

# Importance of Local Drinks in the Economic Development of Himachal Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

Himachal Pradesh is located in the Himalayan regions of the northern part of India. Its climate varies from humid subtropical to dry tropical alpine because of its geographical conditions. The economy of Himachal Pradesh is an agriculture-predominated economy. However, it seems rat race to term the Himachal economy as an agriculture economy, as it is abundant with precipitous cliffs and the gradation of a large portion of land is more than 40 degrees. It has only 10.4 percent agriculture land out of its total geographical area of 55,673 square meters. Eighty percent of this meagre agricultural land depends upon the rain, and 10% is irrigated with the irrigational resources. Its contribution to the state gross domestic product is 13% in 2020 (economic survey report 2020). Thus, it is not an agriculturally predominated economy; however, it must be termed a human resource-predominated economy. It's always spent on the revenue expenditure. It is estimated to spend Rs. 33, 463 crore on committed expenditure, which includes salaries, pensions, and interest payments. The debt of the state has been budgeted at 425% of gross domestic product in the financial year 202044-25. It is higher than the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission indicative debt estimate of 32.8% of the gross domestic product of the state. It beckons towards the poor financial condition and serious financial concerns of Himachal Pradesh. It necessitates finding new modes of resources. The main source of revenue, which has been largely ignored until now, is the local liquor (desidar). Lugri, Chulli, Angoori, Kinnauri, Dru/Chakti, Behami, Arak, or Ara are the major local alcoholic drinks (DesiDaru) fermented in different districts of Himachal Pradesh. The fragmented alcoholic beverages have remained a major ingredient of the food menu since the beginning of civilization. The technique of preparing fermented alcoholic beverages has also almost remained the same, with a few changes in it since the inception of its production. These drinks carry with them a legacy of socio-cultural values among the tribal communities. These beverages not only have an inherited association with rituals but are also consumed for nutritive and therapeutic purposes. These drinks are not only rich in their texture, flavor, and nutrition but also fortified with the goodness of probiotic microflora (microorganisms that are promoted for health purposes), which plays an imperative role in enhancing the overall dietary profile of the drinks. Ethno-medicinal plants are used by the natives of the tribal belt for the fermentation of ethnic drinks. Utilization of these plants and herbs, which are found in the high-altitude topography of the state, enhances the therapeutic values of these alcoholic beverages. This paper is a theoretical attempt to ascertain the economic benefits of these drinks to the local economy and to the coffer if these are permitted by granting licenses for commercial purposes.

**Keywords:** Precipitous Cliffs, Fragmented Alcoholic Beverages, 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission, Therapeutic Purposes

## INTRODUCTION

The beverage industry, especially wines, plays an important role in bringing a significant amount of tax revenue to the Treasury of the government. The convention of distilling wine from food grains and fruits has been experienced since long; however, it got impetus during the Portuguese and East India company arrivals in India. Some of the couplets of the Mahabharata and Old Testament in the Bible provide enough testimonies of wine to be in vogue during the time these epics were written. Its use in China and Egypt during 2000 BC and 3000 BC, respectively, was also prevalent. Some of the alcoholic beverages like Chhang, Lugri, Aara, and Chiag are conventionally distilled from fruits and cereals in Himachal Pradesh. It is largely heard from the people that this domestic alcohol has nutritional content and is economically cheaper than English wine. These are generally distilled during the summer as of the congenial temperature for the fermentation of the cereals and extract wine from them. After conducting a survey in these areas, it was found that these products are regularly consumed by the natives, and their production and consumption increase during festivals, marriage and engagement ceremonies, and other special occasions known as Tagri (Goji). There are many other occasions in these areas where different local alcoholic beverages are served to the guests and the natives gather there.

The Indian Himalayan Regions (IHR) nourish and cherish the ecological flora and fauna. It covers Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Darjeeling Hills, Arunachal Pradesh, and some hilly regions of north Assam. Tamang, 2001; Nehal, 2013.. The inhabitants of this area have their own traditional insights, which they have achieved in legacy, and lead a tough life because of the precipitous geographical terrain of the tribal

belt where they live. They have unique characteristics of living because of the geographical conditions and banquet style. They have gained traditional knowledge of the techniques and different gradients of raw materials to prepare alcoholic beverages. (McGovern, 2009; Dutfield, 2010; Egea et al., 2015).

This paper is an attempt to analyze the importance of aforesaid alcoholic beverages to mobilize the tax revenue to the Treasury and also ascertain their utility in the state as well as the national and international markets. Goa is one of the states that raises a significant amount of tax revenue from alcoholic beverages. The most popular alcoholic drink “Feni” in Goa has been flourishing in institutional patronage as it is bestowed the heritage drink status by the state government. It has also gained a geographical indication (GI) tag. This sign reflects a specific geographical origin, which tags it with certain quality and reputation across the global market. The Goa government is mobilizing one percent of its state revenue, which sounds quite significant to give impetus to its economic development.

