

Consumption of Liquor and Bengal Society, 1856-1908

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Dedicated to

My Guide

&

My Parents



Date: 14.6.17


Declaration


I hereby declare that the thesis entitled 'Consumption of Liquor and Bengal Society, 1856-1908' submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** is the result of original research and has not been previously submitted for any degree to this or any other university.

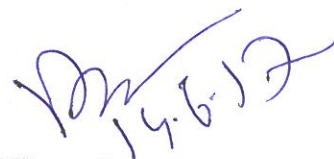

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Certificate

We recommend that this thesis may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	i-ii
Abbreviations	iii
Glossary	iv-v
Introduction	1-22
Background	
Historiography	
Research Questions	
Outline of Chapters	
Nature of Sources	
1. The New Governmentality: Colonialism and Liquor Consumption ..	23-71
I) Tracing the Colonial Excise policy	
II) Criminalizing the drinking practice	
2. Interrogating Morality and Tracing the Patterns of Alcohol Consumption	
in Everyday Life	72-106
I) Upper Class Drinking	
II) Drinking of the Western Educated Student	
III) Drinking Habit of the Aborigines	
IV) The Lower Class and Working Class Drinking	
V) Caste and Drinking Practice	
VI) Women in the Drinking World	
3. A Career of Temperance Movement in Bengal	107-141
I) Temperance Movement in England	
II) Temperance Movement in Bombay Presidency	
III) Temperance Movement in Bengal	
1) Missionary Initiatives	
2) Bengali social reformers	
IV) Government responses	

4. The Subaltern Voice in the World of Temperance: Tracing the Geo-Cultural Space of the Drinking Public	142-179
I) Tracing the Cultural Space of Drinking through Popular Culture	
1) <i>Bat-tala</i> Paintings and Lithographs	
2) <i>Bat-tala</i> Literature	
3) Bengali Proverbs	
II) Tracing the Geographical Space	
5. Discourses on Usage of Liquor: Elixir or Poison	180-210
I) Narcotics as Medicine	
II) Perception and Responses on Usage of Alcohol and Alcoholic Mixture as Medicine	
III) Responses of the Colonial Government to Medical Impact of Liquor and the Medicinal Usage of Liquor	
IV) Indigenous Responses to the Medical Usage of Alcohol.	
Conclusion	211-216
Appendix	217-219
Bibliography.....	220-242

List of Tables:

1. **Table no: 1:** List of the *Saddar* Distilleries opened in the year of 1860, the location of these distilleries, Supplying area of the each distillery, number of the liquor shops benefitted by theses distilleries, and the number of *Out-still* distilleries closed by the government after the introduction of *Sadder* distilleries 28
2. **Table No. 2:** Excise Revenue 1875-1878 34
3. **Table no. 3:** Excise revenue of the Lower Province of Bengal, 1892-1900 49-50
4. **Table no. 4:** Comparing the Excise Revenue, 1856-1908 55
5. **Table no. 5:** Number of arrests, Convicted, and imprisonment for the malpractice related to liquor business and amount of fine impose on the convicted 63
6. **Table no. 6:** Number of convict for Illicit Distillation and Smuggling of Out-Still Liquor..... 65
7. **Table no. 7:** statistics of drinking population 98-99
8. **Table 8:** Number of liquor shops in Kolkata and around, 1908 177
9. **Table no: 9:** A Comparison between alcohol with other spirits on the basis of strength 205

List of Pictures:

1. Picture No. 1: A babu holding a wine glass in the company of a courtesan 146
2. Picture no. 2: Mahanta forcing Elokeshi to drink alcohol 149
3. Picture no 3: Mahanta was using a hand fan to comfort Elokeshi after drinking liquor, 1880 149
4. Picture no. 4: Advertisement of Tonic (lithograph) 152
5. Picture no. 5: Advertisement of Tonic (lithograph) 153
6. Picture no. 6: Advertisement of Ashwagandha Wine 187

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Abbreviations

AITA	Anglo-Indian Temperance Association
BL	British Library
FD/Ex	Finance Department, Excise Head
FD/SR	Finance Department, Separate Revenue Head.
GOI	Government of India
INC	Indian National Congress
NAI	National Archives of India
NNPR	Native News Paper Report
R/MR/Ex	Revenue Department, Miscellaneous Branch, Excise Head
S.P.G	Society for Preaching Gospel
WBSA	West Bengal State Archives

Glossary

Abkaree Department/Abkari Department: Excise Department

Abkari Darogas: Excise Inspector.

Babu: Gentleman

Bat-tala Print Culture: A number of inexpensive printing presses started to mushroom around Bat-tala area in north Kolkata. These presses were referred as Bat-tala Press as per their location. These presses of Bat-tala area produced ‘almanacs, religious and mythological literature, sensational novels and romance, plays songs on topical themes’ and circulated them in cheap price. Most of these literatures were written on colloquial style and captured the contemporary popular imagination.

Bat-tala Literature: Popular literature of nineteenth century Bengal, published by *Bat-tala* printing press.

Central or Sudder Distillery: Under this distillery system, a contractor distilled not on his own account, but on the Government. The strength of the spirit and the price were determined by the Contractor. Liquor from these distilleries supplied to the retail vendor for sale.

Chamar: A lower class community. The people of this community pilled off the skin of dead animals and did the tanning and leather related work for livelihood.

Contract Distillery: This distillery system, introduced in Bengal in 1904, separated the right of manufacturing and retailing of the liquor as well as fixed the wholesale rate, maximum retail price and strength of the liquor.

Country Spirit/Country Liquor: Liquor prepared at the government distilleries.

Durga Puja: Festival for worshipping of goddess Durga

Ganja: Hemp

Lower Province of Bengal/ Lower Province: The term refers to ‘Bengal Province’. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the term

'Lower Province of Bengal' used in the colonial documents to identify the areas of Bihar, Bengal, Assam and some portion of Orissa. In the second half of the nineteenth century and after the division of the lower Bengal province the remaining parts of the Province started to refer as the Bengal Province.

Lithographs: Lithography has been emerged in nineteenth century India with the development of the printing press. By mid-nineteenth century onward, several local vernacular printing presses used this printing style for greater production of book in cheap rate. Initially, wood has been used to produce lithograph plates. Later metal plates were used for lithograph.

Mahua: A kind of weak liquor extracted from the Mahua (*Madhuca Longifolia*) flower.

Marwa Liquor: Local Liquor of Darjeeling.

Mofussil: Sub-urban area

Out-still Distillery: Under this distillery system, the production of liquor, the price and strength of liquor were determined by the Contractor. The Government had hardly control over the production of this kind of distillery.

Pachwai: Fermented liquor which is prepared from rice.

Paharies: A group of people settled in Santhal Parghana.

Patna Distillery System: This system introduced in the Patna District on 1st April 1886. The system was introduced in two phases; i.e., inner circle and the rest. The capacity of distilleries under this system was limited and mostly determined by the local demands of each shop. Besides, the price of distilled liquor was fixed at the minimum level.

Taluka: Subdivision of a district

Tari: Fermented liquor which is prepared from the syrup of the palm tree.

Introduction

This thesis proposes to examine various aspects of consumption of liquor in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century. Consumption of liquor is usually connected with the leisure and amusement in different societies. Bengal is also not an exception to this. The establishment of British rule, however, changed the pattern of the use of liquor. It, apart from being a medium of amusement, increasingly became a good source of revenue for the British. The East India Company government, therefore, set up a separate department to regulate liquor business in 1794, and named it *Abkaree* Department (Excise Department). The department established under the supervision of Sir Richardson and other Justice of Peace¹ in Kolkata. Till June 1800, the retailers of native spirits and punch housekeepers had to pay a fixed rental duty of one rupee and eight annas.² After that, the duty was increased. 1803 onwards, toddy and *ganja* (Hemp) business were brought under the license system. In November 1808, the *Abkaree* Department came under the direct control of the Board of Customs, Salt and Opium.

Meanwhile, Kolkata emerged as an important trading and administrative center of British Empire in India. As a result, a large number of European sailors came to the city. A number of taverns, punch houses or boarding houses were built in the Bow bazar area of Kolkata to accommodate these sailors.³ As time passed, these boarding houses and taverns became ‘den of criminals’. The keepers of these boarding houses had even tried to virtually control the navigation of Kolkata port by flexing their muscle power.⁴ Besides, these tavern keepers bribed seamen for all these activities. Significantly, these boarding houses were owned by the Europeans. Thus they remained free from

¹ Empowered by the Charter Act of 1793, Governor-General in-Council appointed ‘Justices of the Peace’ for the Town of Calcutta to look after the municipal administration in the three Presidency towns. The Justice were authorised to impose taxes on houses and lands in order to meet expenses incurred for sanitation, maintenance of roads, police, etc.(See: Bidisha Chakraborty & Sarmistha De, *Calcutta in the Nineteenth Century*, Niyogi Books, New Delhi, 2013, p. 35.)

²*Ibid.*, p. 59.

³*Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 368.

the colonial law and these European tavern keepers sold spirits without a license. In 1818, the colonial government of Fort William had passed a law according to which keeping license became mandatory for all taverns. However, until 1860 the implication of the law was not satisfactory. All these developments built up the connection between crime and alcohol in the nineteenth century.

Availability of spirits and spaces at taverns in the city attracted different people from different backgrounds. Noticeably, the police had assumed a connection between liquor and crime. Thus, they identified most of the people at taverns as criminals. However, this kind of notion was not new as from the seventeenth century onwards European countries like France and England had started to draw a link between crime and alcohol. In 1856, the first consolidated Abkari Law was passed to control the liquor business in India. Later, this law went through modification at several times. Certainly, the colonial Government did not want to impose complete restrictions on the liquor business for their own financial gain. Instead, they brought the entire business under their direct control, so that they could monitor the liquor business and extract good amount of revenue from it.

The practice of liquor consumption had always prevailed in India. However, drunkenness emerged as a social problem from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The indigenous society took initiatives to address this issue. In 1849, a Maharashtrian leader, R. B. Gopal Rao Deshmukh first carried out a temperance movement.⁵ Later, in 1874, a renowned social reformer, Keshab Chandra Sen had written a letter to the Viceroy informing him of the growing tendency of consumption of liquor among the countrymen and asking him to start a temperance movement.⁶

The development of printing technology and reduction in printing cost ultimately helped in the availability of a large number of printed materials, like newspapers, magazines and cheap books in the market. These printed materials also helped in spreading the anti-liquor awareness among the people.

⁵ Tek Chand, *Liquor Menace in India*, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1972, p. 10.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

In spite of all these approaches, consumption of liquor increased. Notwithstanding its role in the spreading awareness about the bad effect of alcohol consumption, the print media also promoted the liquors and liquor based tonics during the same time. By the end of the nineteenth century, different kinds of liquors with different strength flooded the market. During the same time a number of medicinal tonics, containing alcohol, were also launched in the medical market, and doctors of western medicine recommended them to the patients for different diseases. This led to a big debate around the usage of liquor for different purpose. Involvement of different group of people in this debate had connected the issue of liquor consumption with the larger socio-economic, cultural and political issues of nineteenth century Bengal.

In this Socio-economic milieu, this thesis has chosen the time frame of 1856 to 1908 to trace the development of excise laws and drinking practice in Bengal. There are two reasons for selecting this time frame; first, the consolidated excise law was passed in 1856, and subsequently, the colonial government brought the liquor business under the strict control of the government. So a new form of 'Governmentality' developed and the colonised people also started to encounter that in a different way. Secondly, the research period of this thesis ends in 1908, as the time witnessed several changes in the political scenario of Bengal with the Emergence of the Swadeshi movement which led to the picketing of liquor shops by the Swadeshi activists. Several temperance organisations too tried to force the government to take strong steps to check the growing intemperance. As a result, the government passed another excise law in 1909. Till 1908, the government continued with the same excise laws of 1856 with some modification.

Historiography:

Writings on the subject of liquor can be divided into three broad categories. The first category consisted of the literature that deal with drunkenness and the culture of drinking. Drunkenness and colonial laws constitute the subject of the second category of literature. The literature on medical history constitutes the third category. Besides, some books on the socio-cultural history of

Kolkata and ethnographical history are also selected to be discussed in the thesis.

(I)

A good number of works exist on the drinking practices of the British people residing in India, especially in Kolkata, during the nineteenth century. Writers of these works had divided the drinking practice of the British people along class lines, i.e., drinking of the upper-class Europeans and drinking of the lower class Europeans. While discussing the upper-class drinking, scholars like Laura Sykes⁷ and many others have shown that drinking was a part of their everyday life. For them, liquor was imported in India soon after coming of the Europeans in India. Several British officers reported that due to the heavy drinking many British officers died, as Indian climate was unsuitable for drinking.⁸ However, the British government's attitude to the drinking of the upper-class British people was not much critical. Drinking and serving the guest good imported wine were a custom and issue of prestige for the upper-class British people. Thus, the colonial government was not much critical about the drinking of the upper-class Europeans.⁹

Harald Fischer-Tiné in the article 'The drinking habits of our countrymen': European Alcohol Consumption and Colonial Power in British India'¹⁰ addressed this issue. In this article, Fischer-Tiné shows different aspects of consumption of liquor by the Europeans and how the perspectives of British colonial government had changed over time. He argues that excess consumption of liquor by the low-class Europeans, especially by the European sailors and tea planters had made the British government worried. They thought excess drinking habit of their countrymen would hamper their reputation before their native subjects. He also argues that the ideological shift and 'growing race consciousness which was the characteristic of the late

⁷ Laura Sykes, *Calcutta through British Eyes*, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1992.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.47

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32; Sri Pantha, *Kolkata*, Ananda Publishers, Calcutta, 2010, p. 234-35.

