

Rupkatha Journal

On Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities

ISSN 0975-2935

www.rupkatha.com

Volume VII, Number 3, 2015

General Issue

Indexing and abstracting

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|-----|-------------|--|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
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The Question of Intoxication in 19th Century Colonial Bengal

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Abstract

The paper explores how political, social, and cultural changes shaped the different trends of intoxication practices in 19th century colonial Bengal. At the onset of East India Company's colonial rule in Bengal, the administration and its collaborators worked out modalities of profit-making from drugs-trade, especially through processing and export of opium. On the other hand, the colonial regime – that is, both administration officials and their social counterparts like missionaries – tightened control over intransigent social categories like *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis*. The intoxication practices of the Muslim and Hindu holy men became a key focus of the regime in classification, vilification, criminalization, and exclusion of these groups. Meanwhile, the privileged *Babu* class was transitioning in their use of intoxicants: subaltern addictions like *ganja* was vying with more aspirational and anagogic addictions like wine that facilitated assimilation into putative 'civilization'. Following a surge in consumption under the civilizational aspiration, a discursive backlash with both secular and revivalist undertones rolled back the intoxication practices.

Keywords: 19th Century Bengal, Intoxication, Addiction, Colonial India, Drugs.

Introduction

In pre-colonial Bengal, consumption of intoxicating substances was associated with religious rituals, spiritual culture, magical techniques, subaltern soporifics, or aristocratic addiction. A new chapter opened in the history of intoxication in Bengal with the assumption of Bengal administration by the East India Company. This paper takes a broad look to sift together scattered traces to summarize some of the ways that the colonial regime was changing the intoxication culture in Bengal.

In the colonial regime, certain intoxication practices were found to be more conformist and useful than others. The colonial administration engaged in export of the 'pernicious' drug opium to a reluctant China. In Bengal, after the Company demolished the Nawabi state, it was faced with the task of establishing control over society. In this task, the new regime came to blows with certain intransigent sections of society, such as the Muslim holy men or *Faqirs* and their Hindu counterparts including *Sanyasis* and *Bairagis*. While practices of intoxication was part of the spiritual culture of the holy men, the colonial administration criminalized and penalized such intoxication. Later, the regime's approach was adopted and appropriated by modernist Muslim and Hindu gentlemen as well as neo-traditionalist or orthodox clerical groups against the mystical sects. Meanwhile, the fast-growing *Babu* class centered on Calcutta was acclimatizing itself to fashionable intoxication as part of the program of civilization. Eventually, development of nationalist politics would transform the approach towards intoxication.

Role of the East India Company in Export-oriented Opium Processing

In the first half of 18th century, European companies – especially the Dutch – were already heavily engaged in trade in intoxicants in Bengal. Following the victory of the English East India Company (EIC) in the fateful Battle of Plassey in 1757, the Nawabi administration became a virtual hostage to the Company. Taking advantage of the weakness of the administration, the EIC openly violated legal prohibitions on sale of intoxicants in Bengal. In the mercantile capitalist ethos of the EIC, the alien society was a source of profit by hook or crook. In early 1760s, Nawab Mir Muhammad Qasim Khan (r. 1760-1763) lamented in a letter to Henry Vansittart, Governor of the Presidency of Fort William, Bengal (1760-64) how, despite treaty-bound prohibitions on the company's dealing in certain articles like opium, the company's agents were buying and selling these 'in every pargana and village' (Wilson, 1852, p. 137). In 1765, the EIC secured the *Diwani* (revenue administration) of Bengal and gradually choked the *Nizamat* (government) of Bengal until its abolition in the 1780s. With the coercive machinery of the state in its grip, the EIC began to use its political advantage to buoy up its commercial position. Without much scruple, the Honourable East India Company ramped up its role in the vice trade in opium.

In 1789, Earl Cornwallis noted the economic benefits of contract-based poppy cultivation in Bengal, Behar (Bihar), and Benares. The private growers of opium in Bihar and Benares were bound to sell their produce to Company agents at a fixed rate, while in Western parts of India, private growers were at liberty to choose buyers for their crop (Minturn, 1858, p. 153). EIC had a monopoly in Opium marketing, justifying it on the ground that without such a monopoly the pernicious drug would have more internal consumption¹. Thus the mercantile capitalist ethos was reshaped when it found itself at the helm of administration of a vast subject country. The Colonial Government encouraged export-oriented poppy cultivation as it was 'one of the most productive sources of revenue to the government' (Martin, 1838).

The Company and English privateers (often company employees) would employ *gomostah* agents to procure opium from private growers. The main export destination of opium via Calcutta was China. British ships would transport opium to China².



¹ "Opium, it is well known, has been monopolized by government. It is provided in the provinces of Bihar and Benares, and sold in Calcutta by publick sale... It is doubtless a rational object of policy to discourage the internal consumption of a drug, which is so highly pernicious, when employed for intoxication." (East India Company, 1804, p.110)

² The American shipping magnate Robert Minturn travelled from China to India in 1850s in a ship which was owned by an 'eminent English firm' all whose ships were engaged in 'carrying opium to China, for which purpose they had entirely supplanted the opium sailing clippers, formerly so numerous in Eastern waters'. (Minturn, 1858)

In 1811-12, opium constituted around 25% of the maritime commerce of British India (Balachandran, 2006, p. 101). By mid-1830s, opium became the largest single export of India. The Chinese empire had two options: either legalize and tax the opium import from Bengal, or suppress it. They decided in favor of the latter option. The British retaliated with an expeditionary force and in two consecutive wars in 1839-1842 and 1856-1860 they defeated the Chinese, annexed Hong Kong, and forced China to accept opium import from India.

Faqir-Sanyasis under Fire

While the Honourable Company was forcing opium down the throat of the East, on the other side the administration was clamping down upon the time-honored spiritual cultures of local holy men – Muslim and Hindu.

In Bengal, the colonial administration came to blows with the holy men from early on. In the late 18th century, immediately after the assumption of Bengal administration by the East India Company, the *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis* led a rebellion against the British³. The administration took a series of measures to crush the very base of organized religious orders that posed a threat to the colonial governance. By 1780s, the Faqir-Sanyasi Revolt was crushed. By 1830s, a vast amount of property vested into religious purposes were expropriated by the administration. Despite the ruthless repression, the *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis* continued to cause havoc to the colonial order. For example, in 1830-31, when Titu Mir was leading a Wahhabi revolt, Faqir Miskin Shah along with his followers joined his party (Anonymous, 1870, p. 179).

Beyond suppressing political rebellions, the social apparatus of the colonial order came to face offs with the *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis* due to their insubordination and nuisance-making. Missionary preachers like George Gogerly (1794-1877) – who would come to Calcutta with the holy intention of salvaging the benighted native souls – would face no mean trouble from the *Sanyasis* and *Faqirs* – some of whom still carried the banner of cross-confessional front against the colonial conquerors. There was an occasion, when an allegedly intoxicated *Boiragi* aroused the crowd gathered to hear the preaching of Gogerly against the missionaries⁴.

³ Many impoverished peasants joined the *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis*. The *Sanyasis* were Vedantic Hindu yogis – also armed – belonging to Giri and Puri groups of ek-dandi sanyasis. Although originating in Bihar, northern Bengal was most affected by the revolt (Purnea, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bogra, Malda, etc.), but other areas were also affected (Birbhum Burdwan, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Bakerganj, Comilla, Chittagong, etc). The *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis* attacked Company *kuthis*, Zamindari *kachharis*, Zamindars loyal to *Firinghee Raj*, Houses of zamindar officials, etc (Khan, 2012). They used the jungles and frontier states (e.g. Nepal) as rear, i.e. place of strategic retreat. The Company Administration retaliated with heavy military attack. The revolt started in early 1760s. By late 1770s, the revolt was mostly crushed.

