
PANEL: THE HISTORY OF ALCOHOL AND DRUGS IN MODERN SOUTH ASIA (18TH - 20TH CENTURIES)

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OPIUM AND GANJA

1. Nirmal Kumar, Sri Venkateswara College, New Delhi (kumarnirmal42@gmail.com)

The creation of morals: Alcohol and opium consumption among the Mughal elite
(working title)

Alcohol and substances such as opium were not associated with negative moral values in ancient and medieval India. Ancient Indian and Islamic medicine involved many herbs and preparations that would be called 'drugs' or 'narcotics' today; even public consumption of such substances by adults was considered acceptable. People were also quite open about sexuality: there were written accounts as well as graphical representations on temples. Up to the 19th century, it was normal to visit a 'tawaiġ', a courtesan, for entertainment. Courtesans even introduced young men to etiquette and manners.

British colonialism, however, produced crucial changes. The Victorian fear of sexuality, the new standards of decency especially for women, and, most important, the image of the 'Indian civilization' constructed by European travelers such as Bernier and colonial scholars such as Max Muller or James Mill interplayed in the making of a new complex of morals. The criminalization of herbs and medicinal preparations was part of this civilizational construction and its moral code, as can be shown by comparing social values and attitudes towards the consumption of alcohol and substances such as opium during the Mughal period with the British rule.

Most Mughal rulers and nobles openly drank and consumed opium: Jahangir (1605-1627), his grandfather Humayun (1530-56), and great-grandfather Babur (1526-30) were known consumers of alcohol and opium. So was Ibrahim Lodi who was defeated by Babur to capture India. My paper will make a detailed presentation based on written material as well as paintings to demonstrate how the consumption of substances today considered as 'drugs' or 'narcotics' was widespread and acceptable in the Mughal period.

2. Hope Marie Childers, PhD Candidate, UCLA Art History (hopa65@yahoo.com)

Cabinet of Cures: India's Narcotic Drugs on Display in the Victorian Era

The impact of colonial-era exhibitions and display upon the construction of public and professional knowledge about India is by now well understood. My paper examines more

specifically the relationship between the exhibitionary impulse and shifting attitudes towards narcotic drugs, with particular focus on the varied display strategies deployed in both the colony and the metropole. Drawing from correspondence, archived records, and contemporary published commentary and essays, I unravel the polyphonic debate as filtered through the discursive space of spectacle, including the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1851, regional displays in India, as well as several new, disciplinary museums in London. Ultimately my objective is to demonstrate how the exhibition space served as an important platform for numerous interested parties: nascent professional societies, scientific institutions, anti-opium trade campaigners, and the wider public—all this in a climate of increasingly polemical debate as well as mounting government regulation of narcotics in the latter decades of the century.

3. Kawal Deep Kour (Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati, Assam, India) (kawal@iitg.ac.in)

The Opium Question in Colonial Assam. Remarks on the Assam Opium Enquiry Committee Report, 1933.

This paper analyses the *Assam Opium Enquiry Committee Report* of 1933 as a far-reaching investigation of the opium problem in colonial Assam. It explores the dimensions of the opium narrative, from opium control to opium suppression, from reforms to treaties. It also examines the intellectual underpinnings, within the colonial framework and at the international level. In doing so, it intends an understanding of an exhaustive document intended to serve the purpose of entailing within its ambit the entire trajectory of the opium question in Assam.

4. Maria Moritz, Doctoral Candidate, Jacobs University, Bremen (m.moritz@jacobs-university.de)

Looking for spiritual experience in South Asia: Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden's experiments with 'ganja' at the intersection of Temperance, Theosophy and 'Indian spirituality' (1894-1896)

This paper analyses the spiritual-transcultural dimension of drug consumption in late colonial South Asia by looking at the diaries of Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden's 'trip' to India and Sri Lanka in 1894-1896. Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden (1846-1916) was a noted member of the German Theosophical Society (TS) and the Hamburg Geographical Society. At the end of the 19th century he travelled through South Asia in search of spiritual insight and thus entrusted himself to two Indian 'gurus' Ras Bihari Mukherji and Pasupati Deva. His diaries give a detailed subjective insight into his experiments with Yoga practice, abstinence and consumption of 'ganja' under the guidance of his Indian 'gurus'.