¹⁰ Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'The drinking Habits of our countrymen': European Alcohol consumption and colonial power in British India', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:3, 2012.

Victorian era encouraged aggressive self-assertion vis-à-vis the native population through the spectrum of European society'¹¹.

In an another article, named 'Britain's other civilizing mission: Class prejudice European 'loaferism' and the workhouse-system in British India'¹², Harald Fisher-Tiné has discussed the class prejudice of the British government and tries to show how this class prejudice further determined the different activities of the British colonial government. To elaborate this, he has taken the 'European Vagrancy' case. During the nineteenth century, the European vagrants become a prestige issue for the colonial ruler. Thus, Fisher-Tiné has argued that class prejudice, as well as the pressure from local native groups, forced them (the colonial government) to pass anti-liquor laws.¹³ However, these two articles addressed the colonial perspective towards the consumption of liquor and their attitude for the low-class Europeans neatly, but it has left unanswered certain questions, like whether this attitude of colonial government had any impact on indigenous society? What was the impetus behind anti-liquor laws? What was their impact?

In these two articles, Harald Fisher-Tiné tries to give a new interpretation of Indian history. At first, he has traced the subaltern within the British power, whereby he shows how colonial power looked at the low-class Europeans. In this process, Fisher-Tiné has used drinking habit as a tool to highlight the relation and conflict within the European society of India.

However, Mrinalini Sinha, in *Colonial Masculinity*, mainly deals with the question of masculinity and shows that it had become the conflict point for the coloniser and colonised.¹⁴ She argues that from the second half of the nineteenth century a series of confrontations occurred between the British colonial Government and Bengalis on the issue of the passing of administrative authority to Indians, especially to the Bengalis. There was a

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 389.

¹²Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Britain's other civilising: Class prejudice, European 'loaferism' and the workhouse-System in colonial India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 42:295, 2005.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.299.

¹⁴Sinha, Mrinalini, *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and The Effeminate Bengali in Late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester University Press ND, USA, 1995, p. 7.

prevailed notion of ‘effeminate Bengalis’ among the British government which made them feel that Bengalis would not be able to handle the administrative responsibility. Sinha, while elaborating the reason for such British notion, has argued that the British colonial government thought that if these Bengalis had no control over their habits, especially the habit of drinking and if they could not protect their women then how would they handle administrative responsibilities. Further, she shows how the colonial notion of masculinity had evolved over time and how the Bengalis’ perception of masculinity changed accordingly. The author describes all these issues through the Ilbert Bill Controversy, the native volunteer movement, the evolution of public service commission and Age of consent controversy. However, the author has not clearly described what the Bengalis had done with their habit of consumption of liquor in the process of evolution of the colonial notion of masculinity. This aspect I have discussed later.

In the article ‘Drug-use in History, Colonial Dominance, and Resisting Drugs: Some Implications for Contemporary Social Policy’¹⁵, Prof. Shri Krishan has brought important facts about drug abuse. He tries to trace the reasons behind the drug addiction. While doing this, the author describes how drugs have worked on the humans and finds out the origin of several narcotics, like alcohol, Opium, and Cocaine. He shows how these drugs are often used in the traditional medical system. He has shown how colonial powers used different drugs as ‘tools of empire’ and for financial gain. While discussing alcohol consumption, he mainly emphasised the last few years of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. He shows how social mobilisation on the issue of anti-liquor agitation was done and how nationalist intervention ultimately promoted temperance movement during the twentieth century.

Another book on drunkenness is *Liquor Menace in India*¹⁶ by Tek Chand. In this book, the author tries to give a general picture of consumption of liquor during post-independence period. While doing it he also gives a

¹⁵Shri Krishan, ‘Drug-use in History, Colonial Dominance, and Resisting Drugs: Some Implications for Contemporary Social Policy’, in K. Venugopal Reddy (ed.), *Dominance and Resistance in Colonial India*, Kalpaz Publications, Delhi, 2012.

¹⁶ Tek Chand, *Liquor Menace in India*, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1972.

general historical background of consumption of liquor in India. However, it needs more intensive study.

(II)

In the European context, most of the works by western scholars have tried to look at the issue of drinking from two broad perspectives, first, how a new kind of culture flourished through the drinking habit and second, how drinking culture was connected with crime. While discussing these two perspectives, the scholars have brought several other angles of drinking, like the concept of the public place and development of the drinking places, changing the notion of crime, and emergence of the temperance movement in the discussion.

Thomas Brennen, in *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century Paris*¹⁷, shows how the usage of liquor had created new places, norms, and regulations in the everyday life of the Parisian. He argues that with the establishment of new social places for drinking, like café, tavern, and *gottinguttes*, it became possible to create a private place within the public place.¹⁸ He also highlights other dimensions, i.e., growing connection between the consumption of liquor and crime during the seventeenth century onwards and how drinking places became the place of social gathering. However, the creation of private place within the public place had indicated to the fact that the drinking places were not open to all. Visiting of the women to the pubs and tavern were unappreciated in the eighteenth and nineteenth century France. Brennen, after consulting several judicial records, states that there was ‘a striking disparity between men’s and women’s pattern of attendance, behaviour and treatment in the tavern’.¹⁹ Most of the time women visited tavern along with their husband or friend with some specific reasons. Tavern owners reported that most of the time Single women faced problems while visiting a tavern alone, as male drunkards behaved in decently with them. The exclusion of women from the tavern made this public place of the eighteenth

¹⁷ Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking Culture and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century Paris*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, P. 116.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.147.

century accessible by the males only.²⁰ In short, it can be said that the writer has tried to intervene in the eighteenth-century Parisian life by dealing with the issue of the consumption of alcohol and argues that these drinking places were evolving as the new 'mate' place and male-dominated area of the eighteenth century.²¹

While discussing the pub culture of the 19th century, Brian Harrison argues that a number of pubs were established in the Victorian England. However, the numbers of pubs in London were quite less comparing to suburbs. Most of the pubs in London were situated near railway stations, slums, and factories. With the spread of the temperance movement, the pattern of drinking changed. Many temperance societies were also established in London as well as other parts of England. By 1860s, the wealthy and upper-class people preferred to have a drink at home or not drink at all. This change in the pattern of drinking also affected the location of the pubs. Numbers of pubs had been closed in the elite areas of London, and new pubs were coming up in the slums.²² The author also shows how the architecture of the pubs also changed with time. During the same period, the drinking practice came under the speculation of the police and temperance society. Thus, this development also influenced the architecture of the pubs. Seating arrangements in the late Victorian pubs had been made in a way that the customers would drink under the vigilance of the pub manager. Despite all these facts, pubs in the Victorian England became a recreation place for the different groups of people.

Keith Wrightson in 'Alehouse, Order, and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660' has argued that drunkenness emerged as a social problem from the sixteenth century onwards. From the medieval age, drinking places were considered as 'womb of all disorder'.²³ In spite of this fact alehouses emerged as places of social gathering, a site for recreation;

²⁰*Ibid.*, p.147.

²¹Brennen's argument also vindicated the argument of Nancy Fraser, that the newly emerging public spheres were not equal, as only males were allowed in the 'pubs'.

²²Brian Harrison, 'Pubs', in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff edited, *The Victorian City*, Vol.1, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1973, P. 168.

²³Keith Wrightson, 'Alehouse, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660' in Eileen & Stephen Yeo edited *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914*, The Hervester Press, Great Britain, 1981, p.12.

‘particularly in winter, at night and in bad weather’²⁴. However, sixteenth century onwards several laws had been passed to regulate these alehouses. In 1552 with the passing of license acts, alehouses were brought under the supervision of laws.²⁵ Acts of 1603 and 1606 determined the working hours as well as the price of beer in alehouses. Thus, the author tries to say that while passing several laws during the sixteenth and seventeenth century to regulate the business of alehouses, the elite section of England tried to establish a ‘cultural hegemony’ over the lower section.²⁶

The nineteenth century witnessed more changes in the British laws in relation to alcohol, pubs, etc. These changes in British laws became significant as they also indicated ideological and political changes of the time. While defining crime, most of the thinkers and policy makers of that time included several things, like ‘drunkenness, increasing poverty, rapid urbanization, overcrowding residential areas, universal and natural decline of morality, unsettled family life and increasing population’²⁷ as the causes of crime. Writings of the authors like, Charles Dickens, Agatha Christie, have depicted the same thing. However, the process of identification of inebriation as a crime started from the medieval age in Europe, although, drinking was regarded a common practice in England. In the nineteenth century, the attitude of the society towards the consumption of liquor had changed, and consumption of liquor was seen as an immoral practice.

In *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900*, C. Emsley has explored how the eighteenth and the nineteenth century England understood crime and how the society dealt with that problem. Besides, he shows that while dealing with crime and criminals, how criminal justice system worked under a framework created by the socio-economic and political structure of the society. While looking into the crime through all these perceptions, the author argues that drinking practice was detected as a crime factor from the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. He also shows how drinking habit was

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Cited in, *Ibid.*, p.21.

²⁷ Meena Radhakrishnan, *Dishonored by History ‘Criminal Tribes’ and British Colonial Policy*, Oriental Longman, New Delhi, 2001, p. 2.

linked up with the social structure of the society and as a result poor were identified as drunkards with ‘immoral’ and ‘disorderly’ behaviour. Even the Select Committee on Police had reported in 1828 that due to the lack of morality, very often poor were addicted to the consumption of liquor and committed crimes. Hence, the committee suggested that only Christian and moral education would help these poor people to get rid of such habits.²⁸

Significantly, the author highlights that the tools of analysing the crime and criminality had been changing throughout the nineteenth century. Initially, the social class structure was used to analyse crime. Later, during the latter half of nineteenth century ‘biological discourse’²⁹ was used as an analytical tool.³⁰ Further, with the development of medical science, psychological studies were considered as the determining factors of crime. This changing approaches helped the criminologist to analyse the criminals as ‘individual rather than simply part of a class, and provided an understanding of the criminal as an individual’.³¹ Alcohol was considered as an important factor which easily provoked a person to commit a crime.

Martin J. Winter, while tracing the cultural transformation of laws, policies and crime in England during the nineteenth century in *Reconstructing the Criminal*, shows how British notions over drunkenness had changed through the century, particularly after 1860, with the beginning of the Victorian era. Several changes had happened in the society in this time. These changes affected the judicial system, and lawmakers of the society started to reconsider them.³² The aim of the judiciary reform in the Victorian era was to prepare a uniform law. This new reformed law became ‘less discretionary and less tolerant’ and emphasised on the need of the self-governing individual. Thus, the Victorian civil and criminal law not only dealt with the consequences of people’s behaviour, but also provided guidance to people on behaviour before they acted. Winter states that several human behaviours were identified as immoral or disorderly and were brought under judicial laws

²⁸ Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900*, Longman, London, 1987, pp. 56-57.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64-65.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 101.

during the nineteenth century due to this reasons.³³ “Police were more thoroughly scrutinizing popular behaviour, judge and magistrate became the readier to use criminal law against behaviour seen as immoral or disorderly.”³⁴ Drunkenness also came under the speculation of law in this process of scrutinizing the human behaviour.

Medieval time onwards drunkenness was seen as a social problem. However, with the emergence of temperance movement drunkenness began to be taken seriously in England³⁵ and was detected as the ‘source of all crime’³⁶. 1865 onwards attitude of the British laws towards drunkenness had changed. Development of science was one of the reasons for this change. New researches in the field of physics and biology, and coming of the new theories from these researches had established the facts that human world was not exempted from the natural law.³⁷ Further, the Darwinian model of thinking got a strong support from the growing social complexity and interdependency. While quoting Harber Spencer, Winter argues that it had been considered in the Victorian era that sociological and biological modes of thinking were interlinked and the social unit and individual unit were interdependent.³⁸ Psychological study was also started for the betterment of the society under the influence of these considerations. The psychological study had changed the society’s perception of crime and punishment. Crime had been looked at as the expression of mental disorder, which changed the way of punishment. The Victorian society started to believe that punishment should bring the changes in the offender and widen the path of the person’s moral development, rather than reflecting only suffering and pain.³⁹ It was also argued that the moral

³³Martin J. Winter, *Reconstructing the Crime*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 50.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 67

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 78-79

³⁶Cited in, *ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*, p.160

³⁸*Ibid.*, p.161.

³⁹Before the nineteenth century, it had been considered that physical pain was the good for the offender. This notion was entirely based on the Christian ethics, which said that the pain would purify the soul of offender. However, this notion of punishment was changed in the Victorian era. Bringing change in individual and providing them guidance to the people on behaviour before they acted became the aims of the law. Martin. J. Winter’s argument also vindicated the argument of Michel Foucault that the pattern of punishment changed with the coming of new forms of Knowledge. The aim of the new knowledge system and newly built

development of a person was not an individual responsibility, but a collective effort.⁴⁰ This notion also changed the society's perception of drunkenness. Soon drunkenness was considered as a disease and drunkard as a criminal. During mid-1870s consumption of liquor had increased, but less numbers of drunkards were arrested by the police. The British government blamed the surrounding environment for it.⁴¹ The government policy regarding drinking began to change in two ways during the late Victorian age. First, greater regulations were imposed on the liquor trade and the drinking places and second, drunkards were brought under the direct custody of the law with the passing of the *Drunkards Act of 1879*.⁴² Further, British Government established asylums for drunkards and provided medical treatment to them. Later, objection arose against this approach as it was found that this medical facility was only accessible to the rich.⁴³

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth-century changes had occurred due to the reduction in alcohol consumption. Besides, with the passing of the *Intoxicating Liquor Act* in 1914 and *Defence of Realm Act* of 1915, the British Government controlled the timing of pubs.⁴⁴ Along with these, the Government was appealing to its citizens by describing drunkenness as an immoral practice. Temperance movement also helped in this process. These newly established asylums and temperance societies helped the drunkards to get rid of their bad habits by providing these drunkards 'disciplinary methods of treatment – education, vocational training, physical training, counselling and reliance on rewards for good behaviour rather than penalties for bad.'⁴⁵

All these different perspectives of analysing the crime and criminality of England were used in India while preparing the colonial laws. Meena Radhakrishnan in her *Dishonoured by History: 'Criminal Tribes' and British*

institutions, like asylum and police department was to bring the individual under the direct control of the state.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p.189.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 378.