⁴ “Some ignorant self-righteous Boiragees (religious ascetics) – literally, without passions – who are always found lounging about in the vicinity of the temples, with their bodies covered with the dried mud of the Ganges and almost in a state of nudity, demanding alms from the devout Hindoos. These intolerant fanatics would frequently interrupt our discourse, and using the most abusive language, completely undo all the good we had hoped to had been accomplished.

On one occasion, when a large audience had assembled, and we had just commenced the service, two of these men, as filthy in their appearance as it is possible to imagine, with blood-shot eyes and demoniacal look, evidently under the influence of some powerful stimulating drug, entered the bungalow, and in loud threatening tones commanded us to be silent. Then, turning to the people, they declared that we were the paid agents of the Government, who not only had robbed them of their country, but who were determined

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Gogerly reduced the enunciation of the *Boiragi* by attributing it to effects of intoxication. Rather than taking the *Boiragi* by his words, the missionary dismissed him as a ‘fanatic’ whose filth, intoxication, and criminality compounded his unpardonable offensiveness.

In the public space, the intoxicated, naked Sufi offended the British sentiments: the fine sentiments of the gentlemen, *memsahibs*, and missionaries⁵. Missionary vigilantes like Gogerly would collaborate with the administration to penalize the public presence of the holy men on the pretext of intoxication^{6,7}.

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The people listened to this furious address with alarm, and believing every word, rose in a body and rushed upon us, striking our persons, tearing our clothes, and threatening our lives. In vain we endeavored to speak; our voices were drowned in the cry of “Hurri bol! Hurri bol!” and we were compelled hastily to escape... The next time we visited the place all was quiet as usual; the Boiragees had departed, and the people expressed great indignation against those who had so maltreated us”. (Gogerly, 1871, p. 55)

⁵ Nile Green speaks about such faqirs in the context mainly of Hyderabad: “the less respectable class of faqirs, the unruly and bedraggled drug-users who constituted the holy fools of Indian Islam. While Hyderabad’s elites were taking increasing care to properly button their tweeds and dinner jackets in the late nineteenth century, such faqirs remained free to flaunt their nakedness before the eyes of *memsahib* and *mullah* alike. ... Stoned on *bhanga* or opium; raving at the passing *sahibs*; lying lazy in the shade of a tree; bare of the merest strip of clothing; and as often as not plainly diseased and scabby, the *faqir* represented the ultimate affront to Britain’s civilising mission.” (Green, Jack Sepoy and the Dervishes: Islam and the Indian Soldier in Princely India, 2007)

⁶ “One evening, when it was broad daylight, accompanied by my wife, I was driving my buggy, and nearing the chapel, when we met one of these filthy pests of society, a Boiragee, or religious ascetic. This was a tall, stout, and powerful man of about thirty years of age, his body covered with the dried mud of the Ganges, and in a state of entire nudity. The people – men, women, and children – who were lounging or walking about, adopted no means to rid themselves of his society, and he kept stalking about in the open road. I dare say it was very wrong, but I could not restrain my feelings of indignation, and risking the consequences of the act, as I drove past, I gave him such a cut with my horsewhip on his dirty back, that I doubt not he long remembered it. Perhaps some will blame me for this mode of preaching to a heathen; but by that act I

The grassroots activism of the missionary against the *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis* dovetailed with administrative policy. While the state overtly took a neutral and non-interventionist stance towards 'religion'⁸, the socio-political insubordination and counter-hegemony of *Faqirs* and *Sanyasis* encouraged the British to interfere with their public presence and activism. The intervention of the colonial administration took the form of classifying them as nuisance referring to their nudity, intoxication, and vagrancy⁹. The administration would arrest and imprison the culprits to eliminate the public 'nuisance'¹⁰.

Nile Green shows that in pre-colonial India – not unlike Ottoman or Safavid empire – certain forms of Islamicate spirituality involved a good dose of intoxication as part of the psychosomatic culture. Elsewhere, I have elaborated on the case of Bengal – where certain subsections of the both Muslim and Hindu spiritual orders engaged in intoxication practices as part of their spiritual exercises, although it was not uncontroversial.

Freewheeling intoxication had been castigated within the Indian austerity tradition itself. *Charya Pada* – the earliest specimen of Bengali or proto-Bengali literature that is a collection of mystical literature of Buddhists – set the example of critiquing superficial, outward posture of austerities. Kabir, the 15th Century *Sant* in North Indian Bhakti tradition, ridiculed and dismissed the Yogis. The *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* propounded by Sri Chaitanya (c. 1486-1533) was dead set against use of intoxicants. Lalan (c. 1772-1880) was critical of the posture of both *Yogis* and *Faqirs* who vaingloriously bask in consumption of intoxication for intoxication's sake without caring about getting to the core of spiritual essence. Thus Lalan said:

preached to him and the bystanders a lesson on decency and morality which most certainly he was not likely soon to forget. I never met him in that neighborhood again, nor beheld another such sight so near to the European part of the city". (Gogerly, 1871, p. 205)

⁷ "We took our station in the midst of the booths erected by the Sunyasses and Fakirs, a race of men of all others the most depraved; who, under the pretence of holiness, practice a few austerities, but generally with a view to deceive; and whilst they are adored by the people as gods, manifest the spirit of Satan, and excel in every kind of abomination. A number of these, with bodies bedaubed in filth, and with thick ropes round their waists joined the congregation, and were addressed on the universal depravity of men..." (Gogerly, 1871, p. 250)

⁸ The natives would claim privileges of free practice of their religion under the principle of toleration. The 1858 Proclamation of Queen Victoria enshrined this principle: the Christian colonial state promised not to interfere with or favor any faith.

⁹ Green shows that the faqirs through his clownish freedom gave vent to a certain freedom of speaking through 'reckless jeers'. The British would suppress the voice by recategorizing them as nuisance – on account of their naked, drugged, mendicant, and vagrant status – instead of religiosity – as the state was officially neutral with regard to religion of the subjects. (Green, Jack Sepoy and the Dervishes: Islam and the Indian Soldier in Princely India, 2007)

¹⁰ "Among the Indians present in the asylums of the Bombay Presidency in the annual reports up to 1900 the predominant occupation listed was that of 'beggar, mendicant, fakir, etc'.. ... In other words, the main class of Indians finding themselves confined in the colonial asylums were the unruly faqirs and beggars ..." (Green, Jack Sepoy and the Dervishes: Islam and the Indian Soldier in Princely India, 2007)

না জেনে ফিকির আঁটা
শিরেতে পরলাম জটা
সার হল ভাঙ-ধুতরো ঘোঁটা
ভজন-সাধন সব চুলাতে
ফকিরি ফিকির করা
হতে হবে জ্যাস্তে মরা
লালন ফকির নেংটি-এড়া
আঁট বসে না কোন মতো

Song 292 (Lalan, 2004)

Clueless about what *faqiri* really entails,
Into tangled tresses I wore my hair,
to take on a holy air,
And to add to the abuse,
I basked in *Bhang* and *Datura* - to no use.
All the austerities go down the drain.
To really thrive in the *faqiri* enterprise
One has to be a living-dead.
Yet woe betide Lalan: in girding up the loins, for keeps he slips.

