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THE DRINK AND DRUG EVIL IN INDIA

The Drink and Drug Evil in India :: ::

An account of the origin and growth of these vices with a statement of the Government's responsibility in encouraging them and of the ways and means to abolish them.

By BADRUL HASSAN

FOREWORD BY

MAHATMA GANDHI

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FOREWORD

TYPED copies of Mr. Badrul Hassan's chapters on the Drink and Drug Evil have lain on my desk for over three months. I had hoped to be able to go through them and write a fairly long foreword, and in that hope I have been postponing writing the foreword. I must no longer do so.

Mr. Badrul Hassan was for many months assisting me in bringing out *Young India* from week to week. The readers of *Young India* will recall his chapters on the Alcohol and Opium Habits. They discover a close study of blue books and statistical abstracts. The chapters now presented to the reader are a reprint of Mr. Badrul Hassan's writings in *Young India* with enlargements and additions. They will repay perusal, and they cannot but help the reformer who is bent upon ridding India of the double evil. Mr. Badrul Hassan's study shows also how the policy of the Government has tended to increase the habit. The facts and figures presented in these

chapters to the reader demonstrate in the clearest possible manner that the Government has trafficked in these two vices of the people of India. It will be no defence to urge that the vice has existed in India from times immemorial. No one organised the vice as the present Government has for purposes of revenue. But I must not anticipate. Let the young writer prove his own case.

Satyagrah Ashram

Sabarmati

5th March 1922

M. K. GANDHI

PREFACE

The habit of drinking leads to neglect of family, to forgetfulness of all social duty, to distaste for work, to want, theft and crime. It leads at the very least to the hospital—for alcoholism causes a great variety of diseases, many of them most deadly.

Alcoholism is one of the most frightful scourges—whether it be regarded from the point of view of the health of the individual, of the existence of the family, or of the future of the country.

PROF. DEBOVE AND DR. FAISANS

It has often struck me that the habits of intemperance which have, of recent years, increased so fast as to become a national disgrace and calamity, could never be put down unless the *intelligentsia* fully understood—what they had so far ignored—that these habits were promoted and fostered by a system of government that should have been ended long ago; that these vile habits, which were really foreign to us, could be discarded as easily as one casts off one's clothes

if once the ignorant impression that these habits were of our own making was removed.

It was in the columns of *Young India* that I first had the opportunity of drawing attention to the fact that the drink evil was propagated by the excise policy of the Government. The following pages will show how cleverly and systematically the habit of drinking has been thrust upon a people who, by habits, associations, and inclinations, would lead a pure and temperate life.

I have only to add that the figures and statistics used in this book were collected from government publications; that the case made out against the Government is based upon and proved from official records.

I must here acknowledge my indebtedness to Mahatma Gandhi, not only for contributing a very valuable foreword to this book, but also for having allowed me to make full use of the articles I had contributed to *Young India*.

To my friend, Mr. Omar Subani, I am deeply grateful for the help he so willingly gave me. Without it, this book might never have been written.

Satyagrah Ashram
10th October 1921

BADRUL HASSAN

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CHAPTER I IN ANCIENT INDIA

OF all the multifarious problems in India, the drink evil is at once the oldest and the gravest. It is indeed steeped in antiquity. Though the oldest records extant bear abundant testimony to the fact that, far from countenancing, much less encouraging, the habit of drinking, our oldest thinkers condemned it wholesale;¹ though our oldest legislators had so hedged in both the drinker and seller of spirituous liquors that it required a very bold, adventurous person to break through the net of legislation or face the rigours of public condemnation and contumely; it should not be imagined that in ancient days the people as a rule were free from it. It may be stated at once that, except for gambling, the greatest vice² of the Aryan race

¹ Sukracharya is said to be the first to have promulgated total prohibition. See 76th chapter, Mahabharata, in which this incident has been embodied.

² Professor Max Muller called it a "leading vice". See his articles especially on the Soma plant.

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in India was drinking. In both they had gained a reputation which even the passage of over three thousand years has not sufficed to efface. There are innumerable passages in ancient Sanskrit literature that prove conclusively this weakness of our ancestors,¹ and the Rig-Veda Samhita has a hymn which shows that "Wine was kept in leather bottles,² and freely sold to all comers". It may be added that wine was freely consumed.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine it otherwise. The dawn of civilisation finds a nation more or less in the grip of this vice. Even amongst savage tribes to-day, if there is a deity to be propitiated or a demon to be exorcised, if a marriage is to be celebrated or a death to be mourned, if a war is to be waged or peace to be made; some intoxicant or another is almost certainly employed in the rites or ceremonies that such occasions usually entail.³

The discovery and art of manufacturing some kind of intoxicating liquor was a corollary of settled habits. Wandering savages have

¹ Various hymns in the Rig-veda are devoted to the lavish praise of liquor. See especially X, 119; I, 54; III, 58.

² Wilson's Rig-Veda, II, p. 204; and Rig-Veda, I, 191, 10.

³ Samuelson's *History of Drink*, Ch. I, and Alison's *History of Europe*, Vol. I, p. 21 *et seq.*

generally been found ignorant of it.¹ Whether the Aryans possessed the knowledge of intoxicating liquors previous, or subsequent, to their coming to India is still a matter of conjecture.² However the properties of intoxicants may have been discovered, their use soon formed a large part of the ceremonial and sacrificial rites of every tribe and clan. Therefore it could not have been otherwise than that the dawn of our civilisation should find us, to put it, at its worst, familiar with the use of intoxicating drinks.

The cult of Soma, probably imported from ancient Eran where Haoma (Aryan Soma) worship flourished, and against which the efforts of Zarathustra were largely directed, had at this time attained in India equal, if not larger, proportions than the Haoma worship of neighbouring Eran. Passages after passages in the Rig-Veda are given to the praise of Soma,³ the liquor, which was afterwards incorporated

¹ In a paper read before the Ethnological Society, March 10, 1868; Mr. J. Crawford, F.R.S., a leading ethnologist of the time, expressed the view that the manufacture of liquor may be said to be coeval with the first dawn of social development.

² Professor Max Muller in his *Biographies of Words* shows that there is no common root in the Aryan languages for wine or liquor. This inclines me to the opinion that in their original homes, the Aryans, if not altogether ignorant of the use of liquors, certainly used it sparingly.

³ Rig-Veda, V, 43; I, 54; I, 9; I, 4; etc.

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with the worship of Soma—the Moon God. Whatever the parallelism between the God and the liquor may be, and however they came to be so closely identified in one symbol, the facts remain that not only did this liquor play an important part in the worship of this and other deities, but it was regarded with an affection, and endowed with such virtues, and gifted with such properties, that even the God may have envied.¹ Elaborate rules for the preparation of this intoxicating liquor are still to be found, which show the hold that the liquor had on the Brahmins—if not the people.

Professor Ragozin's description may here be profitably quoted :

The Soma used in India is thought to be the *Asclepia-acida* or *Sarcostemma viminalis*, a plant of the family of milk-weeds. It is described as having boughs bare of leaves along the stalks, of light ruddy colour ("golden"), with knotty joints, containing in a fibrous, cane-like outer rind, an abundance of milky, acid, and slightly astringent sap or juice. It is this juice which, duly pressed out, mixed with other ingredients, and fermented, yields the intoxicating sacrificial beverage. The process—the most sacred and mystic act of the Vedic and Brahminic liturgy—is alluded to in the Rig Veda innumerable times, but in such fanciful and enigmatical ways that we might be puzzled to reconstruct it, had we not in some of the

¹ And no wonder, as the liquor was only the earthly form of the Celestial Soma.

Brahmanas, most precise directions, amounting to a thorough and detailed description of the operation. Though pages might easily be written on the subject, the following brief description after Windischmann must suffice, as it is both graphic and comprehensive.

. . . . The plant, plucked up by the roots, collected by moonlight on the mountains, is carried on a car drawn by two goats to the place of sacrifice, where a spot covered with grass and twigs is prepared, crushed between stones by the priests; and is then thrown, stalks as well as juice, sprinkled with water, in a sieve of loose woollen weaving, whence, after the whole had been further pressed by the hand, the juice trickles into a vessel or kettle which is placed beneath. The fluid is then mixed with sweet milk and sour milk, or curds, with wheaten and other flour, and brought into a state of fermentation; it is then offered thrice a day and partaken of by the Brahmins . . . It was unquestionably the greatest and holiest offering of the ancient Indian worship . . . The Gods drink of the offered beverage; they long for it; they are nourished by it and thrown into a joyous intoxication . . . The beverage is divine, it purifies, it is a water of life, gives health and immortality, prepares the way to Heaven, destroys enemies, etc.

The fieriness of the drink, its exhilarating and inspiring properties, are especially expatiated upon. The chosen few who partake of it . . . give most vivid expression to the state of exaltation, of intensified vitality, which raises them above the level of humanity.¹

Nor is this the only evidence. It is safe to say that fermented liquors were familiar to the

¹ Ragozin's *Vedic India*, p. 173.

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ancients. "There is little doubt that distilled alcoholic beverages like arrack from toddy have been known in India since at least 800 B.C. and in Ceylon from time immemorial."¹ The discovery of primitive stills for the distillation of alcohol, and those still in existence amongst certain savage tribes, show what advances had been made in those bygone days in the manufacture of liquor.

The early drinking propensities of our ancestors have led most people to draw the false moral that hard-drinking has been the rule rather than the exception of the Indian people in all ages and under all governments.

This deduction is unjustifiable, fallacious, and illogical, if it is remembered that succeeding legislations, customs, ordinances, and institutions had brought about such a change that drinking came to be regarded as a low vice, and the use of spirituous liquors, except on ceremonial occasions, was confined to people of the lowest social scale.

It must be reiterated, then, that at the beginnings of our history, the Aryan peoples indulged in spirituous liquors, perhaps to excess, but the evil consequences and baneful results

¹ Simmonds, *Alcohol, its Productions, Properties, and Applications*, p. 3.

demonstrated to the thoughtful the necessity of repressing this growing habit, and brought about a revulsion of feeling, so that the later Vedas prohibited the use of spirits for the gratification of the senses, saying, " wine is unfit to be drunk, unfit to be given, unfit to be accepted ". A step in the right direction was thus taken, and though the use of spirits could not entirely be done away with, they were employed solely at religious ceremonies. This is the first example in history where the right of drinking alcoholic liquors was disputed and denied.

As is the common lot of most legislations, succeeding generations observed more and more loosely these wise injunctions. It is an unfortunate trait of the human race that it has a tendency to decry the efforts and wisdom of bygone generations, whilst tacitly believing in its own superiority and learning. But for this, half the evils that are now rampant in the world would have lain buried under the accumulated weight of thousands of years. A little more faith in the simple, true wisdom of the past, a little less pride in our glorified but uncertain knowledge, would make us all better, braver, and truer men. It therefore came to pass that the use of liquors increased more and more with every generation. Fortunately it

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never attained such proportions that it could be denominated "a leading vice".

We have seen how in the later Vedic period a compromise was effected by sanctioning the use of liquors at ceremonial and sacrificial functions only, whilst condemning its common usage, so that in the age of Manu, that thoughtful sage, knowing full well that, for an evil to be resisted, it must be abolished, and not confined, (for evil, like a sleeping volcano, may erupt without warning or intimation, and envelop, overwhelm, and destroy a multitude of people) turned his attention to rooting out the evil.

He laid down strict rules for the prevention of drinking. He held that drinking was the most pernicious of the king's vices.¹ He counselled the king instantly to banish the sellers² of spirituous liquors and to brand the drinker on the forehead with the sign of the tavern (*i.e.*, wine-cup).³ For a ~~twice-born, drinking~~ was a mortal sin.⁴ If he did not perform the prescribed penances, he was "excluded from all fellowship at meals, excluded from all

¹ Manu, VII, 50.

² *Ibid.*, IX, 225.

³ *Ibid.*, IX, 237.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XI, 55; and, according to the Institutes of Vishnu, 'a high crime,' V, 5.

sacrifices, excluded from instruction and from matrimonial alliances; excluded from all religious duties".¹ A terrible punishment, but not enough, from Manu. He was forthwith to be cast off by his "paternal and maternal relations, and receive neither compassion nor salvation; that is the teaching of Manu".² Nor were the penances less rigorous as only death could put an end to them.³ He denounced, too, such women who so far forgot themselves as to drink. It was an offence in itself to share her couch; ⁴ she "might any time be superseded";⁵ no libations were to be performed at her death;⁶ and in her next birth she would descend into the body of a jackal or some equally low animal, or would be born in Hell. Nor did Manu content himself by appealing to the fears of the people; he laid down proper rules and observances for practice in this world. For instance food given by intoxicated persons could not be eaten by a *Snataka*,⁷ money due for spirituous liquors could not be realised by the seller by having

¹ Manu, IX, 238.

² *Ibid.*, IX, 239.

³ *Ibid.*, XI, 92; and Apastamba, *Prasna* I, *Patala* 9; *Khanda* 25; v. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XI, 67.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IX, 80.

⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 90.

⁷ Brahman who has completed his studentship.

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recourse to law,¹ even a seller of Soma—the sacred liquor—was to be avoided at sacrifices offered to the Gods and the *manes*,² and food given to a seller of Soma became ordure.³

It would seem, therefore, that, whilst previous moralists had allowed the use of liquor for religious purposes, Manu was opposed even to this indulgence and was determined to put it down. He, therefore, put restrictions in the way of selling Soma by regarding a seller as a low person, and in the way of drinking by laying it down that “he who may possess (a supply of) food sufficient to maintain those dependent on him during three years or more than that, is worthy to drink the Soma juice”;⁴ but a twice-born who had less “did not derive any benefit from drinking the Soma juice though he may have formerly drunk it”.⁵

Nor was Manu alone amongst the legislators of old who were opposed to drinking. Even stronger prohibition is laid down in the *Apastamba*, *Gautama*, and the *Institutes of Vishnu*. The *Apastamba* declares that “all intoxicating

¹ Manu, VIII, 159.

² *Ibid.*, III, 158.

³ *Ibid.*, III, 180.

⁴ *Ibid.*, X, 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, X, 8.

liquors are forbidden";¹ and the only penance meet for a drinker of spirituous liquor is that he "shall drink exceedingly hot liquor so that he dies";² whilst, according to the Gautama, a Brahman can only be purified after death³ resulting from a similar penance. Even for drinking it unintentionally, a Brahman had to drink for three days hot milk, clarified butter and water, and inhale hot air, and after this penance he had again to be initiated.⁴ The Institutes of Vishnu declare even the smelling of spirituous liquors a crime.⁵

But even the anathema of the most considered of our ancient legislators were not successful in stopping the complete use of intoxicants, and the passage of a century or two found the people again indulging in drinking, though less freely. Both in the Mahabharata and Ramayana one finds frequent references to drinking, which show that the habit was not uncommon; and the curious may even discover that "Baladev and Krishna and Arjuna indulged in drink in the company of their wives, daughters

¹ Prasna I, Patala 5, Khanda 17; v. 23.

² Prasna I, Patala 9, Khanda 25; v. 3.

³ Gautama, XXIII, 1.

⁴ Ibid., XXIII, 2.

⁵ Institutes of Vishnu, XXXVIII, 2.

and sisters,"' that the sage Bharadvaja offered in his hospitality wine to Bharata and his soldiers¹, and even the incomparable, queenly, virtuous Sita while crossing the Yamuna offered that Goddess "a thousand jars of arrack and cooked flesh-meat". But there are no references to any woman drinking, and the probability is that by that time drinking was never indulged in by ladies of rank at least, and only on rare occasions by women in general.

The most beneficial of Manu's reforms was that he not only disputed the propriety of the use of liquor at religious ceremonies, but was able to remove, what previous moralists had dared not, the mistaken, erroneous, and fallacious impression that drinking had the sanction of religion and pleased the Gods to whom it was offered. This was a great advance indeed. It did not succeed in uprooting drink from the land but it removed its sacro-sanctimonious quality, and stamped it as low, evil, and pernicious. Henceforth drinking, though often tolerated, and sometimes indulged in to excess by monarchs and commoners, was never looked upon in any other light than that of unadulterated evil. It was barred from the

¹ R. Mitra, *Spirituuous Drinks in Ancient India*, p. 6.

² *Ramayana*, Carey's Edition, III, p. 297.

home, never again to regain its dominion over the people. But even this toleration was to disappear before the greatest moralising influence ever known in the history of any nation, an influence that even to-day exerts itself with untold benefit for the good of the people.¹

Where drinking had been practised as a fine art, it was certain that the process of manufacture and distillation must have been continuously improved. The ancient Hindus were not satisfied with crude intoxicating drinks; they took care to remove its odour and render it palatable with various spices, roots, and herbs. They had also learnt that old wine was better than new, that different methods of keeping it heightened its colour and improved its taste. Not rarely one comes across in ancient medical books some well-tried recipe for the manufacture of wine.

Whilst progress was being made in the direction of rendering liquor fit for the epicurean palate, others were experimenting with different stock ingredients. The *Institutes of Vishnu*² mention ten different kinds of liquor that were distilled from (1) sugar; (2) blossoms of the *Mahuva*; (3) flour; (4) molasses; (5) the fruits of

¹ See Chapter II.

² XXII, 82.

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the *Tanka* (or *Kapittha* tree); (6) of the *jujube* tree; (7) of the *karagura* tree; (8) or of the bread-fruit tree; (9) from vine grapes; and (10) from the sap of the coconut tree. This list, however, must not be regarded as comprehensive. There were doubtless more ingredients employed for the stock of liquors, but these ten seem to be those in common use.

Pulastya, an ancient sage, enumerates other kinds of liquors, over twelve in number. The following were made from ingredients other than those enumerated above: (1) *Panasa* or jack liquor¹; (2) *madhuka* or honey liquor; (3) *tala* or palm liquor; (4) *aikshava* or cane liquor; (5) *saira* or long pepper liquor; (6) *arishta* or soap berry liquor; and (7) lastly *sura*² or arrack, also called *varuni* and *paishti*, which was distilled from fermented meal.

It appears that the different kinds of liquor were always taken neat, and the pungency removed by means of wine biscuits, roasted meats, cakes and fruits, and various pulses spiced with chillies. Then the medical books

¹ Its mode of preparation is quoted from the *Matsyasuka Tantra*: "Place unripe jack, mango, and plump in a jar, and pour on it daily a quantity of unboiled milk, and add some flesh meat, put therein hemp leaves and sweet lime on alternate days, and when duly fermented, distil, and this is jack-wine."
—R. MITRA.