Colonial Policy has shown how the changing notion of crime and criminality ultimately built up the base of the *Criminal Tribes Act of 1871*. This act had identified few Indian tribes as criminal, like Koravas. However, while categorising them as criminal, the colonial government had created certain criteria and drunkenness was one of among them. Through this book, the author has tried to link the issue of colonial law and colonial ethnography.

Sumanta Banerjee, while exploring different crimes of Calcutta during the nineteenth century, says that with the coming of new people from villages and *moffusils* to Kolkata for their livelihood; several illicit practices like gang robbery, forgery, and murder had increased. Banerjee, after consulting Fort William Reports, describes that taverns, different liquor shops, and grog shops were the dens of all crimes. These became places of redistribution of stolen goods.⁴⁶ Even Police Commissioner Wauchope in 1863 argued in his dispatches that most of the offences occurred due to drunkenness.⁴⁷ These assessments led to queries, like when these taverns of Calcutta became a place for amusements and dens of criminals, then how the British government had reacted to these liquor shops and what was the attitude of colonial Governments towards drunkards.

Besides describing liquor shops as dens of criminals Sumanta Banerjee has also tried to find out why people consumed liquor. He argues that the newly migrated villagers of Calcutta started to consume liquor for their pleasure,⁴⁸ due to the lack of any entertainment, marginalization of different popular amusements like *Jatra*⁴⁹, *Kobigan*⁵⁰ and *Kothokatha*⁵¹ and to escape from the weariness of the city life. However, while discussing the upper class' drinking culture, he said that these people consumed liquor to upgrade their status, but ultimately it became their daily habit.⁵² These two arguments show that most of the contemporary people considered the consumption of liquor as a part of the entertainment and during that time the connection between crime

⁴⁶ Sumanta Banarjee, *The Wicked City*, New Delhi, Oriental Black Swan, 2009, p. 63.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴⁸ Sumanta Banarjee, *The Parlour and The Streets*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1998, p.64.

⁴⁹ Theatre.

⁵⁰ Light song in the form of question and answer.

⁵¹ Reading and exposition of mythological stories.

⁵² Sumanta Banerjee, *The Wicked City*, Oriental Black Swan, New Delhi, 2009, p. 262

and consumption of liquor is almost invisible. Even Banerjee has also argued the same.⁵³ This is interesting to study how and why the link with crime emerged over time.

(III)

Most of the books on the social history of medicine of colonial India have addressed two issues, the nature of western medical practices in India along with its attitude towards the several tropical diseases and indigenous remedies. Besides, these books also tried to find out how indigenous society responded towards the western medical practices. In the process of writing of medical history, the link between the consumption of liquor and disease was hardly noticed by the historians. However, few works have been done on this.

Laxman D. Satya in *Medicine, Disease and Ecology in Colonial India* argues that excess consumption of liquor and other narcotic drugs were the main reason for insanity in colonial India⁵⁴. He shows how in spite of being aware of the side effect of the narcotic drugs, the colonial government had encouraged their consumption for financial gain and ironically used these narcotics, like opium as medicine.⁵⁵ Though, Satya does not look into the matter of usage of liquor as a medical remedy, and what kinds of medical initiatives had been taken by the colonial government for the drunkards.

The excess consumption of liquor, however, did not leave the European untouched. Europeans soldiers, and vagabonds were worst affected by the liquor consumption along with Indian labours class, who were employed in the tea gardens and mines. David Arnold in *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* has mentioned this fact and identified alcoholism as a disease.⁵⁶ Noticeably, in spite of detecting alcohol as a factor in certain diseases, the colonial government had permitted usage of alcohol as a medicinal compound. Anil Kumar has explored the evolution of Indian drugs industry in colonial India and argues that several chemical and pharmaceutical

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 260

⁵⁴ Laxman D. Satya, *Medicine, Disease and Ecology in Colonial India*, Monohar, Delhi, 2009, p.152.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 154-56.

⁵⁶David Arnold, *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*, OUP, Delhi, p.6.

manufacturing firms were established in India during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth-century. Some of these firms, like, one was set up in 1903 in Mumbai, and another was Dr. Bose Laboratory in Bengal, prepared alcohol-based medicines.⁵⁷

These works mentioned above have tried to show the attitude of western medicine towards alcohol. However, few questions remain unanswered. These works do not mention whether western doctors had referred alcohol or spirits as a medical remedy to the patients and if so, then how colonial society reacted to this.

(IV)

The Christian missionaries opposed the medicinal use of narcotic drugs by the British colonial government. James H. Mills in his article ‘Colonialism, Cannabis and Christians: Mission Medical Knowledge and Indian Hemp Drug Commission of 1893-4’ has tried to show the attitude of Christian missionaries towards the medical usage of different narcotic drugs, especially cannabis, by the British Colonial Government of India. Further, he argues, this attitude of Christian missionaries had left a strong impact on the metropolitan discourses as well as on metropolitan politics and power. While establishing this argument Mill chooses William Caine’s⁵⁸ stand on the medical usage of cannabis in different lunatic asylums of British India and shows how Caine’s criticism of medical usage of cannabis and other narcotics, like liquor, *ganja*, and opium, forced the colonial government in the establishment of Hemp and Drug Commission.⁵⁹ Moreover, William Caine’s criticism gave strength to the missionaries’ criticism of British Colonial Government’s drug trade in South Asia. Certainly, one needs to explore the missionaries’ stand on the promotion

⁵⁷ Anil Kumar, ‘The Indian drug Industry under Raj, 1860-1920’ in ‘*Health, Medicine and Empire*’ edited by Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison, Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 371.

⁵⁸ William Caine was one of the founders of Anglo-Indian Temperance Association. Besides, he also started its journal with the ironic title, *Abkari*. (See: James H. Mills in ‘Colonialism, Cannabis and Christians: Mission Medical Knowledge and Indian Hemp Drug Commission of 1893-4’ in David Hardiman edited *Healing Bodies, Saving Souls*, Amsterdam –Rodopi, New York, 2006, p. 181.)

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, P. 184.

of temperance movement in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century.

V. Ball in *Tribal and Peasant life in Nineteenth Century* has done an ethnographical study on different tribes of India. In this process, he has pointed out that drinking was part of tribal life in India. He highlighted that liquor consumption was an integral part of their life. However, liquor was not only a medium of pleasure to them but also a medium through which they offered things to their ancestors.⁶⁰ V. Ball also has argued that both colonial power and indigenous people, outside of tribal communities, had criticized the tribes' drinking practice. Ball, however, has not discussed how *Abkaree* laws were implemented in tribal areas and how the tribal people reacted to the *Abkaree* laws.

(V)

Socio-cultural development of Kolkata has been the focus of lots work, both in Bengali and English. Among them, few important books are *Anya Kolkata* (Another Kolkata) by Biswanath Jordar, *Kolkata Sohorer Itibritta* (History of City Kolkata) by Benoy Ghosh, *Bat-tala, Kolkata, and Elokeshi Mahant Sambad* by Shripantha, *Chitrita Padme* (Painted Lotus) by Arun Nag, *Unish Shataker Kolkatar Anya Sanskriti* by Sumantra Bandyopadhyay, *Calcutta: The Living City* edited by Sakuntala Chaudhuri etc. All these books have done good research on the socio-cultural development of Kolkata, and tried to trace the development of the drinking culture in the city. However, most of these books have certain limitations, i.e., most of the time they discussed the liquor consumption of Bengali upper class. Drinking of the 'lower' caste and poor was not given emphasis. Therefore, drinking practice of the 'lower' class and caste people needs to be investigated. Besides, one needs to trace the existing pattern of drinking in different parts of Bengal, as well as its development over time.

While conducting this kind of study of nineteenth century Bengal, especially of Kolkata, one needs to go through the study of city planning.

⁶⁰ V. Ball, *Tribal and Peasant life in Nineteenth Century*, Usha, New Delhi, 1880, p.163.

Partho Datta in his work *Planning The City* has described the development of town planning of Kolkata throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Here the author discusses the town planning of Kolkata during the colonial period and has reflected two things, firstly the ideology of the Raj⁶¹ and secondly, the development of the notion related to hygiene and health. Besides, he also shows how the newly created public places, like streets which reflected the notion of public order and also supported the local economy.⁶² Following Paul Rabinow's view, he argues that this public space indicated the place of interaction between society and the state.⁶³

Certainly, the collection of revenue from different sources had enabled the colonial government to carry on with their planning work. Datta has argued that huge amount of revenue was collected from 'arrack shops, European spirit, from retail vendors of Bengal rum by "sooris" (a traditional caste who made spirits) and *Tari* (a local brew) shops, ganja shops, punch house license... spruce beer shops and from the 'mofussil *abkaree* tax'.⁶⁴ However, Datta does not mention how the colonial government had placed these arrack and European spirit shops in the City while planning the town.

It can be said from the above discussion that most of the books, either on social history or history of laws or history of medicine have tried to show the nineteenth century from different angles, but they hardly consider drunkenness or drinking culture as an entry point into the nineteenth century. Though some works have been done on drinking culture and Bengal society of the nineteenth century, they failed to give a complete picture. Most of these works look at specific areas of drinking practice of nineteenth century Bengal. For instance, Harald Fisher-Tiné's works discussed the drunkenness of the low-class Europeans of colonial India whereas drinking habit of other non-Europeans needs to be explored.

It has been seen that during the nineteenth-century, society's notion of the consumption and usage of liquor was continuously changing. These

⁶¹Partho Datta, *Planning The City*, Tulika Books, Kolkata, 2012, p. 2.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p.110.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p.115.

changes had been started in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the impacts of these changes were clearly traced out during the second half of the nineteenth century. This thesis proposes to explore the use of liquor and other alcoholic drinks in the everyday life of the nineteenth century Bengal which covers both European and indigenous people of Bengal. While tracing the daily usage of alcoholic drinks, the thesis will also try to address the different socio-cultural, economic and political issues of the late nineteenth century Bengal, related to the consumption of liquor with a critical approach. Further, the thesis shall explore the relationship between the colonial laws and drinking culture of Bengal, particularly the responses of indigenous society towards these colonial laws. The research questions emerge from the above concern.

Research Questions:

1. What was the attitude of the colonial Government towards liquor trade and its consumption in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century?
2. How did class and the social structure affect the nature of liquor consumption in Bengal during this period?
3. How did the educated Bengali middle class (*Bhadrolok*) and different European organisations, such as Christian Missionaries and European gentlemen react to the consumption of liquor by indigenous people and the Europeans? How did different social reformers of the nineteenth century Bengal address the issue of consumption of liquor?
4. Did drinking culture leave any imprint on Bengal's cultural orientation? How was the 'drinking space' defined?
5. How did the western medical sciences deal with the problem of drunkenness? Was there any medical usage of liquor during the said period? How did the indigenous health care system and indigenous society deal with this drinking problem?

Chapter 1:

The first chapter explores the relation between ‘drunkenness’ and colonial laws during the late nineteenth century. While doing so, the chapter tries to show how the colonial government had prepared a structure of the governing system to control the liquor business as well as the disciplining the drinking habits of the countrymen as well as the Europeans. The chapter also highlights that the government intention of doing all these was to extract as much excise revenue as possible. While using the excise revenue data, this chapter highlights how the excise revenue collection determined the excise policy of Bengal within the time frame of 1856-1908. The second section of the chapter has discussed how the colonial government criminalised several activities of people related to the liquor consumption and liquor business.

Further, the chapter looks at the responses of the colonised and coloniser towards the implemented laws. During the nineteenth century, the British Colonial Government earned a significant amount of revenue from the *Abkaree* tax. For instance, during the second half of the nineteenth century the British Colonial government had collected excise revenue of 8,71,761 rupees from the Berar district.⁶⁵ The picture was almost same in Bengal. In 1841, itself the colonial government had made 1,70,425 rupees from the Abkari department.⁶⁶ Thus, this chapter tries to give ample light on the working process of Bengal’s excise department during the second half of the nineteenth century, especially, after the passing of the first consolidated *Abkaree* law.

Chapter 2:

After discussing the colonial excise policy and colonial approach of regulating the people’s drinking habit, it is necessary to look into the existed drinking pattern of the people in Bengal. Thus, the second chapter traces how the class and social structure influenced consumption of liquor in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century and tried to ask questions like, who were

⁶⁵ Laxman D. Satya, *Medicine, Disease and Ecology in Colonial India*, Delhi, Monohar, 2009, p.156.

⁶⁶ Bidisha Chakraborty & Sarmistha De, *Calcutta in the Nineteenth Century*, Niyogi Books, New Delhi, 2013, p. 58.

the people consuming liquor? Why was liquor consumed? This chapter will also highlight how a class division could be observed in the consumption of liquor. Apart from being a source of pleasure, alcohol also became a social symbol for few people. The ‘Babu Culture’⁶⁷ of nineteenth century Bengal gave a new dimension to the drinking culture. For them, consumption of liquor became an integral part of life. Receiving European officers with liquor during *Durga Puja* was seen as upgrading their prestige in society. However, they never used country liquor on such occasion. Common people and various tribes usually consumed country liquor. Noticeably, the attitude of colonial government towards these two kinds of liquor consumption was different.

