

## Colonial versus Cultural Construction of Alcohol Consumption in the Tea Garden Society of Assam, India.

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### ABSTRACT

Alcohol drinking in the tea gardens of Assam is mainly associated with colonial period and culture of the communities working within it. During the colonial period or the British's period, there arose a shift from cultural to commercial consumption of alcohol. Although, cultural consumption of it still has its significance surviving through rituals and ceremonies. Cultural consumption of it is associated with drinking within cultural sphere. But, due to economic profit, the Britishers tried to normalize the drinks among the tea garden workers in their work life. Both of the factors have influence on the normalization of alcohol in the tea garden society of Assam. In this regard, cultural construction and colonial construction of alcohol consumption can be seen as two phenomenons related with the normalization of it. Alcohol consumption in Mancotta tea estate or garden is a common thing like the other tea gardens of Assam. So, this tea garden is purposefully selected for the study. To understand the relationship between alcohol and culture, the data related to the use of alcohol in the rituals and ceremonies of the dominant tribal communities such as Oraon, Munda, Santhal and Savar were necessary. Alcohol is socio-cultural as well as work stimulant in this tea garden society. This paper tries to compare mainly the colonial and cultural construction of drinking in the tea gardens of Assam.

### KEYWORDS

Alcohol, Culture, Tea Garden, Colonial, Construction, Work.

### Introduction:

The manners of drinking alcohol in a society are very much associated with the social nature of that society. In some societies, nature of alcohol drinking is pathological and, in some societies, it is cultural in nature. In some other societies also both of the natures of drinking can be seen. In the societies, like tea garden societies of Assam which was created by the British Colonizers<sup>1</sup>, both of these natures of alcohol consumption can be seen. So, generally tea gardens of Assam are now a semi-industrialized society because these are managed by various management companies as well as the governments. If we look towards the periods of nineteenth centuries, then we can find that it is colonial construction (Behal,2014) and also the pattern of alcohol consumption. But we

<sup>1</sup>The tea gardens of Assam are started by the British Colonizers during the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries for tea production. The British East India Company (belonged to Britishers) brought many people from present day Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh states of India under various contractual systems out of which tea garden society emerged (Behal,2014).

cannot deny the fact that the people's contribution in this kind of construction of alcohol consumption is also inevitable in nature. In this case, the role of culture is crucial in nature. So, the nature of alcohol consumption among the people living in the tea gardens of Assam is colonial as well as cultural in nature. There is contribution of culture in the nature of consumption of alcohol and the society (Heath,1995). Culture of a society contribute on those spheres through various social agencies such as family, community, peer groups etc.

### **Materials and Methods:**

For the study both primary as well as secondary data are used. For the collection of the primary data, the author selected purposefully the Mancotta tea estate of Dibrugarh district of Assam, India. The Mancotta tea estate is located at 4 kilometers away from the main town of Dibrugarh. The tea estate is surrounded by many villages and important roads connecting the town.

For the collection of primary data, non-participatory observation, personal interview and focused group interview methods are used. For the data collection, 4 tribal communities living in the tea estate are selected based on purposive sampling, such as Oraon, Munda, Santhal, Sabar or Savar. The respondents belonged to the communities are divided on the basis of gender such as men and women and selected based on stratified sampling. The ratio of respondents based on gender is 2:1 as it is found from the pilot studies that women are less engaged in alcohol consumption as compared to men of the communities under study. 10 male and 5 female members are selected from each community for the study purposively.

On the other hand, the secondary data are collected from books, journals, websites and government sites available online. These data will be analyzed through narrative as well as thematic analysis.