² *Sura* was the liquor most commonly used especially by the poorer classes, it was the "country spirit" of to-day.

give precise prescriptions for the removal of odour from the mouth, which go to show that there was a certain class of people rich enough to indulge in liquors and afford the expense of these medicinal recipes, yet who wished to pass off as teetotallers. This again is conclusive proof that a section of the people, who were entitled to respect, and of weight, were opposed to the use of intoxicants.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF BUDDHISM

There is a liquor in the world, my son, that
men call wine,
Fragrant, delicious, honey-sweet, and cheap of
flavour fine,
This Narada, for holy men is poison, say the
wise.

Jataka.

IN the sixth century before the Christian era, Hinduism as a social order was fundamentally different from that of to-day. The Brahmin oligarchy had reached an ascendancy so supreme that every one from the king and the court down to the peasant and the outcast bowed low before them in abject awe. The commonest act of daily life was performed only by the advice of the Brahmins. Not only did they exercise full control in political affairs; but in ministering to the religious needs of Aryan India, they had by this time developed an intricate and costly ritual, and had assumed control over the social and private life of the people. It was

the age of *Mantras*. "A *Mantram* could bring victory or defeat in wars, assure the prosperity of the State or the destruction of its enemies ; it could be used to win votes in the popular assembly or to silence the arguments of an opponent, and either by itself or in conjunction with medicinal prescriptions it could stop a cough or promote the growth of hair. In short, the *Mantram* embodied in itself the dynamic principle of the universe ; there was no concern of daily life, great or small, which could not be affected by it for better or worse."¹

The divine power of sacrifice was another instrument that helped the Brahmin ascendancy. In the course of many centuries, an involved and expensive ritual had been evolved and perfected to a fine art. The mere reciting of a *Mantram* entailed a sacrifice, and as has been explained above, a *Mantram* had become a necessity for the commonest act of daily life. The performance of domestic sacrificial rites was incumbent on the king and the householder alike. In the former case, legions of Brahmins were employed and fortunes spent in their performance. The ordinary householder dispensed with the services of a Brahmin for his daily rites ; but there were innumerable occasions

¹ Havell's *Aryan Rule in India*, p. 46.

when the presence of a Brahmin was indispensable. There were ceremonies connected with the donning of the sacred thread and the piercing of the ears ; ceremonies of feeding and naming ; ceremonies of birth to be repeated every month ; ceremonies of marriage and death ; ceremonies galore. These ceremonies entailed " the indiscriminate slaughter of animals and the free indulgence of the intoxicating juice of the Soma plant ".

Against these corrupt practices which had by now grown into institutions, Buddha had rightly rebelled. Renouncing his high rank, his kith and kin, he turned his back upon the world and sought refuge in the hills of the Vindya range, away from the ills of the world, in search of that absolute peace which no man has yet attained in his corporal existence. But from that peace for which his whole being yearned, he was as yet far away ; for, as he learnt afterwards, that perfect peace could only be found in a life devoted to the service of mankind in all humility and disinterestedness. The piling of mountains of merit by penance, torture, starvation, suffering, and exclusion, brought him no nearer. After a few years of this rigorous existence, Gautama learnt that, whatever its ultimate value may be, it certainly

was not a panacea for the ills that had affected him so profoundly. To the consternation, dismay, and disgust of his followers, who had by then gathered about him, he renounced this life, at best a glittering tinsel, and once more entered the world. It was then that, under the Bodhi tree at Gaya, he received the light and grasped the fact that *Nirvana*, the salvation, the absolute bliss, could only be attained after a life consecrated to the service of mankind, the means of this service being the Noble Eightfold Path.¹

Having arrived at this solution of his problem, the Buddha started a crusade against the evils he found in Hinduism, with an ascendant Brahmin oligarchy, with intricate rituals that made it difficult for the people even to worship the Supreme Being; with its approval of drinking and the slaughtering of animal; with its innumerable corruptions.

Buddhism was essentially a social revolution. It taught no new philosophy; it laid down no dogma; it neither appealed to the credulity of

¹ i.e., Right views (free from superstition or delusion); Right Aspirations (high, and worthy of the intelligent, worthy men); Right Speech (kindly, open, truthful); Right Conduct (peaceful, honest, pure); Right Livelihood (bringing hurt or danger to no living thing); Right Effort (in self-training and in self-control); Right Mindfulness (the active, watchful mind); Right Rapture (in deep meditation on the realities of life).

the people, nor excited their cupidity with the blessings of Paradise in lives to come. Instead the Buddha taught the truest truth that has ever been spoken by the lips of man, and as an earnest of his faith, he himself set the example. He purified the whole life of Aryavarta, and his simplicity, his earnestness, have to this day exerted their influence upon us. If to-day it is abhorrent to a Hindu to eat flesh, let him remember that it is the result of the Buddha's teaching; if it is abnoxious for him to drink wine, let him again remember that Buddha still exerts his purifying influence.

Nor is it difficult to quote chapter and verse for Buddha's tirade against drink. Not only was abstinence compulsory in the order of monks he founded, but it forms one of the five Buddhist commandments.¹ Indeed, if a man were but to keep to the Noble Eightfold Path, abstinence from intoxicating drinks follows as naturally as night follows day.

Buddhist literature² contains examples galore of the importance and benefits of abstinence

¹ The five Commandments are: (1) Ye shall slay no living thing; (2) Ye shall not take that which has not been given; (3) Ye shall not act wrongly touching the bodily desires; (4) Ye shall speak no lie; and (5) Ye shall drink no maddening drink.

² Amongst others see *Buddhist Suttas*, translated by Rhys Davids; and Vol. I and IV of *Jataka*, published by the Cambridge University Press.

and the evils and dangers of drinking. One such example is found in the Kutadanta Sutta¹ where a Brahmin of that name questions the Buddha as to the different values of different forms of sacrifice. He is told that the giving of open largesse is a good form of sacrifice, better still is the giving of perpetual alms, better than both the gifts of dwelling places for the monks, and better than all three the accepting of guidance, *i.e.*, the Noble Eightfold Path.

“And is there, O Gautama,” asks Kutadanta, “Any other sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and of greater advantage than all these four?”

“When a man with a trusting heart takes on himself the precepts—abstinence from taking life; abstinence from taking what has not been given; abstinence from evil conduct in respect of lusts; abstinence from lying words; abstinence from strong, intoxicating, maddening drinks, the root of carelessness—that is a sacrifice better than open largesse, better than perpetual alms, better than the gift of dwelling places, better than accepting guidance.”

In the *Jatakas* many stories are told how the Buddha even in his former lives taught the value of abstinence and exerted himself to stamp

¹ Sacred Books of the Buddhists, Vol. II, page 182.

out the drink evil. One such story is given in the appendix¹ wherein the evils of drink and its attendant vices are set down with admirable lucidity. The frequent repetition of this theme shows that, long after the Buddha's death, it was necessary to remind the people of the evils of drinking, which again shows that the bulk of the people became abstinent—as they certainly did—only after a prolonged, vigorous crusade against drinking.

Needless to say the guiding and propelling force of this crusade rose from the teaching, the life, and the example, of the Buddha himself. And what were the weapons with which this crusade was waged? Were the weapons those of terrorism, and strict penances, and unending fasts, and the drinking of hot boiling water or milk as prescribed by Manu? What cruel laws were imposed or what deterrent punishments threatened? We have seen how Manu and other legislators had failed to stamp out the drink evil; how was it then that the followers of Buddha succeeded? What witchcraft or black magic did they use to cast such a spell over the people as has lasted to this day? It must be confessed that where the terrorism of Manu failed, the love of Buddha succeeded, for the

¹ See Appendix A.

weapons of this crusade were the very essence of Buddhism—a, spirit of toleration with the erring; of sympathy with the weak; a spirit of humanity, of love for all.

The Buddhist kings of those days nobly led the crusade, so that by Chandragupta Maurya's time drinking had nearly, but not quite, died out. During his reign, drinking was no crime; but it was not approved of. Drinking saloons were provided for those that might wish to use them; but counter-attractions were provided for the wine-bibber, so that he might voluntarily refuse, where fear would have made him crafty and his cravings would be satisfied by stealth. "Among other affairs of civic life, Kautilya provided for the regulation of the drink traffic and gambling. Brahmins were placed under severe penalties for indulging in liquor. Neither taverns nor gambling saloons were allowed in villages and those in towns were limited in number under strict supervision. The former had to be decently furnished and provided with scented flowers, and other 'comfortable things' according to the season, so that the lure of drink should not be the only attraction.¹ Inspectors or spies stationed in taverns took note of

¹ Here we find the prototype of the Gothenburg System, which has been found so useful in Sweden for promoting temperance.

the *habitués* and ascertained whether they drank moderately or excessively. They also noted the value of the jewellery and other valuables in possession of customers, for in the event of robbery the tavern-keeper had not only to make good the loss, but was liable to a fine of the same amount.”¹ Such were the methods employed by this enlightened sovereign to free the country from the curse of drinking.

Asoka was even a stauncher Buddhist than his grandfather Chandragupta. His own example, his zeal, his exertions for the common good and his watchfulness over their interest, triumphed over the weakness of his countrymen. He made the Moral Law the guiding principle of his statecraft and life. He appointed officers to spread the teaching of the *Dharma* and expound it to the people. All the power, the influence, and the prestige of a highly centralised and efficient government were utilised in making the people obedient to the law, and it resulted in far-reaching social and cultural reform. Before Asoka's time there is not much to show how the meat-eating and liquor-drinking habits of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas had been toned down; but

¹ Havell's *Aryan Rule in India*, p. 79. Not being able to lay my hands on the Kautilya, I have been forced to give the reader a second-hand quotation.

in the thirtyeight years of Asoka's rule were laid those traditions of vegetarianism and non-alcoholic drinking which form the rule of the upper classes of Hindu society even to-day. Drinking in Asoka's time had diminished to such infinitesimal proportions that the dogma that there was no drinking in Asoka's mighty kingdom, if asserted, cannot be disputed.

So deep, indeed, was the impress of these reforms, and so much did they conduce towards promoting temperance, that when Fa-Hien arrived in India, about A.D. 399, he noted with pleasure that "the people of this country kill no living creature nor do they take intoxicating liquors . . . They do not deal in dead animals, nor are there shambles or wine shops round their markets".¹ The testimony of Hiuen-Tsang who arrived in India about A.D. 630 and stayed over sixteen years, shrewdly observing the lives, manners, and customs of everybody from king Harsha and his vassals down to the lowliest peasant, is the same. Both

¹ *Travels of Fa-Hien*, translated by Beal, p. 55.

The Laws of Manu quoted in the preceding chapter may be said to have been the laws practised in the country about this time. Whilst it cannot be disputed that Manu was born some centuries earlier, his famous book of laws was revised in the light of Buddha's teaching, the direct outcome of which is seen in the injunctions against drinking and meat-eating. The result is embodied in Fa-Hien's observations quoted above.

the Brahmins and Kshatriyas "were clean-handed and unostentatious, pure and simple in life, and very frugal".¹ That a Buddhist priest and Master of Law, should give such an encomium, only reveals what a high moral stature had been reached, and how the Buddha's influence had gradually sobered the intemperate, strengthened the weak, uplifted the fallen, and purified the whole life of Aryavarta.²

¹ Walter's translation, Vol. I, p. 330.

² It must not be forgotten that intoxicating liquors are taboo to both Jains and Vaishnavites to this day. Jainism was first preached by Mahavira who died in 467 B.C. The Vaishnavite cult was strongest under the Guptas. This makes it clear that the people made a great effort to rid themselves of the intemperate habits of the Vedic times.

CHAPTER III

UNDER MUSLIM RULE

“The wines of Shiraz have always prevailed over the laws of Muhammad”—GIBBON.

WHILST Harsha was reigning in India, the prophet Muhammad had all but established himself in Arabia, and had imbued his followers with that zeal, intrepidity, and activity which afterwards carried the banner of Islam to Granada on one side and India and the Far East on the other. The part that it played, and the importance it attained, in India by the establishment of Muslim rule over a large part of this country makes it necessary to examine the teaching of this remarkable man on this question.

There is an impression abroad that great severity is threatened by Islam for the use of intoxicating liquors. This impression is correct only if it is taken to represent the Muslim point of view, which has never hesitated to regard intoxicants as evil and to stigmatise the user

as a sinner. There is, however, not much support for this in the Koran. There are only two references to drinking, neither of them condemnatory enough to prevent the use of it, nor damning enough to frighten the user. One, indeed, goes so far as to say that there is both profit and sin in it, only the sin is greater than the profit.¹ The other is an exhortation to the believers to shun wine, gambling, and statues for the reason that they are an abomination of Satan's works and turn the believer from God and prayer.²

One reason why the Koran does not deal more largely with intoxicants is perhaps due to the fact that drinking was not common amongst the Arabs, that the baneful result of over-indulgence, the consequent misery and shame, were of rare occurrence. If the Prophet had been a Persian, perhaps Allah might have been more strict and more severe ; as it was, the Arabs in this particular respect had no need for his special directions.

The very severity and simplicity of the Prophet's life doubtless created a Muslim antipathy towards drinking. The Arabs, revelling

¹ Chapter of the Heifer : para 215. (Sacred Books of the East) . . . The Koran.

² Chapter of the Table : para 90. (Sacred Books of the East)
. . . The Koran.

in their simplicity and fired with all the fervour of a new faith that had moved them so profoundly, could not but detest any luxurious, or even superfluous, habits. To them the drinking ways of the Persians must have been as abhorrent and detestable as the worship of idols ; and their Spartan habits and rigid discipline must have made the contrast seem more glaring. Their austerity would not allow for any human weaknesses. Then was laid that foundation of the Muslim outlook which to-day makes drinking a cardinal sin.

When, however, the Spartan way gave place to the luxurious habits of the later Caliphate courts, the use of intoxicants was not only looked upon with favour, but some of the Caliphs themselves even expressed their weakness for it and indulged in it openly and to excess. Their example however could never remove the impression so sedulously fostered by the earlier Arabs, and Muslims have ever looked upon drinking as unfitting the dignity of Islam and even transgressing the laws of God.

It is difficult to state what influence the earlier Muslim kings of India exerted upon the people. Till the establishment of Mogul rule, the history of the country is so full of internecine wars, battles fought and won, kingdoms

made in a day and lost almost as soon, invasions, conquests, treachery, deceit and cruelty, that there was hardly any time to observe the social or moral progress or retrogression of the people. Where there is such dearth of information, it would be hardihood to express an opinion. It is however told that Allauddin Khilji was so stricken with remorse at his earlier misdeeds, tyranny, and cruelty that he remodelled his life and even checked his own vices. He used to indulge in wine almost to excess. Whether it was remorse, or the knowledge that his drinking habits impaired his efficiency, he not only gave up drinks, but, in common with other autocrats who impose their will upon their subjects, he prohibited both the selling and drinking of wine, beer, and intoxicating drugs. It is true he set an example himself by ordering all the China and glass vessels of his banquetting hall to be broken up. "Jars and casks of wine were brought out of the royal cellars and emptied at the Budaun gate in such abundance that mud and mire," says the historian picturesquely, "were produced as in the rainy season." Outside this gate, huge holes were dug in which wine drinkers were mercilessly incarcerated, and the severity was such that

¹ Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Elliot Vol. III, p. 180.

many died. "The terrors of these holes deterred many from drinking."

For one example of abstinence, at least ten may be given of indulgence. Even Firuz Shah, who was from all accounts a good man and pious Muslim, had a distinct weakness for wine. And the example that was set by the king was followed by the court. There is every reason to believe that the contagion did not spread further, for few reigns were so lasting that the king's vices could permeate to the people and corrupt their habits to any serious extent. Apart from this, such had been the influence of Buddhist kings, and so firm were the traditions against drinking, that they could not be easily perverted.

The advent and growth of Islam, the establishment of Muslim rule, did not in any way promote habits of temperance or lessen the use of drink. The reaction caused by the Puritanism of early Islam had, as we have seen, resulted in the growth of luxurious habits at Baghdad, from whence they had spread to every part of the world where there was a Muslim ruler or potentate. The hardy kings of the highlands, moreover, succumbed even more readily to the blandishments of the Indian climate than their Aryans forbears. That their

influence was not more damaging is due mainly to the fact that they had ever to remain on the *qui vive* against aggressors, and could not afford to become slaves of habit lest they might lose their kingdom by their unwariness or sloth or lack of skill. The fear of their enemies guided the acts of their life and proved an efficient preventive against degeneration.

As soon as this fear was removed, the obstacle against intemperate ways of living was broken, and like a stream that breaks through its dam and hurries headlong in one mad rush they plunged into a riotous life. The stability given to government by Akbar through a prolonged, efficient reign had the effect of making Jehangir one of the most dissipated of monarchs, who may unhesitatingly be put down as an inveterate drunkard. His successors, too, were not exemplary. Aurangzeb stands out a solitary exception ; but the benefits of his abstemious life were crushed underneath the millstones of his cruelty and rigidity, and the little good he may otherwise have done was lost by his tyranny and bigotry. The later emperors followed faithfully in the steps of Jehangir, holding carousals and drinking parties. Their example undoubtedly promoted habits of intemperance amongst the courtiers and their immediate entourage.

Whilst there is a dearth of contemporary opinion regarding the social and moral habits of the people under pre-Mogul Muslim rule, it must not be supposed that we are not in a position to state whether the people remained abstinent as before, or had succumbed to the influence of their rulers and of the Caliphs of Baghdad and elsewhere. There is enough data to warrant the inference that under Muslim rule the habit of drinking was promoted rather than discouraged by the example of those kings who used to drink, and their court ; that the religious antipathy was toned down by the example of the Caliphs ; that both these influences ultimately made a little headway against that rule of life which was preached by Buddha and adopted by succeeding kings and sedulously and zealously propagated and fostered by them among the people. With meagre and scanty information it is difficult to lay down the truth ; but the above inferences are a little justified by the fact that the habit of drinking *bhang* was unknown to Indians before the Muhammadan invasion, and that it was a purely Persian drink introduced into the country by the Muhammadan conquerors of Sindh, where its use even to-day is more excessive than in any other part of the country. According to Klemm, one of the

ablest of German sociologists, a drink called "bengueh,"¹ prepared from herbs and fortified with hemp seeds, was largely used in Persia in Tavernier's time. This is evidently the same drink which is known here as *bhang*. Nor can it be disputed that the habit of *bhang* drinking is strongest where Muhammadan influence has been longest.