Chapter 3:

The discussion on the government excise policy along with the liquor consumption pattern of the people leads to the question of how the indigenous, educated and social reformers reacted to the drinking habits of the people. The third chapter of the thesis seeks to answer these issues along with tracing the emergence and impact of the temperance movement in Bengal. While doing so, the chapter also makes an attempt to find out the connection between the temperance movement of England and the anti-liquor resistance in Bengal. The chapter will also discuss initiatives, taken by different groups, like Bengali *bhadraloks*, Europeans, Christian Missionaries, indigenous social reformers, and the nationalist leaders regarding temperance movement.

Chapter 4:

This chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first section, the chapter explores the cultural orientation of drinking practice in Bengal along with

⁶⁷Elite’s culture of nineteenth century Bengal. However, the definition and class composition ‘*babu*’ had changed over time. Though, certain characteristics had remained common. ‘The term *babu* also has been used liberally – sometimes in sense of respect, sometimes in a pejorative sense to describe the parvenu. With the rise of professional middle class, consisting of government officers of similar occupations, the term *babu* came to be used as a Bengali version of the English ‘mister’. In the early nineteenth century, the *babu* as he appeared in the farces and sketches was the pampered son of parvenu dewan or banian, who having inherited his father’s wealth dissipates it on drinking, whoring and other amusements with a host of sycophants.’(See: Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and The Streets*, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 1998, p.180.)

tracing the subaltern perception of the drinking culture. In this process, the chapter tries to show how consumption of liquor was reflected in the popular culture, such as literature, music, paintings and proverbs of nineteenth century Bengal. The second section of the chapter analyses how the drinking place was defined. While tracing the special orientation of the drinking places, the chapter is trying to find how the establishment of grog shops, wine shops and arrack shops had constructed new places within a new metropolis like nineteenth century Kolkata.

Chapter 5:

The fifth chapter deals with different health-related issues associated with liquor. Nineteenth century onwards British government in India had started to take special interest in the improvement of indigenous health and hygiene a result the Calcutta Medical Colleges established in 1835, followed by the introduction of western healing processes and recommendation of western medicine. Certainly, indigenous society did not accept these remedies without any confrontation. Controversies arose on the methods of western medical practices, especially when the doctors had started to prescribe alcoholic spirits and liquors as medical remedies for the indigenous patients. The issue becomes more controversial when it came to questions of consumption of such medicine by women. During the latter half of the nineteenth century with the development of the printing press, several medical journals had taken a lead role in spreading of anti-liquor awareness. Therefore, this chapter also addresses these issues. Besides, the chapter also investigates how the indigenous medical system dealt with this problem.

Sources and their locations:

Different archival materials, like the proceedings of Judicial Department, Police Department, Revenue Department (Branch: Miscellaneous Revenue, Head: Excise) and Finance Department (Excise) of Bengal along with several newspapers and periodicals (both in English and vernacular language) of nineteenth century Bengal, vernacular literature and pamphlets are the important source of my thesis. Most of the primary and secondary sources were collected from different libraries and archives of Kolkata, Delhi, and

London. The reference libraries and archives are: West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata; National Library, Kolkata; National Library News Paper Archives, Kolkata; Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Library, Kolkata; the Indian National Archives, New Delhi; the Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi; Jawaharlal Nehru University Library and DSA Library of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Wellcome Trust Library, London; British Library, London. Besides, I have used few online digital archives, like West Bengal State Library (DSpace at West Bengal State Central Library), Visual Library South Asia (www.savifa.uni-hd.de), digitalised archives of the South Asian Research Foundation and www.archive.org.

Chapter 1

The New Governmentality: Colonialism and Liquor Consumption, 1856-1908

Liquor became an important source of revenue for the colonial government in India from 1790's onwards. While structuring the excise policy and excise administrative system, Government's intention was to collect a good amount of revenue from the liquor business. These excise policies and Excise laws had gone through several modifications, and the collection of revenue changed with every modification. Besides, being a medium of extracting money from the Indian people, the colonial government used excise policy to control the indigenous life too. The entire process of modification of excise laws did not happen smoothly, a number of debates occurred around the excise policy. Internal conflict within the colonial structure also became visible. Besides, the indigenous society also reacted to these modified excise laws in different ways.

The new governing structure in the form of excise law started soon after the passing of the first consolidated Abkari Law in 1856¹. The colonial government claimed that modifying the excise laws would stop illicit distillation of liquor. In the later years, while changing this law, the government argued that their excise policy would check intemperance among Indians. However, the policy had a disastrous effect on the process of controlling liquor consumption and a desirable effect on collecting more excise revenue. The government identified home brewing as a crime and those who were creating 'nuisance' after drinking declared as criminal. As a result, the leisure of drinking came under the ambit and speculation of law. This close relation between the crime and alcohol brought the police into the picture. As a result, the issue of excise became a conflict ground for the police department and the excise department.

This chapter is divided into two parts to discuss all these matters while looking at the colonial excise policy. The first part discusses the excise policy

¹ Also known as the 1st Abkari Law of India

and modifications therein, and the revenue collected by the excise department from 1856-1908. The period is divided into few segments, i.e., 1856-1869, 1870-79, 1880-89, 1890-1999 and 1890-1908. The second part of this chapter explains the implementation of the excise rules, methods and ways of forcing the subjects to follow them. This part, therefore, discusses the acts which made liquor brewing as criminal and how the state's excise policy tried to discipline drunkards.

Excise revenue had always been a lucrative financial source for government, across time and space. The state always used liquor consumption as a good source of revenue. In medieval India, some of the Delhi sultans, like Ala-uddin Khalji and several other Mughal Emperors imposed restrictions on the sale of liquor and its consumption. Despite the emperors' apathy, abkari had always been the state's concern. Distillation was already known to ancient India, though it produced weak liquor. With the coming of new distillery methods from the Mediterranean and the Arabs in the thirteenth century, India started to produce good quality of strong wine. This new distillery system had brought changes in the perfume and liquor manufacture sectors. Spreading knowledge of the distillery system enabled common people to prepare wine at home. In spite of Ala-uddin Khalji's restriction, brewing and consumption of liquor by the people had continued behind the closed door.² With the coming of the Europeans and settling down in the coastal areas, like Goa, Due, Bombay, importation of liquor also started. Initially, European merchants and sailors brought a variety of French wine, i.e., Canary Wine, Shiraz wine on their way to India.³ Besides, they also become interested in punch. However, during all these times the intention of the Europeans was just to produce the liquor for their consumption. The mid-eighteenth century onwards British power gradually acquired and expanded its territory in India and after acquiring territory British government imposed taxes on the subjects. In this process, the British colonial government realised that the liquor business

² *The Cambridge Economic history of Medieval India*, Vol I: c. 1200-1500, Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1882, pp. 55-56.

³ Prasun Chatterjee, The lives of Alcohol in Pre-colonial India, *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 8, April, 2005, p. 195.

needed to be brought under the government for its revenue generation capacity.

In 1794, the Company government first established a department, *Abkaree Mahal*, to collect excise revenue in Bengal. In 1800, the Company Government asked every retail shop to pay a fixed daily retail duty. Thus, they introduced a licensing system in 1803, and toddy shops had brought under this system. Along with toddy shops, company government also took steps to control the sale of liquor in the taverns, punch houses and grog shops by bringing these places under the license system. However, the rules of the license system for the toddy shops and boarding houses were different from each other. The government wanted to collect maximum revenue while bringing toddy shops under the license system. It also wanted to control the crime in Calcutta by bringing boarding houses under the license system. Later, the rules of the license system were modified several times, i.e., in 1813, 1818, 1824, 1826, 1840, 1841, 1848 and 1856. It only added certain clauses in the initial excise law. Ultimately, in 1856 the colonial government introduced a consolidated excise law which decided to bring out a centralised excise department. Soon after implementation of the Excise law of 1856, the collection of revenue increased and the period 1856 to 1908 saw a continuous increase in excise revenue.

The process of tax collections and the administrative structure of the excise department went through several modifications. The Act of 1849 had authorised the Collector of Land Revenue Department to collect excise revenue under the supervision of Commissioner of Revenue and Board of revenue. However, the *Act XXI* of 1856 said that the government would appoint a superintendent of Abkari revenue in any district or place. Further, Abkari Commissioner, appointed by the Governor, authorised to select the Abkari officers. These Abkari officers could collect revenue, check illicit liquor manufacture, and arrest the person involved in the illegal production.⁴ Later the government asked the police department to help the excise department to control the illegalities in the liquor business. With time several

⁴ Abkaree Law of 1856, Consolidate and amendment the law relating to the Abkaree Revenue in the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal.

new posts, like the post of chemical examiner and excise investigator, Abkari daroghas (excise inspector), were introduced to increase the efficiency of the excise department. This administrative structure of the excise department remained same throughout the period of 1856 to 1908.

(I)

Excise laws, Revenue and Distillery System

1) 1856-1869

Initially, the excise revenue was collected under the head of *Opium, Ganja, and Spirits and Drugs*. The colonial government had declared that it would impose the duty on the noxious articles, like opium, *ganja* and liquor, to check people's consumption of these narcotics. While imposing the duty on narcotics, the colonial government divided them into two categories. The first category was spirituous liquor, which consisted of commodities, like fermented liquor, wine and other alcoholic liquor obtained by distillation and sap of any kind of palm tree. The second category was intoxicating drugs, which includes *ganja, bhang* and charas. While bringing these narcotics under the government regulation, the colonial excise policy, however, revealed another dimension of the British rule. Through the *Abkari Law* of 1856, the colonial government introduced a proper structure to the excise department. The collection of excise revenue from the Lower Province of Bengal was increasing gradually after implementation of this excise law. In the initial years after implementation, i.e., 1856 to 1859, the largest share of the excise revenue was collected under the head of Opium. The collection under the head of opium decreased from 1859 onwards due to the restriction on the cultivation of opium in Assam. This decline in the supply of opium turned people toward liquor. Liquor, therefore, became an important revenue generating commodity for the Excise department. The excise department took full control over the distillation of liquor and started to decide the price of the liquor.

Besides gaining control over the production of the distilleries and the price rate of the manufactured liquor, the excise department took some more steps. First, the excise department imposed a ban on home brewing and

declared it an illegal act. Liquor brew only from the government distilleries was accepted as legal for the liquor business. During this period there were two kinds of government distilleries activated in Bengal; *Out-still distilleries* and *Central distillery*. Both of these distillery systems were registered under the *Act of XXXIV* of 1813 and introduced in Bengal. Separate localities had been selected for these two different distillery systems. The *Central* or *Sudder Distillery System* was introduced at the headquarters and in big towns of the twenty-one districts of Lower Province of Bengal, but this experiment failed soon. Thus, *Out-stills* once again adopted in other parts of the 21 districts, situated beyond 8 miles from the *Sudder Distilleries*. The Government extended the *Out-still System* in these districts for one year after following the *Regulation VII* of 1824. Besides, this Regulation also indicated that *Out-still Distillery System* soon would be introduced in the entire province. Due to the introduction of this system, the collection of revenue from the country spirit had increased. However, the appointment of two Abkari Commissions in 1840 and 1844 had caused the downfall of revenue from the country liquor. As, both commissions imposed restrictions on the liquor business, which curbed the sale of liquor.

The government, in spite of the introduction of the distillery system, was unable to control the growing drunkenness. When the Excise Department conducting a survey after passing and implementation of the *Abkari* law in 1856, it was found that the consumption of liquor had increased due to the *Out-still System*. Therefore, the excise department once again introduced *Sudder Distillery* or the *Central Distillery System* in several parts of Bengal to control the *Out-still Distilleries'* production, consumption of liquor and the retail price of the liquor. Further, the excise department denoted the strength of the liquor and also decided as to which area a distillery could distribute its production. The price of liquor was decided after measuring the strength of the liquor and distance between the retail shops and the distilleries. Experiments with the *Sudder Distillery System* or *Central Distillery System* had started in Patna and Bhagalpore Division. The introduction of this system led to the increase in retail price of the liquor. Besides, the Abkari department either brought most of the *Out-stills* under the *Central Distillery System* or closed

them. The following table shows the extension of *Sudder Distillery* in the year 1860 in different areas of Bengal.⁵ This table depicts the name of the districts and sites where the *Central or Sudder Distillery System* introduced, the area of supply and numbers of liquor shops to which distilled liquor was supply from the each distillery, and lastly the numbers of *Out-stills* which were closed by theses government distilleries.

Table no: 1 (List of the *Saddar* Distilleries opened in the year of 1860, the location of these distilleries, Supplying area of the each distillery, number of the liquor shops benefitted by theses distilleries, and the number of *Out-still* distilleries closed by the government after the introduction of *Sadder* distilleries.)