Himachal Pradesh, as having a miniscule scope of large-scale industry and mechanization of the agriculture sector because of its precipitous terrain, must harness and utilize its resources, which are traditionally found here. The government must ponder over to give its patronage to the natives of Chamba, LahulSipiti, Kinaur, and Mandi (Karsog) to produce it not for subsistence but for commercial purposes to make them supplement their livelihood and also sell it outside their native places in the state as well as in the country and export it across the globe to mobilize resources in the state in the similar mode of Goa.

These drinks must be bestowed with the “heritage status” to make them popular drinks across the world. It appears to be the potential gigantic resources of tax revenue for the government to mobilize funds for the economic development of the emerging economy of the hilly state. It will facilitate our tourism industry and enable natives to sell their products, which are rarely found in other places in the world. The commercialisation of “PahariDaru” mountainous drink seems to revolutionize the debt-ridden economy of Himachal. According to the 2019-2020 report of the national family health survey (NFHS-5), consumption of liquor and tobacco among men is higher in rural areas compared to urban areas in Himachal Pradesh.

#### Alcoholic Drink Fermented in Tribal Belt of Himachal Pradesh

Different types of alcoholic drinks are fermented in the tribal belt of Himachal Pradesh. (Thakur et al. 2004; Joshi et al. 2012; Kumari et al. 2015).

**Table No. 1: Fruits and Cereals Used for the Preparation of Traditional Alcoholic Beverages by the Kinnauras in Kinnaur**

S. No	Scientific Name	Family	Common Name	Local Name	Part Used	Traditional Beverages
	Eleusinecoracana (L.) Gaertn.	Poaceae	Finger Millet	Kodro, Koda	Grains	KodruRak
	FagopyrumesculentumMoench	Poygonaceae	Buck wheat	Olgo, Ogla, Ogli	Grains	OlgoRak
	Fagopyrumtataricum (L.) Gaertn.	Polygonaceae	Duck wheat	Bras, Bra, Phaphra	Grains	BrasuRak
	Hordeumvulgare L.	Poaceae	Barley	Tag, Cha, Jhau	Grains	Chang, TaguRak
	Maluspumila Mill.	Rosaceae	Apple	Pale, Seo	Fruits	SeoRak
	Diospyros kaki Thunb	Ebenaceae	Japanese Persimon	JapaniPhal	Fruits	JapanifolanguRak
	Prunusarmeniaca L.	Rosaceae	Wild Apricot	Chul, Chuli	Fruits	ChuluRak
	PrunuscerasiferaEhrh	Rosaceae	Cherry Plum	Plum	Fruits	PlumuRak
	Prunusdomestica L.	Rosaceae	European Plum	Lucha	Fruits	LuchaRak
	PrunusmiraKoehne	Rosaceae	Wild Peach	Reg, Behmi	Fruits	ReguRak
	PrunuspersicaBatsch	Rosaceae	Peach	Aadu	Fruits	AaduRak
	Pyruscommunis L.	Rosaceae	Pear	Nahpoti, Nashpati	Fruits	NaspotiRak
	Triticumaestivum L.	Poaceae	Wheat	Jod, OjaGandam	Grains	JoduRak, Chang, Nesang Brandi
	Vitisvinifera L	Vitaceae	Grape	Dakhang	Fruits	Angoori, DakhangRak, Sudung
	Arisaemajacquemontii Bl.	Araceae	Cobra Lily	Zamashang	Tuberous roots	ZamashangRak

The production of ragi, barley, wheat, rice, apples, grapes, and wild apricot, which is known as chulli in the local dialect, is found in abundance in this belt of the state. Conventional fermented alcoholic beverages of Himachal

Pradesh are extracted from organic material with the help of traditional techniques, which have been transferred over the generations to the current generation. The account of the scientific and country names of the beverages and the raw material used to ferment them has been portrayed in Table 1. The techniques of its processing are kept undisclosed, and the world is still naïve about it, which is only inherited to tribes. Thus, this alcohol steals the show against *Angrezi's* (English) counterparts, which mean an imported alcohol in the state. The locals always prefer homemade DesiDaru over the imported alcohol in Himachal Pradesh. Though the consumption of alcohol is considered a vice by many, one can find alcohols and their variants in all households.

