suffering from during the Dark Ages was due to dogmatic approach of certain religious institutions. The emphasis here is not on a package with a religious label, but on the characteristics of the required package, being: comprehensiveness, order, justice, healthiness of mind, rejection of “me and mine” culture, and above all, understanding the meaning and purpose of life. There is strong linkage between all of these, and they all branch out from and merge into each other. What is being pointed to, is that, for instance, people from any society with characteristics similar to the Islamic or Buddhist characteristics are likely not to engage in drinking and other problematic activities, because, for one thing, it would not appeal to them, and does not fit into their priorities. The aforesaid linkage is well recognized in these two religions. All social disorders can be avoided, only when the principle of interconnectivity is recognized and brought into account in our individual and collective pursuits.

The introduced solution here is very feasible, within our reach and applicable to present-day society and in fact empirically verifiable. For instance, the modern track record of the Islamic model of abstinence, possessing all the necessary characteristics shows that it works and indeed has meritorious applications for contemporary society. The Islamic model of society is based on the preservation of the balance and has the potential to cure the mounting socio-economic problems of the contemporary world. For example, it can be observed in many Afro-American communities in the United States, where social ills are skyrocketing; however, when Islam arrives, the entire vicinity is transformed into a flourishing community. American social justice activist, James Baldwin elaborates on the potentiality of Islam as a remedy for most contemporary social ills including addictions:

And now suddenly people who have never before been able to hear this message (of Islam) hear it, and believe it, and are changed... (Islam) has been able to do what generations of welfare workers and committees and resolutions and reports and housing projects and playgrounds have failed to do: to heal and redeem drunkards and junkies, to convert people who have come out of prisons and keep them out, to make men chaste and women virtuous, and to invest both male and female with pride and serenity that hang about them like unfailing light.

Still, one may be led to question the efficacy of ‘abstinence’ in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, when, despite the prohibitions stipulated by these religions, there still remains the spectre of pervasive alcohol dependency in regions around the globe, by those purporting to follow the


teachings of these major religions. The concerned objection then is: If the message and teachings of these religions with respect to the consumption of alcohol are so clear, why on earth is the outcome not so effective? For example, why are there people in countries like Turkey, Egypt, India, Nepal and China who drink alcohol, despite the fact that drinking is categorically forbidden in their respective scriptures? These questions are legitimate — but is there a contradiction here? Is the practicality of abstinence model undermined by drinking habits of people in these regions?

To understand the situation fully, we have to consider all underlying reasons, which have created this peculiar situation. We know that the consumption of drugs, particularly alcohol and tobacco is rapidly increasing in the Asia and Africa. In fact, the manufacturers of alcohol and tobacco find the ‘third world’ countries an ideal market due to a lack of governmental regulations, higher population density and lack of individual and government concern for one’s state of health.239 In recent decades, the Western tobacco and alcohol industries have had a substantial amount of domestic revenue lost. The decline of sale is associated with a number of factors such as the partial awakening of public opinion in the West with regard to alcohol and tobacco health hazards, high ‘sin’ taxes, tighter governmental restrictions due to an escalating healthcare costs. The loss of local market has forced them to focus their attention on populated ‘third world’ countries, where there are no governmental restrictions such as the requirement of warning labels of the percentage of tar, nicotine or alcohol content, no sales taxes and no restrictions on advertising.240 These industries have started to abuse the ‘third world’ nations and exploit them as other western industries have been doing generation after generation.241 In fact, “out of the 46 countries where beer output grew more than 50 percent between 1975 and 1980, 42 were developing economies”.242 Many of these cash-strapped countries are so desperate that they would almost do anything to bolster their sagging economies. The abundant availability of cheap labor has exacerbated the unleashing of these multinationals to yonder ‘third world’ countries. Through investments and expansions, the


240. Wickstrom, Bo. (1979), Cigarette Marketing in the Third World.


Pan, Laynn. (1975), Alcohol in Colonial Africa.