In contrast to the internal critique of freewheeling consumption of intoxicants by the *Faqiri-Yogi* tradition itself, a strong social discourse took shape under the auspices of the colonial regime. This anti-intoxication discourse incriminated the native *Faqir-Pir-Boiraqi-Sanyasi* tradition wholesale. The modernist Muslim would inherit the gaze of the utilitarian, rationalist, and colonial gaze¹¹, while the orthodox or neo-traditionalist Muslim would refashion this gaze to inveigh against heterodoxy. A broad characterization came into being that would place the *Faqirs, Bauls, Sadhaks, and Pirs* as social types that are *ganja*-addicts and thus poisonous.

Intoxication – Utilitarian and Wasteful, Public and Private

The utilitarian gaze of the colonial regime distinguished between dangerous addictions and normal ones. There were intoxicants – alcohol or tobacco – that had utility, and there were those that were wasteful.

In 19th century Calcutta, strictly utilitarian consumption of alcohol or other intoxicants was deemed normal in the eyes of the British. The poet-cum-journalist Ishwar Gupta (1812-1859) depicts the British men and women drinking in South Calcutta in an attempt to alleviate torment of the hot and humid summer¹².

However, orgiastic alcoholism and public drunkenness would be deemed scandalous by the ruling classes. Early 19th century Missionary Claudius Buchanan approvingly mentioned that there was no wine-drinking among the respectable Europeans in Calcutta – since wine intoxicates

¹¹ Abul Fazal in his autobiography recounts an incident where he went to meet a famous Pir. When he found the Pir was almost naked, and the food that was given to visitors was very poor, he felt deep loathing. The modernist has a whole new set of criteria to judge the potential merit of the Faqir.

¹² নগরের দক্ষিণেতে যত শ্বেত নরা
খাটায় খেসের টাট্টি মুড়িয়াছে ঘোরা।
তাহাতে চামের জল ঢালে নিরন্তরা
তখাচ শীতল নাহি হয় কলেবরা।
ও গড ও গড বলি টবেতে উলিয়া।
মনোহর হাঁসা মূর্তি কামিজ খুলিয়া।
ব্রাহ্মী-জল খায় তবু ঠাণ্ডি নাহি করে।
কেবল চাইস ভরা আইসের পরো
শুকায়েছে বিবিদের মুখ-শতদল
দে জল দে জল বাবা দে জল দে জল

(Gupta, 1919, p. 198)

and is part of vulgar bacchanalian feasts (Pearson, 1817, p. 133). For the colonial masters, the most problematic form of intoxication was the tendency of some Europeans themselves – destined for playing into the role of civilized educators – to appear publicly in drunken revelry, thus disgracing themselves. In 17th century, the Dutch doctor Schouten was full of sorrow to see how some European sailors by their drunkenness were exposing ‘*the Christian Religion to derision of peoples*’ in Bengal (Schouten, 1708, p. 153). In early 19th century, the English missionary Gogerly was thoroughly embarrassed when he found English sailors at Calcutta who would drink heavily and live a sinful life – making a bad name for Christianity. While Hindus would drink in secrecy, the English sailors would be seen intoxicated in public. The public visibility of drunken members of the British race was seen by Gogerly & co as a shame and disgrace incurred upon the British face. Like the *Faqirs*, such sailors were thus deemed a nuisance, an embarrassment. Gogerly & co resorted to organized preaching among English sailors as a measure to eliminate this evil (Gogerly, 1871, p. 116).

Then there were wasteful addictions of the natives. The Victorian utilitarian discourse recorded the wasteful practices and technologies of native addictions. *Hookah*-based tobacco consumption – called ‘hubble-bubble’ by the British – was widespread in Bengal. Robert Minturn found in the design of native Hookahs the cipher to native laziness and inferiority – also manifest in the dark skin and nakedness of the lower classes of Bengal:

‘(The hubble-bubble) consists of a cocoa-nut shell, half filled with water, and pierced above with two apertures. Through one of these, which is on top, passes a tube descending into the water. The other hole is for the mouth. The tube is ten inches or a foot long, and is surmounted by the earthen chillum, or pipe-bowl. The smoke passes down the tube, through the water, and out of the small hole into the smoker’s mouth. The tobacco, as used by the natives, is formed into a soft paste with molasses, and has to be kept alight by the contact of burning charcoal, or balls of dried cow-dung, called *ghools*, which are ignited and laid on the tobacco... it has to be held with great steadiness, as any motion will shake off the *ghools*. No more awkward instrument could be devised, and none better calculated to induce inaction in a people whose chief pleasure is smoking, and who are naturally lazy’. (Minturn, 1858, p. 93)

The racist characterization holds contempt for the harmless addiction of the lower classes of the subject people. Beyond venting about the inferiority of natives, the 19th century racist author is not much concerned to render the ‘inactive’ native productive as such.

Civilizational Fads - Intoxication among the *Babu* Classes of Calcutta

The development of Calcutta from a trade-oriented colony into an administrative-economic metropolis was a case of massive urbanization, which allowed new forms of inter-mixing among the Europeans and the natives. New institutions sprang up. New forms of visibility and fashionability came into being.

Native Bengali urbanites were used to various sorts of addiction. When, a boy called Ramtanu Lahiri came to Calcutta from Krishnanagar for education in 1826, wine was not very common in Calcutta, though *bhang* and hemp were widely consumed. The boys’ mess in which young Ramtanu lodged had youths thoroughly given to drugs. These early dandies of Calcutta did not care much about the anagogic essence of intoxication. Sastri writes:

“Their juvenile tastes, conversation, and amusements, were tainted by wicked examples. They grew very precocious, and frequented the streets like so many dandies, in thin black-bordered *dhutis* and English shoes, with teeth dyed black and hair parted. Their predilection for intoxicating drugs sometimes grew strong, and in other respects their conduct was immoral.” (Sastri P. S., 1907, p. 47)

There were dens or clubs of hemp-smokers. Sastri writes:

“Smoking hemp was a vice very prevalent then. There were in the city of Calcutta houses where hemp-smokers met, and passed hours, and even days, together with no other motive than to inhale the exhilarating fumes of ganja. One house at Bowbazar was the most famous among these. The company that met here were each named after a bird, and so the name given to the association was "Birds' Association." A member on his admission received as a rule the name of a tiny bird, which, with his progress in hemp-smoking, would be changed into that of a larger one, and it was compulsory that he should imitate the sounds and movements of the feathered biped the name of which he bore. There is a funny story about one of these ganja smokers, who, having been missed by his father for several days, was at length found in the house at Bowbazar. As soon as he laid hold of his son, and attempted to drag him out, the young man, who was called "Woodpecker," and who held between the teeth an apparatus resembling the beak of his prototype, commenced pecking his father.” (Sastri P. S., 1907, p. 51)

As opposed to the holy men consuming intoxicants as part of spiritual culture, these dandies took drugs as a matter of secular addiction for diversion, entertainment, and subcultural sociability.

Contemporary poet Ishwar Gupta depicted a scene of revelry:

ইয়ারেরা গদগদ, কেহ গাঁজা কেহ মদ,
কেহ বা চরসে দিয়া টানা
কাছে রেখে অবলায়, দিয়ে চাটি তবলায়,
মনের আনন্দে ছাড়ে গান। (Gupta, 1919, p. 227)

The reveling merry chums having a jolly grand
blast!
Regaling with *ganja*, *churs*, booze, in full gust!
Hookers at arm's length, stroking on *Tabla*,
Singing in rejoice: tra-la-la-la-la!