Drug experiments of Euro-American searchers guided by South Asian 'gurus' naturally evoke the notion of so called Hippies of the late 20th century. Hübbe-Schleiden represented a new type of traveler on the subcontinent who was not a missionary, colonial officer, merchant, or scientist, but exclusively on a search for spiritual insight. As a 'forerunner' of later spiritual searchers Hübbe-Schleiden's diaries show the rising fascination of the West with 'Indian spirituality' that is illustrated by the Theosophical Society and its incredible worldwide success. By trying to achieve spiritual experiences through drug consumption in an early 'Hippie manner' Hübbe-Schleiden

contradicted the official theosophical approach by which drug consumption was considered not as a trigger but a hindrance to spiritual development. Annie Besant, the Society's later president, actively promoted the Temperance movement both in Great Britain and South Asia.

Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden's background of a protestant family, his membership in the 'sober' Theosophical Society and his experience with mood altering substances provide the elements of an early, often contradictory transcultural search for spiritual experience in South Asia. Analysing Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden's diaries and letters from 1894-96 as well as letters by his 'gurus' Ras Bihari Mukherji and Pasupati Deva, I will pursue questions such as:

How were the cultural connotations of mood altering substances negotiated in the interaction of the European searcher with his South Asian guides? How did Hübbe-Schleiden reflect the contradictions of his 'sober' socio-religious background, his affiliation with the Temperance oriented TS and his drug experiments in India? How precisely can we link the 'Hippie' culture of the mid 20th century with the unique accounts of Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden? This paper thus shows the trans-cultural dimension of drug and highlights the role of drugs and sobriety in an interaction of 'East' and 'West'.

5. Jim Mills, Department of History, University of Strathclyde (jim.mills@strath.ac.uk)

'Prohibition of cannabis would not be practicable in India': South Asia and the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

The 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs remains the basis of international laws on cannabis to this day and this paper considers the role that the delegation from the Government of India played in shaping its stipulations on cannabis. Early in the 1950s the WHO had declared that the medicinal use of cannabis was obsolete. However, this was challenged by the Government of India by reference to local systems of therapy in Asia and the Middle East where the leaves of the plant were used in traditionally prepared remedies as a sedative and an analgesic. As such, Ayurvedic and Tibbi practice became the basis for a challenge to the hegemonic assumptions of the western trained doctors of the World Health Organization. However, the delegation also freely admitted that 'cannabis in the form of ganja and bhang was still consumed by a small section of the population for non-medical purposes' and that their administration was reluctant to interfere with these recreational users. In looking at how and why the Indian delegation concerned themselves with cannabis, the paper examines the place of South Asian practices concerning psycho-active substances in the shaping of the international drugs regulatory system, and the significance of the drugs debate for the post-colonial Indian state.

ALCOHOL

TEMPERANCE

6. Abhilash Malayil, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
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The Practice of Alcohol and the Politics of Temperance in British Malabar: South India

This paper deals with the distillation and consumption of ‘country liquor’ in British Malabar. By considering a comparatively long historical period (1800-1940), this paper will be attempting to chart certain genres of *mentalités* towards the circulation of locally distilled alcohol in this region. These were closely linked with the locally prevalent conceptions on purity, morality, health, (social) mobility and at the last instance, with the Colonial punitive (licensing) Raj. These patterned *mentalités* were not only crucial in defining natives’ later engagements/approaches with ‘intoxicants’ like liquor, toddy and opium but also in molding a general/common attitude in favor of a ‘regime of temperance’. This—the flavor of temperance—as this paper argues, was tangibly explicit in their political and cultural choices under Colonialism, from their popular mobilization strategies to strict injunctions on food and sexuality. The major focus of this paper is on the late 19th and early 20th century concerns over health and wellbeing as they were introduced/ propagated in this region by the mainstream anti-colonial leadership. Large collections of serial publications, particularly in vernacular, will be depended as one of the major sets of primary sources for this study. It was through these weekly/monthly renderings, a well structured propaganda against alcohol had unfolded often with an extra-medical foundation. This paper will conclude by arguing that the prescription of ‘temperance’ against ‘intoxication’ in this south Indian locale was political in its basics and it was authenticated itself against the subterranean (also read as ‘the subaltern’) locations of intoxication, where alcohol was conceived as an ‘ingredient’ or practiced as a ‘medicine’ or as a ‘stimulant’.

