

Daru and Bhang

Cultural Factors in the Choice of Intoxicant

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1. The Problem

Throughout the year 1951 the writer of this article was engaged in a field study which involved his living in intimate daily contact with the inhabitants of a large village² in the State of Rajasthan, in northern India. In the course of that year, he got to know this community fairly well; and he was struck by one unexpected aspect of the caste system which permeates Hindu society. This was the violent antithesis shown in the community attitudes toward the two most prevalent forms of intoxication—that caused by drinking daru, a potent distilled alcohol derived from the flowers of the mahwa tree (*Bassia latifundia*), and that due to bhang, which is the local name for an infusion of the leaves and stems of Indian hemp (*Cannabis indica*) which is readily cultivable in this region. Each had its partisans, and each decried the other faction.

It may be noted, in passing, that these were not the only forms of nasha, or intoxication, recognized. Villagers frequently spoke of the nasha caused by drinking cups of sickly-sweet tea infused in milk. Some went so far as to blame the breakdown of traditional piety on this modern indulgence in "English tea." They would also describe the nasha induced by a few puffs from a communally shared cigarette, and of that brought about by an unaccustomed feast of meat. Instances were cited of men who had become addicted to chewing opium; but in recent years this has become so prohibitively expensive as to have dropped out of the picture. It [68] was remembered by the warrior-caste, the Rajputs, one of whom explained that in the old days they would take opium before a battle in order to steady their nerves and to inhibit untimely bowel movements. Another Rajput, of humbler rank, put it more prosaically: "Yes, they'd issue a lump of opium to every man in those days, and glad to get it. - Might as well enjoy it now-may not be here tomorrow."

Here in Rajasthan the Rajput caste held a position of social supremacy. It is they who are the Rajahs, the rulers. For centuries their semifederal authority has governed the State, which was divided into a number of kingdoms, each with a hierarchy of subordinate rulers, down to the village Thakur, who is a Rajput squire of a few acres. They traditionally justified their wealth and prestige by their willingness to fight in defense of their land and their religion. On the smallest scale, it was to the Thakur and his kinsmen that the ordinary villagers turned for protection against marauding bands, especially in times of famine or of war.

As fighting men, the Rajputs had certain special prerogatives, notably the right to eat meat and drink alcohol. These privileges, as well as their forefathers' bravery in battle, are

commemorated in a rich store of poetry and song. The writer recalls many evenings spent listening to minstrels reciting epics of war and of the hunting field, while drummers played and strident women's voices sang with the refrain: Pi lo, pi lo manna Raja! (Drink on, drink on, oh King!) His Rajput hosts were careful to point out on such occasions that daru should be taken with circumspection, only in the proper measure (niyam se) and with due formality. Yet for all their protestations, "Oaths are but straw to the fire i' the blood," and a typical Rajput party tends to become boisterous, bawdy and unbridled.

Besides the Raj puts, only the Sudras (the artisan castes) and the Untouchables - and not all of them - are accustomed to take meat and alcohol. These lower orders also observe a certain formality in their drinking. Usually they go in a group to the village grogshop, and there the daru is passed from hand to hand in a small brass bowl. Each man, before taking his first drink, lets fall a drop or two and says, "Fai Mataji!"-invoking the demon-goddess Kali in her local embodiment. In so doing, they fortify themselves with the knowledge that that great goddess, mother and destroyer in one, relishes a diet of blood and alcohol.

In striking contrast, the members of the other top caste-group in the village, the Brahmins, unequivocally denounce the use of daru. It is, they say, utterly inimical to the religious life-and in matters of religion the Brahmins speak with authority. Certainly [69] no Hindu who has tasted or even touched daru will enter one of his temples (not even a goddess temple) without first having a purificatory bath and change of clothes. The first requirement of those who begin to devote themselves seriously to religion is always: "Abhor meat and wine." Priests and holy men insist that a darulia (an alcoholic) is beyond the pale of possible salvation. And yet again and again the writer was able to see respectable Brahmins and holy Saddhus who were benignly and conspicuously fuddled with bhang. To his eye, they were drunk as lords-drunk as Rajputs -and yet they would have been mortally offended if the comparison had been drawn, because this form of intoxication they believed to be not only no disgrace, but actually an enhancement of the spiritual life.