### **Results and Discussion:**

#### **Colonial Construction of Alcohol Consumption:**

The British tea planters started tea gardens in Assam during the nineteenth century. In order to sustain the tea gardens of Assam, they brought people from various agrarian communities from the present-day states like Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and the United Provinces, consisting of mostly of 'tribals' and 'aboriginals' who were marginalized by the colonial land revenue policies (Behal,2014). The tea industry in North-East India has a history dating back nearly 170 years (Das,2015). Many of the workers in the tea gardens came from regions such as Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh. Today, the population is ten times larger than in earlier times. The first experimental tea estate was established in the Chabua area of Dibrugarh district of Assam in 1837 (Das,2015). After that, the tea estates were established at several places in Assam. The great need for workers in the tea gardens led the British to import many workers to Assam. "Different groups were recruited from different places, e.g. the Mundas & Gonds from Bihar, Santals, Tantis & Bhumij from Bengal & Bihar, Oraons from Bihar & Orissa, Gowalas from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh & Uttar Pradesh and Bogas from Tamil Nadu" (Kar,2005). There were two groups of people in the worker's community: one from tribal areas and the other from the plains. There were also communities such as Sabar, Nayak, Bauri, Sahu (Teli) who were brought together for the purpose of work. The elderly people of the tribes and various castes had various cultural, social, political, and economic importance in their communities. However, after they arrived in the tea gardens, their social, cultural, and health status was lost because they were only treated as workers by the Britishers (Behal,2014).



### **The Britisher's Approach Towards Alcohol:**

The colonial construction of alcohol consumption began during the British period during the nineteenth century. During that period there was sudden increase in the number of grog shops near by the proverbial gates of every tea garden of Assam. The issue was notified by a writer on May 31st, 1880 edition of the daily Englishman termed as 'The Planter's Grievance' (Varma, 2016). It was an issue of concern as it led to the rise of the problem of alcoholism, bad characters, absenteeism, sickness among the workers. It is also important to say that when there was the need to increase the labour power of the workers while working, brandy or rum was the only inducement (Barker, 1884). So, it is very complimentary to say that alcohol was attached with Britishers way of increasing the production of tea. But the officials of the British colonial period asserted that alcohol was provided to the workers as a gift for extra and good work.<sup>2</sup> Many scholars also argues that alcohol as a work stimulant was not even a colonial invention. The information regarding this is found over time and space.

### **Alcohol and Colonial Excise Policy:**

The Britishers had attention towards the large working drinker's population during the late nineteenth century. In the tea gardens, there was a large number of working populations drinking high level of home brewed rice-beer which was a major concern for the colonisers. So, they introduced the 'licit liquor' (country liquor) in the licensed shops offering the workers to buy to check on the consumption of 'illicit' home brewed rice-beer. During the late 1970s, there started the inauguration of out still system which encouraged the business of taxed country liquor in the tea gardens checking on the traditional rice-beer which was untaxed in nature. Over the time, the planters complained to the British Administration regarding issue of alcoholism, chaotic situations among the workers that led to the lower standard of living (Varma, 2016).

### **Alcohol as a Work Stimulant:**

During the 1970s, the planters of the colonial periods imported large amounts of rums (liquor) for the workers as a stimulant for the works.<sup>3</sup> This suggests the double standards of the colonial planters and officials during that time. At that it was also the belief that the alcohol could help in working in unhealthy climate condition, working condition, so it was regarded as work stimulant during that time. Alcohol at that time was considered as healthy and prescribed by the doctors.<sup>4</sup> The introduction of alcohol, especially rum had impact on the daily life-processes of the tea gardens. Earlier, the traditional drink was only confined to some communities of the tea gardens, but after introduction of the country spirits, the colonial administration tried to provide spirits to the workers during the various social and cultural occasions which was considered the leave days (Varma, 2016). These practices and the strategy helped the workers to get habitualised with alcohol consumption and its addiction. The approach regarding alcohol by the workers changed over time.

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<sup>2</sup>Report on the Excise Administration in Assam, 1884–85.