As far as the drink question is concerned, it may therefore be said that Muslim influence helped rather than retarded the habit of drinking. But when we come to examine the extent of the injury, we are forced to state that it was amongst the richer classes only that this habit grew, and that also spasmodically, as it depended on the example of the king; that amongst the mass of the people the use of drink was so negligible as not to excite comment, nor common enough to be noticed by such shrewd observers as Bernier and Tavernier.

¹ The "banga" of the Zoroastrians.

CHAPTER IV

THE VARIOUS SYSTEMS

THE advent of the East India Company provided a fresh stimulus for intemperance. The habits of its employees in the eighteenth century were so condemnable, their lives so riotous, that it is difficult to gauge the extent of the demoralising effect they had on the lives of the people. The growth and consolidation of the Company's power till it became the paramount ruler of the country, brought a greater evil than the intemperate example of its employees, for, in its insatiable passion for money, the Company, looking upon excise as a legitimate source of revenue, began to encourage the drinking habits of the people, and devised ways and means for enhancing this revenue regardless of the baneful effects that such a policy would entail. This expansion of revenue continues to this day. Various systems have since been evolved, tried, adopted and perfected, for ensuring the maximum of revenue.

To control more effectively the output of intoxicating liquors, and to ensure their proper taxation, the Government of India, with the active help of the Provincial Governments, has evolved a new system, which may be denominated by the general name of the distillery system, of which varied forms exist under varied conditions to suit local needs and satisfy existing conditions. The adoption, introduction, and promulgation of this system, whilst undoubtedly adding to the efficiency of the excise department, and assuring the maximum profit to Government, have brought a great evil in their wake in the shape of close interest between the production and actual sale of liquors, which makes the Government a party to the increase of consumption.

The East India Company had inherited from the real rulers of the country the pure farming system, which is still in force in some outlying portions of the United Provinces, and in some small and specially situated tracts in Madras; a similar system but with the farms greatly reduced in area, is also to be found in some parts of the Central Provinces. The Government of India inherited along with other things, either this system of pure farming or a crude system of out-stills which had been improvised

by some zealous officers in a few parts of the Company's possessions.

Under the farming system large areas were "farmed" to individual bidders for excise purposes. The Government of the time received its dues and had then no more interest in either the manufacture, the sale, or consumption of liquor. Nor did those people who bought such "farms" make any great exertions to increase the consumption, because, the buying and management of farms having become more or less a hereditary occupation, the aim of the buyers was not so much to reap a fine harvest as to prevent other people from buying them up on subsequent occasions. Rivals had to be avoided or discouraged by making it abundantly clear that there was but little profit in such undertakings. If the farm were improved, it would excite the cupidity of other rivals; if the sales increased, the ruler might frown upon such efforts or enhance the price of the bid. The result was that under the pure farming system, the farmer just received his little profit, and the consumption never attained any marked proportions. The State having received its share, could never be looked upon as a friend of the publican. It was this system, which provided the least possible incentive to consumption, that

the Government of India set out to improve. First, the farms were restricted to smaller areas, the result being that more people were interested in the sale of liquors, for whereas one man supplied the liquor before, now ten men performed the same task for the same area. The next improvement of giving the combined right of manufacture and sale at particular places, without any exclusive privilege over a definite area, left the "farms" merely in name, and lastly, even this right was further subjected to control of means and time for distilling and the like.

The transformation from the farming system to the improved out-still system having been carried out on the above lines, the Government further "improved" it by granting annually the combined right of manufacture and sale at a special shop. But even this failed to come up to the purpose for which these changes had been made. The Government's aim all along had been to bring to pass a system which would enable it to tax the liquor *before* it was sent out to the retail seller, thus assuring to itself the fullest possible revenue. Where the centres of manufacture were diffused in large numbers over a large area, it entailed enormous superintendence and trouble, and it was therefore

resolved that the manufacture should be confined to one place from whence the liquor would be distributed to the selected area. It is true that such a system ensured the control of supply as well as the strength of liquor, but it only enabled the Government to impose a haphazard form of taxation mainly by means of vend fees, and it fell short of the real purpose of taxing the liquor before it was sent out from the manufacturing centres. Gradually then the numerous pot-stills scattered all over the country under the crude arrangements were collected into Government enclosures called distilleries, at last enabling the Government to impose a still-head duty. This is known as the central distillery system.

The out-still system may thus be taken to include all systems prior in order of development to the imposition of a still-head duty as happens in the distillery system. "The development of the distillery system from the out-still system proceeded roughly along the following lines. Large tracks were "farmed" out to individual people for excise purposes. These were next restricted to smaller areas. This was in turn displaced by the right to distil and sell at particular places, no exclusive privilege over a large area being conferred. Lastly, the sale of

a similar right subject to control of means and times for distillery gave place to the distillery system.”¹

The distillery system however has since undergone many changes. The original one, the Sadar Distillery System, provided for at first by Bengal Regulation X of 1813, and the Acts derived therefrom, exists now only in name. It may be said to include all systems which involve the collection of a number of distillers into a single enclosure. It is now obsolete, having been superseded either by the District Monopoly System, or the Punjab System, or the Contract Distillery System.

In the Contract Distillery System, which has now been adopted for the greater part of India, the monopoly of supply of a given area is given out on contract, the contractor issuing his liquor at the rate of still-head duty in force. He also supplies vendors at a fixed rate determined by tender over and above this duty. The manufacturer pays a fixed rate of duty on every gallon of liquor issued from his distillery, and supplies the retail sellers also at fixed rates. The manufacture and storage being under Government supervision, it makes it difficult for the liquor to be supplied without the duty

¹ *Young India*. April 13, 1921.

being paid. The right of retail vend, however, is sold, usually by auction, up to a sanctioned number of shops. This system was first introduced in Madras alongside of the Private Supply System, and was intended to avoid the dangers of unregulated competition among distillers for the custom of retailers, to ensure proper supervision with the least amount of trouble, and to secure to Government the largest possible proportion of profit both on the whole-sale and retail supply.

Under the Punjab System, the distilling licences are limited to a small number, the sites of the distilleries are fixed, the still-power of each restricted, and the price to be charged for spirit issued regulated. It leaves the distiller free to compete for the supply of the whole province, though the competition is to a great extent hindered by the above conditions. It, however, does stimulate him to manufacture popular liquor, for his custom is not guaranteed as under the other system.

Under the District Monopoly System, the monopoly of both manufacture and sale for given areas, generally districts, is leased to contractors, who are selected by the local Governments. There is no competition for contracts. The monopolist is required to pay

duty on a certain quantity regardless of whether he sells it or not, and if he sells beyond the quantity covered by the guarantee, he pays in addition the amount of still-head-duty chargeable on such excess at the rate in force.

It is apparent that, under all systems, measures are devised rather to ensure the proper taxation of spirits than to restrict the consumption of liquors or lower their strength. The introduction of the distillery system has generally resulted in a greater increase of consumption, for the Government has a real stake in the increase of consumption and a close interest between the manufacture and sale of liquor, and every innovation or departure serves but to strengthen this interest.

The main advantage of the distillery system is that it enables the Government to control the strength of liquor, which is being gradually reduced. Also the Government derives the fullest possible revenue from the liquor traffic. On the other hand its disadvantages are both numerous and patent, the two chief being that more men are interested in the production, supply and sale of liquor than before, and, secondly, the Government itself is interested in all the three. To reap the highest profit from the distillers, the Government has to satisfy,

not guarantee, them a certain minimum consumption. The revenue to the Government depending on the consumption, it is again interested in the sale and consumption of liquors. This will be apparent from the policy of the Government and the ways and means adopted for furthering the policy.

CHAPTER V

THE POLICY

REGARDING the policy pursued towards the drink problem, it has been shown that prohibition had been the aim of Indian rulers after Buddha's teaching, and that this policy during Muslim rule had degenerated into one of tolerance. The policy followed at the present time has been thus set down by the Government of India :

The Government of India have no desire to interfere with the habits of those who use alcohol in moderation. This is regarded by them as outside the duty of the Government, and it is necessary in their opinion to make due provision for the needs of such persons. Their settled policy, however, is to minimise temptation to those who do not drink, and discourage excesses among those who do, and to the furtherance of this policy all considerations of revenue must be absolutely subordinated.

Even as it is worded, the policy presents a marked contrast to that pursued by enlightened rulers like Asoka and others, as well as to that adopted in our own time by certain western powers, which have rightly placed before them

the goal of total prohibition. It will be noticed that the policy makes no mention of the Government's intentions of combating the drink evil or of stopping the drink traffic; instead it has couched a policy of benevolent toleration—toleration not with the reformer, but with the drunkard and the publican.

If the phraseology of the policy falls short of the high ideals that the present Government both assumes and ascribes to itself, the actual results engendered by it may be imagined. Only in this case the bite is worse than the bark. An examination of the working of this policy will serve to show that the present high consumption of intoxicants is due not to misfortune nor chance, but to deliberate calculation and concentrated efforts in this direction.

As far back as 1899, the Government of India thus laid down the correct principles on which excise policy was to be based in future :

1. That any extention of the drinking habit was to be discouraged :

2. That taxation was to be as high as possible without encouraging illicit manufacture and vend :

3. That, subject to these considerations, a maximum revenue was to be raised from a minimum consumption of intoxicating liquors.

These principles were accepted by the then Secretary of State for India—Lord Cross. It is significant that no express principle of *reducing* consumption is laid down, whereas the importance given to increasing the taxation and revenue cannot be mistaken. At the very outset, an undue prominence is given to, and an unfair suggestion made of, the fallacious principle that increased taxation must result in decreased consumption. Gradually the vital principle, the decrease of consumption, is left in the background and at last fades completely from vision, and the policy degenerates into that of increasing the revenue. This is clearly seen from the practical measure suggested for carrying out the policy, which may be outlined as follows :

1. The abolition of the out-still system ;
2. The gradual introduction of the distillery system ;
3. The imposition of as high a rate of duty as possible on country liquor, but the duty not to exceed the tax on imported liquor ;
4. The restriction of the number of shops.

The first three practical measures are devised solely with a view to swelling the liquor revenue. In a previous chapter it has been explained how the Government, which had inherited the system

of 'farming', soon began to modify it for the purpose of imposing a better form of taxation, that would ensure to it the maximum of profit. The first three practical measures facilitate its object. Taxation is difficult—almost impossible—in out-still areas: it had therefore to be abolished; taxation is easy in distillery areas: it must therefore be introduced; the income from country spirit forms half of the total excise revenue: it must be raised as high as possible. Moreover, these measures are so carried out in practice as totally to ignore the object aimed at, *viz.*, the diminution of the drink evil. Even the Indian Excise Committee of 1905-06 bewailed the fact that subordinate excise officers were labouring under the mistaken impression that enhanced revenues would be the criterion of efficiency, that they had no direct interest in the policy of restricting consumption. When excise officers are capable of misinterpreting—and perverting, though unknowingly perhaps—the Government's excise policy, is it to be wondered at that there should be increased sales of liquors and drugs every year? It is equally significant that, whilst the utility of these measures have a doubtful and uncertain value for the purpose of lessening consumption, they are, perhaps,

the best that could be devised for enhancing revenue.

Of the four measures suggested, only the last, *viz.*, the reduction of shops, may be regarded as a preventive measure. The following statement will show to what extent the number of shops has been reduced :

STATEMENT SHOWING NUMBER OF SHOPS

Year	Liquor shops	Drug shops	Total
1899-1900	82,117	19,766	1,01,883
1905-1906	91,447	21,865	1,13,312
1910-1911	71,052	20,014	91,066
1914-1915	56,723	17,699	74,422
1915-1916	55,046	17,316	72,362
1916-1917	51,917	17,177	69,094
1917-1918	54,896	17,147	72,043
1918-1919	52,683	17,152	69,835

It must be added that there was a *steady* decrease in the number of shops from the year 1905-1906 to the year 1916-17; a decrease of 44,218 shops in a period of 11 years, or an average of 4,020 per year. In the year 1917-18 the number of shops was increased to 72,043, and in the next year the number was again reduced to 69,835, or 741 more than in 1916-17.

¹ See Appendix for detailed Statement.

The decrease of the number of shops, however, is in itself no proof of its having been carried out as a preventive measure. Before this resolution was adopted, the number of public-houses had reached a proportion that was scandalous. Tippling houses were profusely dotted all over the country, and in large cities—which are generally the best places for a big sale of intoxicants—they were placed under the very noses of the people, providing them with temptation at every turn of the road. It is no exaggeration to state that in some cities liquor shops were as numerous as opium dens and *chandu*-shops in Lucknow in the early nineties. Mill-hands and other industrial workers, who, on account of long hours, hard work, and bad living, were more than usually prone to relieve the misery of their hard existence in the temporary solace provided by liquor, found that a far-seeing Government had in this respect, at least, provided them with innumerable opportunities of “enjoying” themselves. Between the miserable hovels in which they were housed under conditions most insanitary and most galling, to the mills or factories where they were employed, they found half-a-dozen drinking-booths, alluring them with temporary relief. When the resolution with regard to the

restriction of shops was issued, the number of such shops was so large as to become a nuisance and disgrace. The decrease that has since resulted has shown no beneficial results, for the reason that the decrease was effected after it had been ascertained that no loss of custom or revenue would be entailed. The procedure adopted was that custom was directed to other shops, *i.e.*, before a shop was closed, the excise officers made sure that the customers of this particular shop had no difficulty, by way of distance or place, in getting their supply at one more centrally situated. With a little planning, a little forethought, a little circumspection, and a little ingenuity, the real purpose of the restriction—the decrease of consumption—was forestalled and frustrated by excise officers. The general plan of action was, to take a common case, that one shop was opened in a central place in a locality where before three catered for the weakness of tipplers. The reduction of shops has never been carried to an extent that would show loss of revenue or decrease of consumption, or cause any great difficulty to people to procure their usual measure of drink.

This is apparent from the methods adopted for the location of such shops. The sanest are the

rules adopted by the Bengal Government, the essential portions of which are as follows :

In any case, no new liquor shop should be opened in a bazaar, or at the entrance to a bazaar, or near a bathing ghat or any other place of public resort, school, hospital, place of worship, factory, in the interior of a village, at the side of a road leading to a bathing ghat or other place of water-supply. In some districts the side of a main road or a village inhabited by aborigines of known drinking habits should also be avoided. A liquor shop should not be inaccessible to persons requiring liquor, but it should not be in such a situation as to obtrude itself on the attention of the public or to render persons passing by subject to annoyance from persons drinking.

These rules apply to new shops only. If they were applied to all existing shops, and these removed from localities where their position is undesirable, it would conduce greatly towards the promotion of temperance. Besides, if there are objections to new shops being opened in such localities as mentioned in the above regulations, they apply equally logically and emphatically to those in existence. What has happened, however, is that there is already a glut of shops in such localities, and the rule for not opening any new ones is at best a pretext to disarm criticism, a subterfuge to carry on this nefarious traffic under the cloak of good intentions, a blind to gull the public with high sounding

phraseology, a sorry artifice, a cheap device to avoid just blame and censure. Why should not a new shop be opened in any locality, while ten old ones should ply their evil trade with impunity in similar localities? Why should not the old shops in localities where it is considered dangerous to have them, be peremptorily closed down? There can be no extenuating circumstances for allowing such shops to flourish when their presence is admittedly dangerous to both the morals and the health of the people.

The Government of India is particularly happy and rich in its choice of words, phraseology, and pecksniffian platitudes: on paper, its resolutions breathe the highest resolve and purest motives; in practice they are not worth the price of a dried blade of common grass. Nowhere is this better seen than in its excise policy, and nowhere so clearly as in its policy of the location of shops. How frequently this policy is perverted for the sole purpose of enhancing the excise revenue is too well known to need amplification. It is no exaggeration to state that in our chief cities "departmental rules regarding the location of shops are broken in from twenty to forty per cent of cases, and the authorities reply that their attempts to secure sites to which the rules would apply, and to which

local objection would not be raised, always end in insuperable difficulties, so that the present objectionable sites have to be retained".¹ In the end, the shops are forced upon a protesting public. . . .

The policy, the principles on which this policy is based, the methods adopted for pursuing this policy, all alike fail to combat the drink evil, because they are designed not for the purpose of restricting consumption but for the purpose of increasing the revenue. Restrictive laws, like licensing, are haphazard and loose, and yet the importance of the licensing system towards the promotion of temperance cannot be exaggerated. It is the back-bone of the temperance movement. A judicious and careful method of licensing, wherever tried, has resulted in turning inveterate drunkards into almost sober people. Except for total prohibition, the system of licensing is the safest and best device for lessening the use of drink, for minimising temptation to those who do not drink, and for preventing excesses amongst those who do. It can, and has, effected wonders.

An example of this is provided by the growth of temperance in Sweden by that method of licensing known as the Gothenburg system.

¹ Address of the Temperance Association to Lord Hardinge.

During the first half of the last century, the Swedes were considered by some persons to have been the most drunken people on the face of the earth. The growth of such abnormal drunkenness—three million people consuming nearly forty-two million gallons of spirits—is directly attributable to the licensing system then in force which enabled everyone who felt so disposed to turn distiller on the payment of a petty fee. “The effect was fearful national drunkenness beyond the excess of all other nations, and the whole country may have been said to have been deluged with spirits.”¹ The licensing laws then in force “permitted almost free trade in the manufacture and sale of spirits, and even the poorest peasants could obtain as much brandy as they wanted. All the horrors that ever follow habitual intemperance were to be seen throughout the land. The poverty of the people was great; social and moral degradation were prevalent; insanity and crime were dangerously on the increase, and there was a general air of hopeless desolation over the country.”² The average consumption of spirits, which being home-manufactured were of the crudest and most injurious quality,

¹ Lord's Committee on Intemperance, First Report, p. 262.

² McKenzie, *Sober by Act of Parliament*, p. 123.

has been variously estimated at from a little under six to over fourteen gallons per head yearly. The number of distilleries was computed at over 33,000 in 1853.

This was the state of affairs in 1850 ; in 1900 Sweden was rightly reckoned the soberest country, and her people the most temperate, in all Europe. This marvellous change was effected simply by a change in the licensing laws which had promoted not intemperance only but actual drunkenness.

In 1853 a bill was introduced in the Swedish Diet which effected a complete reform in the licensing system and incidentally "wrought wonders in the habits of the people". The distinctive feature of this system is that it enabled the formation of a company for taking the whole number of public-house licenses with which the town authorities might make a contract for three years without an auction, subject to the confirmation of the provincial governor. The formation of a company to take up this work resulted from the report of a committee appointed in 1865 by the Municipal Council of Gothenburg to enquire into the causes of pauperism. The committee found that the direct cause of pauperism was the use of brandy by the working classes. "Yet it is not the

intoxicating liquor only and its moderate consumption which cause demoralisation and poverty ; it is the disorder, evil example, temptations and opportunities for every kind of iniquity with which public-house life abounds, that contribute mainly to this unhappy state of things. Neither local enactments nor police surveillance can do much so long as public-houses are in the hands of private individuals, who find their profit in encouraging intemperance, without regard to age or youth, rich or poor.”¹ How truthfully and appositely would the above description apply to our own state of affairs in the present day !