Beginning from 1810s, the Europeans increasingly supported a formalized expansion of English education in Bengal. Under the influence of the civilizing drive of the English, the addiction culture in Bengal made some adjustments. Under the pedagogic civilizing drive, wine found many new converts. Gradually, wine consumption saw a steep rise with higher volume of wine import and availability. The members of the Young Bengal movement allegedly adopted wine with an anagogic sense, as a matter of their fidelity to English culture. The followers of the educator Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) were the trailblazers. The young revolutionaries saw wine as an essential ingredient of civilization, as an integral article of faith of European civilization. The personal – so to speak – being political to them, much of their socio-political ideas were at that stage limited in personal transgressions.

“(A) passage in Kartik Babu's Autobiography runs thus: "That wine is an abomination, and that drinking it is a great sin, has been the belief of this country, but we cannot but condemn this belief as erroneous. Can the practice, so common among the most intelligent and civilised nations of the world, be anything but highly salutary, and therefore commendable? How shall we Indians be civilised, and how will our country be free from the tyrannical sway of error and superstition, if we abstain from wine? The alumni of the Hindu College, who set themselves up as reformers, all drank. When one of

them, Babu Madhab Chandra Mullick, was here, we now and then went to his house of an evening and drank each a glass or two of the best liquor." (Sastri P. S., 1907, p. 69)

Drinking in parties became a fashion. It became a way of moving up the social ladder, a status symbol and an emblem of spiritual progress. But other intoxicants were not put out of use. The litterateur Kali Prosunno Singh mentions a *nouveau riche Chhoto Babu* who daily consumed 1.5 *bhari* opium, 150 *chhilim ganja/cannabis*, and 1 barrel *Tari* (local liquor). (Singh, 1862, p. 26)

Intellectuals and opinion leaders like Raja Rammohun Roy recommended consumption of wine with moderation. The rationalist reformist would personally practice strict moderation in the ingestion of wine. The cross-cultural or cross-civilizational gustatory practices of the path-breaking reformer apparently made news among the wannabe youths of Calcutta:

"It was his daily custom to eat food prepared and cooked in accordance with Hindu prejudices in the morning, and in the evening to regale himself on English dishes and to drink a moderate quantity of liquor. He never took a drop too much. Once a pupil of his tricked him into drinking an extra glass, to see how he could bear it; and it is said that the Raja, coming to know this afterwards, was so annoyed with the man, as to shut him out of his presence for the next six months. Raja Rammohan Roy did not know that he was leaving an evil example behind him; and that it was not so easy for others to be moderate like himself." (Sastri P. S., 1907, pp. 67-68)

Moderate wine-drinking that veers away from the path of intoxication was within acceptable norms of the modernizing elite:

"Here is an anecdote, showing how innocent moderate drinking was held to be in English-educated Hindu families. Babu Rajaram Bose, afterwards one of the leading members of the Adi Brahma Samaj, had got into the habit of drinking at the age of fifteen or sixteen years. Once it came to the knowledge of his father Nanda Kisor Bose, a disciple of Rammohan Roy's, that his son had drunk too much and had showed signs of intoxication. The young man being called into his father's presence and asked if the report were correct said it was. On this the father, taking from his almira a full bottle and a glass, poured out a little wine, drank it himself and then offered an equal quantity to his son saying, "Whenever you drink, drink with me in this way." This was one of the many instances showing how drinking was countenanced by men who had come into touch with the English, and it is not a matter of surprise that the pupils of Derozio progressed in it as rapidly as in other matters. (Sastri P. S., 1907, pp. 68-69)

The urban poor and the *lumpen* were not deprived from the *jouissance*. Singh mentions that the indigent consumers of cannabis and liquor would beg alms in the street of Calcutta posing as blind beggars to get money for satisfying addiction. The 'Moutati old men' in the average morning would gather in 'opium and cannabis circles'. (Singh, 1862, pp. 13-14)

When the native *Babu* class was notching up their vertical allegiance towards European civilization by way of fashionable intoxication, the native religious intoxication and associated practices were coming under the censoring scissors of the administration. Certain practices of public intoxication and spiritual cultures about the body were proscribed by the administration. During this steep rise of wine consumption among the *Babu* class, there were other processes going on. *Suttee* or widow immolation practice – banned in early 19th century – allegedly involved desensitization of the victim by feeding her betel or other intoxicants. The Government had banned the *Charak Puja* that involved intoxicated austerities. In 1850s, Minturn wrote that a great change was effected 'by the abolition of the Churruk-poojah by the government. This was a festival

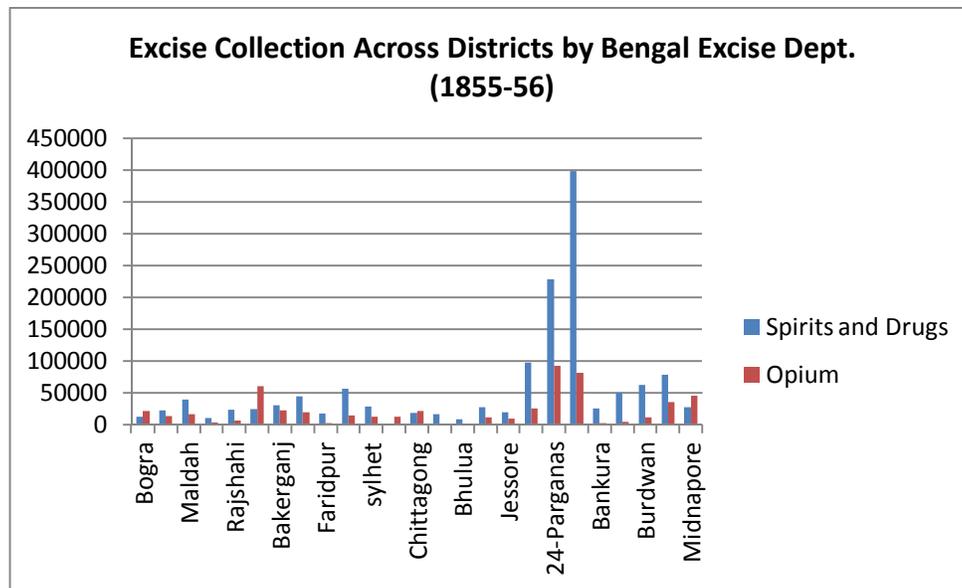
in which men were swung in the air, supported by iron hooks run under the muscles of the back. The performers used generally to intoxicate themselves by smoking bhung (the Cannabis Indica).’ (Minturn, 1858)

Thus, new forms of assimilatory social intoxication were emerging while some of the older forms of intoxication were being repressed. Civilizational wine-drinking was coming to visibility in Calcutta while the spiritual culture of the drugged *Faqir/Boiragi* was being forcibly excluded from public prominence.