<sup>3</sup>Report on the Excise Administration of British India (Simla, 1882) p. 24

<sup>4</sup>Paul E. Kopperman, "The Cheapest Pay": Alcohol Abuse in the Eighteenth Century British Army, *The Journal of Military History* 60, no. 3 (July 1996) pp. 446–448.

### Cultural Construction of Alcohol Consumption:

As it is known that the communities under study were brought by the colonial power from their original lands during the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, some of the features of cultural attributes are lost due to that kind of separations. “The daily lives of the labourers remained confined within the socially and culturally insulated world of the ‘coolie lines’, of which they themselves left no record” (Behal,2014). Those kinds of conditions were very harsh for their culture to be kept going. Although several communities preserved their culture among the conditions of assimilation and acculturation.

**The Oraons:** The *Oraon* is an important tribal community inhabited in the *Chota Nagpur* plateau of Jharkhand. The *Oraon* people mainly live in the states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh. They generally speak ‘*Kurukh*’ which belongs to the Dravidian language family.<sup>5</sup> The *Oraon* is an important community of *Mancotta* tea estate. The *Oraon* people celebrate *Sahrul Puja* [celebrated during the *Assamese* (related to Assam state of India) month of *Sot*, which is March-April month], *Borpahari* or *Khuti Puja* (celebrated by a group of families nearer to the festival of *Kali Puja*, a *Hindu* festival during the months of October-November), *Gohal Puja* (under the cowshed for cow worshipping) during the *Kali Puja*, *Bhelwa Faadi* (celebrated for protection of the house, people from hazards, bad spirits by offering *Handia* to the sacred deities) at family and community levels. Apart from that, they observe marriage, death, birth and compensational (related to marriage if endogamy is not followed) ceremonies (Kumari,2024).

**The Mundas:** The *Munda* is another tribal community of the *Chota Nagpur Plateau*. This is a group of *Kolarian* tribes (Roy,1912). They speak *Mundari* language which is an Austro-Asiatic language. The *Oraons* and the *Mundas* of *Mancotta* tea estate follow almost same kind of rituals and ceremonies and use *Handia* in their culture. They also organize marriage, death, birth and compensational (*Jaat Vaat*) where alcohol is used.<sup>6</sup>

**The Santhals:** The *Santhal* is another tribal community which live in the states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal etc. The community constitutes 6.8% of India’s total tribal population (the census of 1991) (Soren & Jamir,2020). The *Santhal* people of *Mancotta* tea estate observe *Baha Porob* (celebrated during the month of March-April during the time of budding of flowers), *Gohal Puja*, ancestral worships (*Burha-Burhi Puja*) during the *Kali Puja*, *Durga Puja* (*Hindu* festivals), *Gohal Puja*, *Khuti Puja* (like the other tribal communities) along with death, marriage, birth, compensational ceremony (*Jaat Vaat*) where alcohol is used. The main sacred deity of the *Santhals* is *Marang Buru* (Soren & Jamir,2020).

**The Sabars:** The *Sabar* or *Savar* is an important tribal community of India inhabiting in the states of Chhattisgarh, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh etc. The *Sabar* people speak *Savara* language which belongs to the *Kol Munda* group of Austro-Asiatic family.<sup>7</sup> The *Sabars* of *Mancotta* tea estate observe the rituals such as ancestral worships (*Burha-Burhi Puja*) like the other tribal communities, along with *Kamala* (orange) *Tenga Puja*, *Rahar* or *Rahad* (a kind of lentils), *Sim* (beans) *Puja*, *Aam* (mango) *Puja* which are related to new fruits where alcohol is used. Apart from that they also use *Handia* in the marriage, birth, death, and compensational ceremonies.<sup>8</sup>

So, these are the rituals and ceremonies of the communities. Apart from their community rituals, all of the communities participate together in the village-level ritual known as ‘*Ashad Puja*’ or ‘*Gram Puja*’ celebrated

<sup>5</sup>For more visit: <http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924024114773>.