Powell, Alfred, “Coach”. (1996), Message ’n a Bottle: The 40oz Scandal, (This book is focussed on, and exposes the “predatory” marketing schemes used to target African Americans, and Blacks in general. The author provides an Afrocentric analysis of corporate alcohol’s deliberate and “unethical” advertising strategies in ways that disable Blacks everywhere).

western alcohol and tobacco industries, far from trying to benefit the weak nations, are obscenely working to exploit them, financially as well as corporeally. Their corporate agenda must be upheld.

This seemingly paradoxical phenomenon appears to be an outcome of a deliberate colonialist agenda. For neo-colonialists, the ideal way to control and dominate a society is by controlling the minds of its people, to get them to think the way they want them to think, to create selective thinking or to create no-thinking at all — that is, to siphon out the critical faculties into oblivion. Here, the use of a substance such as alcohol, which is an intoxicating and addictive drug of the highest order, has been proliferated throughout the so-called ‘third world’ by government backed corporate alcohol. This nefarious scheme has been expeditiously expedited not only to make a fast buck, but also to assist in the automatonization and zombi-ization of entire countries immersed in other extraneous detrimental aspects beamed down by various means. This is no accident that breweries have grown so swiftly, particularly, in these regions. The idea is to get the masses hooked on alcohol; thus there will be no forthcoming trouble. Has anyone ever heard of a drugged revolutionary who cannot even tie his shoelaces let alone lead a revolt against the dominating neocolonialistic puppets that rule over his country for their own selfish interests. This is the corporate plan of the ultimate “win-win” situation — where you fleece, not only the pockets, but also the minds, souls and the economies. Once the colonialists manage to make oppressed masses alcohol dependent, the effected minds are preoccupied on obtaining their alcohol fixes. Under such circumstances, the question of revolution or reform becomes out of reach and inconsequential. The only revolution that such victims can hope for is that brought about by the state of giddiness. For oppressed people in pain and misery, alcohol is a good prescribed pacifier. The editor of Zimbabwe’s *Daily Gazette*, states:

> By providing easily accessible beerhalls as the only recreation centers...the colonial rulers made sure that when the African worker was not toiling in their factories, he was in a beerhall getting drunk to the extent where he could not be bothered about his wretched status. Consequently, the ordinary African worker was cultured to work and drink with little else to occupy his time.  

The paradox here can be easily understood when we further realize that, in these regions, the social conditions may not be conducive for avoiding alcohol; on the contrary, they may be ripe for its propagation or permeation into society. In general, although, alcohol use is common among most segments of population, its high consumption is particularly more noticeable among the underprivileged class. People in lower socio-economic classes have very little opportunity to develop effective ways of coping with stressful problems. When one lives day in and day out in doom and gloom scenarios with chronic poverty knocking at one’s door each day, the bottle is seen to be the only light at the end of a rather long tunnel, the only accessible psychological crutch. Under such a condition, a debilitating product can be seen as liberation. In fact, in pre-Prohibition era in the United States, saloons were nicknamed “poor man’s club”, a place where the working class would go for consolation. George Elliot Flint, a vindicator of the wet movement, criticized the United States prohibition policy during the economic slump of 1920s on this ground. He stated:

A Government which permits cruelty to many of its citizens, in the form of overwork and underpay, must not deny them the solace of after stimulation, or of partial narcotization, to procure rest. If the government should deny them that solace, it would subject them to the dangerous temptation of seeking substitute drugs, a hundred times more destructive than were those to which they become accustomed.\textsuperscript{244}

Clearly, this state of affairs is not just a characteristic of recession. It is in principle, prevalent not only in the poorer nations of the world, but also in the industrial North, even when the economy is booming. It is the result of the domination of the corporation over its own citizens, especially the working classes of society, for capitalism knows no mercy, not even for its own mother. Studies indicate that in North America, alcohol disorders among blue-collar occupations like: craft workers, labourers, service workers, construction workers are much higher than those of the white-collar segment.\textsuperscript{245}

So it is that many destitute people caught in this endemic situation, are programmed to think that they can escape poverty, helplessness, hopelessness and alienation by floating away on a sea of alcohol, but only find themselves drowning or capsized due to its devastating vortex like effects. Drug use is a symptom of social breakdown, as long as there is injustice, alienation, and no sense of purpose with no sense of self, accompanied with mendacious advertising, drinking then will continue, be it in the West, the East, Pluto or an outpost in the Andromeda galaxy.

