Ban on liquor - Part II

Click here for Part I

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What is the issue?

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- The liquor shops on national and state highways have been recently banned by Supreme Court.

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- But the judgement bans only liquor shops and exempt bars.
- All opportunities for drinking must be removed from the highways.
- The liquor lobby is already trying to neutralise the SC order.
- In several places, moves are afoot to transfer the management of highways to municipal corporations to bypass the apex court ban which applies only to national and state highways.

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Is the freedom of choice compromised?

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- The judgement infringes on individuals right to decide with their own free will.
- But alcohol influences the brain and compromises its ability to make a reasoned choice.
- Moreover, there is third party damage.

- Those around the abusers like wives, children, neighbours, those walking or driving on the streets, the poor sleeping on footpaths, employers, colleagues, even recipients of the drunk's service are at grievous risk.
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- Therefore the issue is not simply about the freedom of choice of drinkers.
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- It is also the freedom of life, safety and dignity, of family income and the productivity of other people.
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- Therefore the issue is more in the realm of betterment of society than the individual freedom.
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- Also the state has the constitutional obligation of the state regarding prohibition.
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Whether prohibition is effective?

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- According to WHO, the annual per adult consumption of absolute alcohol in India is 4,000 ml.
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- It is 100 ml in Pakistan and 200 ml in Bangladesh.
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- In the predominantly Buddhist Myanmar and Bhutan, it is 700 ml.
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- It is less than 1,000 ml in 26 countries where governments and culture have taken an anti-alcohol view.
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- So culture does influence peoples' behaviour, especially when the government also holds a similar view.
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- Most religions in India prohibit drinking.
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- If government policy and efforts complement this cultural factor, lessening the present alcohol consumption will not be impossible.
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- Even countries like France and Italy, known for their drinking culture, have reduced alcohol consumption by a third.
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- Russia aims to reduce it by 55 per cent.

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- Alcohol consumption might never become zero.
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- So the initial focus of prohibition should be towards reducing alcohol consumption.
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Source: The Indian Express

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