In consequence of this report, a company of philanthropic gentlemen was formed to take over the trade. The stipulations were that neither the shareholders nor the managers should be pecuniarily interested in pushing the sales, and that they would receive no more than six per cent on the paid-up capital : all receipts beyond this were to be paid to the town treasury. The main object of the company was the same as that of the Government of India, *viz.*, to meet the legitimate wants of the moderate drinkers, and to discourage excess in

¹ “ The Gothenburg System of Liquor Traffic,” Washington, 1893.

every possible way ; the difference, that the policies adopted for pursuing this object are poles apart ; the result, that the company has succeeded in making a community of drunkards into sober, temperate people, and the Government of India, to say the least, has not been careful in avoiding temptation to the sober.

The company started its campaign by securing sixtyone licenses, but it used only nineteen. The law permitted public-houses to be open till 10 p.m., the company closed its establishments at from 7.30 to 9 o'clock according to the season of the year. It opened five coffee-houses and reading rooms, where no spirits were sold. Great attention was given to management. "Each public-house is placed under the charge of a manager, who is expressly ordered not to encourage drinking in any way, and is warned that if he does so he will be dismissed. The managers derive no direct or indirect profits from the sale of spirits beyond their stated salaries ; and they have directions not to supply strong drink to young people, to those who show any signs of intoxication, or to those who require several drams in succession, or who pay repeated visits to the public-houses at short intervals for the purpose of drinking. They are not allowed to give any credit for

liquor.' " These were the measures adopted to combat the excessive use of liquors, but the company aimed at reducing consumption to infinitesimal proportions, and this it set out to achieve by providing counter attractions,² by keeping a supply of good hot and cold food, temperate drinks, and similar wholesome articles, also cigars. These eating-houses catered exclusively for workmen, and provided meals at so cheap a rate—a dinner then cost about two pence—that the workmen flocked to them, with the result that their consumption of drink was restricted to just a dram, and soon at least half of them gave it up. The establishment of the company soon led to a steady decrease in the number of drunkards and the amount of spirits consumed.

The importance, therefore, of licensing cannot be exaggerated. A good, sane system must of itself promote those habits of temperance which are necessary, not only to the prosperity of a people, but for their very existence. A comparison with the laws in force in Sweden and those that are in force in India will immediately reveal the grave difficulties under which we

¹ "Sober by Act of Parliament," p. 126. I would here acknowledge my very deep indebtedness to this interesting and accurate book.

² As adopted in Chandragupta Maurya's time.

labour. Temptation is put in men's way by the providing of unnecessary facilities for drinking; the public-houses are conducted by people who have a real stake in the increase of consumption; the houses themselves provide no counter-attractions, nor are any steps even taken by their owners to prevent excessive drinking—the sight of people reeling drunk outside a shop or in its vicinity, whither they have been pushed by the watchful attendants to avoid the blame that they have broken the rule preventing the sale of liquors to people already intoxicated, is unfortunately too common and too well-known to need substantiation by facts and figures.

Examining them in the light of their results, the measures adopted by the Government of India absolutely fail “to minimise temptation to those who do not drink, and to prevent excesses amongst those who do,” and may rightly be said to be just those that would bring about totally different and opposite results, though for purposes of enhancing the revenue they are perhaps the best that could be devised.

CHAPTER VI

SOURCES OF REVENUE

EXCISE revenue is collected from taxes levied on the manufacture and sale of various kinds of intoxicating liquors and opium, drugs, and narcotics. The principal sources of excise revenue are taxes upon :

I. The manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors, *e.g.*, country spirits, *pach-wai* etc. ;

II. The sale of foreign liquors imported from abroad or manufactured in this country, *e.g.*, rum, brandy, and beer ;

III. The tapping of trees and sale of toddy or *tari* from the palm, coconut, or date, etc. ;

IV. The manufacture and sale of opium and its preparations for *local* consumption ;

V. The manufacture and sale of hemp drugs, *e.g.*, *ganja*, *bhang*, and *charas*, etc. ; and

VI. The manufacture or sale, or both, of other narcotics or intoxicating drugs, *e.g.*, cocaine, morphia, etc.

The above list is not exhaustive ; it would be arduous, if not impossible, to enumerate all the sources of excise revenue. Suffice it then to say that all liquids that have been brewed, distilled, or intentionally fermented for the purpose of drinking, all liquids possessing either alcoholic or spirituous properties, are rigorously taxed, and so too are drugs, narcotics, and intoxicants. A detailed examination of the six main sources of revenue enumerated above will give an idea of how the revenue is actually derived.

I. Country spirits alone contribute half the total excise revenue, which is realised mainly by—

(1) Still-head duties on the issue of liquor, and—

(2) Sums paid in respect of the right of sale.

Under pre-British rule, excise revenue was derived from the second source only. The first is an innovation of British administrators who are gradually but persistently introducing it into newer and wider areas. In a previous chapter, we showed how the system of farming liquors, which presented to the people the least possible incentive to consumption and to the government of the time the least possible interest in the liquor-traffic, had been displaced by

systematic effort and constant endeavour in some form of the distillery system, which enabled the imposition of duty before the liquor was issued to the retailer. The revenue from country spirits under the distillery system is raised by—

- (1) The imposition of a still-head duty at various rates, and—
- (2) License fees.

The second embraces the revenue realised from the sale of the rights of manufacture, of wholesale and retail sale, distillery fees, and other miscellaneous items.

Where the distillery system has not been introduced, the revenue from country liquors is raised generally by (1) auctioning the rights of manufacture, and (2) license fees as above slightly modulated to suit different conditions.

Country spirits are manufactured mainly from the dried flowers of the *Mhowa* tree, which is found all over the country, from toddy, or molasses, or dates.

II. The revenue from foreign liquors and Indian manufactured liquors consists of

- (1) Duty on liquors manufactured in India and excised at the Sea Customs Tariff rates,¹ and—

¹ The amount thus realised is credited to Customs.

- (2) License fees for the sale of Indian manufactured and imported liquors.

The revenue under (1) is mainly derived from malt liquor, spirits of wine, rectified spirits, absolute alcohol, brandy, whisky, rum, and medicinal and perfumed spirits.

III. The principal sources of toddy revenue are :

1. Tree-tax, and—
2. License fees.

The tree-tax is imposed on trees tapped—

1. For toddy used in distillery ;
2. For sale of raw toddy alone, and—
3. Both for sale of raw toddy and its distillation.

License fees are derived from the sale of licenses for shops for retail sale, for tree-foot booths, for hawking, and for domestic consumption ; and from fees for farms for the use of trees on government lands.

Toddy is tapped generally from the coconut, the date, the palmyra, and the brab palms.

IV. The revenue from opium and hemp and other drugs is derived by quantitative duties and shop licenses. These will be discussed more fully in the chapter on Drugs.

It will be seen, therefore, that excise revenue is mainly collected from duty imposed before

the various articles are sent out from distilleries or warehouses, and by the sale of licenses for manifold purposes. The imposition and realisation of such duties imply that the collection of liquors and drugs should be under government superintendence and surveillance, which again means that the interest of the government in the sale of such commodities is not restricted by time (as under the farming system), but is really perpetual. On the other hand, if properly administered it provides the government with the fullest possible control over the quantity that is to be issued for consumption ; if efficiently carried out it provides for the regulation of both intoxicating liquors and drugs. It thus places the government at once in a position of effectively lessening the drink evil or increasing it. In short, the government is provided by this means with great powers both of doing infinite good and infinite harm. The perpetual interests of the government have, however, been conducted mainly with an eye to revenue, and therefore, while the revenue has shown a regular and alarming growth, the consumption has also increased. The position of the government may be likened to that of a manufacturing combine which has no active interest in the retail sale

of its goods, but whose prosperity nevertheless depends on this very retail sale. Having evolved and perfected a system which gives its full control over the produce of spirits and drugs, and not having used it for the purpose of restricting consumption by allowing it to be known to subordinate excise officers that the test of their ability, capacity, and fitness, would be in the increase of revenue, the Government may rightly be blamed for having misdirected and misused this system for the sake of revenue, and may be unhesitatingly condemned for having promoted consumption.

Whilst there are latent possibilities of doing good by levying duties, there are none whatsoever in the system of issuing licences, *which are used solely for the purpose of raising further revenue from articles which have already been taxed*. The general method is that of sale by auction at certain intervals, in the case of country spirits at intervals of not more than three years. This method enhances the revenue considerably as the result of bidding at auctions by anxious and keen rivals. It is equally well-known that retail dealers seldom, if at all, suffer any pecuniary loss. The increased price of the bid as well as the retail vendor's profit, come from the consumer's pocket. It follows,

therefore, that the process of auction sale indirectly serves as an incentive to consumption. The retail vendor gets back his enhanced cost price by enhanced sales. As worked out, the method of auctioning licences is the mother of an undesirable brood of numerous ills. The bidders cannot be expected to stop at the exact figure that will leave a fair margin for profit; and the high prices which are realised for these licences under press of competition, undoubtedly lead to manifold illicit practices on the part of licence holders. In spite of increases of duty shop rents have shown a tendency to rise and shopkeepers are driven to malpractices.¹ So baneful indeed are the subsequent results of such hard driving that one Excise Commissioner went to the length of proposing to impose a maximum for each shop and to draw lots between suitable bidders as soon as the figure fixed was reached! The high price of such bids forms the strongest possible stimulus to push sales to the utmost extent, and is noticeable in the alarming increase of consumption.

The general system of licensing thus gives the greatest possible inducement to all publicans to push sales as much as possible; the high

¹ One candid publican, who shall be nameless, assured me that, as a direct result of the high price he paid for the licence, he had

prices generally received from licences, as apparent from the high proportion that licence fees bear to the general taxation on both liquors and drugs, actually force the retail sellers to increase consumption. The interests of retail vendors being chiefly in increased sales, a continual stimulus to the enhancement of consumption is thus provided. Nor, as it may be imagined, are the licensing functions separated from the revenue functions of administration; both are vested in one authority, the collector, with the result that everything is subordinated to considerations of revenue.

The Administration reports from provincial governments give innumerable instances of the pernicious effect of this system. The excerpts given below are from the reports of the year 1911-1912.

Bengal. "In the 24 Perganahs immediately after the auction in March, 1911, a large number of petitions was filed for reductions of fees, and it was then observed that the fees had been allowed to rise to a limit which made it difficult for vendors to work on *honest* lines at the maximum price fixed for country spirit."

to undermeasure his liquors, *i.e.*, he cheated all his customers by giving them a less quantity than they had paid for. He assured me that this ruse was commonly practised by all publicans, and some of them "treated" it with water, etc.

Bihar and Orissa. The sales in Shahabad were settled with the highest bidders, though the figure had reached a limit beyond which no profit would be made. The result was that the consumption of country liquor in this district alone increased by 24,956 gallons.

It is not necessary to multiply instances where they are as numerous and common as toad-stools in an unploughed field. The fact remains that though frequent attention has been drawn to the evils of this system, the Government has proved so adamant as not to alter it in any way, which leads one to believe that revenue means more to the Government than the good of the people.

CHAPTER VII

EXCISE REVENUE

THE excise policy of the Government soon resulted in an alarming increase of revenue. Before we examine the figures it should be borne in mind that excise revenue is derived by imposing taxation in various forms upon the manufacture and sale of all intoxicating liquors and drugs, the chief means of taxation being still-head duty on country spirits, from which half the total excise revenue is derived ; quantitative duties on opium, hemp drugs, and other narcotics ; tree-tax for fermented liquors tapped from palms like toddy ; customs duty on foreign liquors and spirits (though these are credited to customs) ; and auction or sale of the rights of wholesale manufacture and retail vend. The

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following statement of revenue does not include receipts from customs.

STATEMENT OF GROSS REVENUE¹

Year	Gross Revenue in Rupees
1861-62	1,78,61,570
1870-71	2,37,44,650
1880-81	3,13,52,260
1885-86	4,15,21,360
1890-91	4,94,77,800
1895-96	5,72,24,170
1900-01	5,90,58,030
1905-06	8,53,17,300
1910-11	10,54,54,715
1915-16	12,94,83,132
1916-17	13,82,38,495
1917-18	15,44,25,590
1918-19	17,35,52,770

The figures tell their own deplorable tale. It is no small sum that the Government derives from the people's vice. Since 1905¹ excise has been the *largest* item of revenue excepting the revenue from land.

¹ See Appendix B and C for detailed statement.

A study of the statement given above will immediately show how the government's policy has influenced the growth of excise revenue. For a critical and appreciative study, it is necessary to divide the period under review into two parts. The first period ending with the last century marks the growth of revenue under the old policy. In 1861-62 the gross excise revenue was 178 lakhs, in 1870-71 it stood at 237 lakhs or an increase of 59 lakhs, and in 1880-81 it amounted to 313 lakhs or a further increase of 76 lakhs. The growth of revenue by an average increase of 6 to 7 lakhs per annum does not call for any special comment. In the next ten years this rate quickened so that in 1890-1891, the revenue stood at 494 lakhs, an increase of 181 lakhs in ten years, but in the next decade the rate again slackened to its earlier place, and, with the revenue at 590 lakhs in 1900-01, the increase amounted to 96 lakhs—almost half the increase in the previous decade.

Meanwhile the old policy had been modified, and the new one described in a previous chapter had been adopted by the Government of India about the year 1890. During the next decade, the ways and means for the furtherance of this policy were perfected, so that with the commencement of this century, they were put into

operation. The result was a huge and progressive increase in revenue which jumped to 853 lakhs in 1905-06, resulting in an increase of 263 lakhs in the short space of five years. In 1910-11 the revenue rose to 1,054 lakhs, showing an increase of 464 lakhs in ten years, or an average increase of 46·4 lakhs per year. In 1918-19 the total gross revenue turned at 1,735 lakhs, or an average increase of 85 lakhs per annum.

The average increase per annum of excise revenue and the percentage of increase during every decade will be seen from the following statement :

Period	Average increase per annum in lakhs	Percentage of increases per decade
1860-1870	6·5	33%
1870-1880	7·6	32%
1880-1890	18·1	58%
1890-1900	9·6	12%
1900-1910	46·4	79%
1910-1918	85·0	65%

The above statement explicitly shows the results of the new policy. In the old policy, the maximum average increase was 18 lakhs per annum, whilst the new policy showed as much

as an average increase of 85 lakhs. The percentage of the increase of revenue under the old policy was 76/ for the twenty years ending 1880-81, and 88 per cent for the twenty years ending 1900-01; under the new policy, the percentage of increase for the period 1901-19 was 193 per cent. Under the old policy the revenue could not double itself in twenty years, but the inauguration of the new policy saw the revenue more than trebled in a period of eighteen years only!

GROSS REVENUE

1861-1862 ... 178 lakhs	1900-1901 ... 572 lakhs
1880-1881 ... 313 ..	1918-1919 ... 1,735 ..

The figures of the actual amount of increase convey their own meaning. The eight years 1910-18 show an increase of 681 lakhs, whereas it required a period of twenty-five years (*i.e.*, 1885-1910) to show an increase of nearly the same amount, *viz.*, 641 lakhs.

The assertion that this phenomenal growth of revenue was the direct result of the changed policy is further substantiated by examining the expenditure and charges of the excise department. In 1880-81 the expenses of the department amounted to 9.5 lakhs, and in 1890-91 to

17·5 lakhs or an increase of 8 lakhs. In 1900-01 they had increased in a decade by nearly 7 lakhs and amounted to 24 lakhs. Then came the change of policy which necessitated, owing to the greater interest of the Government in manufacture, an overhauling and expansion of the department which had to keep a careful watch on distillation and wholesale vend, and had to perform manifold duties engendered by this changed policy by way of storage, surveillance, inspection, and the like. In the next ten years, the expenses rose from 24 lakhs in 1900-01, to nearly 61 lakhs in 1910-11, a stupendous increase in expenditure of 37 lakhs in ten years. By 1918-19 the expenditure and charges had swelled to 80 lakhs. Eighteen years after the policy had been pursued, the expenditure had increased by 204 per cent, whilst, as shown in a preceding paragraph, the revenue had increased by almost the same percentage, *viz.*, 193 per cent. Truly, a remarkable similarity between the rise of revenue and expenditure. Indeed, if the figures of both revenue and expenditure for every decade are thus compared, it will show that the growth of revenue has been attended with a proportionate growth of expenditure. The difference is that under the former policy the increases, were comparatively small, while

under the new one they are so large as immediately to arrest attention.

Facts and figures, however, are not essential to prove that the increase of revenue is due to the new policy. Nobody will dispute the general statement that the growth of liquor revenue may be due to reasons which have little to do with the Government's policy, but if it is known that the State has turned distiller, then the growth of revenue may primarily be ascribed to the assumption by the State of the functions of a manufacturer. This is a matter of common knowledge with such as are interested in this subject—it is as well known to them as Pythagoras' theorem to every school boy.

To cite a parallel instance. By article 31 of the Swiss Constitution of 1870, freedom of trade is specially guaranteed. As it was impossible according to this article to check or limit it in any way, the trade in liquor flourished exceedingly. It is beside our scope to describe the attendant evils which followed in the wake of such unchecked indulgence, but so baneful were the results in fifteen years of unchecked trading that eminent sociologists asserted that "the nation was being destroyed by this one curse," and at last the unhappy Constitution

was changed by popular vote and the manufacture of spirits became entirely a State monopoly. The result was a financial success,¹ but the monopoly failed to check the consumption of strong drink, though it provided better and cleaner spirits.

The increase of revenue may therefore be safely attributed to the Government's policy which enables it to be a virtual monopolist in both the liquor and drug traffic.

Returning to the figures of revenue. A graph of the annual net revenue² from 1880-81 to 1918-19 would show very much the same result as those of gross revenue. Starting from 1880-81 when the net revenue was 341 lakhs the line of our graph would shoot up till 1895-96—an unbroken period of twenty-five years—when the net revenue stood at 617 lakhs. The two following years would show a slight drop of 26 lakhs, but in 1898-99 with the revenue at 619 lakhs the line again rises to a point above that of 1895-96. From 1898-90 the line again shoots only at a less inclined angle, for the next sixteen years, with the

¹ "Turning to the financial side of the business, the figures are almost enough to make any Chancellor of the Exchequer whose budget shows a balance on the wrong side become his own distiller."—MCKENZIE.