<sup>6</sup>For more visit: <http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924024114773>

<sup>7</sup>For more visit: <https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog/32384/study-description>.

<sup>8</sup>Kar, R.K. (1981). The Savaras of Mancotta: a study on the effects of tea industry on the tribal life.

during the months of June-July. The ritual is mainly performed in each line area (residential area of the workers or the people of the communities) to protect their area from hazards, epidemics or bad forces.

Culture and society are closely intertwined. In every society, individuals adhere to certain customs, traditions, values, and norms that hold specific meanings and are acceptable in particular ways. This socio-cultural construction plays a significant role in their daily lives. Alcohol consumption is seen as a part of a community or society's culture. It is a socio-culturally constructed practice institutionalized and habituated by individuals through reciprocal social interaction in society. According to the study, the people of the *Mancotta* Tea Estate view alcohol consumption as a part of their culture. The communities in the study are deeply connected to the customs, beliefs, values, and norms of their respective cultures. Since alcohol is used in almost all of the socio-cultural practices, such as rituals and ceremonies, it is clear that the practice of alcohol consumption is an integral part of their tradition. This is known as socio-cultural construction, where society and culture shape behaviours and practices. The consumption of alcohol is initiated by cultural needs and has become an essential element of their culture. The people in the society have customized alcohol consumption through its regular use and habituation. In the tea garden communities, alcohol consumption is a customary practice that has been passed down from generation to generation.

### **Socialization:**

People living in the *Mancotta* tea estate are also socialized by the norms, values, ideas, and culture of their respective communities and the general tea garden society. There are various agencies or social institutions that contribute to the socialization of people or community members regarding the culture, values, norms, and ideas related to the consumption of alcoholic beverages in socio-cultural practices. In her study, Murthy (2015) suggests that alcohol consumption plays a role and has an influence on the cultural patterns and individuals in society. This is closely related to the process of socialization.

### **Factors Related to The Process:**

#### **Cultural Belief:**

The family members' beliefs about the use of alcoholic beverages in rituals and ceremonies are shaped through socialization. Their experiences of participating in and consuming alcohol help to foster a sense of unity and encourage social communication, ultimately aiding in the socialization process. Involvement in these rituals helps to form positive beliefs about alcohol use during such occasions. Acceptance of this practice leads to its normalization within the family, making it an important part of their socialization process. Drinking together as a family fosters love and affection among the members. The members' beliefs about alcohol consumption are shaped through affirmations and emotional attachments to their culture, leading to the perception of alcohol consumption as sacred. This cultural belief is intertwined with the emotions and affection people have towards their culture, often leading to the adoption of certain practices, such as the consumption of *Handia*, as a part of their culture. Cultural norms and beliefs are strong predictors of both current drinking and frequent heavy drinking (Brooks-Russell et al. 2014; Caetano and Clark 1999; LaBrie et al. 2012). Alcohol is considered a necessary element in the rituals and ceremonies of these communities, symbolizing an offering to the ancestors. The communities living in the tea garden perform and celebrate a number of rites and rituals where alcohol is used following norms and values. The type, patterns and nature of alcohol consumption in these cultural practices determine the behavioural approach and attitude of people towards alcohol in their society.

Both male and female of the communities combined confirm the importance of alcohol in their rituals and ceremonies. All 66.67% of male respondents believe that *Handia* is necessary for socio-cultural practices, while all 33.33% of the female respondents agreed with this view (see Table.1).

**Table 1:**  
**Necessity of Alcohol (Handia) in their Cultures**

Community	Agreed		Disagreed		Total
	M	F	M	F	
Oraon	10	5	0	0	15
Munda	10	5	0	0	15
Santhal	10	5	0	0	15
Savar	10	5	0	0	15
Total	40	20	0	0	60
Percentage (%)	66.67	33.33	0	0	100

**Source:** *The field*

Notes: Here, 'M' signifies male and 'F' signifies female.