With respect to Hinduism, apprehension is well justified, since, despite the fact that this religion has a very progressive position on the consumption of alcohol, it does not at all possess the required mechanism to prevent alcoholism and other social disorders. In fact, here is a religion that propagates all manner of superstition and legitimizes the most degrading of all social disorders, being brutally hierarchical. The caste system is a pillar of Hinduism flowing directly out of its philosophical system based on reincarnation. This outlook is a recipe for an infertile ground, on which the fruit that the tree bears, is wholly unpalatable, if not repulsive. India is one of the most unjust societies in the world, not only because of its colonial past, but also directly because of the convoluted Hindu caste system and its lack of respect for human rights. Therefore, despite the fact that abstention of drugs can be practised on an individual level across India, among Hindu citizens, Hinduism has never been able or ever will be able to create an alcohol-free society due to its constrictive vision. In any ideology, when sense is mixed with

\textsuperscript{244} Flint, George E. (1919), \textit{The Whole Truth About Alcohol}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{245} Macdonald, Scott & Wells, Samantha. (1994), “The Prevalence and Characteristics of Employee Assistance, Health Promotion and Drug Testing Programs in Ontario”. This study shows that construction workers have the highest rate of alcohol abuse in Ontario.

Anthony J.C., et al. (1992), “Psychoactive drug dependence and abuse: more common in some occupations than others?”


nonsense, then the produced result is not so prolific. Under such overwhelmingly dehumanizing circumstances, collective abstinence will not have any realistic opportunity to flourish.

However, in contrast with Hinduism, there is no cast system in either Islam or Buddhism. On the contrary, in both of these two religions there is a strong sense of brotherhood and equalitarianism. Both religions promote a sense of care and responsibility towards other members in our global community. The superiority of one man over another is solely based on the degree of knowledge acquired by the superior man, that is the wise one, as compared to the inferior man (the unwise). In fact, every Buddhist and Muslim is required to seek knowledge. For them, learning is mandatory not an option, but exigency. Both these two religions uncompromisingly demand disciple and sensibility. Therefore, a ‘Muslim’ or ‘Buddhist’ society, in which people are behaving foolishly, pursuing their insatiable whims, cannot be deemed as a genuine Islamic or Buddhist nation. This leads us to the second crucial point.

Secondly, not everyone who lives in India is a serious Hindu, not every Chinese is a devoted Buddhist, and certainly not everyone who lives in the Middle East is in submission to Allah. It should not be neglected that in most regions, where people are said to adhere to Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam, they may not necessarily be committed to their belief system, just as there are many so-called Christians in the Christendom who are basically either so indifferent about Christianity, or are staunch secular humanists. There is no relationship between geography and ideology. Who has ever said that proclaimed belief always correlates with behaviour? Or, beliefs can genetically be inherited from one generation to another. The fact that one, for instance, claims to be a Muslim, does not necessarily mean that, one indeed has an Islamic belief. In every religion, there are the followers who strictly follow and there are those who want to play with fire, frivolously oblivious to the consequences in this life or the claimed hereafter, being so enamoured by the ‘pleasure principle’. While some religions condemn the consumption of alcohol, it is no surprise that some would still engage in sanctioned activities. Throughout history, religious doctrines have often been, and still are, deliberately altered or interpreted so erroneously, in order to suit one’s desires or vested interest. The end result of such deviation is imminent. Once the essential fertile ground loses its fertility, the socio-economic problems begin to surface one after another. The soil begins to crack and all cracks get connected.