Districts	Sites of <i>Sudder Distillery</i>	Radius of Supply per miles	No. of Shops Supplied	No of <i>Out-stills</i> closed
Patna	Begumpore	6	34	Not stated – Distillery has been in existence for some time
Purneah	Sudder Station	21	86	80
	Kishengunge	$17\frac{1}{4}$	48	50
Baraset	Sudder Station		12	These Shops supply the entire Division. All <i>Out-stills</i> have been closed
	Busseerhaut		19	
Jessore	Mohungunge		26	
	Koolneah		28	
	Kessubpore		8	
	Benodepore		5	
Calcutta	Maniktollah		93	
24-pergunnahs	Kidderpore		81	
	Sulkea		23	
	Barripore		9	
	Chitpore		19	
Nuddea ⁶	Krishnoghur		52	
	Santipore		5	
	Chagda		4	
Burdwan	Sudder Station	9	23	21
	Culnah	6	10	9
	Jamalpore	8	17	As theses Distilleries have been in existence for some years, it is difficult to ascertain the number of <i>Out-stills</i> that have been closed by them.
	Tatalpore	12	22	
Hooghly	Tribenee	18	24	
	Bhuddressur	10	38	
	Dhuniakhally	10	20	
	Bagnan	16	29	
	Rajbulhat	10	25	
	Pundooah	6	15	
	Jhanabad	20	43	28
Midnapore	Sudder Station	16	17	19
Dacca	Sudder Station	12	19	5

⁵ Report on the financial Result of the Abkary Administration of the Lower Province for the year 1860-61, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1861, p. 7, NAI.

⁶ Nadia

The table shows that a number of *Out-still* had been closed. The price of the distilled liquor had increased with the introduction of *Central Distillery System*. Thus, these changes affected the local price of the liquor as well as the consumption.

Meanwhile, another question became important for the excise department, i.e., what the Excise Department's attitude would be towards the farming of country spirit and other locally fermented spirits. The excise department realised that increase in the duty of the distilled spirits might decrease the consumption of local fermented liquor. Thus, the duty on *Tari* and *Pachwai* was increased. Besides, under the pressure of the petition of the rum distilleries of Kolkata and its vicinity, the government decided to impose equal duty on rum and country liquor on 1861. As a result of, the duty on country liquor was raised from 1 Rupees 4 annas per Imperial Gallon to 2 Rupees 4 annas Imperial Gallon.⁷ This process of imposing a high duty on the country spirits first implemented at Kolkata, and thereafter, it was gradually implemented at the divisions of the province, like Nadia and Burdwan. Initially, the revenue collection went down after the implementation of this system. However, the *Abkary* Department remained optimistic and imposed a high duty on liquor in districts too.

The excise department, while increasing the duty, argued that the revenue would increase as people get accustomed to the system.⁸ The collection during 1860-61 and 1861-62, however, fell in some districts where the *Sudder Distillery System* was introduced. This fall in revenue happened mainly due to the inverse relationship between Liquor consumption and liquor price. Increase in the retail price of the distilled spirits, like rum, and country liquor also forced people to consume fermented liquors, like *tari* and *Pachwai*.⁹ The loss of revenue was counterbalanced by the increase in the collections from *pachwai*, *tari*, and *Ganja*.¹⁰ In the 24-parganas, for example,

⁷ Report on the Financial Result of the Abkary Administration of the Lower Province for the year 1861-62, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1862, p.3, NAI.

⁸ Report on the Financial Result of the Abkary Administration of the Lower Province for the year 1860-61, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1861, p. 6, NAI.

⁹ Report on the Financial Result of the Abkary Administration of the Lower Province for the year 1859-60, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1861, p. 5, NAI.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3, NAI.

there had been a decrease in the revenue collected from Rum in the year 1860-61. However, colonial government did not accept this shift in consumption without interventions.

The colonial government enhanced the duty on *tari* and *Pachwai* while reducing the duty on the country liquor. Government intention was to force people to consume distilled spirits, i.e., country spirits for more revenue from the *Sudder Distillery System*. Therefore, in 1861-62, the colonial government increased duty on *tari* and *Pachwai* in Burdwan district. Later, they decreased the duty on country spirits.¹¹ However, in next year (1862-63) the colonial government once again enhanced the tax on the country liquor in Bankura, Burdwan, and Birbhum. Thus, there was an increase of rupees 23,546 from the revenue collected under the head of *Pachwai*. Due to the same reason, revenue collection from *tari* also increased. The net increased under the head of *tari* was rupees 39,576. By the 1863-64, the poorer class had gradually left the consumption of country liquor and shifted to *tari* and *Pachwai*. Therefore, an increase of four and half lakh of rupees in excise revenue had been recorded in 1863-64 due to this shift in taste.¹²

2) 1870-79

In 1870, the district's officers of the lower province of Bengal notified that the establishment of Government distilleries and the fixing of a high duty on the Government distillery liquor had increased the tendency of illicit brewing of liquor among the people. Besides, the existence of corruption among the distillery workers had created a parallel liquor business. It affected the excise revenue. Thus, the government once again shifted to the *Out-still Distillery System*. Supplying of liquor at the lowest rate under this system resulted in the increase of the revenue. It has been mentioned in almost every annual Excise Report of Lower Bengal till 1876 that the government's intention was to increase the number of *Out-stills*.

¹¹ Report on the Financial Result of the Abkary Administration of the Lower Province for the year 1861-62, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1862, p.4, NAI.

¹² Report on the Financial Result of the Abkary Administration of the Lower Province for the year 1863-64, Bengal Central Press, Calcutta, 1865, p. 8, NAI.

Reintroduction of the *Out-still System* and increase in the revenue, however, came at the cost of the spread of intemperance among the people. This led to the criticism of the *Abkari* policy by a number of temperance activists.¹³ The strong criticism of the excise policy by the temperance organizations forced the colonial government to revise the excise policy. Under this pressure, the excise department of Bengal accepted in the excise report of September 1877 that the number of excise shops in the Kolkata had increased, and that it was injurious to the public. Excise department also pointed out that these liquor shops were licensed liquor shop, and thus, it would be difficult to close them. However, the government found a solution when a revised the license system was introduced by the *Indian Council Act of 1861*. While modifying the license law, the government proposed that only a few selected people would be permitted to open liquor shops after the submission of renewal or fresh application for opening of liquor shops. The fear of loss of revenue had put the Bengal Government in a dilemma. Thus, the government decided to follow the *Mofussil Method*¹⁴ to control the number of the liquor shop. The excise department, though, was unwilling to implement this law in Kolkata.¹⁵ Besides, the resolution of 1877 has also declared that the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal had proposed that opening of a new distillery would happen under two conditions; first, if the existed distilleries did not fulfil the local demand for liquor and, second, the newly established distillery could pay a fixed duty of a certain amount.¹⁶

Later the excise department shifted its focus on the controlling of illicit manufacture of liquor to keep the liquor shops under control and extract maximum excise revenue from them. The excise department stated that intemperance among the people had increased because of the easy availability of illicit liquor. The excise department took help from the *section 16 of the act of 1849* to control this easy availability of illicit liquor, and said that the authority could confiscate the liquor shop if found guilty of the manufacture or

¹³ A discussion on Temperance is in the third chapter.

¹⁴ In the *mofussil* areas the excise department first fixed the number of shops and then distributed the license. This license system was introduced by the Indian Council Act of 1861.

¹⁵ September 1874, Revenue Department (RD), Branch: Miscellaneous Revenue (MR), Head: Excise, A Proceeding, No. 54-55, WBSA.

¹⁶ November 1877, RD/MR/Ex, A Proceeding, Collection no. 1, Number.54, Resolution of Abkari Commission, 1876-77, WBSA.

storage of illicit liquor. As a result, legal sale of liquor had increased, and the collection of excise revenue went up in subsequent years. The revenue collected from country liquor went up around ten percents in 1875-76 than the previous year, and this increase in country liquor's revenue was continued thereafter. This continuous increase in revenue was noticed by missionaries, social reformers, and English philanthropists. They critiqued the government distillery system, especially the government decision to reintroduce the *Out-still System* in different parts of lower Bengal.

The government, in reply, mentioned that it was impossible to check the drunkenness by controlling the number of liquor shops and shutting down the manufacturing units. The government argued that the possibility of consumption of the illicit liquor was always there. Besides, poorest person in the country could also brew liquor at home due to the easy availability of different materials for liquor brewing. The Government report, therefore, stated that it would be tough to identify whether the consumption of spirits and drugs had increased absolutely or relatively. The Lieutenant Governor also pointed out that the population and the earning of the different group of people had increased in last few years. Thus, it was quite natural that people would like to spend little more on the liquor. The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, while mentioning about growing drinking habits of the labourers and agriculturalists, argued that both of the classes became prosperous and they invested their earning on purchasing better clothes, household utensils, food, and also in alcohol. While identifying urban upper class drinking habit as moderate, the Governor said that consumption of drugs and liquor were quite common in India. Indians were 'habitual drunkards'¹⁷; therefore, it was unjustified to blame the government excise policy for encouraging drinking practice of people in Bengal.¹⁸

¹⁷ The practice of drinking is always prevailed in India from the ancient time. The colonial government, however, identified the drinking practice of the Indians as an immoral and illegal act. The colonial government identified the indigenous 'drinkers' as 'drunkards' and therefore, it became the responsibility of the colonial government to discipline these drunkards and turn them as discipline drinkers. The colonial Government referred the indigenous drinker as 'habitual drunkards'.

¹⁸ February 1875, R/MR/Ex, A proceeding, Col. No.1, No. 25, WBSA.

H. J. Reynolds, the officiating secretary of Board of Revenue, had proposed some suggestions after following the Lieutenant Governor's minutes. He proposed to control the drinking habit without affecting the revenue collection by regulating the timing of sealing hours of the liquor shops rather than closing them permanently. He said that the liquor shops should close soon after sunset. The Lieutenant Governor also asked the police to follow the excise laws and regulations¹⁹ and decided to implement equal duty on the foreign imported liquor and the country liquor. The government, initially, proposed to implement these regulations in the seven districts of the Bengal, i.e., 24-pergunnas, Nadia, Jashor, Hooghly, Burdwan, Midnapore, Dacca, and Kolkata. Further, the imposition of an equal duty of four rupees per gallon on rum and country spirits had also been proposed. The government was thinking of controlling the sale of the different kind liquor through all these measures.²⁰

Many other officers, along with Reynolds, asked the government to reintroduce the *Out-still System* for collection of a large amount of revenue. During 1870's the colonial government introduced the *Central Distillery System* in most of the districts to regulate the sale and price of liquor. Some areas, however, remained out of any government distillery system. The collectors of these areas were the supporter of *Out-still System* and had asked the Government to introduce *Out-still System* rather than the *Central Distillery System*. The collectors argued that introduction of the *Out-still System* in these areas would be profitable for the government. In April 1873, for example, the collector of Noakhally had informed the government that drinking was a common practice in his district, but there was no government distillery in this area. Thus, he suggested that the government should open an *Out-still Distillery* in this area which would allow to generate lots of revenue. Besides, sometimes the failure of the *Sudder Distillery System* also led the government to think of the reintroduction of the *Out-still System*. For example, in March 1878 the collector of Nadia was informed that due to the improper handling of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 26.

²⁰ April 1876, RD/MR/Ex, A Proceeding Col no. 1, No. 23, WBSA.

the *Sudder Distillery System* government decided to introduce the *Out-still System* at Nadia.²¹

Table no.2 depicts the amount of revenue collected from the different head of the excise revenue during the year of 1875 to 1878. It can be said that the increase in revenue during these three simultaneous years was not much impressive for the government. The consumption of illicit liquor, meanwhile, also increased. In these circumstances, the government decided to reintroduce the *Out-still System* to collect more revenue and check illicit distillation. Some of the excise officers opposed this step while saying that along with the increase in excise revenue the reintroduction of the *Out-still System* would also increase intemperance. The government, however, dismissed this opinion and said that there were several other factors which had increased the drunkenness. The Government said liquor consumption had increased due to the growth in population. Besides, people started to spend more money on liquor with the increase in the earning. All these factors collectively led to the growth in excise revenue.²² At last, the government said that it would be wrong to identify the *Out-still System* for growing intemperance.

Table no. 2 (Excise revenue 1875 -1878)

Excises article	Year and collected revenue		
	1875-76	1876-77	1877-78
Revenue firm			
Country Spirit	25, 10,064	26,25,399	28,90,460
Rum	3,33,875	2,40,263	2,92,107
Imported wines and spirits	91, 078	94,244	1,04,501
Tari	6,07,172	6,23,085	6,36,693
Pachwai	1,06,472	1,23,572	1,33,529
Ganja	-----	1197116	13,83,657
Opium	-----	1235585	1315292

3) 1880-90

The slow growth and loss of revenue led the collectors of the several districts to ask the Government of Bengal to revise the excise policy in the decades of

²¹ March 1878, Finance Department (FD), Head: Excise, B proceeding, Col. No. 1, no. 32, WBSA.

²² November 1880, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, Excise Resolution for the year 1880, File no. 1, Collection no. 1, Sl. No. 60-61, WBSA.

1880. Thus, the government reintroduced the *Out-still System* in 1880. This decision of reintroduction of the *Out-still System* created some alternative voices within the administrative structure too. When the Bengal Board of Revenue wanted to start the *Out-still System* in Kolkata to generate more revenue, the excise department opposed that. The excise department argued that the role of the excise collector would reduce if the *Out-still System* were introduced in Kolkata.²³ The strong opposition came from the excise department too, and it led the revenue department to roll back their plan and to introduce the *Sudder Distilleries* in Calcutta under the supervision of Excise Superintendent of Calcutta.²⁴

A different kind of situation occurred in Darjeeling at the same period. The *Out-still System* was introduced in Darjeeling long ago, and this was the main source of revenue in this division. Despite the government decision of continuing with the *Out-still System* in the district, the tea garden owners and the missionaries of Darjeeling were continuously urging to introduce the *Central Distillery System* to control the growing intemperance among coolies of the tea-gardens. Finally, the government considered the demands of managers of the tea gardens and the numbers of *Out-stills*, which were 45 at the beginning of 1881, were reduced to 40 in April 1881. Later the Deputy Commissioner of the Darjeeling district had ordered the renewal of the license of 22 *Out-stills*, in the year of 1881. However, these government's steps of reduction of *Out-stills* was opposed by the Board of Revenue. A. Forbes, the secretary of Board of Revenue, Lower Province, opposed these government steps and argued that this huge reduction in the number of *Out-stills* would increase the illicit distillation and smuggling of liquor in the districts. Thus, he suggested that vigilance of the excise police needed to be increased if the government was determined to decrease the number of *Out-stills* in the area. Forbes had also mentioned the chances of revenue loss.²⁵ All of these predictions came true. On 1881 the government was informed that due to the

²³ February 1881, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no 1, Collection No. 2, Sl. No.2, WBSA.