7. Robert Eric Colvard, Doctoral Candidate, University of Iowa (robert-colvard@uiowa.edu)

‘Drunkards Beware’: Indian Nationalism and Global Temperance, 1937-1939

Anti-alcohol agitation in India is intimately associated with nationalism. These two movements shared much in common but were far from identical. Although temperance featured prominently in nationalist discourse, Indian temperance leaders also dialogued authoritatively with other temperance leaders across the world. As the rhetoric of temperance gained importance globally, its status within the larger freedom struggle grew accordingly. My paper will make the case for a separate history of the Indian temperance movement both in its involvements with the nationalist struggle and with foreign and international organizations. Further, it will explore the transformation of temperance rhetoric into policy as nationalists sought to use limited sovereignty to mold Indian bodies to the national ideal.

Temperance could not have achieved its prominence in Indian nationalist discourse but for the influence of local activists whose views were formed in the unique circumstances of hundreds of localities. Attitudes toward alcohol varied from town to town, and even from village to village.

These distinct positions were often pushed upward to inform regional and national temperance policies. Similarly, national temperance policies were frequently altered and adapted in myriad ways when they were promulgated at the local level. Temperance thus offers a unique and dynamic means with which to examine the links among local, supra-local and global discourses in nationalist-era India.

This paper will focus particularly on the brief period from 1937 to 1939 during which the Congress Party entered government to rule the provinces. During this peculiar historical moment, the Congress enjoyed a great deal of power in the provinces without holding complete sovereignty. Thus Congress was in the unique position of continuing an anti-colonial struggle while holding *some* important levers of power, a condition that allowed them to use the machinery of the state to define and enforce national identity. In pursuance of their larger goals, Congress formed unstable coalitions with individuals and organizations as diverse as missionaries, Ayrā Samaj, European temperance advocates, and the Muslim League. However briefly, these organizations worked alongside state bureaucrats to make real the image of the abstemious Indian that had long been an ideal for those who had fought the long war against intemperance.

REGULATION AND MEDICALIZATION

8. Erica Wald, LSE research fellow (e.l.wald@lse.ac.uk)

Intemperance and Control: the Body of the Soldier and Space of the Cantonment in Early Nineteenth Century India

This paper examines methods and levels of control- both which existed and which were attempted in cantonments- ostensibly to control the dangers of drink among the European soldiery in the first half of the nineteenth century in India. These ranged from regulations enacted to order the physical space of the cantonment, to calls for a more direct control over the bodies of the soldiers themselves as well as the numerous others who occupied cantonment space. Crucially for this argument, moral and medical concerns were of critical importance in moulding this ordering. The various ways in which the military and government imposed order on the cantonment had broader implications for the shaping of the empire itself and European understandings of its inhabitants. This paper explores how intemperance among the soldiers prompted demands from medical and military officials to re-define the occupation of cantonment space. Anxiety about the intemperance and misbehaviour of the men prompted a raft of cantonment regulations which not only imposed a punitive regime on those living and working in and around the cantonments, but prompted an extension of military space.

9. Waltraud Ernst, History, Oxford Brookes University, UK (wernst@brookes.ac.uk); presentation prepared together with J. Henry (Nutrition Science, Oxford Brookes University, UK), B. Kar (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences Calcutta, India), P.B. Mukharji (History, McMaster University, Canada)

Framing alcohol as a medical problem in British India, c. 1858 – 1947

This paper explores how alcohol consumption was framed as a medical problem during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in British India. Colonial administrators and military

officials repeatedly raised concerns about the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption on discipline and the state of health of Europeans. These concerns became increasingly framed in a medicalised way, especially so as degenerationist ideas such as those promulgated by Morel were subscribed to by European medical doctors in India and the ‘drunkard’ became a major focus of attention in medicine and psychiatry. Among the Indian population, the consumption of alcohol was widespread among some strata and communities, but prohibited or uncommon, for a variety of reasons, among others. European medicalised paradigms concerning alcohol consumption were from the late nineteenth century onwards discussed also in relation to Indian populations, by European doctors and Indian practitioners alike. The paper attempts to trace these developments towards the medicalisation of alcohol consumption in relation to both European and Indian populations during the British Raj.