The same phenomenon exists at the collective level. There are, for instance, a few so-called Islamic countries in the world which proclaim that their constitution is based purely on the Sharia (Islamic Law). Therefore, naturally collective abstinence is expected in that country. However, very often we easily notice that is not the case at all. The reason for such a profound shortcoming is that often in the so-called Islamic Republic of whatever, there is only an appearance of Islam at the superficial level. In fact, the government’s policies and conducts are completely contrary to the Islamic principle, and since genuine Islamic Sharia is not properly set or at least not in its entirety, collective abstinence is an unrealistic expectation among many other things. In order, to benefit from what Islam has to offer, its entire doctrine has to be practice, not just a portion of it for political expediency.

The third reason for the presumed paradox, is due to the cultural invasion and creation of consumer societies. In the era of ‘globalization’, the old and diverse cultural barriers are falling rapidly. The impact of advancement in telecommunication systems has been like that of a swarm of rapacious vermins. The goal of many Western-based corporations is to capture the lucrative and succulent Eastern markets like voracious locusts. In so doing, the dysfunctional
aspects of Western values and lifestyle, so foreign and alien, are insidiously imposed and blindly adopted by the native inhabitants. Western corporations are engaged in marketing outlooks, mindsets and lifestyles to market their products. Nancy Snow, a professor of political science at New England College in Henniker, New Hampshire, uses the term “propaganda” to describe the modern operations of the United States Information Agency. Snow states:

I consider the USIA a public relations instrument of corporate propaganda which “sells” America’s story abroad by integrating business interests with cultural objectives… American commercial interests have come to dominate U.S. foreign policy in general.”

This overarching economico-political conspiracy aims to assault the indigenous cultures and values to the point of utter extinction. Satellite dishes in this global ghetto — where the East is just the dumping ground of non-recyclable mental trash from the West — have sprouted like attractive yet poisonous mushrooms, infusing the minds of the youths, especially with glamorous images of relatively flaccid Westerners in posh suits, scant micro-bikinis resembling dental floss or what have you, imbibing frothy translucent yellow liquids. The message given to them is that you are pathetic, stupid, unpopular, retrogressive, backward, a loser, a wimp, a weirdo, an outright nerd, an outcast, if you don’t live in such a promoted fashion and buy this product. The idea is, once people have adhered to a particular frame of mind, their concomitant lifestyle guarantees maximum consumption and market expansion in the targeted region. This translates into a higher volume of sales and cash flow for western owned corporations. A recent simple survey on 5,700 Asia-Pacific young people to name their favourite food and beverage indicates a disturbing reality. The survey shows that McDonald’s and Coca-Cola are the most favourites in Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, China and Australia, while KFC and Pepsi are the favourites of Malaysians and Thais. These findings are indeed disturbing, because considering the fact that each country in this region has such a rich variety of exotic cuisine and delicacy no match to western junk foods. The menu of any Chinese restaurant is five to seven pages of small print, yet all these dishes are becoming endangered in home country. The preference for BigMac and Coke is certainly not like an isolated weed grown in the garden, but an outright outcome of the well-planned American cultural invasion fiercely carried through the media by the deregulated exportation of American consumer-based corporate culture. Paul Hellyer, a writer and a controversial Canadian politician expressed his concerns for his country being invaded by American corporate values:

When it comes to culture the U.S. offers the best of worlds and the worst of worlds. It possesses many of the best opera and ballet companies and finest symphony orchestras. Its art galleries and museums radiate excellence and the scope and variety of its many attractions is beyond compare. Still, there are some cultural exports that are not universally welcomed.

It may be a function of the age but I detect a marked increase in the incidence of sex and violence in American movies and video games. Years ago when Hollywood allowed the Hays office to set and enforce industry-wide standards it was far more fun guessing what the lovers were doing underneath the sheets. It


didn’t require a lot of imagination but there was an element of intrigue that has been lost in the process of exposing everything. Perhaps the imposition of standards is impossible in a globalized system but one longs for a little restraint.