It might have been thought that if one form of intoxicant were condemned, so would be the other. In time, however, the writer was able to learn not only the subjective characteristics which distinguish these two states, but also the important cultural values which are associated with their use, and a solution to the riddle began to emerge.

2. Different effects of daru and bhang intoxication

The physiological and psychological effects of the ingestion of alcohol are sufficiently familiar to require no further elaboration.

As Ravi Varma (1) has shown, the stages of inebriation have also been described in ancient Sanskrit texts. He quotes the pre-medieval writer Susruta as distinguishing three phases: first, elation and conviviality with increase in sexual desire; next, a progressive loss of sense of propriety with overactivity and failing coordination; and finally a comatose dead-drunk state, "like a felled tree," in which, "though alive, one is as it were dead." As will be shown below, the Rajputs were vividly aware of the "release of sexual and aggressive impulses" which Horton (2) has shown to be the basic role of alcohol in every community which resorts to its use.

The effect of taking Cannabis indica in one or other of its preparations is less familiar to occidental readers; and yet it is an intoxicant which is second only to alcohol in the volume of its use, the variety of its recipes, and the profusion of its names.³ Descriptions of its effect show a number of discrepancies, which may [70] be attributed in part to the varying concentration of the drug in different preparations, and also to the fact that it is often taken in conjunction with other drugs. Thus Porot (3) reports that most North African cannabists are also alcoholics. In the Middle East it is used often in conjunction with an aphrodisiac.

When a Cannabis preparation is taken alone and in moderate strength (as is the case with the village bhang drinkers), Porot describes the following sequence of events: (a) A transient euphoria, a rich, lively, internal experience, in which ideas rush through the mind and there is an enormous feeling of superiority, of superhuman clarity of insight. (b) Sensory hyperesthesia, and coenesthesias: sights and sounds become unusually vivid and meaningful. (c) Distortion of sense of time and space. (d) Loss of judgment. (e) Exaggeration of affects, both of sympathy and of antipathy. (f) The phase of excitement is succeeded by one of placid ecstasy, known to Moslems as el kif, or "blessed repose." The "will to act" becomes annihilated. (g) After some hours of the trancelike state, sleep supervenes.

As a Frenchman, Porot was interested in the cult of cannabism which was created by a circle of writers and painters in Paris during the 1840's: an intellectual vogue which has enriched medical literature with some vivid accounts of the subjective aspects of the intoxication. This reportage was facilitated by the fact that the condition does not interfere with self-awareness, so that the participants had the sensation of being onlookers at the same time as actors in the scene. As Théophile Gautier wrote (4): "Je voyais mes camarades a certains instants, mais défigurés, moitié hommes, moitié plantes, avec des airs pensifs d'ibis debout sur une patte d'autruche."

But Gautier, as Guilly (5) has pointed out in a recent essay on the "Club des Hachischins," was not altogether a reliable witness. His account was frankly embellished, designed to exaggerate the bizarre and the orgiastic elements of the situation; and in so doing he illustrates a finding of his contemporary, Baudelaire, who also was fascinated by the effects of the drug and carried his experiments to extreme lengths. Baudelaire (6) pointed out that Cannabis affected people differently according to their degree of intellectual refinement. He distinguished "spiritual" from merely material or brutish intoxication; and to this one can add that the quality of the intoxication can be influenced by the expectations with which the subject enters into it. For example, Tunisian addicts would smoke their takrouri in a quiet room, scented and decorated with flowers and with erotic prints calculated to stimulate hallucinations proper to their self-induced anticipation of paradise. [71]

Frivolous though his interest was, Gautier seems to have tasted enough of the drug to have experienced the state of lethargic ecstasy-in Baudelaire's words, "L'apothéose de l'Homme-Dieu"- which he described as follows: "Je ne sentais plus mon corps; les liens de la matière et de l'esprit étaient déliés; je me mouvais par ma seule volonté dans un milieu qui n'offrait pas de résistance. .. Rien de matériel ne se mêlait a cette extase; aucun désir terrestre n'en altérait la pureté..."

There have been other European experimenters who have described the effects of cannabism but none who have been outspoken in its praise. Walter de la Mare (7) wrote that, "Like Opium, it induces an extravagant sense of isolation," and he went on to quote the experience of his friend Redwood Anderson, who reported on the effect of taking small doses of the drug. He was able to describe the euphoria, the rush of ideas and the intense subjective feelings of awareness and heightened significance of all his perceptions; but he was not seduced by this near-ecstasy, rather struggling to resist the weakening of voluntary control and to repudiate these illusions of godlike intuition.

