



Yoga And The Alcohol Prohibition Policy: Relevance In Today's World

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Abstract

Yoga is one of the ancient sciences of the world and has been originated in India. At the present times, it has evolved as one of the alternative therapy for human beings. In this 21st century, the modern man is suffering from lots of stress and strains, due to which he/she needed relaxation to their body. Yoga provides a holistic way solution to the body. Anybody by learning simple postures or exercises performs Yoga and stays fit. This yogic tradition has been coming from ancient times and has been evolved at present times and accepted as a part of health. Alcohol prohibition has been also found in ancient Indian traditions and different philosophers have time and again articulated about the ills of alcohol consumption and need for prohibition. The concept of alcohol use in the name of *Somaras* can be traced right from Vedas and concept of prohibition right from the writings of Manu. In fact, alcohol prohibition has been incorporated in the form of policy and act in several states of Modern India. The present article will discuss the different yogic traditions and concept of alcohol prohibition and will help in explaining how it has evolved in contemporary time and how it has been different from its traditional philosophies. In the light of the article, it will begin with the introductory part that will make us familiar with Yoga and alcohol prohibition. It will be followed by the different philosophies of Yoga and alcohol ban and will help in understanding the evolution of both. The latter will be followed by the significance of yoga and alcohol prohibition. Lastly, it will contain the conclusion parts.

Key words: Yoga, Alcohol Prohibition, Traditional Philosophies, Health, Public Policy.

Introduction

The word 'yoga' means 'union'. It stands for the union of body, mind, and soul. It helps people to find peace amid chaos. It brings health and balance to our bodies, minds, and spirit and it helps people to reach into their inner selves and their inner happiness. The system of yoga has developed by the ancient spiritual wanderer a century ago and has been able to withstand all the resistance so far. It enables us to reveal direct knowledge about life to realize bliss and happiness. It has been believed that the practice of Yoga has been started at the very dawn of Indian civilization. The earliest archaeological evidence of yoga's existence could be found in stone seals that depict the figures of yoga poses. The stone seals place yoga's existence around 3000 B.C. But scholar argues that the existence of yoga is before the beginning of the Stone Age. The presence of yoga is available in folk traditions, Indus Valley civilizations, Vedic and Upanishads heritage, Buddhist and Jain philosophical traditions, Darshanas, an epic of Mahabharata and Ramayana, theistic traditions of *Shaivas*, *Vaishnavas*, *Tantric* traditions, and many more. In fact the concept of alcohol is no different from yoga as the history of alcohol consumption and demand of its ban existed in Indian culture, tradition and writings just the way yoga does. The concept of liquor and drinking is present in India since ancient age and it can be traced from the time of Vedas. The concept of *Somaras* is being mentioned in *Rigveda* itself. In fact, in later Vedic age the demand of prohibition gained momentum as it was found that it is giving birth to several ills of society. Even in medieval India rulers like Allaudin Khilji and Aurangzeb prohibited sell and purchase of alcohol and ordered for strong punishment if anyone found doing so.

However, the concept of prohibition is not delimited to Indian culture but it also has international connotations. In simple terms, Prohibition is comprehended as a praxis that is unsolicited by law. In general, Prohibition is accustomed in an Islamic state where the religion forbids the consumption of intoxicating liquor. It is not merely a matter of political conviction or health concern. Even though a legal ban against drinking/alcoholism and the luxury taxation on all alcoholic beverages, most of these measures have little or no effect. The history of prohibition can be traced back to 1772 BCE in the "Code of Hanummagarhi" where the selling of beer was specifically banned for money.

Although, there are divergent perceptions among thinkers/philosophers of West & East regarding prohibition objectives seems to be a closer one. John Stuart Mill advocated for liberty and all his works/ideas wheeling around individual liberty and freedom, he was cynical regarding the use of liquor by public officials. In his essay 'on liberty,' he argued that "No person ought to be punished simply for being drunk, but a soldier or a policeman should be punished for being drunk on duty."¹ Yoga and the concept of alcohol ban is as old as human civilization. The ancient Indian scriptures and texts have evidence of the same.

¹ Mill, J. S. (1859). *On Liberty*. London: Longman, Green & Co.