The respondents believe that it is necessary to offer and provide *Handia* during ancestral worship. Many of the respondents are aware of the excessive use of alcohol in their socio-cultural practices and they are trying to normalize the minimum amount of it. Alcohol is a social lubricant and it needs social approval to rectify its nature. An Oraon (Male, 80) states: "Alcohol use in the socio-cultural practices is necessary because it is a part of our culture and tradition (Porompura)." For the people, it is an integral part of the cultural practices. The traditional values of their culture are attached to it. From the Durkheimian point of view, it is a sacred thing to them which is associated with social morality. For the people, it is very important for offerings to the ancestors and deities. Though people can eradicate the practice of consumption, they cannot eradicate the offerings to the spirits and deities. A Munda (female, 45) confirms: "It is our tradition; we offer it to the ancestors. We usually need it to offer in the socio-cultural practices, but it should not be accessed for consumption in these practices." So, it is obvious that it is generational. The cultural belief is such that it is socially reflective and rigid. The cultural beliefs in these ways help to socialize the people and normalize the pattern of alcohol consumption in that society.

### Motivation:

Motivation is a "psychological construct 'invented' to describe the mechanism by which individuals and groups choose particular behaviour and persist with it, has a history going back millennia in all cultures" (McInerney Denis M, 2019; 427). It is customary for people of all ages and genders to participate in rituals and ceremonies where alcohol is consumed. Elderly individuals, friends, and other community members often serve as sources of motivation or influence for drinking during these events. This influence is primarily social and cultural, and it contributes to the maintenance of a drinking culture within their communities. The people of these communities often accept the fact that they are motivated to drink either by themselves or by the other

members of their families, communities or the tea garden society during the social and cultural occasions. The people's motivation sources are categorized as "self-motivated" and "motivated by others" based on gender. The first category refers to individuals who motivate themselves to drink. The second category includes respondents who are influenced by their grandparents, in-laws, parents, friends, close relatives, neighbours, etc.

**Table 2:**  
**Motivation for Drinking During the Rituals and Ceremonies.**

Communities	By himself/ By Herself		By Others		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<b>Oraon</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Munda</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Santhal</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Savar</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>42</b>		<b>60</b>
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>30</b>		<b>70</b>		<b>100</b>

*Source: The Field.*

According to the data collected, 70% of the respondents are influenced by other members of the society, community and the family to drink during rituals and ceremonies, on the other hand, 30% are motivated by themselves (see Table.2). The data above suggests that maximum percentage of females are influenced by others compared to the male section of the society. The data indicates that the influence for drinking is more socially initiated and socially important for the saving of their alcohol consumption traditions. Darrah et al. (2021) found that *Māori* (indigenous tribe) people in New Zealand believe that they are motivated to drink to fit in the society. But case of the people of that tea garden is also same in indirect manners. The members of the communities of the tea garden participate in drinking by getting motivated to cope up with their cultures and social situations. On the other hand, the self-motivation to drink in the rituals and practices also reflects the effect of cultural attributes and tradition on the members of the society. So, the case of self-motivation to drink in the rituals and practices is unique to the society of that tea garden unlike the description of Darrah et.al (2021) regarding the *Māori* people. An 80 years old male belonged to the *Oraon* community confirmed that he was self-motivated to drink. The community culture heavily influenced the respondent during the rituals and after that he started to drink by him selves.

The motivation for drinking can also be seen heavily at the individual level. Although the motivation from others for both genders is not the same, the nature and ways of motivation from others or by themselves are similar. Married women in the community who did not drink earlier may be motivated to drink by their in-laws at their husband's homes. So, the motivations for drinking in the society or the community or the family is social or socially constructed. So, motivation to drink at family level, community level and area level rituals is obligatory thing in their cultures for getting attached with the culture of practice as well as the culture of consumption.