In this he was at one with Baudelaire, who indulged very profoundly in this as in other forms of intoxication and, in the end, like a true Westerner, protested against any drug which would hamper the exercise of free, individual assertion and volition. He wrote: "Je ne comprends pas pourquoi l'homme rationnel et spirituel se sert de moyens artificiels pour arriver a la beatitude poétique, puisque l'enthousiasme et la volonté suffisent pour l'élever a une existence supra-naturelle. Les grands poètes, les philosophes, les prophètes sont des êtres qui, par le pur et libre exercice de leur volonté, parviennent a un état ou ils sont a la fois cause et effet, sujet et objet, magnétiseur et somnambule."

It is necessary to refer at length to these subjective experiences because, although to the superficial observer the behavior of the bhang drinker might seem not unlike that of an alcoholic (except that the progress of intoxication is at first delayed, for up to 90 minutes, and then proceeds by rapid stages to a profound stupor), the subject's inner experiences are very different. To quote an early medical investigator, Hesnard (8): "Ses symptômes en sont bien plus riches pour celui qui l'éprouve que pour l'observateur". This was convincingly demonstrated to the present writer when he was prevailed upon to share in the Brahmin group's potations on two occasions. He experienced the time distortion, the tumbling rush of ideas, the intensified significance of sights, sounds and tastes and, more strongly than anything else, the feeling of existing on two planes at once. His body sat or lay in a state of [72] voluptuous indifference to its surroundings, while consciousness alternated between a timeless trancelike state and a painful struggle to keep awake, to keep on observing, and acting (in this case, to keep on writing down notes on his introspective experiences). It became clear to him, in retrospect, that throughout the intoxication his bias of personality, and perhaps his less conscious fears of surrendering to a dreamlike state, resisted the somatic pull of the drug; and yet he was able to enter sufficiently into the fringe of the real ecstasy to quicken his future appreciation of what the experience meant to those who welcomed and valued it.

Hitherto, it will be noted, the state induced by bhang has been discussed in the terms of reference used by Western observers. The writer's own experience confirmed their clinical accounts, with emphasis on feelings of detachment, of extreme introspection, of the loss of volition coupled with a dreamlike impression of heightened reality. Moreover, the recognition of his own fear and repudiation of the state opened his eyes to two possibilities: (a) that other Western observers might have shared his own reluctance, if not inability, fully to submit to this intoxication; and (b) that to Hindus, with their different cultural heritage and personality bias, the experience might represent something different, at once less frightening and more congenial. It was with this in mind that he reviewed his notes of some hundreds of conversations with villagers, in order to consider what were their associations to daru and to bhang respectively.

It should be pointed out that this discussion concerns the use rather than the abuse of

these intoxicants. There were many habitual drinkers of both, and instances of alcoholic delirium were described by several Rajputs, though not witnessed by the writer. The only Brahmin who could be called an addict to bhang in the strict sense was also an opium eater, and at 75 was one of the oldest men in the village. It is a vexed question as to whether cannabism, when carried to extremes, incites to crimes of violence, as Wolff (9), Dhunjibhoy (10) and Porot (3) assert, or whether, as Bromberg and Rodgers (11) and Wallace (12) have shown in careful statistical studies, this association is not supported by the facts. The present writer's study of the literature supports the view that crime (even the berserk attacks on the Crusaders by the hashish-inspired followers of the Mohammedan Old Man of the Mountains, from which the word assassin is said to be derived) is, like the voluptuous daydreams of the Tunisians, merely one of the ends which cannabism can be made to serve during its brief phase of excitement, and not a necessary consequence of taking the drug. In this village, at any rate, there were no instances of crimes attributable to the drink[73]ing of bhang, nor was there any evidence to support the suggestion of Dhunjibhoy, among others, that it gives rise to a characteristic psychosis. It remains open to proof whether such cases are not, as Mayer-Gross (13) maintains, simply schizophrenic illnesses occurring in a Cannabis-taking population.

3 - Villagers' association to daru and bhang

In the following series of quotations from a number of villagers' conversations, it will be helpful to bear in mind that Rajputs are distinguished by the addition of the title Singh (lion) to their name; among the Brahmins, a common second name is Lal (red, the auspicious color). For the sake of clarity all Brahmin names have been transcribed to conform to this rule.