Governance of Intoxication

The colonial administration had some tools and techniques to modulate drunkenness and its spillover into the public sphere. As the administration imposed excise taxes on intoxicant consumption, it provided a good estimate of consumption level. The excise department would exact a daily tax on intoxicants to modulate the consumption and visibility of intoxication in respective jurisdictions – with various degrees of laxity or strictness. Kali Prosunno Singh mentions that though *Abgari law* (excise regulations) stated that in evening the liquor shops should put shutters down, the customers would stay inside drinking on. (Singh, 1862, p. 13)

A sample chart of area-wise excise collection is provided below for the year 1855-6:



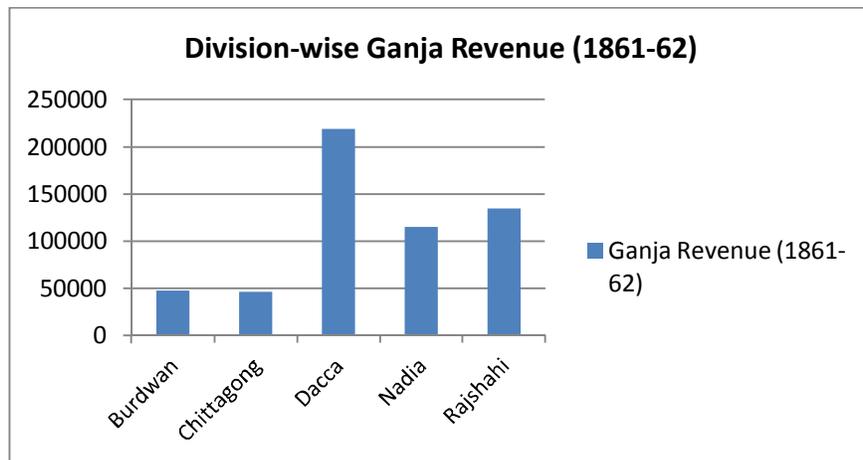
Based on data from (Bengal Excise Department, 1857)

Noakhali (Bhulua)¹³ and Pabna were the most temperate districts, while 24-Parganas and Calcutta¹⁴ were most intoxicated.

¹³ Although people of Noakhali were relatively temperate, yet in 1911, Webster could cite a handsome volume of excise tax collected on ganja (the most popular drug), opium, hemp, etc. He said: “The people of Noakhali, both Hindus and Muhammadans, are extremely temperate, and the excise revenue is far less than in any other plains district in the province. In 1908-09 it was only Rs. 24,772 against Rs. 17,691 in 1892-93. The increase is due almost entirely to the greater consumption of opium and hemp drugs. There is but little consumption of spirits, which are distilled from molasses on the outstill system, and bring in about Rs. 6,000 a year. The consumption of opium has doubled in the last 18 years, and in 1908-09 the duty and

Calcutta was thus oozing liquor through its pores. The ‘*abuse of wine has been the cause of the untimely death of many promising sons of Bengal, and of the ruin of many families*’ – laments Sastri. Wine was allegedly taking tolls on the habits and images of many *Babus*. Some of the Krishnanagar zamindars – known for their devotion and patronage of Hinduism – from mid-19th century onwards turned instead towards the pursuit of *Bacchus*. Sastri mentions untimely perishing of Siris Chandra (d. 1857) and Satis Chandra (d. 1870) due to excess drinking (Sastri P. S., 1907, p. 9)

If Calcutta was the place of spirits and opium, in Dacca (now Dhaka) *ganja* was in widest use. The use of *ganja* had a considerable adverse impact on the population of Dacca. For example, 48% of all patients admitted into the Lunatic Asylum of Dacca in 1862-63 had *ganja*-smoking as the reasons of their insanity while another 2% became insane due to use of opium (J McClelland, 1863). These patients were not necessarily upper-class dandies, revolutionary subversives, or invocers of the divine, but mostly ordinary folks.



Based on data from (Bengal Excise Department, 1862, p. 5)

The Social Backlash against Intoxication

There was a predictable social reaction to the intoxication given its real as well as perceived impact. Some of the militant British missionaries most concerned with the salvation of Indian souls from superstitions were against intoxication and the immoral traffic of opium (Poynder, 1857, p. 42). Apart from the policy level prescriptions of the missionaries, anti-drug activism also involved household level spiritual *dawah* activism. The 1852 Bengali novel by Hannah Catherine

license fees on it amounted together to Rs. 7,183. Gauja is the most popular drug, and yields a revenue of about Rs. 10,600 a year.” (Webster, 1911, p. 94)

Statement of Abkarry shops in the town of Calcutta.

| YEAR. | NUMBER OF SHOPS. | | | | | TOTAL. | |
|---------------|------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------|----------|
| | Doosta. | Tarree. | Rum and Imported Spirits. | Funch Houses. | Honda and Boarding Houses. | Shops. | Revenue. |
| 1851-52 | 72 | 31 | 10 | 8 | 25 | 146 | 1,55,775 |
| 1852-53 | 72 | 28 | 13 | 6 | 25 | 144 | 1,97,592 |
| 1853-54 | 72 | 28 | 15 | 6 | 23 | 144 | 2,00,623 |
| 1854-55 | 72 | 28 | 15 | 8 | 29 | 152 | 2,11,825 |

(Bengal Excise Department, 1857)

Mullens (1826-1861) lists drunkenness as one of the key vices of men as co-managers of the domestic sphere. Mullens' missionary heroine seeks to eradicate this vice through spiritual reform of the addicts (Mullens, 1852).

In native literature as well, drinking began to be portrayed as a major social evil. In the farces of Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873), the drunken orgies of the *Babus* are portrayed in vivid detail (Dutt, 1990).

In the celebrated novel '*Devdas*' by Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay one finds drinking as a vengeful transgressive activity. After having been thwarted from marrying his beloved, the hero Devdas takes to liquor. His drinking had psychosomatic, moral, and social purposes. Aside from forgetting his beloved, his drunkenness was a *perlocutionary* act, or an enunciation. He drank in the house of a courtesan called Chandramukhi. Liquor and licentiousness is juxtaposed to complete the picture of degenerate state, although Devdas initially remained chaste. The liquor allowed him to endure his sense of being impure and degraded in the polluting association of the courtesan. Thus, his intoxication had a threefold character: as an act of transgression against normal life; as a self-harming act; and as a soporific with pain-killing effects.

Devdas was the alcoholic with a heart of gold. He became profligate to pronounce his violation of the principle of self-interest and self-preservation. He jeopardized conventional routines and led a lifestyle that took a severe toll on his physical well-being. He did not enjoy the addiction or the company of other women, as he remained true to his original intent of self-negation¹⁵. When his father died, he observed the rituals and forsook drinking, but after a pause resumed it. Gradually, Devdas descended into true degeneracy and lost chastity as well, though his original intent remained unblemished. He remained painfully conscious of his degenerate state. Due to his sense of being impure, he refused to show his face to his mother. Ultimately, due to excessive drinking, he died of liver cirrhosis.

¹⁵ “একা দেবদাস চন্দ্রমুখীর ঘরে নীচে বসিয়া মদ খাইতেছে-অদূরে বসিয়া চন্দ্রমুখী বিষমমুখে চাহিয়া চাহিয়া সভয়ে বলিয়া উঠিল-দেবদাস, আর খেয়ো না।

দেবদাস মদের গ্লাস নীচে রাখিয়া দ্রুত করিল, কেন?

অল্পদিন মদ ধরেচ, অত সহিতে পারবে না।

সহ্য করব বলে মদ খাইনো এখানে থাকব বলে শুধু মদ খাই।

এ কথা চন্দ্রমুখী অনেকবার শুনিয়াছে এক-একবার তাহার মনে হয় দেয়ালে মাথা ঠুকিয়া সে রক্তগঙ্গা হইয়া মরো দেবদাসকে সে ভালবাসিয়াছে দেবদাস মদের গ্লাস ছুঁড়িয়া ফেলিলা কৌচের পায়াল লাগিয়া সেটা চূর্ণ হইয়া গেল। তখন আড় হইয়া বালিশে হেলান দিয়া জড়াইয়া জড়াইয়া কহিল, আমার উঠে যাবার ক্ষমতা নেই, তাই এখানে বসে থাকি-জ্ঞান থাকে না, তাই তোমার মুখের পানে চেয়ে কথা কই- চন্দ-র-তবু অজ্ঞান হইনে-তবু একটু জ্ঞান থাকে-তোমাকে ছুঁতে পারিনে-আমার বড় ঘৃণা হয়।

চন্দ্রমুখী চক্ষু মুছিয়া ধীরে ধীরে কহিতে লাগিল, দেবদাস, কত লোক এখানে আসে, তারা কখনো মদ স্পর্শও করে না।

দেবদাস চক্ষু বিস্ফারিত করিয়া উঠিয়া বসিল। টলিয়া টলিয়া ইতস্ততঃ হস্ত নিক্ষেপ করিয়া বলিল,-স্পর্শ করে না? আমার বন্দুক থাকলে তাদের গুলি করতাম। তারা যে আমার চেয়েও পাপিষ্ঠ-চন্দ্রমুখী!