### **Awareness:**

In general, awareness involves becoming conscious of personal or social issues, which fosters consciousness among individuals. It's evident that individuals in a society become mindful or aware of their specific cultures. As they gradually comprehend their culture, it helps in creating awareness, influencing them to act following the norms, values, and mores of their particular cultures. The people inhabiting in the society (study area) become aware of their culture of drinking due to the influence of their rituals and ceremonies. After a particular period of time, people realise and understand the necessity and essence of cultural values, and norms. As part of their cultures, the normalized patterns of drinking become acceptable for them over a period of time. Many people believe that alcohol (Handia) is an important ingredient to their culture. This is the result of awareness and realization of their culture. The people believe that it is necessary to offer Handia to the ancestors to ease them during the worship.

### **Institutions or Agents of Socialisation for Drinking:**

#### **Family:**

Children learn moral values and social conventions through a process of socialization, much of which involves parenting (Grusec,2011). The family is the most important agency in the process of socializing a child. Socialization is a multifaceted process based on the goals and aspirations guiding adults in transmitting values and norms. This process is co-active and dynamic and varies greatly depending on contexts and cultural identities (Lerner & Callina,2014; Overton,2007).Through the family, values, customs, and traditions go hand in hand.The generations of familieshelp in reviving the culture of alcohol consumption through the rituals and ceremonies specific to their families and communities. There are various family-level ritualsociety. The use of alcoholic beverages in these rituals is unique. The rituals are unique, where deities, ancestors, and nature are worshipped by offering alcoholic beverages (Handia or local liquor). These rituals and ceremonies are attached to their familial belief system. The family members must attend and celebrate among themselves. The generations of the family get socialized with the beliefs and values related to these rituals, where alcoholic beverages play a crucial role.Lomnitz (1976)states that occasions for alcohol consumption arecategorised according to the size of the drinking group forms and the level of social integration. These occasions and practicesare ranged from the daily consumption in the family circle to large gatherings of tribes. So, the similar kinds of findings are found in relation to the tea gardens of Assam.

In the field of study, the motivation for consuming alcohol is considered to be social and cultural. Generations within a family are influenced or motivated to drink during rituals and ceremonies, making the motivation for drinking an important part of their culture. In other words, family members are influenced by each other to engage in drinking practices. This influence regarding drinking occurs from two sides: motivation from oneself and motivation from others.

It is expected for family members to attend ceremonies and actively participate in them. Being consistently involved in these events and the associated drinking practices can influence family members to drink. Cultural influences can also play a role in encouraging drinking, as family members may feel a cultural attachment to drinking within their family. Their participation in these activities can create an emotional bond with their family's culture, leading them to drink as they emulate the behaviour of older family members. Self-motivation plays a role as well, as family members may feel a sense of obligation to uphold and preserve their customs, traditions, and cultural practices related to drinking.

During cultural events, family members come together to uphold their traditions and customs. The younger members also embrace the cultural values and norms associated with the rituals and ceremonies, fostering a



sense of attachment to their families. However, there is a concerning influence of alcohol consumption during these events, as older family members often encourage and normalize drinking, labelling it as a cultural practice. This encouragement extends to other attendees such as neighbours and relatives, further influencing the younger members to drink. Many community members have confirmed that they were motivated to drink by outside influences. It is worth noting that there are no cultural limitations on motivating the younger married members, except for teenage school-goers and children. Additionally, neighbouring friends of the family members are often invited to these rituals, contributing to the normalization of alcohol consumption during cultural events. They also encourage them to drink in the rituals and ceremonies. As Bunzel (1940) states “in Chamula, however, drinking performs the function of lubricating social relations at a very basic level; you cannot enter into any kind of relationship with another person without first establishing the pattern of sharing a drink. This pattern could be due to infantile experiences.” So, in various regions of the world, it is mandatory thing for the members to drink and establish a communicable relationship during the socio-cultural rituals and practices. So, family have a great impact on a person’s drinking behaviour (Sudhinaraset et. al.,2016).