The first obvious difference to emerge is that while the Brahmins are unanimous in their detestation of daru, the Rajputs do not present a united front in its defense. "Some Rajputs," explained Himat Singh, "those who are worshippers of God, they do not eat meat or drink wine - that is the first thing for them to give up. Wine spoils men's mind: some swear and give abuse, which is inimical to holiness." Such Rajputs, however, are few and far between: "The rest, they eat, drink and remain must."⁴

Many Rajputs prided themselves on drinking with discrimination, a fixed measure every day. Thus Nahar Singh: "My father used to drink a fixed quantity of daru, from a small measure, every night. It was his niyam, his rule." A young man called Ragunath Singh was emphatic in asserting the warlike traditions of his caste, and their need for meat and drink: "Panthers and tigers don't eat grass

- and that's what Rajputs are like, a carnivorous race." He also, however, stressed that liquor was a dangerous ally: "If you take it to excess it destroys your semen, the good stuff, the strength of your body - but taken in right measure it builds it up."

Gambhir Singh mentioned that his father, a former Inspector of Police, used to allow himself a generous measure every day: "It helped him in his work, made him fierce and bold, ready to beat people when that was needed."

This stress on restraint, and on small measures, soon tended to be forgotten in the course of an evening of Rajput hospitality, when glass after glass was filled and emptied at a

draught. In his cups, Amar Singh used to boast of his ungovernable temper, of men he had killed in the heat of anger, of his sexual prowess with prostitutes. His friend Gordhan Singh chipped in with a description of a typical Rajput celebration: "They sit drinking heartily till they are [74] senseless, and then they talk loudly and make fools of themselves, and spill their food down the front of their shirts, and shout to the dancing girls; and some of them pass out altogether - oh, it's a fine sight to see, it's good fun."

The former Ruler of the village and of the surrounding principality expressed conflicting views on daru. On the one hand, he aspired to gain a "spiritual rise" through the practice of prayers and austerities, and this necessitated a strict rationing of his customary indulgence in alcohol. Quite often, however, something would happen to interrupt his abstemious intentions, and on such a day his eloquence in praise of wine was noticeably stimulated: "Red eyes are thought by us Rajputs to be very beautiful. They are the sign of lust. Those who have the good fortune to have red lines in the eyes, they are thought to be very lusty. Rajputs are very lusty, Sahib. It is because of their meat and drink: it makes them so that they have to have their lust, poor fellows." At this point he began to quote verses in praise of wine: "It makes the eyes red, it keeps the pleasure going between the pair, the husband and wife: how shall I praise you enough, oh twice-distilled!" And again: "In time of war, when the drum beats, only opium and daru drive out fear."

On another occasion, the Ruler quoted a ribald couplet to the effect that without meat all food is grass, and without daru even Ganges water has no virtue. But this blasphemy alarmed him into a momentary sobriety. He hastily repudiated the verse, but a few minutes later he was exuberantly describing the scene at a wealthy Rajput's wedding party: "They will be sitting drinking far into the night, with dancing girls entertaining them. They will call the dancing girl to sit on their lap, then they will get stirred and take her into a room and bar the doors; and the others will beat upon the door and say, 'Eh, Rao Sahib, we also want to see this girl.' Poor girl, where can she go, all doors are locked! Enjoy till morning, she must do what you want."

The Ruler's younger brother was emphatically not one of those Rajputs who renounced their pleasure in alcohol in the interests of religion: "Sahib, I am not interested in these things. These religious matters, usually one begins to be interested in them after the age of fifty."

And before then?

"Before then, Sahib, eat, drink and make merry."

Rajputs not infrequently referred to bhang, but never with strong feelings either of approval or condemnation. It is mentioned as a refreshment given to guests who arrive after a long journey. An elderly retainer called Anop Singh said: "We are not in the habit [75] of drinking bhang, though we'll take it if it comes our way. Sometimes holy men come, and they are great ones for bhang, so you have to join them if they invite you, and have some too." On one occasion the writer found a young Rajput landowner called Vijay Singh profoundly fuddled with a large dose of bhang which had been given to him, without his knowledge, in a spiced sweetmeat: "I didn't know I was eating bhang or I wouldn't have taken it -it's not a thing I like. It makes you very sleepy and turns your throat dry... I don't like it, it makes you quite useless, unable to do anything. Daru is not like that: you get drunk but you can still carry on."