Philosophical Traditions of Yoga:

Yoga is an integral part of Hinduism and has been practiced in India for over 5000 years as a way of freeing the mind, body, and spirit. Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism have also included Yoga and meditation as part of their theology. In ancient times, the basic purpose of or form of yoga is spiritual. It has been said that Lord Shiva has been considered as the first teacher of yoga. Several seals and fossils remain of Indus Valley Civilization with Yogic motives and figures performing Yoga-Sadhana suggesting the presence of yoga in ancient India. Before going to the different philosophical traditions, one should first understand the changing trends of yoga according to the time. To analysis the transforming trends of yoga, one can divide the history of yoga into four periods in the following way -

Vedic Period- It is the oldest known yogic teaching found in the Vedas is called Vedic Yoga. This time the Vedic people realized on *Rishis* or dedicated Vedic *Yogis* to teach them how to live in divine harmony. In this period, yoga is found in the sacred scriptures of Brahmanism which is the basis of modern-day Hinduism. The *Yogic Rishis* were living in forests/seclusion and could see the ultimate reality through their intensive spiritual practice. Veda talks about knowledge. According to it, there are three defects in the mind. These are *mala*, which is dirt, waste, excessive thoughts, and emotions. Secondly, there is *Avaran*, which means that it is very hard for us to see the truth. Bhakti and gyana yoga exist in order to remove avaran or cover.

Pre-Classical Period- The creation of *Upanishads*, marks the beginning of pre-classical Yoga. The 200 scriptures of the Upanishads describe the inner- vision of reality resulting from devotion to *Brahman*. It explains the three subjects- Ultimate Reality (The *Brahmans*), the Transcendental Self (*Atman*), and the relationship between these two. Bhagavad Gita was created and is currently the oldest known yoga scripture. However, it doesn't point to a specific time, wherein yoga could have been initiated. The focal point of Gita is that to be alive means to be active and in order to avoid difficulties in our lives and in others, our actions have to be benign and have to exceed our egos. The central point of Gita is that to be active means to be active and in order to avoid difficulties in our lives and in others, our actions (*karma*) have to be benign and have to exceed our egos. Gita defines Yoga as a "*Karmasu Kaushalam*" which means the art of work is Yoga. The Gita has tried to unify *Bhakti Yoga*, *Gyana Yoga*, and *Karma Yoga* and because of this, it has gained importance even in the Globalized phase. Bhakti Yoga means devotion or love to the supreme authority. Devotion is not some mysterious gift that one can get it; it requires consistent efforts to cultivate it. The word Karma has been derived from the Sanskrit word "*Kri*" which means "to do". It is a path that leads to salvation, which is the ultimate state of consciousness. It states that to do work without thinking of the results. Attachment with the result leads to stress, competition, and aggression. Karma Yoga leads to an individual towards work and leads to a satisfying life. The action of the person who acts without desire should be much better than that of the person who acts with desire. The term *gyana* Yoga means "Knowledge or wisdom". It is the path of attaining knowledge of the true nature of reality through the practice of mediation, self-inquiry, and contemplation. In it, we use knowledge as the sacrifice or the means to liberation by stabilizing our minds in the contemplation of God. The fundamental

goal of *gyana* Yoga is to become liberated from the illusionary world of *Maya* and to achieve the union of the inner self. In this period Buddhism stresses the importance of meditation and the practices of physical postures.

Classical Period- This period witnessed the most fertile and prominent for history of yoga. This period marked the creation of the “*Yoga-Sutra*”, written by Patanjali around the second century. It is Patanjali, who systematically codifies, yoga. He was also known as the father of Yoga. It was Patanjali who has been credited for putting together a formal cohesive philosophy of Yoga and presenting it systematically in his book *Yoga Sutra*. He has provided the very essence of philosophy and teaching of yoga in a highly systematic and scientific exposition. He defines it as a “*Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha*”; means to have mastery over the mind is yoga. Or it could be described as stopping of the fluctuations of the psyche. He said that yoga means the restraints of the mental modifications i.e.-the control of thought waves in the mind (*Chitta*). The mind/*Chitta* is made up of three components- *Manas*, *Buddhi*, and *Ahamkara*. So, for Patanjali, the tendencies of *Chitta* are going outside, are to be restrained and those outside tendencies to be removed from worldly objects and to be overturned by doing/taking own inner *Chitta* and absorbing in its original *Chitta* is called yoga. In his book, he mentions about the eightfold path of yoga are also called the eight limbs of classical yoga. They are- *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, and *Samadhi*. Patanjali used Yoga for the restraining of mental modifications and for it yoga system prescribes the practice of intense concentration utilizing which the aspirant or the *Sadhak* attains an absolutely quiet state of mind, where the supreme metaphysical truth is directly known. His book has been composed of 195 Sutras, which expound upon Raj Yoga and its underlying principles. These Sutras are divided into four chapters. The first chapter is ‘*Samadhi Pada*’ which provides a definition and the purpose of yoga. In this, it has been discussed that various approaches can be used to achieve the objectives of yoga. The second chapter is ‘*Sadhana Pada*’, which contains the practical approach to achieving the goals of yoga. In this, the sage Patanjali gives the eight limbs of yoga which is called Ashtanga Yoga. Third is the ‘*Vibhuti Pada*’ and it focuses on some of the supernatural powers that a yogi may be able to attain. Last is the ‘*Kaivalya Pada*’ which discusses the nature of the mind and mental perceptions, desire, bondage, and liberation and follows are discussed.