² " See Appendix B.

net revenue in 1913-14 standing at 1,402 lakhs. There is again a drop of 60 lakhs in the next two years, but like a towering falcon it soars as if in scorn, from 1,435 lakhs in 1916-17 to 1,764 in 1918-19.

An examination of provincial returns¹ of excise revenue will serve further to reveal that the growth of revenue has synchronised with the carrying out of the new policy. As stated above, the policy was put into execution generally at the beginning of this century, the first five years of which show a striking growth of revenue that can only be attributed to the changed policy. In the United Provinces the revenue rose from 63·6 lakhs in 1899-1900 to 102 lakhs in 1904-05, an increase of 62 per cent in five years; in 1918-19 the revenue stood at 159 lakhs or an increase of 96 lakhs in eighteen years. In Madras the revenue increase from 134 lakhs in 1899-1900 to 187 lakhs in 1904-05 an increase of 40 per cent and rose to the huge figure of 464·4 lakhs in 1918-19 an increase of 277 lakhs in eighteen years. It is not necessary to go deep into the figures of other provinces. Suffice it to say that the revenue in Bombay rose from 106 lakhs in 1899-1900 to 378 lakhs in 1918-19, an increase of 271 lakhs or 260

¹ See Appendix for detail figures.

per cent; in the Punjab the revenue, which amounted to 26 lakhs in 1899-1900, had swelled to 98 lakhs in 1918-19, an increase of 280 per cent; in the Central Provinces and Berar the revenue increased from 45·5 lakhs in 1903-04 to 123 lakhs in 1918-19, an increase of 170 per cent in fifteen years.

It is no use multiplying figures. The introduction of the policy which gave the Government a virtual monopoly of the liquor and drug traffic is mainly responsible for the increase of revenue. Wherever the State has turned distiller the increase of such revenue has been the common result, but it is to be doubted whether a people's weakness has been so thoroughly exploited for the sake of revenue as has been done in India. The spectacle of finance officers gloating over the increase of revenue from this baneful source has been reserved amongst all nations for us alone. The expansion of revenue in recent years from intoxicants, which has rightly been represented by temperance societies as evidence of increased consumption, has been lightly explained away by officials, big and small, as due to "higher wages," and "the rising standard of prosperity," "the fine harvest," and to equally flimsy and palpably untrue causes. The suggestion that

“Government officials were fostering the increase of drinking habits to secure the expansions of revenue” seems a more probable explanation of the alarming growth of revenue.

The revenue receipts from the various excise items show how the new policy has affected them. The receipts from license fee, duty, and other items are levied mainly upon spirits, beer, opium, and other drugs. The new policy was designed specially to control the traffic in spirits and the increase of revenue since the inauguration of this policy will show that the new policy has stimulated the growth of revenue from these sources. For the real purpose for which the policy has been pursued, *viz.*, the increase of revenue, it has proved a marked and phenomenal success.

RECEIPTS FROM SPIRITS AND BEER

Year	Spirits	Beer
1900—1901	4,23,45,156	4,62,263
1905—1906	6,19,82,966	5,94,529
1910—1911	7,79,63,543	8,38,667
1915—1916	9,29,48,755	10,29,561
1916—1917	9,96,85,481	18,80,373
1917—1918	11,09,90,299	30,07,474
1918—1919	12,80,52,740	36,15,693

In the first five years in which this policy was pursued the receipts from spirits increased by 50 per cent, the total amount of the increase being nearly 2 crores ; in eighteen years the receipts from this head had more than trebled to nearly 13 crores—an increase of over 8·5 crores ! Well may the Government persist in this policy when it brings such huge and increasing amounts into its treasuries ; equally well may those who have the real interests of the country at heart look on this policy as a deadly poison that is slowly but effectively ruining the manhood of the nation. In no country and in no time has the weakness of a nation been so thoroughly and ruthlessly exploited by the Government for the sake of revenue as is done in India to-day. The revenue that it derives is but a measure of this sinful exploitation and a testimony to our weakness to resist the evil that has been sedulously fostered amongst us.

CHAPTER VIII

CONSUMPTION

BEFORE the policy had been in operation for more than five years, the statistics of consumption began to show a progressive increase. This policy, as has already been explained, affected more than anything else the traffic in country spirits. The revenue from country spirits formed about half the total revenue from all sources of excise, and any improvement (from the revenue point of view) in the handling of country spirits would show a substantial increase. The distillery system was designed ostensibly for controlling the traffic in liquors and the strength of country spirits, but in reality for enhancing the revenue and assuring the maximum profit to government. That this has been achieved is borne out by the figures of revenue given in a previous chapter. If this had been the only result, the policy could be condoned if not justified. Unfortunately, the close connection and interests of government in, and its aim of securing the maximum of revenue from, this trade have made it blind to the other awful results which followed in the

wake of the policy. The government's interest has made it a party to the increase of consumption, not only in country spirits, but in opium, drugs, and foreign liquors, and the increase of consumption is directly and mainly due to the present policy of the government, which, for all intents and purposes, has made every other consideration subject to that of revenue. The charge is not recklessly made. The statistics of consumption warrant the statement that the increase of consumption is due mainly to the new policy.

It will be remembered that the policy was put into operation at the commencement of this century. By 1905 it had been introduced into every province, with the result that the consumption of both intoxicating liquors and drugs showed a considerable increase in every province. The Indian Excise Committee of 1905-06, which consisted mainly of officials, gave the verdict that consumption had increased largely everywhere. A few sentences, from the summary of their conclusions, which show the result of the government's policy are quoted :

"The consumption of all classes of foreign liquors, has *largely* increased."

"The consumption of *Tari* unless properly controlled is liable to lead to *much drunkenness*."

"The consumption of country beers is causing *much drunkenness* in certain areas."

CONSUMPTION

Indeed, the conclusions of a committee—of officials though it may be—are not necessary to prove that consumption has increased. The fact is unblushingly admitted in most government publications. The following quotations will provide some food for reflection.

“Between 1901-02 and 1911-12 the issues of country spirits in distillery areas rose in Bombay from 1,792,618 proof gallons, or about 117 gallons per 1,000 of population, to 2,705,567 gallons or about 168 per 1,000, and in Sind from 168,225 gallons, or about 52 per 1,000 to 227,467 or 55 per 1,000. *Practically the whole of the increase took place in the first half of the decade.*”¹

The last sentence clearly shows that the inauguration of the policy stimulated the consumption of country-spirits. In Madras “the increase in consumption which as regards country spirits in distillery areas was put at 1,628,178 proof gallons, or 41 gallons per 1,000 of population in 1911-12, as against 875,755 gallons or 24 gallons per 1,000, in the rather smaller distillery area, of 1901-1902—was ascribed . . . mainly to the advancing prosperity of the drink consuming classes”.² In the Central Provinces and Berar there was “on the whole a considerable increase of consumption”; in the Punjab “there was a large

¹ Report of the Moral and Material Progress of India, 1910-11, p. 214.

² *Ibid.*, page 123.

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addition to the recorded consumption of country spirits, the sales by licensed vendors increasing from 253,909 to 459,796 proof gallons, or from 12½ to 23 gallons per 1,000 of population between 1901-02 and 1911-12"; in the United Provinces "the issues of country spirits in distillery areas were 1,538,504 proof gallons in 1911-12, as compared with 1,282,766 proof gallons in 1901-02, the increase being due mainly to the extension of the distillery area".

The following statement of the consumption of country spirits will show, how in the first ten years in which it has been pursued, this policy has affected the growth of consumption :

CONSUMPTION OF COUNTRY SPIRITS IN PROOF GALLONS

Province	1901-02	1911-12	1918-19
Bombay and Sindh	17,17,775	29,37,034	26,70,154
Madras	8,75,755	16,28,178	16,72,492
Punjab	2,48,524	4,59,796	4,56,837
C. P. and Berar	2,66,180	10,66,880	12,21,137
United Provinces	12,14,798	15,38,504	14,68,620
Bengal with Behar and Orissa	6,08,298	18,76,319	20,69,909
Assam	...	2,38,947	2,25,571
Burma	...	26,786	1,24,409
Total (Excluding India General)	...	97,72,444	99,09,129

The increase in consumption in the decade 1901-02 to 1911-12 is staggering. In Bombay, Madras, and the Punjab, the consumption of country spirits has almost doubled in this period ; in Bengal (with Behar and Orissa) it has more than trebled from six lakhs of gallons to $18\frac{3}{4}$ lakhs of gallons, while in the Central Provinces, the consumption of country-spirits alone has quadrupled ! The actual amounts of consumption in these provinces are so large and considerable that they almost appear to be grossly exaggerated. In Bombay and Sind the consumption increased by over 12,00,000 gallons, in Madras and the Central Provinces by 8,00,000 gallons each, in the Punjab by 2,10,000 gallons, in the United Provinces by 3,25,000 gallons, and in Bengal with Behar and Orissa by 12,64,000 gallons.

These huge increases in consumption were the results of the government's efforts to increase its revenue. The policy of the Government was designed (ostensibly) to minimise consumption, and the chief method of restricting consumption laid down was by increasing taxation so as to make liquor prohibitive. In other words taxation was to be employed as a preventive measure against consumption. The policy as practised was different from what was preached.

The means of taxation have been employed by the Excise Department solely for the purpose of increasing the revenue—they took care that taxation was never so high as to show a fall in sales. As a matter of fact the increases of taxation in the decade 1901-02 to 1911-12 averaged less than the increases in consumption, as the following table will show :

STATEMENT SHOWING PERCENTAGE
OF INCREASE IN THE DECADE
1901-02 TO 1911-12¹

Province	Increase of consumption	Increase of taxation
Bombay ...	51%	38%
Sindh ...	35%	22%
Madras ...	86%	31%
Punjab ...	81%	33%
United Provinces ...	20%	34%
Central Provinces...	300%	54%

The statement shows at a glance that the average increase of taxation in all provinces except the United Provinces was less than the average increase of consumption. Whilst the consumption of country spirits increased in Bombay by 51 per cent, taxation increased

¹ The figures for Bengal, Behar and Orissa cannot be given owing to the partition in 1905-1906.

by only 38 per cent, in Madras consumption increased by 86 per cent and taxation by 31 per cent, in the Central Provinces consumption increased by 300 per cent and taxation by only 54 per cent. The United Provinces alone show a greater average increase of taxation than revenue, and there the increase of consumption has been proportionately the smallest in any province. If taxation had been adopted as a preventive measure it would at least have retarded the growth of consumption.

Nor can the distillery system be looked upon as a proper system for minimising consumption. In all provinces this system has failed to check the growth of consumption, and in most, the introduction of the distillery system has been followed by greater increases of consumption. In Bombay for instance the area under the distillery system in 1905-06 was 75,110 square miles, and the consumption of country spirits amounted to 23,92,423 proof gallons; in 1910-11 the area was increased by only 3 miles but the consumption swelled to 26,06,058 proof gallons—an increase of 2,13,635 gallons. In Sindh the area in both these years was 47,011 square miles, nevertheless consumption increased by 27,110 proof gallons. These are of course

striking cases which show exactly how far the distillery system can be used to increase consumption. The following percentages of the increases in area, in consumption, and in population under the distillery system will throw some interesting light on the working of the system and its supposed efficiency for retarding consumption—its utility for purposes of revenue has been fully demonstrated in a previous chapter.

The following table¹ deals only with the Distillery System :

¹See next page for the statement.

The comparison of the percentages of increase (columns 3, 6 and 9) will show that the Distillery System has promoted rather than restricted consumption. The percentage of increase in consumption has been generally in excess of that in area. In Madras for one per cent increase in the distillery area the increase of consumption was 25·5 per cent, and the increase of population was only 9 per cent. In Bombay the area was the same in both years, the population increased by 5 per cent and the consumption by 13 per cent. The only provinces which showed a proportionately less increase in consumption are the Central Provinces and Behar and Orissa. It should not be understood, however, that the consumption in these two provinces is decreasing. Strange as it may appear, the consumption in both these provinces is greatly on the increase, but it does not seem so from the comparison we have made for the reason that the consumption does not synchronise with, but follows, the introduction of the Distillery System. An example will make this clear. The distillery system in a Province serves one thousand square miles and the consumption amounts to 4,000 gallons. Supposing the area is increased by 100 square miles, the consumption in that year will not show a

corresponding increase because of the dislocation caused by the change in systems and the time required for perfecting the new organisation. The year *after* the organisation has been completed will show an increase of consumption—the almost certain result that attends the introduction of the distillery system. In Behar and Orissa the Distillery area in 1910-11 had been increased in one year by over 16,600 square miles, and in the Central Provinces by nearly 9,000 square miles. These causes had affected the growth of consumption in this particular year—though, of course, the rate was accelerated in the next year, when the distillery area in Behar and Orissa increased by only .3 per cent and the population by .7 per cent, but the consumption by 15.5 per cent.

By 1910-11 the distillery system had been introduced in almost all those areas where it could profitably be worked, and the consumption of country liquor had been pushed to almost its maximum. Since then the variations in consumption have fluctuated about the figures of 1911-12, now showing a slight increase, now a slight decrease. In 1918-19 the consumption of country spirits in the major provinces was 99,00,000 proof gallons—an increase of 1,37,000 gallons in eight years

Nor did the new policy influence the consumption of country spirits alone. It is, however, not possible to give a complete statement of the total consumption of intoxicating liquors. Till 1910-11 there was "no record of the output of toddy and other fermented liquors, nor was the quantity of spirit produced in distillery areas accurately known". The figures given below will give a general idea of the scale of consumption of imported liquors and country spirits under Distillery areas :

CONSUMPTION OF IMPORTED LIQUORS
AND COUNTRY SPIRITS UNDER
DISTILLERY SYSTEMS IN
LIQUID GALLONS

Kind	1901-1902	1911-1912
Ale, Beer and porter	3,673,852	4,239,585
Cider, etc. ...	4,912	11,283
Whisky ...	553,971	655,673
Brandy ...	302,059	336,485
Gin ...	73,205	73,792
Rum ...	40,671	50,782
Liquor ...	11,804	14,821
Wines ...	300,672	335,716
Total ...	4,961,146	5,718,137

There has been a considerable rise in consumption under every separate head, while the total shows an increase of over 750,000 gallons in ten years.

These statistics are sufficient to show that the government's policy has brought about an increase in the consumption of liquors, that its settled policy of "minimising temptations to those who do not drink, and preventing excesses amongst those who do" has never been carried out, nor any attempts made to give effect to it. On the contrary, every plan that ingenuity could devise, every scheme that experience could suggest, have been utilised and pursued for increasing the revenue from this evil and nefarious traffic.

CHAPTER IX

OPIUM

I

OF the innumerable problems that confront the temperance or social worker, none is more fascinating, none more terrible, than the problem of opium. The use of opium has been constantly decried by a consensus of medical, religious, and public opinion. The dangers that attend this habit are too well-known to need amplification—the sallow skin, the haggard face, the livid, pale countenance, the drawn-out, bulging eyes, the wasted, emaciated body, are all tell-tale tokens of its effect. So well known, indeed, so striking are the baneful results of the opium habit, that it will be thought that a government which makes high and loud pretensions to being civilised would exert itself to stamp out this evil, would at least be above profiting from this baneful source. The truth is different. Not only does the government derive a considerable revenue from opium in India but it

derives one still greater from supplying this poisonous drug to peoples of different countries. The revenue from opium that is exported abroad and not consumed in this country is far in excess of that received from excise opium. We must understand once for all that we are instrumental to no small extent in keeping some peoples of the world subject to the awful vice of drug taking for a little pecuniary advantage.

Opium, for export to China and other countries, and for home consumption, is manufactured from the poppy grown mainly in Behar and some districts lying on either side of the Ganges in the United Provinces, and a number of Indian States in the Central India and Rajputana Agencies, principally Gwalior, Indore, Bhopal, and Marwar. The product from the first is known as Bengal, and that of the second tract, as Malwa, opium. So profitable is the trade that in 1797, the Government of Bengal assumed the direct monopoly of manufacture—a system that continues to the present day. A system, similar to that then in course in regard to salt, was formed, under which the growth of the poppy and the manufacture of opium was entrusted to a special department, comprising

two agencies, one for Behar with headquarters at Patna and another for the United Provinces with headquarters at Ghazipur—both the agents, however, being under the control of the Bengal Board of Revenue, and the Bengal Government—hence the name of Bengal Opium for opium manufactured in both these provinces. In 1910, the whole department was placed under the control of one opium agent, with headquarters at Ghazipur. Elsewhere in British India, the cultivation of the poppy is prohibited, except to a certain extent in the Punjab and in some frontier districts of Burma.

The cultivation of the poppy and the manufacture of opium are regulated by laws, the chief being Act XIII of 1857 as amended by Act I of 1911. The cultivation of the poppy is allowed only under licence from an authorised officer of the department, and the cultivator is bound to sell the whole of his produce at a fixed rate to government. The rate paid to cultivators increased with slight fluctuations from Rs. 3-10 a seer in 1850-51 to Rs. 6 a seer in 1894. This rate prevailed till 1913-14 when it was raised to Rs. 7-8 per seer and again to Rs. 9 per seer in 1916-17. The area to be cultivated is also fixed by licence. The crude opium is delivered by the cultivators at some local centre

and thence despatched to the factory at Ghazipur where it is manufactured in three forms: (1) opium intended for export to foreign countries, departmentally known as "provision" opium, (2) opium intended for consumption in India and Burma known as "excise" opium, and (3) medical opium for export to London.

Malwa opium is purchased by Government for preparation for excise purposes.