The Brahmins, on the other hand, were quite unanimous in reviling daru and all those who indulged in it. They described it as foul, polluting, carnal, and destructive to that spark of Godhead which every man carries within him. As Shankar Lal put it: "The result of eating meat and drinking liquor is that you get filled with passion, rage - and then what happens? The spirit of God flies out from you."

The Ruler's own attempt to reconcile religious devotions with a measure of indulgence in alcohol was rejected with contumely by Mohan Lal, a scholarly teacher: "He is all wrong: he is a bogus lecher. Always busy with wine and women, how can he find his way along this stony and thorny path?"

In their references to the use of bhang, the Brahmins were matter-of-fact rather than lyrical. "It gives good bhakti" said Shankar Lal: "You get a very good bhakti with bhang." He went on to define bhakti as the sort of devotional act which consists in emptying the mind of all worldly distractions and thinking only of God. The "arrived" devotee is able to keep his thoughts from straying off onto trivial or lustful topics; in his impersonal trance he becomes oblivious to mundane concerns so that you "could hit him on the face with shoes a hundred times, and he would remain unmoved" (Mohan Lal).

Brahmin informants made many references to a nearby pilgrimage center presided over by a very influential priest. Both he and his predecessors were described, with admiration, as being mighty drinkers of bhang and heroic in the depth of their devotional trances. The chief object of worship at this place was an ancient phallic symbol of black stone, representing the God Shiva; and this God in turn was often cited as both a bhang drinker and a paragon of the contemplative life. It is by modeling themselves on his example that religious ascetics practice severe and prolonged austerities, training themselves to withdraw their entire attention from the distractions of the sensible world until they can exist for [76] hours in an oblivious, inward-looking state. The ultimate reward of this asceticism is that the Suddhu is enabled to divest himself of his body (which becomes imperishable, though apparently lifeless) and to pass directly into reunion with the spirit of the universe. (One is reminded of Baudelaire's "l'apothéose de l'Homme-Dieu.") Bhang is highly regarded as conducing toward this condition and is taken regularly by most soddhus. In the precincts of the great Shiva temple, the writer frequently encountered holy men, dressed in little more than a coating of sacred ash, who staggered about in the early stages of bhang intoxication. If he addressed them, they would reply only with an elusive smile or with an exclamation like "Han, Han, Han!" - repeating one of the names of God. Ordinary village Brahmins, who did not aspire to such feats of asceticism, made a practice of devoting some minutes or hours every day to sitting in a state of abstraction and prayer, and in this exercise they found a modicum of bhang to be most helpful.

4. Relevant themes in Hindu culture pattern

Both the Rajput and the Brahmin castes, at least in this large village, belonged to the economically privileged section of the community. Their male members had all received at least enough education to make them literate in Hindi, and in an unsystematic way had been instructed in the fundamentals of their religion and made familiar with the main features of the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics which illustrate those teachings in a variety of dramatic episodes. Hinduism encompasses so wide a range of practical and

philosophical beliefs, of myths and ritual ordinances, and contains so many contradictory elements, that one theologian, after 25 years of study, came to the conclusion that there were only two indispensable features in this religion: reverence of the Brahmin, and worship of the cow (14). These features are epitomized in the formal greetings exchanged by Rajput and Brahmin. The former salutes the priestly caste with, "I clasp your feet," and the latter replies, "May you live long and protect the Brahmins and the cows." In so doing, they acknowledge each other's caste in its respective status of spiritual and temporal primacy.

The fundamental orthodox Hindu beliefs, as Taylor (15) has painted out in an analysis drawn from study of a community in an area contiguous with Rajasthan, stem from the concepts of karma (predestined lot), of the cycle of rebirth, and of dharma (right conduct), observance of which leads to promotion in one's next rebirth and ultimately to the goal of all human endeavor, which is moksh, or liberation from the cycle of reincarnation altogether. Socioeconomic relationships are accepted as inevitable, as is the [78] hierarchic structure of caste. Indeed, "the individual's security in this society comes from his acceptance of his insignificant part in a vast pre-ordained scheme: he has little anxiety, because he is not confronted with a variety of choice." Rajputs and Brahmins are alike in knowing that virtue consists in performing the duties appropriate to that station in life into which one is born, and in minimizing one's indulgence in sensual and emotional satisfactions of a private nature. Thus Nahar Singh, a Rajput renowned for his religious zeal, said: "Those of us who take religion seriously, but have still not wholly renounced the world, we can do it by taking care not to let our affections become too deeply engaged in things of lesser importance. We should do our work, fulfill all our duties, and be affectionate to our families - but all that should be on the surface of our daily lives. Our real souls, deep down, should not be involved in any of these emotional ties..."