Much more worrisome is the degree of violence. It is difficult to pick a movie where no one gets killed, and one with less than a half dozen homicides is considered tame. This trend has spilled over into video games that are getting painfully ugly. The Fall 1998 generation of software titles allowed players to indulge in masochism, mutilation – even prostitution…. [Are these] the kind of “inspiration” young people should be exposed to? Is there any correlation between the incidence of violence in television, movies and video games and the incidence of violent crimes committed by children and young people in real life? The questions are valid even if the answers are complex. But one wonders about unseemly products that serve no social good except to make money for their producers. One wonders, too, about trade agreements that say this kind of product must be admitted in any country that is party to the treaty. If not, the country can be sued for damages by the company in question.

Sadly, many individuals and nations in the ‘third world’, too, have fallen into this hazardous trap, thinking that Western lifestyle is a dazzling badge of honour, while their own long traditions are a badge of dishonour. Just like a naive teenager who thinks smoking automatically bestows grown-up status, most Eastern girls, for instance, think that dyeing their hair blond, wearing a mini-skirt and low-cut tank top bestows modernity. Through the use of effective propaganda machines, easterners are made to think that if they mimic certain aspect of Western culture, they are then ‘modern’ and ‘civilized’. The most popular imitations happen to be exactly what often appears in most commercial ads. For example, a young native boy or girl wearing blue Levis jeans and a RayBan sun glasses, smoking slim American cigarette with the left hand and having a glass of imported European alcoholic beverage in the right hand, while flirting with the opposite of sex. In a subliminal way, drinking and smoking is sexualized and modernized, while abstinence is impotentized and backwardized. Mohammed is reported to have warned his people against the danger of imitating problematic non-Islamic lifestyles. He cautioned his people that “if you live like (imitate) them (idolaters), you are indeed one of them,” and naturally shall suffer from problems similar to theirs. Similarly, Buddha was concerned that humankind should follow the basic precepts of Buddhism, which involved following his example of leading a balanced life and not copying existing erroneous cultures.

In essence, culturally, the East is no longer as pristine as it used to be, but has become worse under the dominance of the negative aspects of commercialized Western culture. Their own ethical values are becoming a distant memory. The children grow up not knowing what it means to be a Muslim or Buddhist. Murad Hofmann, the former German Ambassador to Algeria and Morocco, who currently resides in Turkey, states:

Muslim countries, once colonized or governed by westernized local governments, to some extent travelled the same route. Most of the Turkish

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249. *This Hadith was researched by Ahmed, one of the six considered to be reliable sources of Hadith, Volume 2, Chapter 5. Also mentioned by Abu Daoud (one of the six), Volume 4, Chapter 314.*
Like Turks, the Asian and African youths, too, have become fascinated with the love of Rap and Rock’n Roll music, engage in licentious sexual relationships and have adopted an easy-going attitude towards every facet of life. Living as such, is an imported lifestyle, which is so foreign to their culture. Nevertheless, it most certainly comes with its concurrent and concomitant side-effects. As a result of the invariance of natural law, the East has also begun to suffer the consequences of its injections of corruption as the West. The fact that lewdness and vulgarity are potential gateways to other evils are well established principles in the moral philosophy. “Sex, Drugs and Rock’n Roll” is a slogan proclaimed by those who adhere to this kind of lifestyle. This hedonistic philosophy first infected the West, then spread to the East. The research conducted by Spencer and Navaratnam on social background and attitudes towards drugs among Malaysian students indicated that among all the possible reasons for drug use, there is a link with lifestyle in all strata of society.251 In today’s India, Turkey, China, etc. abstention is lost in the wilderness of rapid Westernization of indigenous cultures in terms of post-modern consumerism and neo-colonialism.