Post-classical Period- It differs from the first three, as its focus is more on the present. The Post-Classical Period exists from 800 A.D. to 1700 A.D. It no longer strives to liberate a person from reality but rather teaches one to accept it and live in the moment. Yoga was introduced in the West during the early 19th century. It was studied as a part of Eastern philosophy and began as a movement for health and vegetarianism around the 1930s. By the 1960s, there was an influx of Indian teachers, who expounded on Yoga. This period witness the teachings of Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, and Madhavacharya. And also the teaching of Surdas, Tulsidas, and Purandardas has been expounded. In this period, Yoga is something different from its traditional philosophies. In the traditional period, yoga is seen as more spiritualistic in nature and is performed by the Rishis whereas in this period yoga is mostly seen in the form of exercises, and meditations and it reaches to common people.

After this, the period of modern yoga has been started. Yoga has started to popularize in the world. It has been said that Yoga has been introduced to the world, through the speech of Swami Vivekananda in 1893 at Chicago. His book Raj Yoga in 1986 delineates methods of concentration and ways to liberate the soul from the body that had become hugely influential in Western society. Vivekananda was the first Indian teacher to actively advocate and disseminate aspects of yoga to a Western audience. After that, Paramhansa Yogananda popularizes Yoga abroad. After that, lots of Indian yoga Guru helps in its popularization across the globe. Some are: Yoga Guru T. Krishnamacharya (1888-1989) was known as the father of modern yoga. He contributed to the revival of Hath Yoga. His teaching was on the principle that- what is appropriate for an individual. It was his works that were expounded to the world. B.K.S. Iyengar was the founder of the Iyengar style of yoga. He was one of the earliest students of T. Krishnamacharya. In 1966, his book "Light on Yoga", became an international seller. He told that yoga allows us to find a new kind of freedom that we may not have known even existed. Indra Devi is a Russian-born lady who introduced yoga into American Popular culture. She was the first lady to be taught by the Krishnamacharya in 1927. Swami Shivananda was the proponent of the Vedanta. He founded the Divine Life Society (DLS) in 1963 on the bank of Ganga in Rishikesh. S. Shridharan was one of the pioneer teachers of yoga. At present, he was the managing trustee of Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram and also a member of the department of Ayush and Moraji Desai National Institute of Yoga. Kamlesh D. Patel is the president of the non-profit organization founded by Shri Ram Chandra Mission in 1945. Since, 2014 it is associated with the UN Department of public information. Later, Baba Ramdev popularized yoga across the globe. These all have created a platform by popularizing yoga abroad. They make an easy task for the government to use its cultural programs abroad.

Philosophical traditions of Alcohol Prohibition

The history of demand of prohibition in India right from Vedic to post independence era can be traced and in relation with this context several philosophers and writers have given their views. A brief analysis of some of the views of philosophers are as followed:

Manu- Manu was a wise man who understood that in order to defeat evil, it must be outlawed rather than contained. He then focused on finding and eliminating the bad. He set very rigorous guidelines/measures to discourage drinking. He believed that the king's drinking was his worst vice. He suggested that the king promptly demote the alcohol vendors and brand the drinkers with a wine cup mark on the forehead. Alcohol drinking was a grave offence for a twice-born person. Manu not only discussed the drawbacks of alcohol use, but he also made a clear connection between it and the descent into hell. In fact, he outright prohibited women from using it. He established appropriate guidelines for living in this planet. While past moralists permitted drinking for religious grounds, Manu was adamantly opposed to it.

Gandhi- Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to the independence of India is well known and well-documented. However, Gandhi's dedication to temperance, a crucial component of his vision for an independent India, is remarkably underappreciated. Gandhi was the one who convinced the Indian National Congress to prioritise ending prohibition. A priority that ultimately led to the mention of prohibition in India's first

constitution, adopted in 1949. Gandhi's proposal of prohibition was founded on the justification that it would assist India's lower classes, who consumed the majority of the country's alcohol. He claimed in 1925 that the alcohol curse is the second-most heinous thing after untouchability. "Those who are addicted to drugs and alcohol lose moral integrity. Only women who have alcoholic husbands are aware of the evil effects alcohol has on once-orderly and peaceful homes".² According to Gandhi, drinking alcohol deprives consumers of their reason as well as their money. He also notes that most addicts are ashamed of their habit when they are cognizant. Gandhi describes the horrible events that drunkards in South Africa, Britain, and other nations went through as well as how they lead lives devoid of grace. He notes that everyone in India, from kings and the wealthy to addict laborers, is in a similarly pitiful circumstance.