²⁴ March 1881, FD/Ex, B Proceeding, File no. 1, Collection No. 1, Sl. No. 4, WBSA.

²⁵ April 1881, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 1, Collection no. 8, Sl. No. 8, WBSA.

closing of *Out-stills* in the area, smuggling of liquor from Nepal had started and the government faced a significant amount of revenue loss.²⁶

The colonial government was worried about the revenue loss. The government, to redeem the loss of revenue, expanded *Out-still System* in many other parts of the province where *Central Distillery System* was already introduced. For example, in spite of the missionaries' opposition, the government introduced the *Out-still System* in the Santhal Parghana in August 1881. By 1882, the *Out-still System* had been spread into the different parts of Lower Province of Bengal, like Midnapore and Nadia.

The Government's aim of collecting a good amount of revenue was fulfilled soon with the introduction of the *Out-still System* in different parts of the province. The government reports depicted that collection of revenue in 1882 was 85.50 lakh which was 13.50 lakh more than the collection of previous year. Besides, this revenue was 18.50 lakh more than the average revenue collected from the year of 1875-76 to 1879-80. The increase in revenue under the head of country spirit, *ganja*, opium and imported wines and spirits was also noticeable.²⁷ However, reduction in the liquor price due to the introduction of the *Out-still System* had been criticised by the temperance activists of Bengal.²⁸ Besides, the British Parliament and the GOI also started to pressurise the Government of Bengal to take certain steps to control the intemperance. However, the Government of Bengal did not want to sacrifice the revenue.

The Government of Bengal took some steps to control the intemperance and regulate the sale of liquor. The government took the first step by deciding the timing for the liquor shops. On June 1882, Lieutenant Governor fixed the timing of the liquor shops. He considered that it would be sufficient to allow the sale of liquors to effect up to 10 pm in summer and up to 9.30 pm in the winter. However, some of the officers doubted the

²⁶ August 1881, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 1, Collection no. 8, Sl. No.13, WBSA.

²⁷ January 1883, FD/Ex, Excise Administration Report, No. 23, India Office, London, 27th April 1882, WBSA.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

effectiveness of this regulation.²⁹ Despite this regulation, there was an increase in the sale of liquor. The government report pointed out that the government did not fix the excise duty on the liquor under the *Out-still System*.³⁰ Thus, the price of liquor totally depended on the will of the licensee. The licensed liquor shops, sometimes, sold alcohol at the cheapest rate under the temptation of promoting liquor consumption for profits. Hence, the government had been left with the options of considering the petition of the people against the growing intemperance, abandoning the *Out-still* distillation and reintroduced the *Sudder Distillery System*. The Secretary of State asked the Governor General of Council to follow the modified *Sudder Distillery* model of Madras Presidency.³¹ Later, the Secretary of State asked the Governor General in Council to carefully consider the matter and said “under the provincial contact system, the local government may be liable to the temptation of looking at the question too much from a revenue point of view, rather than the promotion of temperance and public morality, which ought to have the precedence in the determination.”³² Besides, the Secretary of States was continuously forcing the Government of India (GOI) to take steps to control the intemperance because a number of British philanthropists and well-wishers of Indian people started to discuss the question of growing intemperance among the Indians in the British parliament. Therefore, the British Parliament had pressurised the Secretary of State in India to take action on the existing excise policy in India by ‘maintaining the price of liquor at proper standerd, and diminishing the temptation of the intemperance’³³. Secretary of State in India forwarded these suggestions to the Governor General of India in Council. This growing tension between the colonial government and Indian social reformers and British philanthropists had shown the seeds of the temperance movement in India.³⁴

²⁹ June 1882, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no.4, Collection no. 1, Sl. No. 99, WBSA.

³⁰ A fixed amount of duty was implemented on the stills under the Sadder Distillery System. This system secured that no spirits would be sold below a minimum price. (See: January 1883, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 1, Collection no.1, Sl. No. 2-3, WBSA.)

³¹ Under this model number of shops and price of liquor was decided by the government.

³² January 1883, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 1, Collection no.1, Sl. No. 2-3, WBSA.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ See chapter 4 for more details.

However, neither the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal nor the Excise Commissioner of the Bengal considered or followed these suggestions made by the Secretary of State. They decided to continue with the old excise arrangements. The *Out-still System* was introduced in different parts of Bengal without considering the objection from the different officers and petition from the indigenous people.³⁵ As a result, criticism of Bengal's excise policy and GOI's pressure on the Government of Bengal to change the province's excise policy were continuing. Many excise officers, in this circumstance, suggested a number of solutions to control the situation of growing intemperance without scrapping the *Out-still System*.

Reverend J. M. Thoburn, on March 1884, gave a proposal of closing the liquor shops on Sunday in Kolkata. The government replied, they would go through this proposal before implication.³⁶ Further, it was notified that the government had failed to check the intemperance in spite of closing a large number of the liquor shop under pressure of public opinion. An investigation committee was set up to investigate the reasons for the failure of the government's initiatives.

The investigation report argued that there were different sources of liquor other than the distilleries and home brewing. The government, initially, had imposed the restriction on the home brewing.³⁷ However, government was compelled to allow the home brewing of liquor by the aboriginal people in some particular occasions. At the same time government also maintained that the amount of liquor brewed at home should only be appropriate for personal consumption. The Government Report of 1880 had said that there were several natural resources available in India from where one could get the fermented liquor easily, and one of these natural resources was the palm trees. The government report also argued that any poor person in the rural Bengal could brew the liquor from the palm juice. The excise department, therefore, imposed an excise tax on the palm trees and on February 1885, Government

³⁵ November 1883, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 9, Collection no. 1, Sl. No. 139-14, WBSA.

³⁶ March 1884, FD/Ex, B Proceeding, File no. 15, Collection no. 1, Sl. No. 57-58, WBSA.

³⁷ After realizing the amount of revenue collected from Santhal Parghana, Government imposed ban on the home brewing of the Santhals.

imposed penalties on some of the palm tree owners of 24-Parghana for the illicit manufacture of *tari* for personal consumption.³⁸

It has already been discussed that the government introduced the *Saddar Distillery* System in the Santhal Parghana, but later, it was replaced by the *Out-still System* to check the illicit manufacturing of liquor. The missionaries, working in Santhal Parghana criticised this government decision. Therefore, the excise department was forced to bring some changes in the excise policy of Santhal Pargana. Further, when the Government asked suggestion from the collectors of the several districts, the Collector of Bankura suggested that 'it would be quite feasible to introduce the proper system of fixing the excise fees upon the number of persons consuming *Pachwai* liquor instead of on quantity made by the distilleries.'³⁹ The collector said if the Excise Department would give the permission then he might introduce this system in the western part of Bankura where the home brewing of *Pachwai* was allowed. The Collector was optimistic about the fact that the Santhal community would also accept his proposal⁴⁰. He commented that the fee would change with the increase in the number of households. However, there were some problems in the implementation of this system. The Santhals preferred *Pachwai* than the country liquor. Thus, it would be hard to mobilise them toward distillery spirits. Besides, it became apparent after the government survey in the western part of the Bankura that the country liquor would not meet the demand of the population. Finally, the collector of Bankura said that his proposed system should be introduced 'into those Santhal villages only where the people were now allowed to brew *Pachwai* for themselves'. Besides, he also made it clear that the new system would be introduced without interfering with the existing arrangement of *Out-still*.⁴¹

³⁸ February 1885, FD/Ex, B Proceeding, File no. 1, Collection no.10, SI, No. 1, WBSA.

³⁹ July 1886, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 1, Collection no. 70, WBSA.

⁴⁰ The collector of the Bankura proposed that if the new system of taxing would apply on liquor then instead of calculating tax on the sold quantity of liquor, the tax would be calculated according to the *Pachwai* drinking population. He also argued that according to this system one Santhal village had hardly to pay one rupee per month. This might cause a loss of a huge amount of excise revenue.

⁴¹ July 1886, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 1, SI no. 170, WBSA.

The proposal of the Bankura's collector was criticised by the collector of Birbhum, Midnapore, and Burdwan. These collectors of latter districts argued that the new system would increase the smuggling and illicit distillation of country liquor. Besides, this system would become problematic for the daily labours who drunk according to their earning.⁴² The government, therefore, would face the loss of revenue after implementing the policy of 'making of unlimited *Pachwai* after paying fees of fixed amount'.⁴³ All these criticisms resulted in the rejection of the policy of implementing a tax on people consumed liquor rather the amount of liquor produced.

Meanwhile, the British temperance activists and some Bengali social reformers highlighted simultaneous growth in the excise revenue and in liquor consumption in Bengal from 1880 onwards due to the Government decision of re-introduction of the *Out-still System*.⁴⁴ The government replied to this criticism in the excise resolution of 1887 while saying that intemperance had increased due to illicit distillation. Further, the resolution also placed three proposals to check the the growing intemperance; first, by reintroducing the *Central Distillery System*; second, by controlling the location and number of the liquor shops⁴⁵, and third, by monitoring the sale. Further, the government was argued to legalise the home brewing of liquor. However, this proposal was rejected. The excise resolution of the year 1887 also proposed an excise law which would restrict the sale of liquor to the minor. Besides, the resolution also decided to incorporate some of the suggestions made by Baboo Barada Prasad Bagchi, secretary of the Murshedabad Association, like to make a limit for selling hours of liquor, not to establish new distilleries inside the towns and taking steps to decrease the consumption, prevent the illicit

⁴² The Collector of Bardwan said that most of the people were daily labors in this district and they mainly depended on the liquor shops. Besides, they got drunk when they have money in their hand and the consuming amount was varied from person to person. In this situation it would be bad decision to implement same tax on everyone. (July 1886, FD/Ex, A proceeding, File No.1, Sl. No.170, WBSA.)

⁴³ July 1886, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File No.1, Sl. No.170, WBSA.

⁴⁴ February 1887, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. Coll. No.1, Sl. No. 35, WBSA.

⁴⁵ In this resolution of February 1887, the Government argued that the liquor shop should be located near to the police station so the police could efficiently check and strictly supervise these liquor shops. (February 1887, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 8 Coll. No.1, Sl. No. 18, WBSA.)

distillation and smuggling. However, the government predicted a huge amount of loss after following these steps.

The government passed most of these the excise resolutions in February 1887 to control the intemperance. However, government continued with the same plan of extraction of more revenue. Thus, the government decided to schedule the opening hours of the liquor shops. The excise department opposed the idea of closing liquor shops before the sunset. The Excise Department argued that most of the liquor was sold from the evening to 9 p.m., because the labourers came to the liquor shop after the day long work with their salary. The finance department also agreed with the excise department and posed few question to the Government of India (GOI), like whether the timing of the liquor shops applied in general shops or only for the *Out-stills*. The Government of India (GOI) replied that the closing timing of the liquor shop would be same everywhere. To elaborate this point, the GOI stated that *Out-still* shops situated in the in the municipal town should be closed at 7 pm from the 1st November to 31st March and 8 pm for the rest of the years. Besides, the GOI also said that there would be no change in the timing of the *Sudder Distillery* Shops. They would close at the same time as it was earlier.⁴⁶

The Excise Department also faced the problem of adulteration of liquor along with the smuggling and illicit manufacturing of liquor. The government identified it as the reason for growing liquor consumption and introduced new technology to detect the adulterated liquor. They introduced Hydrometer along with some other apparatuses to measures the purity of the liquor. Additionally, a certain section of the government also decided to introduce *Patna Distillery System* as an experiment in some parts of Bengal. All these plans, however, failed to check the growing intemperance.

The Government of Bengal, in September 1888, prepared the proposal for the excise settlement for the year of 1889-90. This proposal decided to fix the number and production capacity of *Out-still*, along with the minimum price of liquor sold at the retail shop. A number of district officials opposed to

⁴⁶ February 1887, FD/Ex, A proceeding, File no.8, Collection no.1, Sl. No.21, WBSA.

this proposal. They argued that implementation of these proposals would lead to the loss of revenue, loss of customers, and unnecessary interference of police in the excise matters. Meanwhile, the growing strength of the Temperance Movement in Bengal had changed the government position on the drinking practice of the indigenous people. Some European temperance organizations, like Anglo-Indian Temperance Association, had abled to convince the Government that drunkenness among the Indians had increased due to the colonial excise policy. However, an alternative explanation of increase in alcohol consumption was developed among the colonial officials. They argued that increase in the income level of the people and growth in the population was responsible for the growing intemperance among the indigenous people.

The Government of Bengal's position on the growing intemperance among people had changed after 1888. A government report of 1888 claimed that drinking was a common practice in India, especially among the lower class and aboriginals. Government of Bengal stated that initiatives had always been taken to check the drunkenness by passing excise laws, establishing licensed liquor shops and imposing restriction on home brewing. However, all these measures failed because the general instinct of the common people of getting drunk remained unchanged and this was the main reason of growing intemperance.⁴⁷ This statement indicated that the colonial government accused Indians of being habitual drunkards and thus explained increased drunkenness in society. In fact, the colonial government considered themselves as the saviour of the Indians by introducing excise laws.