### **Employment and Production of Phari Liquor in Himachal Pradesh**

Wine demand in the market of India is par value of US\$ one fifty million; the demand for imported wine is accounted for at thirty percent, and the rest is met domestically. The wine market grows at a compound growth rate of twenty to twenty-five percent. The conventional social and cultural taboo about drinking alcoholic beverages is gradually mitigating, and serving wine in all ceremonies and functions is gaining momentum and becoming a status icon among the young generation and upwardly mobile classes of the country and the nation. Economy's' infrastructural changes have brought about occupational changes, which result in changes in lifestyles. Raising disposable income, inclination towards western cultures, and overstate education have contributed to the popularity of wine culture among the young generation of its rural basin. As per the Keynes principle, aggregate demand is the main instrumental factor of industrial production and employment. If the Phari liquor is given license to the natives of the pahari region, it will facilitate employment growth in the state.

The scope of the alcohol industry in India in terms of employment is very remarkable, providing a livelihood for a staggering 79 lakh individuals, which accounts for 15% of the total employment in the country from its production, supply chain, and retail management. It creates employment opportunities in the subsidiaries, such as transportation, marketing, and retail that are significant subsidiary avenues for the distribution and sale of alcohol products. The alcohol industry in Himachal Pradesh is a significant sub-sector for creating employment in the agriculture sector, which caters for the required raw materials for the liquor industry. The alcohol industry in India is far more than just a lifestyle choice. It is a significant economic growth propeller as it gives impetus to the government coffers and employment in agriculture and the food and beverage industry. It helps many families earn their livelihood and stimulates the growth of the rural economy.

### **Techniques of production of local alcoholic beverages**

The history of fermentation and serving alcoholic beverages goes back to 7000–6650 BC. Purposeful and subsistence production of alcoholic drinks was common, and it reflected cultural and religious peculiarities as well as geographical conditions. Chemical analysis recently confirmed that primitive alcoholic beverages in the world were a mixed fermented drink of rice, honey, and hawthorn fruit or grapes. These are produced by using the above-mentioned ingredients by treating them with yeast at a controlled temperature. Many historical evidences are available that provide insight about the procedure of production and how different communities around the world had been consuming these drinks on different cultural and religious occasions and in different geographical and societal conditions. The consumption of these drinks was in vogue because of their medicinal and nutritive values. It also served as a source of recreation and pleasure to the guests and the natives of their tribes during various ceremonies and rituals. (Tamang 2010)

Fermentation is a microbiological process, and indigenous people hardly recognised the knowledge of microbial activities. The fermentation methods are used to prepare them in the high-altitude areas, which experience low temperatures. They use those resilient microorganisms that are capable of surviving and performing fermentation at low temperatures. It takes place when raw material is mixed with starter culture and stored in a closed container. Fermentation takes place when raw materials are mixed with starter culture and kept in a closed container. Starter cultures are nothing but inoculums [1], which contain microorganisms that are required to initiate the fermentation process of alcoholic beverages. Natural ways of fermentation are applied in the foods; however, a group of microorganisms is used in the production process of alcoholic beverages in which valuable potentials of microbes are used. The production of fermented food happens to be the action of the metabolism of complex biota, which comprises the native microorganisms. It is generally related to the basic raw materials and selected microorganisms inoculated as starter cultures. The bacteria, yeasts and molds are different categories of microorganisms that are involved in the traditional alcoholic beverage fermentation. The microorganisms are of probiotic nature and are considered friendly agents for enhancing human health.

### **Salubrious Importance of Local Liquor in Himachal Pradesh**

According to local people, who were included in the study survey in Kinnaur district, it was mentioned that grape wine (in the local dialect known as Angoori) is used by pregnant women by mixing with the extract of apricot to get relief from pain. It is also used by the natives as a remedial remedy for various ailments like joint pain, constipations, flatulence, and rheumatism. Natives also use it with honey and cow butter as medicinal doses to cure cough, cold, and

fever since they have been living there. They also issue it as an ointment by mixing it with mustard oil to cure dandruff and hair allergies. The mixture of it with *Behmi oil* is also used to get relief from skin allergies and itching problems. The alcohol fermented from apricot is used to cure indigestion and acidity problems. Furthermore, "*ZamashangMoori*" is used by the natives in the treatment of fever, pneumonia, and chest congestion.

Ordinarily, the villagers believe in traditional and local medicinal remedies to cure the niggling diseases, as they do not have any side effects like allopathic medicines. Thus, the government of Himachal Pradesh must take institutional initiatives to bring it under its own patronage by licensing its production not for subsistence but for commercial purposes. It will have dual advantages, i.e., it will supplement the income and living standard of the natives and bulge the size of the coffer by generating extra tax revenue from the intra- and interstate sale of its production.