কিছুক্ষণ থামিয়া কি যেন ভাবিতে লাগিল; তাহার পর আবার কহিল, যদি কখনও মদ ছাড়ি-যদিও ছাড়ব না-তা হলে আর কখন ত এখানে আসব না। আমার উপায় আছে, কিন্তু তাদের কি হবে?

একটুখানি থামিয়া বলিতে লাগিল, বড় দুঃখে মদ ধরেচি-আমাদের বিপদের, দুঃখের বন্ধু! আর তোমাকে ছাড়তে পারিনে,-

দেবদাস বালিশের উপর মুখ রগড়াইতে লাগিল। চন্দ্রমুখী তাড়াতাড়ি কাছে আসিয়া মুখ তুলিয়া ধরিল। দেবদাস দ্রুত করিল-ছিঃ, ছুঁয়ো না-এখনো আমার জ্ঞান আছে চন্দ্রমুখী, তুমি ত জান না-আমি শুধু জানি আমি কত যে তোমাদের ঘৃণা করি। চিরকাল ঘৃণা করব-তবু আসব, তবু বসব, তবু কথা কব-নাহলে যে উপায় নেই তা কি তোমরা কেউ বুঝবে? হাঃ-হাঃ-লোকে পাপ কাজ আঁধারে করে, আর আমি এখানে মাতাল হই-এমন উপযুক্ত স্থান জগতে কি আর আছে।” (Chattopadhyay S. C., 1991)

Enunciative intoxication of Devdas was gendered, as being a man, he could perform austerities through drinking and association with courtesans. His beloved Paru, on the other hand, being a woman, performed austerities through renouncing jewelry¹⁶.

The Gaze of the Native

Just as the deprecatory and incriminating gaze of the masters *interpellated* the subjects, the colonial subjects would also arrest the orgies of the masters. The liquor-love of the *Sahib* was a common motif in the native literature and the native authors would describe the drunkenness in lurid detail. The 19th century Bengali author Mir Mosharrif Hossain (1847-1912) portrayed liquor addiction of the *Sahibs*. In his long poem on the construction of Gorai Bridge over the river *Gouri* or *Gorai*, he dwells at length on the liquor love of the British officers. Parties are held in the evening at the places of the *Sahibs*, in which the wives of *Sahibs* also partook. Hossain's conscience is particularly piqued by the ways of the *Sahibs'* wives .

কারো কারো বাসায় নিশিতে বড় রং
কেহ নাচে কেহ গায় কেহ দেয় সং
সাহেব মাতিছে মদে বিড়ালক্ষী লয়ে
পড়িছে বিবির গায়ে ঢলিয়ে ঢলিয়ে
মাতামাতি লাফালাফি কত গীত গায়া
তালে তালে নাচিতেছে শাখামৃগ প্রায়া
সেরী চেরী ব্রাণ্ডি ধরা মেজের উপরো
সেজের আলোয় আরও বড় শোভা করো
যার যাহা ইচ্ছা তাহা করিতেছে পান।
দারা রারা সুরে কেহ করিতেছে গান।
কোন বিবি সুরা ঢালি গেলাসেতে করি
দিতেছে সাহেব-মুখে আ মরি আ মরি।
বিড়ালক্ষী শাদামুখী ধবল বসনা

Some hold rave parties in their houses at night
Some dance, some sing, some are playing clowns
Sahib is having fun, with a glass of wine in hand
and nestling close to the cat-eyed wife
now and then falling over the lady.
Fun and frolic surge up, they sing on in a row,
Dancing to beats like a bunch of chimpanzees.
Sherry, Cherry, Brandy are lined up on the table.
The lights twinkling on the bottles make it a pleasing sight.
Each is drinking to his or her wish.
Some are singing in 'da-ra ra-ra' tune.
Some lady is pouring wine in the glass
And holding it to a Sahib's mouth – oh! What a sight!
Cat-eyed, white-skin, neat-white-dressed

¹⁶ “দেবদাদা, একটি কথা বলব?

কি?

পার্বতী আপনাকে একটু সামলাইয়া লইয়া কহিল, তুমি মদ খেতে শিখলে কেন?

দেবদাস হাসিয়া উঠিল, কহিল, খেতে কি কোন জিনিস শিখতে হয়?

তা নয়, অভ্যাস করলে কেন?

কে বলেচে, ধর্মদাস?

যেই বলুক, কথাটা কি সত্যি? দেবদাস প্রতারণা করিল না; কহিল, কতকটা বটো

পার্বতী কিছুক্ষণ স্তব্ধ হইয়া বসিয়া থাকিয়া জিজ্ঞাসা করিল, আর কত হাজার টাকার গয়না গড়িয়ে দিয়েচ, না?

দেবদাস হাসিয়া কহিল, দিইনি, গড়িয়ে রেখেছি। তুই নিবি?

পার্বতী হাত পাতিয়া বলিল, দাও। এই দেখ, আমার একটিও গয়না নেই।

চৌধুরীমশাই তোকে দেননি?

দিয়েছিলেন; আমি সমস্ত তাঁর বড়মেয়েকে দিয়ে দিয়েছি।

তোর বুঝি দরকার নেই?

পার্বতী মাথা নাড়িয়া মুখ নীচু করিল।

এইবার সত্যই দেবদাসের চোখে জল আসিতেছিল। দেবদাস অন্তরে বুঝিতে পারিয়াছিল, কম দুঃখে আর স্ত্রীলোক নিজে গহনা খুলিয়া বিলাইয়া দেয় না। কিন্তু চোখের জল চাপিয়া ধীরে ধীরে বলিল, মিছে কথা, পারা কোন স্ত্রীলোককেই আমি ভালবাসিনি, কাউকেই গয়না দিইনি”। (Chattopadhyay S. C., 1991)

বাতির আলোতে আরও উজ্জ্বল বরণ
বুক উচ্চ কুচ গিরি অর্ধ আবরণ/
কে বলিবে আছে তার উপরে বসনা
শান্তিপুরে ডুরে পরা আমাদের মেয়ে।
শতগুণে ভাল তারা বিবিদের চেয়ে।।
(Hossain, 1957, pp. 31-32)

The clothes are so revealing that
The large swelling breasts can scarcely be said to be covered.
Our women who wear *Shantipuri dure*
Are hundred times better than white ladies.

Hossain was thus refounding the normativity of the native society across categories of gender and nationality. In his social critique, he portrays the native *Babus* parroting the Englishmen in devotion to liquor. Native cocottes are shown to take part in the party. The *Babus* eat fried rice and chickpeas. They sing *ganjakhuri* (ganja-inspired) songs and mix with native cocottes. In such parties, native cocottes have a confident presence – emerging from their otherwise social marginality.