Mohan Lal expressed similar views: "The religious man lives in the world, but apart. He is like a drop of water on a lotus leaf, which moves over its surface but is not absorbed." His caste-fellow Bhun Lal described the ideal pattern of "nonattachment," leading in the end to release: "Moksh is obtained by purging the self of all carnal appetites and withdrawing from the illusions of this world.

A wise man is cool-tempered." Immediately after this, he went on to talk of sexual morality. Sex, he said, should be strictly controlled. It should be regarded as a duty, and used only for the purpose of perpetuating one's male line. He himself had been afflicted with four daughters before his two sons were born, and then, "As soon as my second son was born, I gave up having sex. You say I look young? That's because I have practiced celibacy for years."

This exaltation of asceticism, of self-deprivation, of trying to eliminate one's sensual appetites, is a basic theme. Again and again in Hindu mythology one encounters heroic figures (by no means always virtuous ones) who practice austerities so severe and prolonged that their spiritual power becomes prodigious: the gods themselves beg them to desist and offer to grant anything they ask. Taylor has related this to the absoluteness of paternal authority in the home; the pattern is firmly laid down that one can achieve success and recognition only by self-abnegation and prostration before the all-powerful father figure. A student of Kardiner (16) might be tempted to carry the analogy still farther back, to the Hindu child's wholly indulgent experience at the suckling stage, during which he actually usurps his father's place, because parents are not supposed to sleep together

until the child is weaned. In this context, the tapassya which constrains even the gods can be seen as a return to the infant's fantasied omnipotence. [78]

The values discussed thus far are held in common by both castes, with the difference that the Brahmins, being at the pinnacle of the spiritual hierarchy, have a special obligation to lead a pious life. More than ordinary men, they must pay constant attention to the fulfilling of religious duties. Their lives are beset with recurring threats of defilement and their days are punctuated with acts of absolution. Among the many forms of self-denial to which they are accustomed are the avoidance of anger or any other unseemly expression of personal feelings; and abstinence from meat and alcohol is a prime essential. They are rewarded by being regarded, simply by virtue of their birth in this high caste, as already quasi divine. Ordinary men address them as Maharaj, the greeting given to the gods. As one of them put it: "Even now, when people see a man is a Brahmin, they pay much respect in comparison to other castes. He is much more closely related to God."

In this region the Rajputs represent the temporal aristocracy, as the Brahmins do the spiritual. Their caste is one of warriors and landlords. Until the social reforms of 1948, their Rajahs exercised arbitrary and autocratic rule over the innumerable small principalities into which Rajasthan is divided. They owed allegiance in their turn to the Ruler of their State - in the case of this village, to the Maharana of Udaipur. By virtue of their role as warriors, the Rajputs were accorded certain privileged relaxations of the orthodox Hindu rules: in particular, those prohibiting the use of force, the taking of life, the eating of meat and drinking of wine. These all represent violations of basic canons of Hindu dharma, and so they are hedged about with restrictions and formalities in order to minimize their evil effects. Violence is a part of their lives, but they are taught to exercise forbearance, to rebuke an offender twice before chastising him. In warfare they obeyed a code of chivalry not unlike that of the medieval knights. Similarly, the meat of only a few animals is counted fit to eat, and then only of the male of the species; and hence, also, the emphasis on restriction and invariable "measure" in drinking daru.

The Rajputs find themselves in a curious position. Their social preeminence is due to their role as defenders of religion, and they are as conservative in belief as they are in politics; and yet their own cherished traditions emphasize their deviation from "right living" in the orthodox Hindu sense. The conflict is heightened by the circumstance that in their caste, even more than in all the others, patriarchal authority is stressed. As the writer has pointed out elsewhere (17), both sons and younger brothers in Rajput families have to learn to defer in utter subservience to their fathers and elder brothers. Whereas in the Brahmin caste this domestic [79] discipline is made tolerable by the fact that it is impersonal, simply a facet of a general obedience to propriety which the elders observe in their turn, among Rajputs it is different. There is a great difference between the status of the head of the family and that of his subordinates. For example, a younger son inherits an estate only one twentieth the size of that which comes to the first-born. The head of a Rajput family is anything but an impersonal figure. Coached from infancy by a succession of sycophantic retainers, he has an inflated idea of his personal importance, coupled with an often well-founded suspicion that he is surrounded by rivals and enemies. The tensions which arise in such a setting explode from time to time in violent quarrels. Another corollary of the peculiar upbringing of the Rajputs is that they are taught to put great stress on individual bravery and ferocity in the face of danger. The test of real danger is all too seldom met with, but every young Rajput lives with the anxiety that he may not prove adequate to the occasion when it comes. As a result he tends to be boastful, touchy, and