SOCIAL CONFLICTS & CONTROL

10. K.M. Lokesh, Reader, Dept. of History, Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri, (lokesh_kodira@rediffmail.com)

Alcoholism in Coorg Society: the Colonial Experience and Contemporary Situation

Coorg is a hill country, which is also popular as a plantation district in South India; it was a Commissioners' province till independence under British. The European capitalists not only introduced coffee cultivation but also popularized alcoholism by introducing foreign-made liquors in the province. Coorgs or the Kodavas as they are called today were westernized under colonial impact and alcoholism became part of their socio-cultural life during this period. Of course the colonial period witnessed some attempts on the part of the administration to popularize temperance movements. But the commercial interests of the colonial capitalists and the temperance movements could not go hand in hand and in the end the latter had to suffer failures. The Basel Mission which worked in Coorg for a long time in the second half of the nineteenth century under the leadership of Fr. Hermann Moegling and others tried to spread awareness about the scourge but without success.

This culture continued even after independence in spite of prohibitions, etc. Today the social life of the people of Coorg is dominated by alcoholism and drink evil. The paper intends to highlight the socio-cultural dimensions of the problem of alcoholism not only in the colonial past, but also in the contemporary situation, reasons for the popularity of drink culture, attempts of the state to regulate the problem and the role that alcoholism has played in the image construction of the community.

11. Dhiraj Kr. Nite (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Centre for Historical Research, School of Social Sciences (dknitenine@hotmail.com))

Drinking Culture and Class Conflict: The Jharia Coalfields 1920—1940

In the 1920s on, colliery managers as well as social reformers declared drinking to be a major social-evil in the mines. Managers, though, expressed no anguish over the evidence of

undernourishment and unbalanced nature of workers' diets, their disease, lack of education, the absence of recreational facilities, or their crippling indebtedness, and their relation with workers' efficiency! For a period in the 1930s, miners apparently spent a significantly increased proportion of their income on consumption of liquor. To understand these phenomena I intend to investigate new discourse on drinking, the extent of its affect on the drinking culture, and the place of drinking among the colliers.

One set of literature regards drinking a social predicament and suggests that its ubiquitous prevalence in the urban-industrial context was an outcome of the impact of industrialization—estrangement, the squalid and miserable life environs, breakdown of family life and social control—on the labouring masses (R.K. Mukherjee (1948), S. Banerjee (1981), D. Simeon (1995)). The other set of literature considers drinking as a means of leisure or as part of the cultural production; they see the politics of drinking as an integral part of the dynamics of class relations and class struggle (K. Wrightson (1981)). My project is close to the second kind of investigation. I put forward the following contention: The consumption of 'liquor' was an essential part of the diet of the mining classes and one of the crucial means of recreation. The transcription of drinking practice as a menace by manager and reformer was intimately linked to new industrial effort at re-organising labour-process thereby resulting in demands for regular attendance and better attention to works and at responding to the new wage politics. While the moralist reformer's approach was guided by the new nationalist social and political organisation of life, wherein they pursue both 'functional' and 'reforming' approaches towards the subaltern classes. The latter approach was mediated by their patriarchal and bourgeois inclinations; the pressure from below for social transformation apparently precipitated this new attitude, however. The steep increase in the liquor consumption of the mining community during 1934-36 was part of survival strategy: a mode of confronting their stressful, option-less and hopeless experience in the context of immiserisation and everyday humiliation. This was, of course, a special characteristic of drinking, as a mode of 'dodging' distress, fighting hopelessness and pathos; it was not just a mode of recreation and celebration.

12. Nitin Varma, Doctoral Candidate, University of Heidelberg
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For the Drink of the Nation: Drink, Labour and Plantation Capitalism in Colonial Assam

The paper revisits the debate surrounding the perceived increasing consumption of alcohol among coolies in the late nineteenth century Assam plantation—to illustrate the nature and changes in the plantation economy, work culture and the growing relevance of Assam tea in the global market. The genesis of the controversy can be traced to the policies of the colonial state of the late 19th century—which asserted its right of taxing the *coolie* drink', by checking their home brewed stuff and offering them with opportunities to buy the 'legal liquor' instead. Planters argued that by bringing 'liquor shops at the gates of every tea garden', and making disruptive patterns of drinking possible, the state was in effect morally and physically corrupting the *coolie*/tea gardens. That the administration for the sake of few extra rupees was destroying the industry entrusted with the noble task of producing the 'drink of the nation'(tea). In this unique conjuncture, colonial demands of extraction- revenue (for the state) and labour (for the tea plantations) stood in contradiction. The specific nature of plantation labour process meant that

drink was not desired to be eradicated, for planters knew its ritualistic and stimulative roles in a working population which valued it socially and culturally, but had to be controlled and channelized to fuel the engine of plantation capitalism.