A crucial point in this analysis, however, is that Islam and Buddhism do not attack the West as an embodiment of evil per se, but are against only the causally harmful elements within both East and West. These systems are invariant to geography, time, space, colour or ethnicity, for that matter. It is the behaviour which is criticized and unfortunately, such behaviours have developed and cherished predominantly in the Western society, where there is no balance between freedom and discipline. Such a lifestyle has for various socio-historical reasons, become the norms in the west, and then has started to permeate the rest of the globe. The criticisms against easy-going hedonistic lifestyle are not the novel ideas of Buddhists and Muslims. Many Western secular scholars themselves are critical of such attitudes and behaviours, just as are the adherents of these two belief systems.252 When one looks at all these groups of critics as a collective ensemble, one realizes that their criticisms emanate not from, culturalism, fanticism, prejudice or pent-up emotion, but from solid, indefeasible fact, as they observe the ever-burgeoning dysfunctionalities in the mental and physiognomic landscapes.

Another point which needs to be discussed, in order to clarify this assumed paradox, is that these regions may not totally adhere to their religion in a collective manner, but among them there are still many individuals and sub-communities which would not allow foreign values influence their way of life. Similarly, there are many Muslim communities deep in the heart of


western world, which have maintained their values. In the midst of overwhelming temptations one may still chose to lead a virtuous lifestyle, if one wishes to. Furthermore, granted that alcohol is easily available, and many purported followers of abstentionistic religions in these regions do have a very flexible attitude contrary to their religious doctrines, in which drinking alcohol might be one among many attitudes, nevertheless, often, when it comes to alcohol, the remnants of their religions’ influence is still visible to some extent.253 For example, anyone who claims to be a Muslim and yet chooses to drink, knows that drinking is against the Islamic principle and ought to be stopped. He would never attempt to argue that drinking is allowed in the Quran. Naturally, there is always some guilt associated with his consumption. In such places, drinking alcohol, though tolerated, is still not a commendable act by their indigenous socio-cultural norms. Consequently, despite the fact that people drink openly, they do, nonetheless, in these regions, by far have a lower rate of alcohol consumption per capita as compared to the rest of the world. A quick glance at the table of per capita alcohol consumption of the world’s nations shows no Islamic, Hindu or Buddhist nation. The top 35 countries are the Europeans, Latin Americans and North Americans with the exception of Japan and South Africa.254 What could account for this interesting phenomenon? The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Drugs states:

> Of all the countries in the world, the Moslem (Islamic) nations are usually and justly regarded as the most abstemious regarding alcoholic beverages. Except for the vineyards planted in Algeria by the French, practically no alcohol is produced in these countries, and little alcohol is sold or consumed.
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> What accounts for this remarkable degree of temperance among the Moslems is the Koran, Islam’s most sacred book of scriptures. The early followers of Mohammed interpreted the Koran as absolutely prohibiting the use of alcoholic beverages, except in cases of extreme thirst or sickness.255

A study done on the Muslim population of Cape Town, South Africa shows that only 12% of those who were interviewed reported drinking.256 Van der Burgh, another South African researcher reviewed the alcohol consumption patterns and behaviour in the multiethnic South African society.257 He found that among all South African sub-cultures, the Muslims and Hindus, despite decades of living after migration, have managed to maintain their original religious beliefs and attitudes towards alcohol. Thereby, these two communities have an impressive low incidence of alcohol-related complications. It is the lowest in that country.

A survey on alcohol dependency was conducted in Sri Lanka, where the population mostly consists of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhist and some Christians. Keeping in mind that by no