The monopoly, of course, brings to the Government a huge revenue. For the sake of this revenue, the Government has adopted policies and methods that would put Judas to shame. To reap the maximum of profit from its Bengal monopoly, it was necessary to avoid the serious competition of Malwa. "The efforts of the East India Company were at first directed to the restriction or supervision of this trade, which interfered with the Bengal monopoly." These efforts resulting in failure, the Government of India, taking an undue advantage of the fact that the opium producing tracts, had no access to the sea, which necessitated the transport of opium through British India before its export abroad, authorised the export of Malwa opium subject to duty. This duty, known as

pass duty, constituted the Government revenue from Malwa opium, and the rates varied from time to time. The imposition of duty led to a decrease in the production of Malwa opium. In 1880-01 the Malwa opium passed for export to China amounted to 37,000 chests and in 1901-02 to less than 18,000. This export, however, has been prohibited since 1914. But the efforts of Government were not solely employed in restricting the cultivation of Malwa opium. The whole organisation, the power, and the might of the British Empire were employed in forcing opium upon Eastern countries notably China, where the Treaty Ports were employed in dumping chests upon chests of Indian opium upon that country. The quantity of opium that thus entered the Treaty Ports will be seen from the following statement :

IMPORTS OF OPIUM INTO THE TREATY
PORTS OF CHINA (*in piculs*)

Year	1870	1880	1890	1900	1905	1910
Total ...	59,035	73,288	76,616	49,277	51,920	35,488

These figures show the stake of the Government of India in the consumption of opium in China. If it is remembered that the habit of opium eating and smoking had been thrust upon the Chinese by intimidation, threat, and abuse of power, it may give an idea of the heinous offence that has been committed against a peaceful people. The use of such huge quantities of opium rapidly told upon the Chinese, who made valiant efforts to throw off this habit, but the might of the British Government sapped their determination. At last they made their solemn resolve to leave off the habit of opium smoking, which stirred the whole world. "Towards the end of 1906 edicts were issued by the Chinese Government ordering that within ten years the growth and consumption in China should be suppressed. In 1907 an agreement was made with China for an annual reduction of the total amount of opium exported by India; in 1911 it was further agreed that, of the annual exports thus limited, only a certain quantity, to be reduced annually, should be certificated for export to China in the event of the native Chinese production being suppressed before the expiration of the period of

ten years. In 1913 the sale of opium thus certificated was suspended, and it has since been decided that the trade with China shall not be resumed.”¹

Since 1906, the exports to China through the Treaty Ports have been gradually falling off, till in 1918 the amount of opium was reduced to the negligible quantity of 337 piculs.

The stoppage of the export of opium to China in 1913-14 was followed by an intensive activity in neighbouring countries, notably Japan, Hongkong, and the Straits Settlement, regarding the purchase of opium and the manufacture of cocaine. Whilst imports of opium are not permitted in China, there was no edict against the importation of cocaine; and with the remarkable sagacity of British enterprise, the habit of cocaine injection has been stimulated among the Chinese people. This feverish activity in the import of opium is especially noticeable in the Straits Settlements, which imported 600 chests in 1914-15; four times that number, *viz.*, 2,550 in 1915-16; 3,750 in 1916-17; and 4,789 in 1917-18—an increase of 4,189 chests in three years. In

¹ Moral and Material Progress Report, 1912-13, p. 43.

1918-19 the number of chests thus imported was 4,136 or seven times the quantity imported in 1914-15. These huge and sudden increases can only be accounted for by the fact that the opium was manufactured into cocaine which was smuggled or exported to China. Similarly in Hongkong the imports increased from 90 chests in 1915-16 to 450 in 1918-19; in Siam from 850 chests in 1917-18 to 1,750 in 1918-19. All these quantities were sold by Government direct to colonial Governments—the total amount rising from 950 chests in 1914-15 to 8,666 chests in 1918-19; an increase of over 800 per cent in four years! Surely the Government must have been aware of the use to which this opium was put; but for considerations of revenue, it has found this loophole to go back upon its solemn agreement with the Chinese Government. Nor are the colonial Governments alone concerned in the introduction of cocaine into China. The manufacture of cocaine in the United Kingdom has been accelerated to meet the demand from China; and the quantity of opium exported from British India to the United Kingdom increased from 59 cwts. in 1913 to 5,170 cwts. in 1917—an increase which beggars comparison! Almost all the quantity was exported to the Far East,

after being manufactured into cocaine. Nor has Japan been slow to adopt this method of profiting from a people's weakness. In 1917-18 the imports of opium had increased to 971 chests but in the next year more than double this quantity, *viz.*, 1,930 chests were imported—mainly for being manufactured into cocaine. Thus has the Government of India abided by its agreement not to export opium to China !

These measures, tricks, artifices, and devices were employed for the purpose of ensurging the maximum revenue possible. So successful indeed were the efforts, that the opium revenue increased by leaps and bounds. The revenue was hitherto raised partly by the levy of duty on opium exported from the Indian States to China, and partly by a monopoly of the production of opium. The opium manufactured under the monopoly is sent to Calcutta in chests, weighing 140½ lbs. each, where they are sold for export to China and elsewhere by auction at monthly sales. The price obtained at the Calcutta sale, less the cost of production, is the revenue from Bengal "provision" opium. The supply of prepared opium required for consumption in India—"excise opium"—is made over to the Excise Department and Rs. 8-8 per seer is credited to opium revenue for the amount thus consumed.

OPIUM REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE¹

(In lakhs of rupees)

Year	Receipts	Charges	Net Revenue
1850-1851	379	104	275
1860-1861	668	92	576
1870-1871	804	201	603
1880-1881	1,048	203	845
1890-1891	788	216	570
1900-1901	765	268	497
1910-1911	1,128	186	942
1913-1914	244	152	92
1915-1916	287	172	115
1918-1919	493	196	297

The above table shows the total receipts from opium—exported or used for home consumption—and the charges, which include the cost of production as well as the expenditures of the Opium Department. The revenue rose from 379 lakhs in 1850-51 to 1,048 lakhs in 1880-81, an increase of 669 lakhs in 30 years; the major portion of the increase undoubtedly resulting from the increased consumption of opium in China, where it was forcibly dumped through the Treaty Ports. By 1910, the revenue had reached its highest water mark, and

¹ See Appendix D for details.

totalled 1,128 lakhs, a further increase of 80 lakhs in thirty years. In 1913-14, the export of opium was stopped by agreement with China, and the receipts fell to 244 lakhs, a decrease of 545 lakhs from the previous year. Conditions in China necessarily had a great effect on the opium revenues of India, and with the complete cessation of the supply of opium to China, the Government was faced with a great difficulty in making up this loss of revenue. The sudden and unexpected and unexplainable partiality of the Chinese to cocaine provided a new use for opium, and the revenue quickly recovered. In 1916-17 it stood at 474 lakhs or an increase of 230 lakhs in three years. In 1918-19 the gross revenue from opium amounted to 493 lakhs.

Whilst the figures of revenue are enough to make us hang our heads in shame at the thought that we have been weak—really helpless—enough to see the exploitation of another nation for the sake of revenue, the figures of expenditure will reveal how our own has also been exploited for the same purpose. Most of the charges for opium are due to the cost of production, *i.e.*, to the payments made to the cultivators for growing the poppy. The evidence of this is shown by the fact that the expenditure bears no fixed proportion to the revenue. The

increase of expenditure is proportionately less than the increase of revenue. In some cases, the revenue in a particular decade has shown a considerable increase, while the cost of production has shown a considerable decrease. To take a few instances. In 1880-81, the revenue had increased in a single decade by 30 per cent; while the cost of production increased by only 1 per cent. In 1910-11 the revenue amounted to 1,128 lakhs, an increase of 48 per cent in a decade; whilst the expenditure decreased by nearly 70 per cent. In this particular year the Government cleared a net profit of 941 lakhs! This makes it abundantly clear that the Government's policy with regard to opium is to sell it at the maximum price that it will fetch, and buy it from the cultivators at the minimum price it can pay, using, when necessary, intimidation and threats and coercion, both on the users and the producers, thus exploiting two peoples for the sole purpose of enhancing the revenue: dumping opium on the Chinese, and under-paying the Indian cultivator. If there were no monopoly of opium, at least one of the two nations would not have been exploited. Either China would not be forced to buy opium, or the Indian peasant bullied into growing it for the sake of a

pittance. Probably there would not have been any exploitation. The matter then may be summed up as follows : *We help the exploitation of China, and are again exploited by a third, who reaps the benefits of this dual exploitation.* We have, in this case, at least paid blood-money for our brethren in China.

Amongst the most striking spectacles in modern times was the consigning to the flames of thousands of opium pipes by the Chinese, when they made that solemn resolve to give up the opium habit. They have been subtly deceived by the introduction of cocaine—that very opium, the use of which they had so nobly foresworn, in a more dangerous form. Their exploitation still goes on ; but we must certainly keep our hands clean of such slow but certain murder.

CHAPTER X

OPIUM

II

OPIUM intended for consumption in British India is also manufactured at Ghazipur under the superintendence of the Opium Agent. This is known as "excise" opium, and is made up in cubic packets, each weighing one seer, sixty packets being packed in one chest. The chest is sold to the Excise Department for Rs. 510 or Rs. 81½ per seer. Opium is consumed in all provinces in India. It is commonly taken in pills, though it is also drunk dissolved in water. Opium-smoking is not now extensively practised, though this habit is not as rare as it is made out to be. About the beginning of this century, the opium habit had assumed terrible proportions in big cities. The *Chandu* shops and opium dens, especially of Lucknow, had become a disgrace and a nuisance. The misery, the squalor, and the filth that were to be witnessed

there had been noised throughout the world. The late Mr. Keir Hardie has left his impressions in language that will rouse the pity of readers for centuries to come, and the noble hearted Stead joined with him in his cry for abolishing this evil—at least from the Indian Empire. As a result of their agitation, severe restrictions were placed by law upon opium-smoking. The sale of smoking preparations was absolutely prohibited, and private manufacture was allowed to the smoker to the extent of only one tola at a time. Since 1911, the Government of India have suggested to the Local Governments that legislation shall be passed providing that an assembly of three or more persons for the purpose of smoking opium shall be declared illegal. These and other measures have been designed to restrict the consumption of opium, but breaches of such rules are not uncommon, nor is the Excise Department very vigilant in enforcing them.

The Indian Opium Act, and the rules framed thereunder, regulate the dealings in opium, the details of which vary in different provinces. As a rule, the drug is supplied to licensed vendors and druggists at a fixed price from Government treasuries or depots, and the right of retail vend for one or several sanctioned

shops is sold usually by annual auctions. Bengal opium was supplied to most provinces, and Malwa opium to Madras till 1908, and Bombay; and in small quantities to a few other provinces. The interests of Government in the manufacture of opium are greater than those in the manufacture of country spirits. In this case the Government is actually the manufacturer, while in that of country spirits it sells its monopoly of manufacture for a consideration, and only keeps a surveillance over the output. The system of retail sale of opium is identical with that of country spirits—the shops being sold at annual auctions.

The revenue from opium is similarly derived and is mainly composed of duty and vend fees. The same baneful influences that have been at work in increasing the revenue from country spirits have also resulted in increases of opium revenue.

EXCISE OPIUM REVENUE

(In lakhs of Rupees)

Year	1860-61	1870-71	1880-81	1890-91	1900-01	1910-11	1918-19
Revenue	16	36	74	97	103	155	242

A glance at these figures will show that the revenue more than doubled in the first two decades, that this rate gradually fell off, till in the last decade of the last century it only increased by six per cent. The dawn of this century found the Government with a new policy designed to restrict consumption on the erroneous basis of increasing the duty, the result being a great increase in revenue—an increase of 139 lakhs in eighteen years, or 135 per cent. The principle involved in the policy was not only fallacious but even injurious: the activity of the Excise Department was to be concentrated on the increase of revenue; the efficiency of the officers was to be judged from the increasing returns of revenue. The whole attention of the department was focussed on enhancing the revenue. It was thought that these increases of revenue would result in a decrease of consumption. What happened was that the consumption increased with the revenue, for the sales were pushed by the zeal of the department in fulfilling the task entrusted to it, *viz.*, the increase of revenue. The rate of increase was thus accelerated towards the end of the period under review. The revenue from opium increased from 103 lakhs in 1900-01 to 242 lakhs in 1918-19; it

increased by 52 lakhs in the first decade 1900-10, but it took only four years 1914-18 to show an increase of nearly the same amount, *viz.*, 48 lakhs. The revenue from opium was one and a half times as much again in 1918-19 as it was in 1900-01. The opium policy of the Government seems to be more thorough than the drink policy, for there has been a steady, unbroken increase in revenue for the last eighteen years.

The policy has of course enhanced, as it was meant to enhance, the Government revenue. Whilst every effort was made by subordinate excise officers to increase the revenue; they made little or no effort to restrict consumption, with the result that every inducement was given to push sales, as a direct outcome of which the consumption also increased. In 1901-02, the total consumption of opium in India amounted to 411,913 seers, but the new policy gave a great impetus to the increase of sales, with the result that by 1906-07 the consumption amounted to 503,521 seers—an increase of 91,608 seers in five years. In ten years the consumption of opium alone in the whole of British India had increased from 411,000 seers in 1901-02 to 500,000 seers in 1911-12—an alarming increase for such a

baneful drug. These statistics are sufficient refutation of the claim that increased rate of taxation acts as a deterrent on consumption. An examination of provincial returns of consumption will shed a little light on the actual results of the policy.

CONSUMPTION OF OPIUM IN HUNDREDS OF SEERS

$$1 \text{ seer} = 2\frac{2}{5} \text{ lbs.}$$

Province	1901-02	1906-07	1911-12	1916-17	1918-19
Madras	35.6	38.1	41.4	36.5	37.1
Bombay and Sind	46.0	46.9	56.3	57.6	59.3
Bengal, Behar and Orissa	92.8	84.9	96.7	78.7	73.8
Assam	48.2	75.7	60.3	62.2	63.0
United Provinces	62.3	68.9	61.8	...	46.2
Punjab	52.8	59.9	63.5	61.1	53.4
Central Provinces and Berar	30.0	48.4	54.3	52.5	43.9
Burma	39.8	74.7	53.1	47.2	46.5
Total (for the above Provinces only)	407.5	497.5	487.4	...	423.2

In the period 1901-02 to 1911-12, there was an unlimited field for pushing the new policy to its furthest extent, and the consumption of opium increased in every province with the solitary exception of the United Provinces which showed a decrease of 491 seers—the consumption

increasing from 62,301 seers in 1901-02 to 68,864 in 1905-06 and then dropping to 61,810 seers. While the decrease in the United Provinces has been nominal, the increases in the other provinces have been significant and in some the figures of the growth of consumption at once arrest attention. The Central Provinces lead the list with an increase of 24,400 seers, followed by Burma with an increase of 13,300 seers, and Assam with an increase of 12,000. In the Punjab and Bombay the increase in consumption amounted to 11,000 and 10,000 seers respectively. Out of eight provinces, five show an increase of 10,000 seers and over in the consumption of opium.

By 1911-12 the sales had been pushed to their maximum extent, and it has been found difficult to keep consumption at that figure, especially as some really preventive measures—like restricting the quantity to be supplied to a person—have since been passed. These measures are more punitive than prohibitive, and they fall short of the purpose for which they were designed owing to the slackness of the Excise Department and the police in enforcing them. The consumption however in most provinces was appreciably less in 1918-19 than in 1911-12, with the exception of two provinces:

Bombay, where the consumption increased by nearly 3,000 seers to 59,378 seers, and Assam where it rose by an equal amount to nearly 63,000 seers. It may be mentioned in passing that Assam is the largest consumer of opium.

The decrease in consumption in most provinces during the period 1911-18 was, however, less than the increase in the previous decade 1901-11, so that the consumption of opium in 1918-19 was higher in most provinces than in 1901-02. The highest increase during this period was recorded in Assam, where consumption increased by 14,700 seers. The Central Provinces and Berar come a close second with an increase of 14,000 seers. In Bombay the consumption of opium in this period increased by 13,300 seers. The greatest decrease in any single province was in the United Provinces, where consumption fell off by 16,100 seers. In the eight major provinces the consumption increased from 407,500 seers in 1901 to 423,200 seers in 1918, an increase of 15,700 in seventeen years.

The growth of consumption has undoubtedly been accelerated by the government's policy in the furtherance of which all other considerations have been made subject to that of revenue. Not only this. Whilst the government regards

drinking as a vice, with regard to opium it abides by the report of the Royal Commission of 1895 which found "that the use of the drug for non-medical and quasi-medical purposes was accompanied in some case by benefit and for the most part by no injurious consequences". If this is the considered opinion of the government that the use of opium is sometimes beneficial and seldom, if at all, injurious, it is not surprising that this evil should have increased under its fostering care. Moreover, for the purposes of distribution and sale, it regards all sales of opium as if it were employed for medical use, and accordingly provides all facilities for its sale. It is indeed surprising that, whilst the most important medicines for even epidemics are not easily procured in its dispensaries, the Government should have taken all this trouble to provide for the convenient sale of opium—the difference in providing medicines and opium is perhaps due to the fact that opium is a source of revenue, and its consumption therefore needs encouragement, while medicines are at best unremunerative, and their use needs discouragement. If this is the considered outlook of the government with regard to opium, what wonder then if the consumption of opium should increase apace?

According to the Government, then, the use of opium is certainly not a vice, and it has, therefore, been slow to reduce the number of opium shops. In 1906-07, the year when the consumption of opium has been highest, the number of drug shops had been increased in five years by 4·5 per cent. Then came the report of the Indian Excise Committee, advocating a stringent reduction of shops, whether for liquor or for drugs. The government accepted its conclusions, but the rate of decrease of drug shops has been far slower than that of liquor shops.¹ All these things have resulted in a huge increase of opium revenue; the extraordinary growth of consumption in 1905-06 was a necessary outcome of its insatiable desire for revenue.

¹ This question is fully dealt with in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XI

HEMP DRUGS

THE narcotic products of the hemp plant form the third source of excise revenue—the other two being intoxicating liquors and opium.

The plant, which grows wild in many parts of India, is an annual herb, having angular rough stems and alternate lobed leaves. The male and female flowers are borne on separate plants, the male plant being smaller than the female, and its foliage lighter and less luxuriant. The plant is grown for three products: (1) the fibre of its stem; (2) its oily seeds; and (3) the resinous secretion which is developed upon its leaves and flowering heads. The last product forms the source of excise revenue. It is used as a drug and an intoxicant for smoking or chewing in three forms: *ganja*, *bhang*, and *charas*.

The use of hemp for medicinal purposes has been known in India from ancient times when it is highly probable that it was also used in a

restrictive way, as an intoxicating drug. Under Muslim rule, however, intoxicants from hemp-resin were more commonly used. This drug, indeed, produces the most pleasing form of intoxication. In small doses it produces increase of appetite and promotes cheerfulness. Larger doses produce sleep and hallucination. It is this dreamy state which is the delight of the consumer, when, it is said, the imagination brightens, becomes vivid and clear, and rapidly shifting ideas sport themselves. Pleasing pictures rise before the eye, and errors of time and place, which are conspicuous characteristics of its effects on the mind, beguile the user and provide amusement for the observer. A frequent use of this, however, brings about different and opposite results. The imagination becomes clouded and obscure, horrible and ghastly pictures rise before the mind--grisly phantoms, corpses and skulls, dangers and difficulties, till the poor wretch subsides in a flood of tears, cowers before an imaginary giant or supplicates a fancied enemy, or implores on bended knees forgiveness from a person he has never seen, for a crime he has never committed. The sight of a person in the midst of his ravings is revolting in the extreme. The result of continued indulgence may be imagined: he becomes a

nervous wreck, a prey to morbid moods that nothing can relieve.