This explanation of Government of Bengal about the growing intemperance among the people did not satisfy the higher authority. The GOI and several temperance organizations were pressurising the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to bring changes in the excise policy. Therefore, Government of Bengal and the Excise Department of Bengal agreed to replace a number of *Out-stills* with *Sudder Distilleries* in 1889.⁴⁸ The Revenue

⁴⁷ December 1888, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File $E \frac{1D}{3} 1$, WBSA.

⁴⁸ February 1889, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File $E \frac{1D}{3} 1$, Col no. 1, Sl. No. 2 WBSA.

Department and the Excise Department of Bengal were forced to reintroduce *Sudder Distillery System* in the 24-Parguna, Howrah, Nadia, Midnapore, Khulna and some parts of Hooghly in February 1889.⁴⁹ Further, the GOI suggested the Bengal's Board of Revenue to follow the excise policy of the Bombay and Madras and introduced the similar policy in the Bengal Presidency. However, in Bengal the policy did not get implemented due to the opposition of the excise officers,⁵⁰ and the government refused to abolish the *Out-still Distilleries* totally. Later, in 1890, the Government of Bengal was forced to discard the *Out-still System* permanently under the pressure of GOI, the contemporary temperance movement, growing public awareness against drinking. The newly built public opinion pointed out alcohol was never a part of regular food for Indians, and it was always seen as an intoxicant. Some of the Temperance activists also asked the government to implement the total prohibition on the liquor consumption to save the people while sacrificing the revenue.⁵¹

The Government of Bengal failed to gain the confidence of Government of India through the excise resolution of 1889-90, passed before the abolition of *Out-still System* in 1890. This resolution only proposed the reduction of *Out-stills'* numbers, not complete abolition. On April 1889, the GOI began to enquire if slowly the government could abolish the *Out-still System* and suggested to the Government of Bengal to introduce a new system, i.e., Local Opinion System. GOI had stated that both the distillery systems (*Central Distillery System* and *Out-still Distillery System*) had its pros and cons. Thus, it would be very difficult to abolish any of them. In this situation, a committee with the local people consisting of both Hindu and Muslims was asked to be formed. The work of the committee was to suggest a distillery system after discussing with the local religious community and looking after the moral sentiments of the local people.⁵² However, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal questioned whether it would be possible to abolish the *Out-still System*

⁴⁹ February 1889, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1D}{3}$, Col no. 1, Sl. No. 2, WBSA.

⁵⁰ March 1888, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 25, Col no. 1, Sl. No. 42-45, WBSA.

⁵¹ February 1889, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{10}{2}$, Sl No. 1-4, WBSA.

⁵² April 1889, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1-0}{2}$, Sl. No. 5 – 7, WBSA.

permanently and the possibility of introduction of the 'Local Opinion' System in Bengal.⁵³

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, in reply to the GOI, wrote that many times government had tried to replace the *Out-still System* with *Central Distillery System*, but failed. He pointed out the main defect of the *Out-still System* was its inability to fix a minimum price on the liquor. Thus, low price alcohol attracted more people. He also said that opening of a large number of liquor shops also attracted people. Besides, the *Central Distillery System* also failed to check the drunkenness because it increased illicit distillation, smuggling of liquor due to the insufficient supervisor in the distilleries, and corrupt nature of the indigenous excise officers. *Central Distillery System*, therefore, caused the loss of huge amount of revenue. Few excise commissioners agreed to retain the *Out-still System* to compensate the loss of revenue. The government, however, took control over numbers of active *Out-still* and they started to reduce the numbers of *Out-stills* by 1886. At last, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal notified that they would like to reintroduce the *Central Distillery System* in Bengal, relocate the distilleries and liquor shops, restrict the production capacity of the distilleries, determine the strength and price of the liquor to check the growing intemperance. The Lieutenant Governor at the end of the first part of the letter stated that British excise policy was always good for the 'natives', but the excise policy failed due to the corrupt nature of the Indian employees of the excise department. Illicit distillation and drunkenness among the people were increasing with the help of these corrupt Indians.

To answer GOI's the second question which was related to the introduction of the 'public opinion' system at the local level, the Lieutenant Governor replied that it would be difficult to introduce the '*Local Opinion*' System. He said that before implementing this system a committee had to be formed and it was evident that all the members of the committee would be from the upper class. The absence of lower class representation would make the committee's decision biased. Because, the upper-class notion about

⁵³ Ibid., No.7, WBSA.

drinking was different from the lower class, and it was quite evident that the opinion of the upper-class would go against the lower-class' drinking culture. The inclusion of various religious groups in the committee would also complicate the situation, because every religion perceived a different view on drinking.⁵⁴ The Lieutenant Governor stated that the Bengal government, in spite of all these limitations, implemented the local opinion system and started to solicit the public opinions on various issues of excise matters, especially about the opening of new liquor shops.⁵⁵

4) 1890-1899

By January 1890, the Secretary of State finally approved the recommendation of the GOI on the abolition of *Out-still*, reintroduce *Central Distillery System* and implementation of the 'Local Opinion' System. Soon after this, the GOI asked the revenue department of Bengal to submit a detail reports on the result of the implementation of the *Central Distillery System*.⁵⁶ After receiving this despatch from GOI, the Government of Bengal re-introduced the *Central Distillery System* in parts of Bengal. Further, the government of Bengal made an extensive inquiry into the excise administration of several districts, especially of the tea districts of Bengal. In this process, the Bengal government drew the attention of GOI toward the location of the excise shops and withdrawal of the restriction from the home brewing of *murwa* liquor⁵⁷ in Darjeeling.⁵⁸ The final report submitted to the GOI said that most of the *Out-stills* in Bengal were already being closed, the relocation of the liquor shops in

⁵⁴ The Lieutenant Governor argued that both Hindus and Muslims had different perception on drinking practice. In Islam drinking was totally prohibited, thus, it was quite obvious that members of the Muslim community would oppose any kind of distillery system. Drinking was prohibited among the upper caste Hindus, but drinking habits was quite common among the lower caste Hindus. Thus, the upper caste Hindus would never allow the lower class drinking. (April 1889, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1-0}{2}$, Sl. No. 5 – 7, WBSA)

⁵⁵ It has already been discussed that how the Revenue Department and the excise department had modified the terms and conditions for granting the license on the basis of the objection from the local people. Besides, the police had been asked to enquire about the location and the public opinion before giving clearance for granting a license for a liquor shop.

⁵⁶ January 1890, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{10}{1}$, Sl. No. 1, WBSA.

⁵⁷ A kind of local fermented liquor, produced in of Darjeeling.

⁵⁸ February 1890, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{10}{4}$, Sl. No. 1, WBSA.

Darjeeling happened, and aboriginals of Darjeeling were permitted to brew 30 seers of liquor instead of 12 seers.⁵⁹

Reintroduction of the *Central Distillery System* in the year 1890 led to a great reduction in excise revenue. The government of Bengal, in this circumstance, decided to bring down the liquor price of the *Sudder Distillery* in December 1890. They implemented these rules in some particular *Sudder Distillery* areas where the demand of liquor and possibility of illicit distillation were high. The government of Bengal, to support this step, argued that in spite of the GOI's resolution no. 1709, dated 22nd March 1877, said, "the local duty on spirit and drugs must not be altered without the previous sanction of the Government of India", but in certain circumstances, this law can be modified. This modification empowered the local authority to decide the price of liquor.⁶⁰

The above step of the colonial government led to the composition and demand of the population determining the excise policy of a particular area. For instance, the Government reduced the liquor price in Raneegang colliery area. Raneegang area was crowded with a large population of coolies. Most of these coolies consumed liquor daily. Thus, when the abolition of the *Out-still System* led to the increase in liquor price, the government realised that this change would attract this drinking class to the cheap illicitly distilled liquor, and the government would face the loss of revenue. Hence, the price of the distilled liquor was decreased. The government of Bengal, however, decided to fix the price of liquor available in the area on the basis of its strength. This incident indicated that the Government's primary concern was revenue, not the welfare of the people. Therefore the demand of the liquor decided the price.

Some changes also happened in the excise policies after December 1893 due to the appointment of the Hemp and Drug Commission. After the submission of the report of this commission in 1895, the Indian government

⁵⁹ June 1891, Finance Department (FD)/ Head: Separate Revenue (SR), A Proceeding, File no. S. R $\frac{1D}{1}$, Sl. No. 4, WBSA.

⁶⁰ December 1890, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. E $\frac{1D}{7}$, Sl. No. 18, WBSA.

was forced to impose rules and regulation on the sale and usage of opium and *Ganja*. However, the GOI intentionally overlooked the committee's recommendation on the issue of liquor. Soon GOI's attention shifted from the excise problems after submission of the final report to the British Parliament, and with this government of Bengal once again tried to roll back the *Sudder Distillery System* and introduced the *Out-still System*. The Bengal Board of Revenue, for instance, decided to re-introduce *Out-still System* in Bankura along with the opening of new liquor shops at the coolie lines in Darjeeling in December 1895.

These approaches of the Government of Bengal were criticised by the different groups of people, in particular by the managers of the tea gardens and they wrote to the GOI to look into the matter. The Bengal Board of Revenue, on the demand of GOI, submitted a report to GOI while arguing that the allegations of the tea garden managers were baseless. The report stated that the newly opened liquor shops were situated on the government land and at quite distant from the coolie line. These shops were opened to check the smuggling of liquor from Bhutan. Further, the report also mentioned that licenses of the liquor shops in the tea-garden area were given after the prior permission of the tea-garden managers.⁶¹ This claim of the report of Bengal's Board of Revenue convinced the GOI that all the liquor shop in the area opened after conducting proper survey. Therefore, the GOI stopped giving further attention to the opposition of the tea-garden managers on the issue. Besides, during this time the entire attention of the GOI had shifted from alcohol consumption to control the sale and use of the hemp and opium.⁶²

Meanwhile, people's taste of liquor, particularly of the upper-class people, also changed. These groups of people had developed a taste for imported liquor, and as a result, the import of liquor from outside India increased. Therefore, the market was flooded with a good number of imported liquors. In this circumstance, the Government of Bengal took steps to regulate the business of imported liquor.

⁶¹ September 1896, FD/SR, B Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{15}{6}$, Sl. No. 42-46, WBSA.

⁶² October 1896, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{10}{9}$, Sl. No. 102, WBSA.

The revenue collected from the imported spirit in 1896-97 had increased 45.68% as compared to 1892-93, due to this change in the consumption pattern. This increase in revenue had drawn the government attention to the business of the imported spirits. The Government of Bengal became interested in the business of the imported spirit from 1894 onwards, with the increase in revenue. The Annual excise report of October 1894 had pointed out the issue of the business of imported liquor, and it was reported that the mostly methylated spirits had been imported to India. Later, this imported liquor was adulterated with wood naphtha or Eau-de-Cologne and bottled in with the labels of several European Liquor Companies. These adulterated liquors sold in the market. The government also identified that mostly these foreign methylated liquors were imported from Germany. To check this illegal practice, the board of excise and the government of Bengal decided to take two steps, administrative step and legal step. First, the government decided that it was necessary to examine the methylated spirits before selling them in the market.⁶³ Therefore, the government appointed a good number of chemical examiners. In spite of these measures, the excise department of Bengal failed to stop adulteration. Besides, the government also tried to check the adulteration by taking legal steps. The government passed a resolution on 18th August 1894. The resolution said that ‘goods bringing the names of British Indian firms, but produced beyond the limits of the United Kingdom or British India’ were ‘liable to detention unless the origin of the goods is indicated on the same label as that on which the name appears’. Besides, liquors imported from England only were allowed to be sold in India.⁶⁴

By 1900, a good number of foreign spirits became available in Kolkata’s market.⁶⁵ Along with the adulterated liquor, the market was flooded with duplicate spirits with the hallmark of reputed alcohol companies. Thus, On October 1900, the *Calcutta Wine and Beer Association* brought this malpractice to the notice of the government and suggested that government

⁶³ May 1897, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1E}{2}$, Sl. No. 17-35, WBSA.

⁶⁴ September 1896, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1-A}{1}$, Sl. No. 14, WBSA.

⁶⁵ More information on the imported spirits available in the Kolkata markets had been given in the chapter 5.

should take steps under the law of *Sea Customs Act*. According to this law, the Government could cancel the license of any liquor shop owner found guilty of such malpractice.⁶⁶ It can easily be understood that government took all these steps to save the revenue department from a huge loss. Table no. 3 shows that after 1896, the revenue collected under the head of imported spirits decreased. Following that, the government became conscious about the imported liquor business and took measures mentioned above which led to revenue increase in subsequent years.

After 1895, when the attention of the GOI shifted from the excise issue, and the British parliament also became busy with the report of the *Hemp Drug Commission*, the Government of Bengal and the Excise Department once again re-introduced *Out-still System* in different areas of the Bengal province. As a result, during 1895 and 1896, the collection of revenue from the country spirit and *Tari* had increased gradually than the earlier years.