### **Community:**

The all of the members of the community are invited to the rituals. In these rituals, married people are entrusted with the opportunity to drink. Along with that elder members of the families are the experienced drinkers who helps in continuing and normalizing the tradition of drinking practices among the people. The members who participate get influenced by the other members (especially the elder members) to engage in alcohol consumption. Since Handia is regarded as a cultural drink there so, it is normalized among the members in such a way that it is used as a symbol of that ritual. The influence and motivation to drink is a natural, normal and social thing in these occasions. Mutual participation and co-ordination often lead to such drinking among the members(Bunzel,1976). In this situation, their relatives and friends also contribute in this regard. The system for socialization of that kind is constructed in such a way that it would build interconnections and interactions among the members of the communities. Apart from that there are also rituals and ceremonies to which the members from other communities are invited, so it's an obvious thing to get influenced by their nature and attitude toward drinking beverages.

### **Society or Area:**

The interactions among the cultures of these communities create a unique social structure that influences every member of the society. Previously, the traditional beverage Handia was only practised by tribal communities such as Oraon, Munda, and Santhal (Varma,2016). Through the processes of acculturation and cultural assimilation, other communities also practise the culture of drinking. At the area-level rituals and ceremonies, the members from different communities also get socialised through the individuals and the society. The area-level rituals are the main ground for the assimilation of the communities. The individuals get united and celebrate the ceremonies where they use alcohol and also consume it. This suggests the assimilation and socialisation among and through the other community members.

So, the cultural construction of alcohol consumption is such that it is related with socialization, motivations, cultural beliefs, cultural awareness etc. that constructs and attaches meaning for the normalisation of alcohol consumption in the tea garden society. Alcohol also plays functions in the traditional societies (such as tribal societies) in unifying, attaching the people with their cultures (Heath, 1995; Horton, 1943). So, alcohol (*Handia*) also works as a unifying stimulant and cultural ingredient for organising the people and the communities in the same cultural ground.

In the end it can be said that the colonial and cultural construction of alcohol consumption are connected with each other. But in some manners, the context of alcohol consumption

### **Conclusion:**

Alcohol consumption is a socio-cultural as well as colonial construct in terms of the tea gardens of Assam. Dwight B. Heath (1995) finds out that there are patterns of alcohol consumption in the various cultures of the world. The variations in these cultures are determined through the patterns of cultural attributes, customary practices, mores, beliefs etc. In the tea gardens of Assam, the impact of colonial as well as community culture can be seen on the patterns of alcohol consumption. Alcohol consumption in various manners is linked with the social system or the social structure. The social system and social structure of the society inside the tea gardens of Assam are different from other societies of the world. So, the culture of alcohol consumption in these societies are unique in nature. The colonial plantation structure and community moulded the behaviour of alcohol consumption in the tea gardens of Assam. Although, the cultural and social attributes are the key factors for the enhancement and the normalisation of alcohol in the tea gardens. Varma (2016) also agreed that the various working conditions and various cultural patterns shaped the patterns of alcohol consumption. The alcohol consumption was started with culture and was initiated through colonial regime. So, the backbone was the culture that affected the working life patterns through the management. So, if we want to study alcohol consumption in the tea gardens of Assam, we have to understand the history of it and the colonial management patterns. However, the working life standards and conditions of the workers also contributed in the normalisation of alcohol in their-to-day lives.

### **Recommendation:**

In the tea garden society of Assam, alcohol consumption is normalised and accepted behaviour through culture and colonial power. The paper tries to explain the socio-cultural and historical construction of alcohol consumption in the tea gardens of Assam. The problems associated with alcohol consumption in the tea gardens are to be studied systematically. The problems such as addiction, alcoholism are occurred due to the normalisation and acceptance behaviour regarding alcohol. These issues are needed to be studied for the betterment of the society.

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