This whole 'drink question' is not just significant as a subject of enquiry of the plantation work discipline, working class culture and the relevance of drinking in such a context. But what is also interesting is the fact that it was the time that Indian tea/Assam tea was increasingly popularized and advertised as the 'stimulating working-class drink' and as a 'perfect substitute to alcohol.' At the risk of simplifying, this struggle of stimulants (alcohol versus tea/coffee), a major theme in the temperance movement championed by the middling classes, initially in America and Western Europe, and later in the colonized countries of Africa and Asia, was played out in the actualization of the labour process in the tropical plantations. In a sense, the paper alludes at this close nexus of consumption, colonialism and labour. That the changing patterns/ respectabilities of drinking (from alcoholic beverages to tea and coffee) and also changes in the cultures of such drink (from Chinese tea to Indian and Ceylon tea), brings out the intertwined 'laboured history' of colonial consumption. That such new consumption practices were not just in accordance with a changed 'time-work-discipline' of the industrialized metropolitan but were also built upon the modes of production/ labour extraction in the colonies—plantation regimes (of tea, coffee and sugar), migration of labour and indenture.

13. Roger Begrich, Dozent, Universität Zürich (begrich@jhu.edu)

Time to Drink – Alcohol and the Tribal Subject in Jharkhand (India)

By investigating various governmental and public discourses and practices in India, this paper will analyze the role alcohol is made to play in the reification of the Adivasi/tribal subject as inherently different, thus warranting reformist interventions from a wide range of state and non-state actors.

As the recent attack against women visiting a pub in Mangalore (and the ensuing "Pink Chaddi Campaign" in support of "Pub-going Loose and Forward Women") indicates, access to alcoholic beverages has for many among the Indian middle class become a measure for cosmopolitan modernity, and an indicator for the transgression non-modern, or 'traditional' values. The fact that the battle over the alcohol/modernity nexus is fought over women's bodies links the issue to a long genealogy of colonial and postcolonial interventions – launched in the name of particular notions of modernity - to liberate women from various forms of subjecthood. While current notions of progress for urban and urbanizing upper middle classes thus seem to include increasing the availability of alcohol, strategies to facilitate progress among tribal communities are marked by the contrary: Access to alcoholic beverages for "Pub-going Loose and Forward Women" is meant to symbolize agency, while the sale of alcohol by tribal women indicates subjection.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among Adivasi in Jharkhand, I will discuss the ways alcohol operates in various discourses and practices of reform that target tribal populations by promoting abstinence. I will thus argue in my paper that the efforts of various state and non-state actors to reform tribal communities by targeting customary forms of alcohol serve to reify the tribal subject as inherently different. I thus contend that the discrepancy between the forms of sociality that alcohol is allowed to generate among the upper middle class, and among Adivasi

in Jharkhand parallels the mutual constitution of modern and primitive subjects in colonial India, and that it can be seen as a metaphor for the distinction between citizenship and subjecthood.

14. David Beckingham, Junior Research Fellow, Sidney Sussex College (djb79@cam.ac.uk)
Temperance, excise and the British empire in the late nineteenth-century

This paper examines the relationship between temperance and taxation. British excise policy in India - abkari - drew criticism from Liberal temperance figures at Westminster who argued that it was driven by financial and not moral principles, effectively tempting people to drink in order to raise vital government revenue. This was a familiar refrain, having been used to good effect by Irish nationalist figures such as Daniel O'Connell in the 1840s. In India, figures such as Keshub Chunder Sen and Bipin Chandra Pal challenged the perceived moral degradation being spread across India by contrasting the policy of the Government of India with what they saw as widespread drunkenness in Britain. This paper adopts a comparative approach, examining the relationship between excise policy, temperance and different articulations of nationalism and nationhood across the empire in the final quarter of the century in order to analyse the morality of government and the government of morals.