Raja Ji- Rajaji had a sincere faith in Gandhi. Gandhi's idea of prohibition is based on the Hindu belief that drinking is immoral. But they weren't actually widespread until the 1930s. His viewpoint was greatly inspired by Western temperance movements. Because Rajaji, who came to power in 1937, was a man of moral ideals, the temperance argument was vital. Rajaji was brought up in the temperance tradition of the 19th and 20th centuries. He asserted that the people of India are total abstainers. Few people routinely consume alcohol, which in the case of the lower classes results in great poverty. One advantage of prohibition, according to Rajaji, was that the average consumer spent almost three times as much on alcohol as the government received in excise taxes. This meant that the amount of loss to the drinking public was three times more than the amount the state benefited from the tax, which was mostly levied on the low incomes of the working-class poor, who constituted the majority of the drinking population. Therefore, from the perspective of equitable taxation, the distribution of the excise tax to the nation-building programmes was unfair and uneven.

E. V. Ramasamy Naikar- One of Tamil Nadu's social reformers was E.V.R. He spearheaded the anti-alcohol movement in 1921 and felled 500 coconut trees on his property and in his Salem dhadnampati, giving the anti-drink movement a boost. He was imprisoned because of his anti-alcohol crusade. Under the direction of E.V.R., a campaign against India's long-standing drinking culture and for the closure of toddy stores was launched for the first time in the country's history in 1921.

Significance of Yoga and Alcohol Prohibition

Yoga being a subject of varied interest has gained worldwide popularity. Since the declaration of the 21st of June as the International Day for Yoga, it has been globally accepted. It unites the inner consciousness of the universe. Human beings are made up of three components- body, mind, and soul and correspondingly these three need health, knowledge, and inner peace. Health is a physical need; knowledge is our psychological need and inner peace is the spiritual need and when all these three are present then there is harmony. In this modern world of the 21st century, our environment is struggling for endurance and survival and we human beings suffer from more and more physical and psychological stress and strains.

² Gandhi, M. K. (1909). *Hind Swaraj*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House.

Yoga provides solutions to these stress and strains. Thus, yoga is a way of life for good living for the benefit of the body. In modern times, the human being has become more materialistic, empiricism, pragmatism, and utilitarianism. In modern time, human lays stress on urbanization and industrialization. So, could say that the modern time of civilization is on the external world and the external aspects of human personality. The entire attention of yoga, on the other hand, is on the internal or the psychic world, and on the trans-empirical aspects of human personality. Yoga has evolved as a means which provides relaxation to the people of modern civilization. Yoga provides the best solutions to these problems to which modern man is a sufferer. Now, in this situation, it has been thought that Yoga is a boon for the “modern man” of the 21st century, which has become a victim of everyday stress. Thus yoga is being got popular worldwide. Yogic exercises recharge the body with cosmic energy and facilitate:

- Attainment of perfect equilibrium and harmony
- Promotes self-healing
- Removes negative blocks from the mind and toxins from the body
- Enhance personal power
- Increase self-awareness
- Helps in attention, focus, and concentration, especially important for children
- Reduce stress and tension in the physical body by activating the parasympathetic nervous system

The specific impacts and consequences of alcohol prohibition can vary depending on the context and the effectiveness of implementation, here are some of the significant aspects often associated with alcohol prohibition:

Social and Health Impact: One of the main motivations behind alcohol prohibition is to address the negative social and health consequences associated with excessive alcohol consumption. Alcohol abuse can lead to a range of health issues, including liver disease, cardiovascular problems, and mental health disorders. Prohibition aims to reduce these health risks and promote public well-being.

Crime Reduction: Alcohol prohibition is often implemented with the intention of reducing crime rates associated with alcohol consumption. Excessive alcohol use can contribute to public disorder, violence, and criminal activities such as drunk driving, domestic violence, and illicit alcohol trade. Prohibition seeks to curb these criminal behaviors by restricting access to alcohol.

Moral and Religious Beliefs: In some cases, alcohol prohibition is driven by moral or religious beliefs that view alcohol consumption as sinful or harmful to society. Prohibition laws are implemented to align with these values and promote a more virtuous and disciplined society.