Of its intoxicating products, the most common in use in India is *ganja* which consists of the dried flowering heads of the cultivated female plant, which have become coated with resin in consequence of being unable to set seeds freely. It is brownish-green in colour, and has a faint peculiar odour and but a slight taste. *Ganja* is used for smoking though it is sometimes eaten.

Bhang—commonly known as sabzi (greenish) in Hindustani, from its dark greenish brown colour—consists of the dried leaves and small stems of the hemp plant, whether male or female, cultivated or uncultivated. In odour and taste and otherwise it resembles *ganja*. It is sometimes used for smoking with or without tobacco, or it is made into a sweetmeat with honey, sugar and spices, but it is commonly used for the preparation of a drink, when it is powdered and infused in cold water.

Charas is the resin itself and contains all the active ingredients. It is gathered in various ways; the best sort by the hand like opium. It is specially imported from Yarkand in Central Asia, and is, perhaps, the most baneful and deleterious of all drugs. It is chiefly used

for smoking, and is mainly consumed in Northern India. The drug policy now in force is said to be based on the recommendations of the Hemp-Drugs Commission of 1893. The main features of this policy are the cultivation of the plant under supervision, the storage of products in bonded depots, payment of a quantitative duty before issue, and retail sale under licence. The licences cover the retail sale of all forms of hemp drugs and are usually sold by auction. The general features of this policy are identical with the opium, and only slightly different from the liquor policy, in as much as the use of opium and hemp drugs is regarded as generally beneficial, whereas the use of intoxicating liquors even in moderation is regarded as slightly harmful—certainly not beneficial.

The inauguration and pursuit of this policy has resulted, as has been shown before, in the increased consumption of intoxicating liquors in every decade. It is not the sales of intoxicating liquors alone that are on the increase. The drug habit—more vicious, more pernicious and far more injurious than liquor even, more deadly in its effects on body and mind alike—is no less on the increase. The receipts from drugs will show the profits of the government at the cost of the people.

REVENUE FROM DRUGS OTHER THAN OPIUM

(In lakhs of Rupees)

Year	1860-61	1870-71	1880-81	1890-91	1900-01	1910-11	1918-19
Revenue	11	22	30	42	59	107	159

The drug revenue thus increased by 48 lakhs in the last forty years of the last century, or an average increase of 1·2 lakhs per year. In the eighteen years of this century the changed policy resulted in an increase of 100 lakhs in drug revenue, or an average increase of 5·5 lakhs per year. The drug policy of the Government seems to be more thorough than its drink policy. Firstly, the quantities of both opium and drugs consumed is smaller than the consumption of country spirits, which makes both superintendence and management easier. Secondly, the prohibition of the cultivation of the poppy and hemp except in certain areas makes illicit production in other areas impossible, and in producing areas very difficult. These advantages have been used freely by government for ensuring to itself the maximum of revenue. A detailed examination of the revenue from drugs and opium after the new policy was put in force, *i.e.*, after 1900-01, will serve to

show the state of the government in the consumption of opium and drugs and how the new policy has affected its revenue.

REVENUE FROM DRUGS IN RUPEES

Year	Opium	Other Drugs	Total
1901-02	1,01,57,610	61,83,873	1,63,41,483
1902-03	1,08,17,526	66,85,846	1,75,03,372
1903-04	1,26,81,626	72,39,683	1,99,21,309
1904-05	1,29,93,733	68,03,098	1,97,96,831
1905-06	1,36,54,434	88,13,435	2,24,67,869
1906-07	1,39,94,572	88,13,689	2,28,08,261
1907-08	1,47,06,364	88,49,503	2,35,55,867
1908-09	1,48,49,348	94,06,474	2,42,55,822
1909-10	1,48,71,916	98,83,334	2,47,55,250
1910-11	1,55,56,205	1,06,95,789	2,62,51,994
1911-12	1,57,46,775	1,13,85,744	2,71,32,519
1912-13	1,78,24,011	1,21,57,163	2,99,81,174
1913-14	1,93,66,587	1,36,59,163	3,30,25,750
1914-15	1,94,99,479	1,40,21,312	3,35,20,791
1915-16	2,05,45,065	1,42,66,894	3,48,11,959
1916-17	2,11,46,200	1,48,06,031	3,59,52,231
1917-18	2,28,05,037	1,49,24,448	3,77,29,485
1918-19	2,42,25,170	1,59,21,379	4,01,46,549

The revenue from opium has already been explained in a previous chapter. The revenue from other drugs, *i.e.*, principally hemp drugs like *ganja*, *bhanga*, and *charas*, increased from nearly 62 lakhs in 1901-02 to over 159 lakhs in 1918, an increase of 97 lakhs or 157 per cent.

In the first decade, *i.e.*, ten years after the policy was put into force, the revenue increased to 107 lakhs in 1910-11, or an increase of 76 per cent. In the remaining period the rate of increase had slowed down to 40 per cent. It is interesting to learn that the revenue from drugs alone in 1918-19 almost equalled the total revenue from opium and other drugs in 1901-02; whilst ten years of this policy had increased the opium revenue to the total revenue ten years before: for instance the revenue from opium in 1911-12, amounting to 157 lakhs, equalled the total revenue from all drugs in 1901-02. Hence the total revenue from all drugs in any year generally equals the revenue derived from opium alone a decade afterwards. Thus the total revenue in 1908-09, and the opium revenue in 1918-19 both amounted to 242 lakhs. The thoroughness with which this policy has been worked is evident from the fact that there has been a steady unbroken increase in drug revenue since 1904-05; *i.e.*, for the last fourteen years: while the revenue from opium has steadily increased since 1901-02. And it is no small sum that the Government derives from drugging the people; over four crores of rupees, *i.e.*, more than half the revenue from salt.

The growth of revenue from drugs is attended by a growth in consumption. It has already been indicated how the new policy

affected the consumption of opium. It has had a similar effect on the consumption of hemp-drugs. As far as the drug habit is concerned, the following tables will, it is hoped, be conclusive and nail to the counter the lie "that all considerations of revenue must be subordinated to diminishing" this vile habit. The contention that the growth of revenue is due not so much to increased taxation as to increased consumption, is further supported by what may be called the "preferential" method of taxation. There is no uniform taxation on drugs—the rates vary in different provinces from a few rupees to Rs. 30 or more on the same commodity: whilst some provinces have three or more rates for the same drug for districts under their jurisdiction. *Ganja* was taxed in 1918-19 Rs. 20 per seer in Bengal, Rs. 16 per seer in Madras, and Rs. 12-8 per seer in Bombay and Sind; *Bhang*, As. 8 and Re. 1 per seer in Bengal, Rs. 3 per seer in Madras, Re. 1-8 in Bombay and Re. 1 in Sind; *Charas* was taxed Rs. 30 in Bengal, Rs. 16 and Rs. 18 in the United Provinces, Rs. 18 in the Punjab and only Rs. 12 in Assam. Similarly, the rate of duty on opium was Rs. 50 per seer in Bengal and Assam and only Rs. 10 in Sind. The policy of taxation pursued seems to be that those drugs to which the people are strongly addicted are taxed as high as possible without

fear of diminishing the sale; and those drugs which are not in demand are taxed relatively lightly. The policy is based on strict business principles: where the sales are certain the maximum tax is levied, but where the sales are small—or new articles introduced—they are taxed as lightly as possible to increase the demand and capture the market.

The policy has enhanced, as it was meant to enhance, the government revenue. It has also pushed on the sale: in other words, the consumption of drugs has also increased as the following statement will show:

CONSUMPTION OF HEMP DRUGS

(*Per 10,000 of the population in seers: 1 seer = 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ lbs.*)

Province	1901-02	1911-12
Madras ...	10·6	11·7
Bombay ...	20·0	38·5
Bengal ...	32·9	35·1
Assam ...	39·0	52·3
United Provinces ...	93·5	64·7
Punjab ...	60·8	60·7
C. P. and Berar ...	25·4	36·7
Sind ...	337·8	367·3

There is a marked increase in consumption, in all but the United Provinces, Sind heading the

list with an increase of 30 seers per 10,000 of her population. Bombay is second with an increase of 18 seers, though the percentage of increase is highest in this province, as the consumption almost doubled. The decrease in consumption in the United Provinces is by no means a matter for congratulation, for the drug vice here had assumed such terrible proportions as to be noised throughout the world. In Lucknow especially, all sorts of preparations and decoctions for eating, drinking, or smoking, expensive or cheap, potent or weak, indigenous or foreign, could be had for the asking; dens for their consumption were scattered throughout the city, and regular *habitues* resorted there to indulge in their particular preparation and give themselves up to the spell of their favourite intoxicant; a regular and profitable trade was carried on which catered for the weakness, the evil propensities of the people. It will be seen that the consumption in the United Provinces even in 1911-12 was the second highest in India; the first place being taken by Sind, with the great difference that the huge consumption in Sind is attributable to *bhang* drinking, comparatively a very mild stimulant; whereas the consumption in the United Provinces is due to the taking of potent, toxic, and injurious drugs.

Nor are later statistics very encouraging. Since 1911-12, the consumption of hemp and other drugs has decreased in some provinces while it has gone up in others. Neither has the increase or decrease been regular or progressive but it may generally be said that consumption in 1918-19 was less than in 1911-12, but more than in the year 1901-02. In Madras, for instance, the total consumption of hemp drugs amounted to 47,485 seers in 1911-12; increased to 47,770 seers in 1916-17, decreased to 45,050 seers in 1918-19, but again rose in the next year to 48,340 seers or an increase of 855 seers since 1911-12. In Bombay and Sind the consumption was as follows :

CONSUMPTION OF HEMP DRUGS IN BOMBAY

(*In seers*)

Year	1916-17	1917-18	1918-19	1919-20
Consumption	178,169	158,630	167,739	186,629

The consumption fell by 19,500 seers in 1917-18, since then it has progressively

increased till in 1919-20 the consumption had increased by 7,500 seers over that of 1916-17.

The following statement will further show the fluctuating character of the consumption of hemp drugs since 1911-12 :

CONSUMPTION OF HEMP DRUGS, ETC.

(In thousands of Seers)

Province	1911-12	1916-17	1917-18	1918-19
Bengal	159	108	101	106
Behar and Orissa ¹	125	93	91	93
Assam	34	29	23	25
C. P. and Berar	58	45	45	39
Punjab	120	...	118	113
Madras	47	48	47	45
Bombay and Sind	...	178	158	167

The consumption in 1918-19 was less in all provinces than in 1911-12, but it will be noticed that since 1917-18 the consumption has shown a tendency to increase. In 1918-19 the consumption of hemp drugs increased in four provinces, *viz.*, Bengal, Behar and Orissa, Assam, and Bombay and Sind. In the next year this increase manifested itself in the other provinces

¹ Only Ganja and Bhang.

also, *e.g.*, the consumption in Madras increased to 48,340 seers and in the Central Provinces to 46,589 seers. Even then it may be reiterated that consumption was generally less in 1919—20 than in 1911—12, but more than in 1901—02.

The above statements are a sufficient refutation of the claim that increased taxation acts as a deterrent on consumption. The increases in taxation are neither preventive nor prohibitive. The methods adopted are solely for the purpose of increasing the revenue. In the case of country spirits the number of shops was at least appreciably reduced. In the case of drug shops the number of reduction is so small as to be of little utility. Considering the consumption, there are more shops for the supply of drugs than of liquors.

STATEMENT SHOWING NUMBER OF LIQUOR AND DRUG SHOPS

	1900-01	1905-06	1910-11	1915-16	1918-19
Drugs	19,928	21,865	20,014	17,316	17,152
Liquors	83,202	91,447	71,052	55,046	52,683

A close study of the above will reveal the policy of the Government towards opium and

other drugs. The number of shops for the sale of both liquors and drugs was highest in 1905—06. Then came the recommendations of the Indian Excise Committee of that year advocating among other measures a stringent reduction in the number of shops. The suggestion was accepted by the Government and the number of both drug and liquor shops was accordingly reduced. By 1910—11 the number of liquor shops had been reduced to 71,052 a decrease of nearly 78 per cent since 1905—06, and a total decrease of 12,150 since 1900—01. As far as drug shops were concerned the decrease in number was so small that there were 100 drug shops more in 1910—11 than in 1900—01, whereas in the same period the number of liquor shops had been reduced by over 12,000. Ever since 1910—11, the rate of decrease of drug shops has been less by rather a wide margin than that of liquor. By 1918—19 the decrease of drug shops since 1910—11 or 1900—01 averaged in both cases 14·5 per cent, while the corresponding decrease in liquor shops averaged 27 per cent since 1910—11 and 35 per cent since 1901—02. These comparisons will show that the Government regards the drug habit at best a lesser evil than drinking. It is hard to differentiate between the two vices when carried to extreme,

but by a general consensus of opinion, medical or otherwise, the use of drugs has ever been held more injurious to body and mind alike than that of liquor. The decrease of drug shops then should have been proportionately greater. That it should have been otherwise must be due to one of two causes. Firstly, more facilities had been provided before the reduction, for the sale of liquors than of drugs; but having regard to the consumption this plea may be dismissed without much cogitation for the consumption of liquor per shop is less than that of drugs; *i.e.*, if one liquor shop sells say 300 gallons of liquor, one drug shop sells not 300 seers but only 50 seers of drugs. For instance the sale per country spirit shop in Bombay in 1918—19 amounted to 655 gallons per year, whereas the sale per drug shop amounted only to 50 seers per year; in the Central Provinces the sales per country spirit shop in distillery areas amounted to 400 gallons, and the sale per drug shop to 40 seers; in Madras the sales amounted to 263 gallons per country spirit shop, and 50 seers per drug shop. Similarly in other provinces. A considerable reduction in the number of drug shops could have been carried out without much inconvenience. After making due allowances for the difference in spirits and drugs it seems

that better facilities are provided for the sale (and therefore for the consumption) of drugs than of liquors. Secondly, better facilities for drugs should have been provided if they had been found to be the least injurious of all intoxicants. As it is, drugs form the most detrimental and deleterious and are the worst of all intoxicants. Why this preference then to drugs? The answer can only be that considerations of revenue have stood in the way of any reform in this direction. Moreover the revenue from drugs is easy to collect, its manufacture and superintendence cost little; so that with proper management it can be made a very paying concern. Indeed as the revenue figures show the sum of 4 crores—the revenue from drugs—may excite the cupidity of a Chancellor of the Exchequer of any country.

In a word the Government is not above profiting from the sins of the people and trafficking with their weakness. If a tithe of that thoroughness which has marked the execution of its drug policy had been given to a better cause the course of Indian History would have been different. The drug policy has tempted the strong and demoralised the weak; it has exploited the rich and the poor; it has ruined both young and old, the strong and the infirm, of all classes and creeds and races.

CHAPTER XII

RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION

THOUGH the declared policy of the Government, as has been quoted more than once, is "to minimise temptation to those who do not drink, and to prevent excess among those who do," the actual results of this policy after a trial of over eighteen years, have been shown to be diametrically opposed to those which it was said to produce. The reasons are not far to seek. The methods adopted for pursuing this policy provide the Government with considerable stake in the consumption of liquors and drugs, and in its efforts to get the maximum revenue possible, it has been wilfully blind to the fact that the measures adopted for enhancing the revenue, are just those that provide great incentive to consumption.

Even as it is stated, the policy presents a marked contrast to that of some of the western 'civilised' powers who have rightly set before them the goal of total prohibition. What is

more, both the United States and Russia have achieved it. They have both gone 'dry' with the most beneficial results. Ages ago, India had been the first country to set the great example of total prohibition to the world; to-day though her people are naturally abstemious, though they still lead lives of Spartan simplicity, though the virus of industrialism—the greatest ally of drink—has happily not yet had a grip upon her, to-day we find that indulgence in liquors and drugs, intemperance, and drunkenness have attained such proportions as to tend not only to the destruction of health and the debauching of morals, but to public ruin. Fortunately we have so far been spared the calamity of fighting the drink-evil in its strongest forms. The manifestations of it that are to be seen in our industrial towns are confined to a few big cities where a concentrated and powerful campaign can yet attain success at the first stroke.

For the sake of the revenue it brings, the drink evil has been foisted upon the people against their wishes, and is totally unwarranted by the conditions in which they live. Under ordinary circumstances it would have died a natural death; now it flourishes under the fostering care of the Excise Department and like a

parasite it lives and thrives on the life-blood of the nation. More than one bold apologist have condoned excise as a "necessary" evil, others have pointed that without it the Government will not be able to finance education. This is tantamount to saying that for the doubtful benefits of the education it imparts, the Government is, and has been, inflicting on the people the undoubted evils of drink. Better far to be good and ignorant than to be wicked and educated, for what is the value or utility of learning when it propagates evil and encourages vice, and to what end is an education that is acquired by the ruin of many a happy home? What comfort can it be to a woman to know that the drunken brawls and oaths of her husband are necessary for the education of her children, and how will the children themselves prize an education that brings them every evening foul curses and drunken oaths—if nothing worse? To what purpose is an education that perpetuates the sins of the father and adds to the miseries, the wretchedness, the unhappiness of the mother?

Even the contention that excise is a necessary source of revenue will not hold water on examination. It betrays a narrow, short-sighted financial policy. The excise policy of the

Government ignores the first fiscal axiom that the patrimony of the State must in no case be impaired. An unsound financial policy would ultimately impair it. A Government guided by a sound financial policy would try its utmost to prevent the nation from spending its money on objects that undermine both the health and the morals of the people—and liquor and drugs ruin both. It would likewise not only prevent the money from being spent on “unproductive” goods, it would also direct it along productive channels. The money spent on intoxicants gives no return to the consumer; on the contrary it damages his working capacity, saps his vitality, causes loss of efficiency, promotes ill-health and disease, and encourages other forms of vice. ✓

Supposing, however, that the drink evil is abolished will not the Government be a sufferer to the tune of 17 crores (the present revenue from excise)? The answer is simple: it cannot ultimately suffer. By abolishing excise, the nation will have on its hands the money it now spends on drink. The Government derives a revenue of seventeen crores, but the nation spends at least fifty crores on drinks and drugs. If prohibition is attained, the nation, can either spend the money on other objects or save it. If it saves this huge amount *annually*, the

Government will be able to tax the people accordingly, for the taxable capacity of the nation is in proportion to its prosperity, and prosperity itself is based on thrift and industry. Suppose the nation instead of throwing the money away on drink, spends it, say, on cloth. It will mean more growing of cotton, more manufacture of charkas, more weaving of cloth, more employment and higher wages for the labourer. Here again the nation will prosper. Why excise lamentably fails as a proper means of taxation is—not to speak of the sin of it—because it accelerates the increasing poverty and chronic starvation of the people. As a doctrine it is fallacious and unsound, as a policy it is ruinous and immoral.