readily inclined to assuage his anxieties in the convivial relaxation of a drinking party.

5. Discussion

In her much-quoted study of patterns of drinking in two South American villages, Bunzel (18) remarks, of such sociological appraisals in general: "It should be borne in mind that each group represents a different problem: it is necessary in each case to find out what role alcohol plays in that culture." She was able to demonstrate two widely differing ways of using alcohol. In Chamula there was little aggression or promiscuity or severity of discipline; there, heavy drinking was indulged in from childhood and was attended with no guilt. In Chichicastenango, on the other hand, she saw a strict paternal authority and an insistence on the repression of aggressive and sexual impulses, which found release in the course of occasional drinking sprees; and these were followed by feelings of severe guilt. The Rajput drinking pattern, obviously, has much in common with the latter.

A more general frame of reference has been given by Horton (2) in his survey of alcohol in primitive societies, which led to his drawing up three basic theorems: (a) The drinking of alcohol tends to be accompanied by release of sexual and aggressive impulses. (b) The strength of the drinking response in any society tends to vary directly with the level of anxiety in the society. (c) The strength of the drinking response tends to vary inversely with the strength of the counteranxiety elicited by painful experiences during and after drinking. [80]

The first of these theorems is abundantly borne out by the behavior of Rajputs in their cups. It is clear also that the presence of socially approved prostitutes and lower-caste servants and depend-ants enables the carrying out of these impulses in a manner which excites no retribution, and so the third theorem operates in support of their drinking heavily. On the side of restraint is the knowledge that sensual indulgence is an offense against the Hindu code of asceticism; but this code does not weigh heavily on most Rajputs.

On Brahmins, on the other hand, the code weighs very heavily indeed, being associated with their fondest claims to superiority over their fellow men. A Brahmin who gets drunk will be outcasted, condemned to associate with the lowest ranks of society. Consequently the threat of this "counteranxiety" is sufficient to make the drinking of alcohol virtually impossible to Brahmins (at least in the village). There is no reason to suppose, however, that they, any more than the Rajputs, are devoid of anxiety. But the differences in emphasis on individual self-assertion (stressed by Rajput upbringing but constrained by their fiercely authoritarian disciplines) and on the unimportance of personal and sensual experiences (stressed in the Brahmin code) seem to imply that the anxieties of the Rajputs will be more acute while those of the Brahmins will be more diffuse and more readily sublimated in the religious exercises which play such a large part in their adult lives.

Another consideration is raised by Shaloo's (19) analysis of the way in which Jewish cultural values operate to minimize the incidence of alcoholism in their community. In his view, the Jews develop strong familial and communal ties and stress social conformity and conservatism in mores because they are aware of the critical and often hostile scrutiny of the Gentiles among whom they live. He concludes: "Such an analysis indicates that we are dealing with an 'isolated sacred society' as against a Gentile 'accessible secular society.'"

In our Indian example, the Brahmins represented a "sacred society" but not an isolated one. Far from being alien, they represent the ideal religious aspirations of the masses of ordinary Hindus, those who are obliged to "eat, drink and keep their passions alive," as Shankar Lai once put it. If the Brahmins are abstemious, it is not through an exaggerated fear of the censure of their fellows. On the contrary, their consciousness of their exalted state often makes them high-handed and inconsiderate in their dealings with those of lower caste; and moreover, they are not abstemious. If Horton's theorems hold good for alcoholism, must a new set be constructed to account for cannabism?