### **Cultural Ceremonial Significance of Local Liquor in Himachal Pradesh**

The use of local liquor has been carrying ethical and cultural values from generations. It is deemed indigenous ambrosia in different rituals and ceremonies across the tribal belt of Chamba, Kulu, Mandi, Kinnaur, and Lahaul-Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh. It has its own significance during performing pooja of local Devtas (worship of local deities) and in celebrating the spectrum of religious sacraments in the temples of the gods of their respective clans. Local liquor is served as 'Serkem' during the offering of oblations in the fire sacrifice ceremonies (Hawna) in Buddhist religious ceremonies. It is also known as Nimit in the local dialect during its utilization in performing rituals to gratify their clans' deities, especially at the time of festivals, betrothal ceremonies, marriages, and birth and death ceremonies.

It has been observed that natives of the tribal belt of Himachal Pradesh prefer to have local Daru (domestic liquor) over the other alcoholic beverages available in the market. Thus, the traditional values of these drinks necessitate the institutional initiatives to grant licenses for the production of such drinks, which have been carrying with them the social, religious, and economic values for the people over the generations.

### **Causality of Local Liquor and Economic Welfare and Development of the Himachal Pradesh**

Since the economy of Himachal Pradesh has been passing through financial crunches, the institutional approval for the open production of local alcoholic drinks with the scientific techniques would definitely be helpful to raise the income resources of the people of the tribal belt and economic growth of Himachal Pradesh. The peasants of the tribal belt have been seen selling country liquor (DeshiDaru) to meet their routine expenses. Generally, the women are seen as traditionally involved in the production of country liquor. After having sold the liquor produced by them, they spend the proceeds of it to purchase household goods and to meet their minor expenditures. Commercial production of it with the help of traditional and modern techniques will result in an increase in the employment opportunities at different levels of the supply chain to make it reach the delivery point in the market. It will also be an enabling resource for generating tax revenues for the coffer that helps the government facilitate economic development.

Women's engagement in the production of assorted kinds of country liquor in the tribal belt will prove a mascot to socially and economically empower women and make them live with pride and vanity. It will also help women to live their independent lives. It helps them to think beyond their traditional household and domestic work to set up their own small-scale industries either along the parallel line or may start other lucrative businesses of their own choice.

The legal production will also mitigate the crime rate because of the engagement of the people in the lucrative activities of its production, which help them to earn a striking amount of money to live a prosperous life. They would not move away but rather have a busy schedule of life. Thus, they will not have a little time to think and be involved in any kind of criminal activity. It will reduce an administrative expenditure to maintain law and order in the far-flung areas of the state.

The institutional patronage for the production of country liquor will help to mobilize resources not for the producer only, living in the tribal belt, but for the coffer also. The government of Goa has legalized the production of its country's liquor, like 'Feni,' which facilitates the tax resources of the government. It is state-reliant for its resources, which can be utilized to lubricate its development plans. Himachal Pradesh is one of the smallest states of the country. Its topography is not conducive to disseminating the industrial base and also has very slick chances to mechanize its agriculture sector.

Thus, the government can raise its resources only through revamping the traditional occupation undertaken by the natives and harnessing the available natural resources like water from snow-fed rivers and verdant jungles covered with different kinds of trees, which will help to promote health tourism in the state.

These woods create a salubrious ambience and pristine environment that helps to cure many diseases like Asthma and tuberculosis. This product of tourism will appear as a lucrative tool to raise funds for the coffer to give impetus to economic development. It will also give boosts to tour and travel businesses and the hotel industry.

## CONCLUSION

Himachal Pradesh is undergoing serious financial crunches. It has a dire need for additional modes of funds to meet charges as well as voted expenditures. The agriculture sector has almost achieved its optimum point. The growth of the agriculture sector appears difficult to increase more as of its hostile topography. The scope of the dissemination of the industrial sector also does not appear promising because of terrain constraints. Though the efforts of the government of Himachal Pradesh have remained genuine towards the expansion of the industrial domain, these have appeared unsuccessful because of the hostile topography of the state and the lack of prerequisites for its dissemination and raw materials for large-scale industries. Empirical evidence reflects that the contribution of the industrial sector has remained 42.4% in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Rs. 1,95,404 crore of the state 2023-2024. Keeping in view the size of the total GDP, its contribution is not sufficient to make the economy of Himachal Pradesh vibrant and self-reliant. Thus, the government has to ponder the issue of enlarging the size of GDP through finding new avenues of income in order to make a debt-free economy. The traditional fermentation of alcoholic beverages or county liquor, which has been produced in tribal belts of different districts over the centuries, is required to be given institutional approval to produce it for commercial purposes at large scale to raise funds in the state.

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