Yet the Government persists in this most foolish of all its foolish policies, in the face of strong public opposition. The Government has been pleaded with, petitioned, and prayed to revise its excise policy. To such protestations it turned a deaf ear. Suggestions were offered by Temperance Societies, and workers in the cause of humanity. They have been ignored. Social workers started propaganda work with some success. Government officials looked upon their humane efforts with cold disapproval, some have even been arrested on sorry and flimsy

pretexts. One provincial Government has even printed a circular eulogising the value of drinking. Such acts of petty, misplaced tyranny and unbecoming zeal only confirm our worst fears that the Government's excise policy is directed solely for the purpose of increasing its revenue, than it is shameless enough to exploit the sins of the people.

There is, however, a crying need for reform. The drink-evil is increasing apace, and unless it is immediately checked, the health of the nation may be permanently damaged. The evils of the present excise policy which have been dealt with in preceding chapters, can be efficiently, effectively, and easily combated by the following means:

- I. Drastic curtailment of the hours of sale, by later opening and earlier closing hours being fixed for all licensed premises.
- II. Limitation of quantity supplied per person for consumption either on the premises or elsewhere.
- III. Abolition of the auction system, and its supersession by a system of fixed licence fees.
- IV. Removal of the licensing function from the control of the Revenue Department.

These changes, if carried out, will be found to be enough to arrest the growth of consumption ; but if it should be the aim to reduce consumption to a minimum without actually accepting the principle of prohibition, it becomes essential that no person should be pecuniarily interested in liquor or drug traffic, and the system of auctioning shops should be superseded by one similar to the Gothenburg system which has been found to be so effective for promoting temperance. Private enterprise, no less than the Government policy, has been responsible for the present intemperate habits of the people.

There now only remains the question of the location and number of shops. If the wise maxim of consulting the wishes of the people before a shop is licensed in any locality is followed, it will provide the surest test of the fact whether it is wanted or not. It does not require the gift of prophecy to state that if this rule is followed at least nine-tenths of the present number of shops will be found to have been thrust upon an unwilling public.

Our duty is, however, clear. Whatever the Government may or may not do ; it is the paramount duty of every man to immerse himself in that wave of purification which is passing over the land.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE STORY OF THE JAR

(*Cp. Pali Gataka, No. 512, Fausb V, pp. 11—20*)

DRINKING intoxicating liquors is an exceedingly bad action, attended by many evils. Having this in mind, the virtuous will keep back their neighbours from that sin, how much more their own selves. This will be taught as follows :

One time the Bodhisattva, having by his excessive compassion purified his mind, always intent on bringing about the good and the happiness of others, manifesting his holy practice of good conduct by his deeds of charity, modesty, self-restraint, and the like, held the dignity of Sakra, the Lord of the Devas. In this existence, though he enjoyed to his heart's contents such paramount sensual pleasures as are proper to the Celestials, yet compassionateness ruled his mind so as not to allow him to release his exertions for the benefit of the world.

1. As a rule the creatures, drinking from the wine of prosperity, are not watchful, not even with respect to their own interests. He on the contrary

was not only free from the drunkenness originating from the transcendent enjoyments which attend the sovereign rank among the Devas, but his watchfulness for the interest of others was as great as ever.

2. Being full of interest towards the creatures, as if they were his kinsmen, those poor creatures harassed by many violent calamities, he never forgot to take care of the interest of others, persisting in his strong determination and being well aware of his own (extraordinary) nature.

Now one day the Great Being, was casting His eyes over the world of men. His eye, great as His nature and mildly looking according to His friendliness, while bending down to mankind with compassion, perceived a certain king, whose name was Sarvamitra (every one's friend), who by the sin of his intercourse with wicked friends was inclined to the habit of drinking strong liquors, himself with his people, townsmen and landmen. Now having understood that the king saw no sin in this habit, and knowing that drinking constitutes a great sin, the Great Being, affected with great compassion, entered upon this reflection: "It is a pity, indeed, how great a misery has befallen this people!"

3. 'Drinking, like a lovely and wrong path—for it is a sweet thing at the outset—leads away from salvation such people as fail to recognise the evils which it causes, what, then, may be the

proper way to act here? . . . Why. I have found it.'

4. 'People like to imitate the behaviour of him who is the foremost among them ; this is their constant nature. Accordingly, here the king alone is the person to be cured, for it is from him that originates the good as well as the evil of his people.'

Having thus made up his mind, the Great Being took on Himself the majestic figure of a Brahmin. His colour shone like pure gold ; he wore his hair matted and twisted up, which gave him a rather stern appearance ; he had His body covered with the bark-garment and the deer-skin. A jar of moderate size, filled with Sura, was hanging down from his left side. In this shape, standing in the air he showed himself to king Sarvamitra, while he was sitting with his company in his audience-hall, and their conversation had turned to be such as attends drinking Sura, Asava, Maireya,¹ rum, and honeyed liquor. On seeing him, the assembly, moved by surprise and veneration, rose from their seats, and reverentially folded their hands to him. After which, he began to speak in a loud voice, resembling the deep voice of a cloud big with rain.

5. See, 'tis filled up to its neck ;
Flowers laugh around its neck ;
Well 'tis dressed, a splendid jar ;
Who will buy from me this jar.

¹ All of these names are different kinds of spirituous liquors.

6. 'I have here a jar adorned with this bracelet like wreath of flowers fluttering in the wind. See how proud it looks, decorated as it is by tender foliage, which if you desire to possess it, purchase?'

Upon which, that king, whose curiosity was excited by astonishment, reverentially fixing his eyes on him and raising his folded hands, spoke these words:

7. "Like the morning Sun thou appearest to us by thy lustre, like the moon by thy gracefulness, and by the figure like some Muni. Deign to tell us, then, by what name thou art known in this world. Thy different illustrious qualities make us uncertain about thee."

Sakra said :

8. "Afterwards you will know me, who I am, but now be intent on purchasing this jar from me—at least if you are not afraid of the sufferings in the next world or heavy calamities to be expected still in this."

The king replied "verily, such an introduction to a bargain as is made by thy Reverence, I never saw before.

9 & 10. "The ordinary mode of offering objects for sale among men is to extol their good qualities and conceal their faults. Surely, that manner practised by thee, is becoming such men as thou, who abhor falsehood. For the virtuous will never forsake veracity even when in distress !

11. "Tell us then, Eminent One, with what this jar is filled. And what is it, that such a Mighty Being as thou may desire from our side by the barter?" Sakra said: "Hear, Mighty Sovereign.

12. "It is not filled with water, either the largess of the clouds or drawn from a holy stream; nor with fragrant honey gathered from the filaments of flowers, nor with excellent butter; nor with milk, here equals that of the moon-beams awakening the water-lilies in a cloudless night. No, this jar is filled up with mischievous liquor. Now, learn the virtue of this liquor.

13. "He who drinks it will lose the control of himself, in consequence of mind-perplexing intoxication; as his mindfulness will slacken, he will stumble even on the plain ground, he will not make a difference between food allowed and forbidden, and will make his meals of whatever he may get. Of such a nature is the fluid within this jar. Buy it, it is for sale, that worst of jars!"

14. "This liquor has the power of taking away your consciousness, so as to make you lose the control of your thoughts and behave like a brute beast, giving your enemies the trouble of laughing at you. Thanks to it, you may also dance in the midst of an assembly accompanying yourself with the music of your mouth. Being of such a nature, it is worth purchasing by you, that liquor within the jar, devoid as it is of any good!

15. "Even the bashful lose shame by drinking it, and will have done with the trouble and restraint of dress, unclothed like Nirgrathas¹ they will walk boldly on the highways crowded with people, of such a nature is the liquor contained in this jar and offered for sale.

16. "Drinking, it may cause men even to lie senseless asleep on the king's roads, having their figure soiled with food ejected by their vomitings and licked from their face by bold dogs. Such is the beverage, lovely to purchase, which has been poured into this jar."

17. Even a woman enjoying it may be brought by the power of intoxication into such a state, that she would be able to fasten her parents to a tree and to disregard her husband, may he be as wealthy as Kubera. Of this kind is the merchandise which is contained in this jar!

18. That liquor, by drinking which the Krishnayas and the Andhakas were put out of their senses to this degree, that without minding their relationship they crushed down each other with their clubs, that very beverage of maddening effect is enclosed within this jar.

19. Addicted to which whole families of the highest rank and dignity, the abodes of splendour, perished, that liquor which has caused likewise the

¹ The Nirgrathas are a class of monks, especially Jain monks, who wander about naked.

ruin of wealthy families, here in this jar it is exposed for sale.

20. "Here in this jar is that which makes the tongue and the feet unrestrained, and puts off every check in weeping and laughing; that by which the eye looks heavy and dull as of one possessed of a demon, that which impairing a man's mind, of necessity reduces him to an object of contempt.

21. In this jar is, ready for sale that which, disturbing the sources of even aged people and making them timid to continue the road which leads to their good, induces them to take much without purpose and rashly.

22. "It is the fault of this beverage, that the old Gods, having become careless were bereaved of their splendour by the king of the Devas, and seeking for relief were drowned in the ocean, with that drink this jar is filled, well, take it."

23. Like an incarnation of curse, she lies within this jar, she by whose power falsehood is spoken with confidence as if it were truth, and forbidden actions are committed with joy as if they were prescribed. It is she who causes me to hold for good what is bad, and for bad what is good.

24. Well, purchase then this madness-producing this abode of calamities, this embodied disaster, this mother of sins, this sole and unparalleled mode of sin, this dreadful darkness of mind.

25. "Purchase this from me, O King, that beverage which is able to take away a man's senses, so that, without caring for his happiness or future state, he may strike his own innocent father or mother or a holy ascetic.

26. "Such is this liquor, known among men by the name of Sura, O, You Lord of men, who by your splendour equal the celestials. Let him endeavour to bring it, who is known partizan of virtues."

27. People, being addicted to this liquor, grow accustomed to ill-behaviour, and will consequently fall into the precipices of dreadful hells or come to the state of beasts or to the attenuated condition of pretas. Who then, forsooth, should make up his mind even to look at this liquor ?

28. "And, be the result of drinking intoxicating liquors ever so trifling, still that vice destroys the good-conduct and the good-understanding by those who pass through human existence. Moreover it leads afterwards to the residence in the tremendous hill Aviki burning with flaming fire or in the world of spectres or in the bodies of vile beasts."

29. In short, drinking this destroys everybody. It deadens good conduct, forcibly kills good reputation, banishes shame, and defiles the mind. How should you allow yourself to drink intoxicating liquors, henceforward, O King ?

By these persuasive words of Sakra and his strong arguments, the king became aware of the sinfulness of drinking intoxicating liquors. He cast off the desire of taking them and desisted from the vice of drinking strong liquors.

APPENDIX B EXCISE REVENUE

Year	Gross Revenue	Customs Duties	Total Revenue 1+2	Charges and Expenditure	Net Revenue 3-4	Year
	1	2	3	4	5	
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	
1885-86	4,15,21,360	...	4,57,19,460	12,43,720	4,44,75,740	1885-86
1886-87	4,37,51,740	48,81,970	4,86,33,710	11,67,300	4,74,66,410	1886-87
1887-88	4,53,46,550	52,77,920	5,06,24,470	12,70,780	4,93,53,690	1887-88
1888-89	4,70,53,460	54,82,840	5,25,36,300	13,79,410	5,11,56,890	1888-89
1889-90	4,89,18,940	55,92,650	5,45,11,590	15,67,390	5,29,44,200	1889-90
1890-91	4,94,77,800	60,09,000	5,54,86,800	17,49,810	5,37,36,990	1890-91
1891-92	5,11,72,640	58,95,840	5,70,68,480	19,00,970	5,51,67,510	1891-92
1892-93	5,24,24,430	61,02,530	5,85,26,960	19,30,130	5,65,96,830	1892-93
1893-94	5,38,85,730	59,56,510	5,98,42,240	19,33,750	5,79,08,490	1893-94
1894-95	5,52,76,760	61,16,090	6,13,92,850	19,28,090	5,94,64,760	1894-95

1895-96	5,72,24,170	66,25,860	6,38,50,030	20,79,570	6,17,70,460	1895-96
1896-97	5,61,42,000	65,91,650	6,27,33,650	21,28,550	6,06,05,100	1896-97
1897-98	5,48,94,540	66,13,120	6,15,07,660	24,04,555	5,91,03,115	1897-98
1898-99	5,74,34,220	69,52,670	6,43,86,890	24,03,140	6,19,56,750	1898-99
1899-00	5,78,99,125	70,55,244	6,49,54,369	24,22,627	6,25,31,742	1899-00
1900-01	5,90,58,030	69,38,205	6,59,96,235	24,17,640	6,35,78,595	1900-01
1901-02	6,11,50,215	70,33,840	6,81,89,055	24,91,875	6,56,97,180	1901-02
1902-03	6,63,99,630	75,60,000	7,39,59,630	28,37,895	7,11,21,735	1902-03
1903-04	7,47,01,440	78,66,000	8,25,67,440	32,08,920	7,93,58,520	1903-04
1904-05	8,03,01,360	82,86,000	8,85,87,360	36,34,710	8,49,52,650	1904-05
1905-06	8,53,17,300	97,40,000	9,50,57,300	38,71,740	9,11,85,560	1905-06
1906-07	8,84,73,285	84,90,000	9,69,63,285	41,19,135	9,28,44,150	1906-07
1907-08	9,34,05,154	1,00,51,000	10,34,56,154	44,41,410	9,90,14,740	1907-08
1908-09	9,58,44,411	1,04,51,000	10,62,95,411	58,58,277	10,04,37,134	1908-09
1909-10	9,80,67,802	1,05,14,795	10,85,82,597	59,68,698	10,26,13,899	1909-10
1910-11	10,54,54,715	1,20,53,394	11,75,08,109	60,89,904	11,14,18,205	1910-11
1911-12	11,41,46,285	1,24,58,386	12,66,04,671	62,88,803	12,03,15,868	1911-12
1912-13	12,41,68,787	1,25,97,466	13,67,66,253	64,28,572	13,03,37,681	1912-13
1913-14	13,34,14,505	1,33,68,464	14,67,82,969	65,62,932	14,02,20,037	1913-14
1914-15	13,28,53,214	1,21,99,000	14,50,52,214	68,95,269	13,81,56,945	1914-15
1915-16	12,94,83,132	1,17,90,000	14,12,73,132	70,61,095	13,42,12,037	1915-16
1916-17	13,82,38,495	1,25,13,946	15,07,52,441	71,79,474	14,35,72,967	1916-17
1917-18	15,44,25,590	1,09,96,886	16,54,22,476	73,00,000	15,81,22,476	1917-18
1918-19	17,35,52,770	1,10,65,351	18,46,18,121	82,00,000	17,64,18,121	1918-19

1895-96	7,12,39,220	2,06,89,410	5,05,49,810	1895-96
1896-97	6,40,92,380	2,48,65,500	3,92,26,880	1896-97
1897-98	5,17,97,720	2,39,00,005	2,78,97,715	1897-98
1898-99	5,72,53,305	2,37,20,517	3,35,32,788	1898-99
1899-00	6,60,29,731	2,59,07,314	4,01,22,417	1899-00
1900-01	7,65,33,630	2,67,88,125	4,97,45,505	1900-01
1901-02	7,27,80,330	2,41,30,350	4,86,49,980	1901-02
1902-03	6,74,76,570	2,47,27,245	4,27,49,325	1902-03
1903-04	8,60,40,675	3,33,86,160	5,26,54,515	1903-04
1904-05	9,03,22,485	2,95,06,275	6,08,16,210	1904-05
1905-06	8,20,31,700	2,83,86,615	5,36,45,085	1905-06
1906-07	8,49,07,920	2,86,99,380	5,62,08,540	1906-07
1907-08	7,86,74,786	2,50,41,610	5,36,33,176	1907-08
1908-09	8,82,71,824	1,85,41,320	6,97,30,504	1908-09
1909-10	8,30,20,245	1,66,52,322	6,63,67,923	1909-10
1910-11	11,28,29,433	1,86,99,869	9,41,29,564	1910-11
1911-12	8,94,19,170	1,09,17,776	6,85,01,394	1911-12
1912-13	7,68,68,873	89,95,929	6,78,72,944	1912-13
1913-14	2,43,73,178	1,51,86,600	91,86,578	1913-14
1914-15	2,35,83,274	98,11,331	1,37,71,943	1914-15
1915-16	2,87,02,712	1,71,64,971	1,15,37,741	1915-16
1916-17	4,74,00,073	1,36,85,911	2,38,14,162	1916-17
1917-18	4,61,83,538	1,66,31,739	2,95,51,799	1917-18
1918-19	4,93,36,670	1,96,18,273	2,97,18,397	1918-19

APPENDIX E

NUMBER OF SHOPS EXCLUDING
INDIA GENERAL

Year	Liquor	Drugs	Total	Year
	1	2	3	
1899-00	82,117	19,766	1,01,883	1899-00
1900-01	83,202	19,928	1,03,130	1900-01
1901-02	84,925	20,155	1,05,080	1901-02
1902-03	86,757	20,984	1,07,741	1902-03
1903-04	91,323	22,051	1,13,374	1903-04
1904-05	91,138	21,978	1,13,116	1904-05
1905-06	91,447	21,865	1,13,312	1905-06
1906-07	89,214	21,072	1,10,286	1906-07
1907-08	86,758	20,244	1,07,002	1907-08
1908-09	73,350	20,005	93,355	1908-09
1909-10	76,762	19,754	96,516	1909-10
1910-11	71,052	20,014	91,066	1910-11
1911-12	62,113	19,108	81,221	1911-12
1912-13	59,986	18,166	78,152	1912-13
1913-14	58,527	17,957	75,484	1913-14
1914-15	56,723	17,699	74,422	1914-15
1915-16	55,046	17,316	72,342	1915-16
1916-17	51,917	17,177	69,094	1916-17
1917-18	54,896	17,147	72,043	1917-18
1918-19	52,683	17,152	69,835	1918-19

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