standards is Sri Lanka an ideal Islamic, Hindu or Buddhist state, the survey shows no cases of alcohol dependency among Muslims and Hindus, while among Buddhists it was as low as 14/1000 and among Christians 10/1000.258 No cases of dependency were found among women of any religion. Only 8% of men from Muslim community and 15% of Hindus men reported ever taking alcohol. In a self-report survey, “all Hindus and Muslims, irrespective of their habits, stated that their religion considered alcohol use a sin.” Studies show, in the Middle East, where Islam is present mostly at the surficial level, Islamic ethical values are an effective preventative measure to distance the impressionable youths from drug culture.259 Conversely, numerous studies conducted on college students show that drug use is significantly higher among students with no religious affiliation as compared with those who attend religious functions.260 All of these cases exemplify the fact that drinking pattern can indeed be changed towards total abstinence. And both Islam and Buddhism can make valuable contributions to modification of society. In addition, the existence of such numerous cases, cast doubt on scepticism expressed by supporters of wet culture. How can we say that the idea of abstemious society is just a pipe dream, when all these communities practice it? Their claim seems to have been utterly falsified, now that dry societies have been identified. Furthermore, the view which asserts that collective abstinence has always failed, therefore, it will always fail is an error in an inconclusive inductive methodology, now that a number of exceptions to the case have been introduced.

At the present time, it is so hard to make the public realize that drinking a small dose of alcohol is detrimental, because still, after everything we have seen about ‘excessive’ drinking, society does not yet fully grasp that drinking heavily is detrimental to all who drink heavily. This point can be well illustrated in the following example. Not too long ago an ad appeared in the classified section of a local newspaper in Toronto. A reputable research institution was conducting a study on the effectiveness of a particular brand of antabuse medication. The ad, which was intended to recruit subjects, boldly stated that “healthy heavy drinkers” are required. On the following day, approximately 250 heavy drinkers who felt are healthy responded to the ad. Yet, there is no such a thing as healthy heavy drinker. The concept is so imaginary and oxymoronic. Sure enough, many subjects were rejected during initial screening due to their poor health. Some even had to be referred for medical treatment. No one can be healthy, if he or she is drinking heavily. The idea is wishful thinking. This simple fact was overlooked by experimenters

258 Samarasinghe, Diyanath S. (1990), “The Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic Influence on Alcohol”.


and all callers. The point is, when the populace and some experts think that heavy drinking can be fine, how can anyone argue that a lesser quantity is problematic.

At length, the facts and data presented here indicate that, contrary to the vociferous claims made by champions of the ‘harm reduction’ model, not only is their view of ‘moderation’ elusive, but so too is the abstinence model sound and indeed attainable. By considering the provided data, one is compelled to regard the ‘abstinence model’ as practical and implementable, if society decides to straighten-up its priorities; if there is a will, there is always a way. The lack of will to implement such a system, should not be confused with lack of a practical model for its implementation. For instance, since 1980, in 72 villages in state of Alaska alcoholic beverages are unavailable. Residents of these villages have decided to prohibit the sale and importation of alcohol. The success of this latest attempt, depends on the fitness of the fertile ground. Given the concrete realities that have been exhibited in this book, it is not difficult to conclude that the abstinence model is not some ‘pie-in-the-sky’ model, but one which is sound and well foundable on the fertile ground.

As demonstrated, alcohol related problems in society are a result of ignorance and social disorder. Intemperance is like any other social disorder. It cannot be eradicated, unless there is justice and order in society — unless people are properly educated and disciplined. The whole society has to be reformed, so that its members will not have the desire for illusory stimulation, the desire for bogus rest, and the desire for forgetfulness. The drug culture ought to be dissolved. To release tension, means other than ingestion of alcohol must be stressed. Our thinking and attitude towards life in general needs to be revolutionized. The new disposition must be integrated, so that we do not disregard cause and effect relationships based on disliked ‘religious’ doctrine. In this new society, there should be healthy social ‘pressure’ against drinking and any other abhorrent activities. Drinking must first become socially unacceptable, before we start to pass any radical legislation. Appropriate role models and right alternatives to drinking must be introduced and highlighted. Above all, the aforementioned fertile ground necessitates fertile minds, without which achieving this goal is impossible and unrealistic. Doubtlessly, collective abstinence cannot be obtained without complete purification of human society that becomes firmly entrenched in the fertile ground. And it is on this fertile ground where a society, be it the East or the West, may grow like a robust tree, yielding nutritious and delicious fruits in every season.

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