সুরেশ্বরী ধান্যেশ্বরী বোতল সহায়।
উপস্থির হইলেন আসিয়া কয়ায়।।
গলবস্ত্রে কত বাবু করে জোড় করা
কতমতে করিতেছে মায়ের আদর।।
বারাঙ্গনাগণ সব প্রাঙ্গণে আসিয়া।
কহিছে কাতরে কত মিনতি করিয়া।।
থাক মা এপারে থাক সুরের ঈশ্বরী।
সেবিব তোমারে মোরা, ওমা ধান্যেশ্বরী।।...
ওদিকে কতক বাবু বসে নানা দলো
কেহ বসে গীত গায় কেহ পড়ে টলো।।
ধান্যেশ্বরী ভাজা চাল, ভাজা ছোলা নিয়ে।
এ উহার গালে দেয় আমোদে মাতিয়ে।।
দিশী মদ দিশী বাবু দিশী বিবিগণ।
সাদা জলে রাঙ্গা চক সাদা করি মন।।
তবলার বোলে মন উঠিছে ফুলিয়া।।
নাচিছে কামিনীকর আদরে ধরিয়া।।
উন্মত্ত হইয়া কেহ বারনারীসনে।
কি আশে বিদেশে আশা নাহি ভাবে মনো।।...
ধিক ধিকা নাচ আর কেদারার বোলা
গাঁজাখুরি গানে আরও বাড়িতেছে গোলা।।
(Hossain, 1957, pp. 30, 32)

Sureshwari Dhanyeshwari Bottles are the saving grace...
Many *Babus* join both hands to pay obeisance,
Humbly praying to propitiate the goddesses.
The cocottes have freely flocked into the yard
They are making all sorts of prayers:
“Stay here at our side, o Mother Sureshwari
We will worship and serve you, o Mother Dhanyeshwari”.
There, a few *Babus* are scattered into small groups
Some are blathering a song, this or that one tumbles down in a stupor.
Drinking *Dhanyeshwari* with fried rice and chick peas
One puts it to another’s mouth in jest
Native Booze, native *Babu*, and native *Bibis*
White-wash their souls with white booze in bloodshot eyes
The mind takes flight at the beat of *Tabla*
The women are shaking their bodies dancing to the beat
Some *Babus* are so enamored by the cocottes
That it never occurs to their mind to what purpose they have come abroad
Dhika-dhika dance and Bol of the *Tablas*
The cannabis-induced songs are blending into a cacophony!

Revivalist Appropriation of Anti-Intoxication Rationality

The oeuvre of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay – the most influential creative writer in 19th century Bengal – shows two different streaks of thoughts on the question of intoxication. In the satirical vignettes collected under ‘*Kamalakanta*’, the eponymous protagonist – a habitual opium eater – speaks from the margins and provides commentary on various social issues (Chattopadhyay B. C., *Kamalakanta*, 1903). Opium stupor give him *epiphanic* insights about society and humanity. The intoxication also turns him into a wise fool and unleashes his tongue on the pretext of madness so that he can babble freely, defying the conventional regimes of discourse. In

Bankim's novels, on the other hand, the author is rather a somber, nomothetic voice, engaged in the business of building a 'social discourse'. In the novels, intoxicants are pathways to evil. In *Kapalkundala*, a Tantric-Kapalika of Saiva-Sakta school gets the hero Navakumar drunk in order to avail his assistance in sacrificing the heroine Kapalkundala (Chattopadhyay B. C., *Kapalkundala*, 1903). In *Bishbrikkha*, Morally lax men and women – indulging in anti-social relationships – drink brandy (Chattopadhyay B. C., *Bishbrikkha*, 1903). Against the drunk, morally ambiguous ascetics, Bankim comes up with his own project of chaste, literate, sober ascetic devotees (Chattopadhyay B. C., *Anandamath*, 1903).

As the intoxicated *Faqirs* and *Boiragis* receded from their hegemonic role due to active intervention of the colonial regime, the neo-traditionalists appropriated and repurposed the gaze and the surveillance of the colonists. To take a sample from an Islamist author, we can take a look at a fiction by Ismail Hossain Shirazi. In *Ray Nandini*, Shirazi portrays drinking, illicit sexuality, and drug consumption as the three pillars of transgression and attributes the vices to non-Muslim mystics (Shirazi, *Ray Nandini*, 1991). The *Tantric*, the *Kapalika*, the *Vamachara* identity is the culprit^{xvii}. The parasitic, gluttonous *guru* given to all forms of sensuous pleasures is a key motif. In Shirazi's novel, the *guru* also creates an avenue for drug and alcohol consumption which was otherwise strictly proscribed under the Islamic rule^{xviii}. Shirazi makes this proscription as one of the benefits of Islamic governance^{xix}.

Just as Bankim would depict the affair between a Hindu man and a Muslim woman, so Shirazi depicted the affair of a Muslim man and a Hindu woman. This structure all too neatly reveals how patriarchy analogizes male-female hierarchic couples with the hierarchic couples of the master-slave, conqueror-conquered, or enjoyer-enjoyed, here overdetermined by the additional hierarchic structure of a communal conception of interfaith relations. While Bankim

^{xvii} “হেমদা কাশীর ব্যভিচার-দুষ্ট বায়ুতে এবং কুসংসর্গ প্রভাবে অল্পকালের মধ্যেই একজন প্রথম শ্রেণীর গুণ্ডার মধ্যে পরিগণিত হইল। তাহার শরীরে বেশ শক্তি ছিল, সে শক্তি এক্ষণে নানা প্রকার পাশবিক এবং পেশাচিক কার্য সাধনে দিন দিন দুর্দম ও অসংযত হইয়া উঠিল। গায়ের শক্তি, হৃদয়ের সাহস, টাকার বল, সহচরদিগের নিত্য উৎসাহ এবং পাপ-বিলাসের উদ্ভট-চিন্তা তাহাকে একটা সাক্ষাৎ শয়তানে পরিণত করিল। অনবরত কাম-পূজায় তাহার ধর্মকর্ম-জ্ঞান লোপ পাইল। মদের নেশা তাহাকে আরও গভীর পক্ষে নিষ্কোপ করিল। শেষে মদ্য-সেবা এবং কাম-পূজাই তাহার জীবনের একমাত্র কর্তব্য হইয়া উঠিল। অবশেষে বামাচারী তান্ত্রিক-সম্প্রদায়ের এক কাপালিক হস্তে সে তন্ত্রে মত্তে দীতি হইয়া পাপে দ্বিধাশূন্য ও নির্ভীক হইয়া পড়িল”। (Shirazi, Rai Nandini, 1915)