Economic Considerations: Alcohol prohibition can have significant economic implications. On one hand, it may reduce healthcare costs related to alcohol abuse and decrease the burden on social services. On the other hand, it can lead to the loss of tax revenue generated from the alcohol industry, job losses in the

alcohol production and distribution sector, and the emergence of an underground economy associated with illicit alcohol production and sales.

Public Safety and Traffic Accidents: Restricting alcohol consumption can contribute to public safety by reducing incidents of drunk driving and associated traffic accidents. Prohibition laws are intended to prevent individuals from driving under the influence of alcohol and protect the lives of both the drinkers and innocent bystanders.

Cultural and Social Norms: Alcohol prohibition can have an impact on cultural and social norms surrounding alcohol consumption. It can shape attitudes towards drinking and promote alternative forms of socializing and entertainment that do not revolve around alcohol. Prohibition can influence societal values and behaviors regarding alcohol use in the long term.

It is important to note that the effectiveness of alcohol prohibition measures can vary depending on a range of factors, including public compliance, enforcement capabilities, and the presence of alternative substances or activities that may replace alcohol consumption. The historical examples of alcohol prohibition, such as the Prohibition era in the United States (1920-1933), have demonstrated both successes and challenges in achieving the desired outcomes. Policy approaches like regulation, public education, and harm reduction strategies are also employed in addressing the social and health issues associated with alcohol consumption.

Alcohol Prohibition as policy

There are laws outlawing the consumption of alcohol in several nations, including India. Here is a quick rundown of alcohol prohibition in India and other noteworthy cases from other countries:

India's prohibition of alcohol:

1. Gujarat: Since its creation in 1960, the Indian state of Gujarat has maintained a prohibition policy. Except for medical and industrial uses, alcohol is not allowed to be sold or consumed in the state. The region's prevailing social and cultural values have a significant impact on the policy.
2. Bihar: The sale and consumption of alcohol were completely outlawed in the Indian state of Bihar in 2016. This action was taken to address the social and health problems brought on by alcohol consumption. Initial results of the prohibition included a decline in crime and auto accidents, but problems with smuggling and the illegal alcohol trade have also surfaced.
3. Kerala: Over the years, Kerala, an Indian state, has gradually tightened its alcohol laws. In order to reduce the availability of alcohol, the government has closed pubs and encouraged abstention. A total ban hasn't, though, been put into effect in the state.

Policies Against Alcohol in Other Nations:

1. United States (restriction Period): The Prohibition period in the United States, which lasted from 1920 to 1933, is one of the most well-known cases of alcohol restriction. Alcoholic beverages were prohibited by the U.S. Constitution's 18th Amendment from being produced, sold, and distributed. Unintended effects of this programme, however, included the growth of organised crime and the illegal alcohol trade. With the passage of the 21st Amendment, the amendment was eventually revoked.
2. Saudi Arabia: For religious and cultural reasons, Saudi Arabia imposes a stringent type of alcohol prohibition. Alcohol is not permitted to be purchased, consumed, or imported into the nation, and violators face harsh punishments.
3. Iran: Iran has enacted a policy of partial alcohol prohibition. Although alcohol is officially prohibited from manufacturing, sale, and use, there are exceptions made for non-Muslim religious minority, and alcohol is available on the black market.
4. Sweden: Systembolaget is a state-run alcohol retail monopoly in Sweden. It imposes stringent restrictions on alcoholic beverage availability and sales. Although it is not entirely forbidden, alcohol distribution is heavily regulated by the government.

It's vital to remember that alcohol prohibition policies' efficiency and effects can vary greatly based on a variety of elements, including cultural norms, enforcement capacity, public acceptance, and the presence of substitute substances or activities. Countries have frequently implemented substitute strategies, such as legislation, taxes, public education, and harm reduction.

Conclusion

For India, this Yoga could play an important role in engaging the world with Indian values. Yoga has been known as an integral part of the Indian culture. Since ancient times, it has been practiced by the countrymen but now has been accepted by the entire world. As in the 21st century, human being has become a sufferer, due to their hectic workload. Humans became mechanical men. It needs a toning to all the muscles and organs: which could be fulfilled through simple yoga. In today's world, yoga is a boon for the modern man, which has become a victim of everyday stress. The yoga activities provide the fuel for the upliftment of the body, mind, and soul. Regular yoga practice builds mental lucidity and coolness, boosts body awareness, relieves stress patterns, relaxes the mind, and sharpens concentrations.

Combining yoga practices with public policy efforts creates a multi-faceted approach that addresses the underlying factors contributing to alcohol consumption while promoting overall well-being and healthier lifestyle choices. However, it is important to recognize that addressing alcohol abuse requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach involving healthcare systems, education, community support, and policy interventions.

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