The answer which the present writer would suggest to the [81] problem posed at the outset of this paper would be on the following lines: There are alternative ways of dealing with sexual and aggressive impulses besides repressing them and then "blowing them off" in abreactive drinking bouts in which the superego is temporarily dissolved in alcohol. The way which the Brahmins have selected consists in a playing down of all interpersonal relationships in obedience to a common, impersonal set of rules of Right Behavior. Not only feelings but also appetities are played down, as impediments to the one supreme end of union with God. Significantly, this goal of sublimated effort is often described in terms appropriate to sexual ecstasy, as is the case with the communications of ascetics and mystics in other parts of the world. Whereas the Rajput in his drinking bout knows that he is taking a holiday from his sober concerns, the Brahmin thinks of his intoxication with bhang as a flight not from but toward a more profound contact with reality.

Westerners, like the Rajputs, are committed to a life of action. They are brought up to regard individual achievement as important, and sensual indulgence to be not wholly wrong if it is enjoyed within socially prescribed limits. In spite of the existence among a sophisticated minority of the cult of nonattachment, the principles of yoga are unfamiliar to the West, and the experience of surrendering one's powers of volition is felt to be threatening and distasteful - as European experimenters with hashish (and the writer, with bhang) have found. Wolff (9) is, however, too sweeping in suggesting that cannabism is a peculiarly oriental taste. The Rajputs are far from being the only Easterners who dislike it or feel no need of it. Porot has pointed out that Indian hemp could easily be cultivated in the Far East, and yet it is practically unknown to the peoples of China and Japan. La Barre's (20) account of Chinese personality suggests that that people have little inclination to despise material pleasures of this world; and the Japanese would be the last, one would suppose, to renounce the active life.

On the basis, presumably, of his own religious convictions, Wolff has implied that the ecstatic intuitions experienced through cannabism, far from having any validity, represent a flouting of "an inviolable moral law." This is the antithesis of cultural relativism. No one is left in doubt where Wolff takes his stand. Were the present writer to emulate this candor, he would have to say that of the two types of intoxication which he witnessed, and in a measure shared, in this Rajasthan village, he had no doubt that that which was indulged in by the Brahmins was the less socially disruptive, less unseemly, and more in harmony with the highest Meals of their race; and yet so alien to his own personal and cul[82]tural pattern of ego defenses, that he much preferred the other. It was a case of *video meliora proboque, deteriara sequor*.

Postscript

Since the above article was written, Aldous Huxley (21) has published an eloquent and perceptive account of the experience of mescaline intoxication, which is shown to resemble that induced by bhang. Huxley was particularly struck by two aspects: in the initial stage, by the primordial vividness of visual impressions, in perceiving ordinarily commonplace objects; and in the later stages, by the feeling of superhuman insight into the nature of things, accompanied by a complete detachment both from his own self and from those of his fellow men. He regards mescaline as a "gratuitous grace" which facilitates the sort of mystical experience which he finds both chastening and rewarding, in much the same way as Brahmins and Saddhus regard bhang as an aid to contemplation. Yet he is unrealistic enough to wish that Americans, and Westerners generally, should take to this drug in preference to alcohol and tobacco. If the thesis of this paper is valid, Westerners have refrained from taking mescaline (which has long been available to them) because its effect does not accord with their desires. Unless there is an unforeseen reversal of their basic values, they are as little likely to follow Huxley's advice as are the Brahmins to abandon bhang in favor of the Rajputs' dhan, or vice versa.

Summary

In a village in northern India, members of the two highest caste groups, Rajput and Brahmin, were found to differ in their choice of intoxicant, the one taking alcohol, the other a preparation of *Cannabis indica*. An explanation for this cleavage was sought in their own associations to the two drugs, in the psychological effects of their type of intoxication, and in the different values stressed by each group, both in their personality development and in their ideal patterns of behavior. The cultural uses of alcohol and of *Cannabis* intoxication are discussed in the light of this illustration.

Notes

- 1) Psychiatrist Medical Research Council Unit for Research in Occupational Adaptation, Maudsley Hospital, London. Received for publication: December 1955.
- 2) The village had 2,400 inhabitants, of whom 93 were Rajputs and 85 Brahmins.
- 3) These include: bhang, charas, ganja (India); kit (Algeria); takrouri (Tunisia); kabak (Turkey); hashish-elkit (Middle East); djoma (Central Africa); dagga (South Africa); liamba (Brazil); grifa (Mexico); marihuana (South and North America). There are, however, many other names descriptive of particular sweet-meats, cakes drinks, etc., containing the drug.
- 4) Must describes the rage of an elephant which is in heat.

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