^{xviii} “হেমদা কাশী হইতে আসিবার সময় তাহার দীক্ষাগুরু অভিরাম স্বামীও সঙ্গে আসিয়াছিল। অভিরাম স্বামী সন্ন্যাসীর মত গৈরিকবাস পরিধান এবং সর্বদা কপালে রক্তচন্দনের ফোঁটা ধারণ করিত। বাহুতে ও গলায় রুদ্রামালা, শিরে দীর্ঘকেশ, কিন্তু জটাবন্ধ নহে। এতদ্ব্যতীত তাহার সন্ন্যাসের বাহ্যিক বা আভ্যন্তরিক কোনও লক্ষণ ছিল না। সে সর্বদাই অঙ্গ-প্রত্যঙ্গ এবং মস্তকে প্রচুর তৈল মর্দন করিত। তাহার শরীর মাংসল, মসৃণ, স্থূল এবং পেশীবণ্ডলা সে অসুরের মত ভোজ করিত। সকালে তাহার জন্য দুই সের লুচি, এক সের মোহনভোগ ও অন্যান্য ফলমূল বরাদ্দ ছিল। দ্বিপ্রহরে অর্ধ সের চাউলের ভাত, এক পোয়া ঘৃত, এক সের পরিমিত মাছ এবং দুই সের মাংস এবং অন্যান্য মিষ্টান্ন প্রায় দুই সের, সর্বশুদ্ধ ছয় সের ভোজ্যভোগ তাহার উদর-গহবরে স্থান পাইত। অপরাহ্নে দেড় সের ঘন ক্ষীর তাহার জলখাবার সেবায় লাগিত। রাতে রুটি ও মাংসে প্রায় পাঁচ সেরে তাহার ুন্নিবৃত্তি হইত। তাহার ভোজন, আচরণ ও ব্যবহারে সন্ন্যাসের নামগন্ধও ছিল না। মদ্য সর্বদাই চলিত। তাহার চেহারা ও নয়নের কুটিলতা তীব্রভাবে লক্ষ্য করিলে সে যে একটি প্রচ্ছন্ন শয়তান তাহা তীক্ষ্ণবুদ্ধি লোকে বুঝিতে পারিত। কিন্তু তাহার গৈরিক বাস, দীর্ঘকেশভার এবং রক্ত-চন্দনের ফোঁটা হিন্দু-সমাজে তাহাকে সম্ভ্রমের সহিত সন্ন্যাসীর আসন প্রদান করিয়াছিল। তান্ত্রিক সন্ন্যাসীর নামে অনেকে ‘ইতঃ নষ্ট ততঃ ব্রহ্মের’ দল, শিষ্য ও চেলারূপে স্বামীজীবর পাদ-সেবায় লাগিয়া গেল। স্ত্রীলোকদিগের মধ্যে কবচ লইবারও ধুম পড়িয়া গেল। বশীকরণ, উটাতন, মারণ প্রভৃতির মন্ত্র-প্রণালী ও ছিটেফোঁটা কত লোকে শিখিতে লাগিল। শিষ্যদিগের আধ্যাত্মিক উন্নতির মধ্যে ধান্যেশ্বরী সেবা খুব চলিল।” (Shirazi, Rai Nandini, 1915)

^{xix} “সেকালের ইসলামীয় শাসনে মদ্য কোথায়ও ক্রয় করিতে পাওয়া যাইত না। এখনকার মত ব্রাণ্ডি, শ্যাম্পেন, শেরী, কোরেট প্রভৃতি বোতলবাহিনীর অস্তিত্ব ছিল না। কোনও মুসলমান মদ্যপান করিলে কাজী সাহেব তাহাকে কষাঘাতে পিঠ ফাটাইয়া দিতেন। হিন্দুর মধ্যে কেহ মদ খাইয়া মাতলামী করিলেও কষাঘাতে পিঠ ফাটাইয়া যাইত। কাজেই বড় শহরেও মদের দুর্গন্ধ, মাতালের পৈশাচিত লীলা কদাপি অনুভূত ও দৃষ্ট হইত না। হিন্দুদের মধ্যে বাতীতে অতি নিভূতে ধান্যেশ্বরী নামক দেশী মদ প্রস্তুত করিয়া কেহ কেহ সেবন করিত। ইসলামীয় সভ্যতার অনুকরণে হিন্দু সমাজেও মদ্যপান ও শূকর-মাংস ভগ্ন অত্যন্ত গর্হিত এবং ঘৃণিত বলিয়া বিবেচিত হইত।” (Shirazi, Rai Nandini, 1915)

would sometimes depict Muslim mystics as villains (Chattopadhyay B. C., Shitaram, 1903, pp. 439-449), Shirazi portrayed the Hindu guru in lurid colors. The two novelists communalized the history of the anti-Mughal twelve chieftains of Bengal. While the twelve chieftain period is characterized by cooperation among Hindu and Muslim chieftains, Bankim picked up a Hindu chieftain as his chaste hero. Shirazi drew the Muslim chieftain Isa Khan as the epitome of virtue and chasteness, while Pratapaditya was depicted as the drunken berserk. The logic of communal social discourse was given full vent in this exchange.

The medieval or early modern chronicles of travelers and contemporary witnesses would show that the revivalist imagination of Bankim and Shirazi made an anachronistic representation of pre-colonial Bengal. Among other things, the representation of consumption of liquor or drugs was not accurate; e.g. see: (Varthema, 1863) (Nathan, 1936) (Manucci, 1907).

Turning of the Tide: Brief Note on the Rollback of the Market of Intoxicants:

In 20th century, the leading countries in the world took increasingly strong measures to illegalize and penalize drug business. There was the US-initiated conference in China in opposition to opium trade. In 1912, International Opium Conference was held at the Hague. The US passed the Harrison Act in 1914 to restrict drug use with provisions for controlling the production and trade of morphine, cocaine, and so forth. In 1934, governments of around 40 countries signed the 'Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs'. It was the age of prohibitionism and temperance movement around the world, including in the United States. The British House of Commons had denounced opium cultivation and traffic in 1891, 1906, and 1908. Yet the British Indian administration did not suppress its cultivation. Other countries that allowed poppy cultivation included Persia, Turkey, Russian Turkestan, Macedonia, Afghanistan, and China. The British administration was unwilling to concede to the prohibitionist demands because of the revenue generated from alcohol and intoxicants. However, political pressure was building up as the Indian Congress was strengthening the politics of mass agitation. 'Peaceful picketing' of liquor shops was a programmatic component of non-cooperation movement by Congress, for which volunteers suffered police repression (Rutherford, 1927, p. 35). Beyond Bengal, liquor shops were smashed in places like Bombay (1921) during the visit of Prince of Wales. Congress Leader MK Gandhi reflected that the workers and ordinary people would take to alcohol or intoxicants for their drudgery and suffering. He sought support from health professionals to eradicate drinking. At the same time, he encouraged popular entertainment campaigns so that working classes could have alternative sources of recreation (Rajshekhkar, 2003, pp. 256-57). In the first half of the 20th century riots in East Bengal, alcohol shops were often a key target of attack by the agitators. During the *Non Cooperation Movement* and the *Khilafat Movement*, peasants in north Bengal would picket liquor and *ganja* shops in village markets and hats. In Sirajganj and Pabna, Peasants would loot liquor/*ganja*, opium shops (Hashmi, 1994). In the murderous communal riots of Dhaka in 1930, groups would attack liquor shops (Vindicator, 1930). In north Bengal (Bogra, Pabna, Dinajpur), peasants would simultaneously seek to boycott jute, opium, and liquor (Hashmi, 1994).

It would be inadequate to attribute the agitation only to religious opposition to alcoholism and intoxicants, as the same kind of agitation prevailed in other parts of India without Muslim majority populations. The 1931 Gandhi-Irwin pact apparently contained a provision allowing for peaceful picketing of liquor shops. Thousands of liquor shops were picketed during Quit India Movement of 1942 (Rajshekhkar, 2003, pp. 256-57). Some of the Princely states of India banned locally-made liquor. The British administration in Bengal had to respond to the domestic and

international pressure. The government devised legislative restrictions on drugs. In 1930, the Dangerous Drugs Act was passed, followed by the Drugs Act, 1940 that imposed control on manufacture, import/export, sale and distribution of drugs.

Concluding Reflections:

The above discussion seeks to identify the discourses and practices around intoxication in the wake of colonialism in 19th century Bengal. It shows that some forms of intoxication were pushed back by the emergent socially dominant groups while other forms were prized and privileged. Yet, there was no uniform development dynamic as far as the intoxication practices were concerned. Each new development gave rise to new tensions, contradictions, and contests given the conflicting social visions of various social groups. Nor could the meaning of a specific practice or development be assigned exclusively by one group, as other groups could appropriate or refashion the same to suit their own purposes to varying degrees of success.

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