Table no: 3 (Excise revenue of the Lower Province of Bengal, 1892-1900)

Excise Articles	1892-93	1893-94	1894-95	1895-96	1896-97	1897-98	1898-99	1899-1900
Country Spirit	50,30,143	52,52,098	55,61,516	59,80,461	60,80,461	55,81,012	60,97,793	65,13,739
Rum	4,19,717	4,35,308	4,32,227	4,66,296	4,18,780	4,14,665	3,15,613	3,34,325
Imported Spirit	2,02,092	2,33,162	2,81,588	2,87,995	2,94,420	2,91,635	3,06,350	3,11,363
Beer	193	224	538	485	507	726	5,449	5,153
Tari	9,50,379	10,16,375	9,97,852	10,24,031	10,10,481	10,14,265	10,28,219	10,44,663
Pachwai	3,34,557	3,46,518	3,82,336	4,39,284	4,43,481	3,70,843	4,46,441	4,89,873
Charas	9,097	10,776	15,888	17,985	19,932	19,932	22,058	23,625
Siddhi	53,558	55,752	55,394	59,498	65,564	64,083	67,240	65,164
Majnum	1,984	2,069	2,119	1,710	1,495	1,482	1,493	1,558
Madak	79,689	78,379	89,439	77,332	---	---	---	---
Chandu	31,032	24,476	27,624	30,360				
Spirits Used For arts	1,006	337	390	1,097	812	126	322	1415
Ganja	23,86,066	25,35,045	24,92,755	26,80,819	27,31,522	26,57,452	27,20,140	26,99,767
Opium	20,85,635	21,34,867	22,13,721	23,65,129	23,25,603	23,18,598	24,01,026	24,54,877

⁶⁶ October 1900, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. E $\frac{14}{1}$, Sl. No. 1, WBSA.

Miscellaneous	10,413	10,910	12,468	13,844	17,862	13,240	15,086	20,462
Total	1,16,006 21	1,21,37,09	1,25,67,855	1,33,77,705	1,34,10,579	1,27,48,059	1,34,27,228	1,39,65,984

Thus we see that a decrease in revenue and the change in the people taste in liquor consumption once again led to the revision of the Bengal's excise policy after 1896. Soon the revised excise policy was implemented, and the excise revenue also started to increase gradually.

5) 1901-1908

The government had tried to control the quality of the liquor while implementing the regulation on the business of the imported liquor. With time government also planned to determine the limit on the retail sale of imported liquor. In 1903 the Board of Revenue decided to increase the limit of the retail sale of spirit and fermented liquor imported by sea. Earlier the limit of this retail sale was two imperial gallons, but from 1st April 1904 onwards the government decided to increase the limit up to 4 imperial gallons. With the help of this law, the Bengal's Board of Revenue wanted to gain the confidence of the retail sellers of the imported spirits, so these sellers revealed the actual amount of liquor imported by them. Besides, the government also wanted that the licensee seller of imported liquor kept themselves away from the adulteration of the imported liquor.⁶⁷

Many districts' officers of Bengal argued after passing the regulation that the government decision of increasing the limit of selling of imported liquor would hardly leave any impact on the districts' excise revenue, other than Kolkata. These district officers argued that people in the districts had hardly consumed imported liquor and if they consumed then they usually bought one bottle at a time. The *Calcutta Wine and Spirit and Beer Association* also agreed with this opinion of the districts' excise officers. However, the Association said that it would be better to raise the limit on the

⁶⁷ December 1903, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. E $\frac{1L}{4}$ L, Sl. No. 13-14, WBSA.

retail sale than to increase the fees for the wholesale license and supported the government initiative.⁶⁸

The Government, meanwhile, was moving towards the modification of excise law. Certain changes could be noticed in the government's attitude in this process. During this time Bengal's excise policy was addressing three things, first, to decide the nature of the distillery system; second to regulate the sale of the newly imported medicated wines; and third, disciplining the drinking places. The influence of the Victorian ideology and the pressure from the British Parliament played a crucial role in bringing changes in the excise law and motivated the colonial government to pass certain excise laws while addressing some social issues. To check the intemperance among the adolescent, the Excise Bill of 1903 passed a law which prohibited the sale of alcohol to any children less than 12 years. This Law also mentioned that the owners of liquor shops could not appoint women and children as a worker. Violation of these rules could lead to the heavy fine or incarceration on the liquor shop's owner.⁶⁹

The government also looked at the matter related to the country spirit. After the abolition of the *Out-still System* in 1890, the revenue collected from the country spirit had not increased much. However, at the same time, the Revenue Department of Bengal had gone through the loss of revenue because of the increase in the illicit distillation. To solve this problem, the Board of Revenue proposed to colour distillery liquor with the new dye system in February 1903. The government argued that this technique would help to differentiate Government distillery liquor from the illicitly distilled liquor. The Excise Department agreed to introduce this system in the distilleries of Burdwan and Patna division along within the districts of Monghyr, Bhagalpur, and Hazaribagh.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, as it has been discussed, liquor consumption pattern of people also changed. People preferred to consume imported liquor than the country liquor because of two reasons, first spreading of general awareness that imported liquor was less injurious to health, and second the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ December 1903, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{10}{5}$, Sl. No. 16, WBSA.

⁷⁰ February 1903, FD/SR, B proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1D}{2}$, Sl. No. 129-133, WBSA.

easy availability of the foreign liquor in the market. However, in March 1906 the Excise Department revised the duty on liquor and increased the duty on imported spirit. Besides both of the excise department and Board of Revenue realised that both of the existed distillery systems failed to generate good amount of revenue. Therefore, they agreed to abandon both the *Out-still System* and *Central Distillery System* and introduced the *Contract Distillery System*.⁷¹

All these changes in the excise policy affected the revenue collected from the different heads of the excise department. In 1907, the revenue collected from the country spirit had been increased by 32% as compared to 1896-97. Revenue collected from the imported spirits had gone down by 8.8% over the same period. One reason for this fall in the revenue collected from the imported spirit was the change in the excise policy for imported wine and spirits. The market had been flooded with the imported liquor in the name of medicine from 1902 onwards. As a result, a number of medical shops started to sell imported liquor. The government circulated a notification while setting the limit of the sale of the imported liquor and determining the strength of the liquor to stop this malpractice. The notification said that the strength of the medicinal wine should be less than 40 per cent London proof. Any medicine contained alcohol of 42 percent strength or more than that would consider as wine, and the chemists were not allowed to sell them. Violation of these rules would lead to the cancellation of the license of the chemist.⁷² Besides, the growth of the Swadeshi movement also changed the demand for foreign liquor. The picketing of liquor shops and destruction of the foreign goods during the Swadeshi movement affected the business of the foreign liquor.

The government also paid attention to disciplining the drinking place after 1907. A new notion had been developed within the government administrative. This notion argued that the intemperance could be controlled by regulating the drinking place. Several temperance organizations in Bengal agreed with this statement. Some of these organizations came forward to help

⁷¹ March 1906, FD/SR, A proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1C}{2}$, Sl. No. 65, WBSA.

⁷² October 1906, FD/SR, A proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1-D}{7}$, Sl. No. 7, WBSA.

the government to discipline the drinking place. Thus, two issues became important in the government's excise agenda in 1907. The first agenda was to decide the maximum number of liquor shops and the number of licenses for distribution. The second agenda was to decide the ambiance of the liquor shop. The GOI intervened into the process and suggested that the local people should determine the numbers of the distilleries and liquor shops in an area. Because, sometimes less number of shops in a populated area led the liquor shops owners to fix the price of liquor at a high rate, and the high priced liquor resulted in the illicit distillation. Therefore, the provincial government should form a local committee at different administrative levels to fix the required number of liquor shops in an area. The population of the area needed to consider as a determiner factor in this process. Further, the opening hours of the shops needed to be fixed by the Provincial Government and the Excise Department and liquor shops owners were instructed not to sell liquor to some particular group of people. Besides, the Provincial Government asked to keep a record of the amount of liquor sale so the details could be produced during the publication of the Annual Administrative Report. Lastly, the GOI also directed an increase in the duty on the imported liquor.⁷³ The GOI wanted to keep constant vigilance on the Government of Bengal, and Excise Department while asking them to follow the rules.

The Government of Bengal followed the instruction of the Government of India and formed local committees in different places from 1906 onwards. Local excise officers and the police officers both became active and tried to check the illicit distillation along with the distillation of liquor. Excise sub-inspectors of different areas visited local liquor shops on market days and stopped the liquor shop owners to sell alcohol to an intoxicated person and children. Besides, the government closed several *Out-stills* in the villages, introduced *Central Distillery System*, and several shops were asked to change their locations.⁷⁴ The excise department and the government of Bengal decided to introduce *Contract Distillery System* in the entire province, raising the duty on the liquor and decreasing the strength of liquor to control the

⁷³ January 1907, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1D}{6}$, Sl. No. 6, WBSA.

⁷⁴ August 1907, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1-P}{6}$, Sl. No. 1, WBSA.

intemperance after following the recommendations of the local committees.⁷⁵ In June 1908, the Board of Revenue formed a local executive committee to redistribute the liquor shops in Kolkata, and this committee had submitted a full report on the existed liquor shops in Kolkata. The report recommended that the number of liquor shops was more than the required number. Thus, the committee suggested to close a number of liquor shops. However, the president of the Committee, who was a British officer, argued this step would lead people towards illicit liquor.⁷⁶

6) Excise Policy and Revenue Collection

The discussion of the liquor policy of Colonial Bengal from 1856 to 1908 indicated that the Government of Bengal hardly followed the instruction of the GOI in the long term, especially to control the intemperance after 1880. Whatever the ideological differences, none of the government wanted to compromise the revenue. The revenue statistic of the years 1856-1908 shows that the amount of excise revenue increased every year except 1897-98 in spite of taking several steps to control the intemperance (See: Table 3). Thus, one needs to examine the excise policy and excise revenue actually in a collected manner. Such a study helps to trace the connection between the excise policy and excise revenue collection, as well as to trace the pattern of growth in excise revenue. This study has chosen the excise revenue data, collected from different heads, after the interval of each ten years, like, the year of 1856-57, 1866-67, 1876-77, 1886-87, 1896-97 and 1906-07 to discuss these things in the context of the period of 1856-1908. Table no 4 has provided all the excise revenue data collected in these years.

The revenue data of the 1856-57 does not separately provide the amount of revenue collected from all the different heads but only spirits, hems and opium. Opium was a lucrative source of excise revenue for years. Collection of revenue from liquor in the year 1856-57, however, was much higher than opium (liquor: 27,19,856 rupees, opium: 9,35,157 rupees). Imposing restriction on opium cultivation, and bringing the liquor business

⁷⁵ March 1908, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1-0}{2}$ 3, Sl. No. 1, WBSA.

⁷⁶ June 1908, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{1c}{3}$, Sl. No. 20-21, WBSA

under the government's control by illegalising the home brewing were forcing people to buy liquor from the licensed shops leading to this change in the pattern of revenue collection. During 1866-67, the amount of revenue collected from different heads of liquor had gone down by 47.55%.

Table no: 4 (Comparing the Excise Revenue, 1856-1908)

Revenue farm	Year and collected revenue (Rupees) ⁷⁷					
	1856-57	1866-67	1876-77	1887-88	1896-97	1907-08
Country Spirit	27,19,856 ⁷⁸	827274	2625399	5205042	6080461	9401075
Rum		-----	240263	80885	418780	-----
Imported wines and spirits		53365	94244	233083	294420	268288
Tari		470610	623085	727787	1014265	1182201
Pachwai		75241	123572	201216	370843	615945
Ganja		-----	810346	1197116	2245020	2731522
Opium	9,35,157	1862326	1235585	1984096	2325603	2619207

This decrease in revenue in the year 1866-67 forced the Bengal of Government to change in their liquor policy. Hence, the government had introduced *Out-still System* in 1870. As a result, the price of country spirit had gone down and increased in the sale of country liquor could be noticed. This increase in the sale of country liquor led to the collection of 217% more revenue from the head of country spirit than the year of 1866-67. Besides, collection revenue from the other heads of liquor also increased. For example, the growth in revenue from the excise heads like imported spirits, *Tari* and *Pachwai* in the year 1876-77 as compared to 1866-67 were as follows, 76%, 32% and 64% respectively.

This continuous increase in the excise revenue got the attention of the social reformers and British temperance activists. The GOI, under the pressure of social reformers and philanthropists, asked the Government of Bengal to bring change in the excise policy and reintroduced the *Central Distillery System* while abandoning the *Out-still System*. Following these order the sale

⁷⁷Data has been provided according to availability.

⁷⁸ In the year 1856-57 there was no indication of the revenues collected form the different kinds of spirits. Instead of mentioning the different heads of liquors, it accumulated all the revenue collected from the different head of spirits, if mentioned only one head, i.e., Spirits and Drugs.

of country liquor was affected and it led to a fall in the rate of increase of revenue collection. In the year of 1886-87, the increase in the revenue under the head of country spirits was only 50% over the year 1876-77 while the increase of revenue between 1866-67 and 1876-77 was more than 200%. This relative decline in the sale of country spirit, however, was compensated by increase of the sale of imported spirit and wine. The revenue collection in 1986-87 from the heads of imported liquor, *Tari* and *Pachwai* increased by 147%, 16% and 62% as compared to revenue collected in the year 1876-77. The appointment of the *Hemp and Drug Commission* and the pressure from the British Parliament had forced the Government of Bengal to close a number of liquor shops and abolish the *Out-still System* at the end decade of 1880. All these steps ultimately brought down the sale of the country spirits. Henceforth, the revenue collected from country spirit from the year 1886-87 to 1896-97 increased by a mere 16%, much lower than the earlier decades. It does not mean that the intemperance had been checked. At the same time, the sale of imported liquor increased and revenue collected from this head had gone up continuously since 1866-67 till 1896-97. Simultaneously, revenue collected from *Tari* and *Pachwai* also increased continuously over the decades. The Government of Bengal had argued that revenue was increasing due to the increase in licenses fees, growth in the people's income and an increase in the population and not because of growing intemperance.

Several changes had happened in the colonial excise policy due to the pressure on the Government of Bengal from the higher authority and the socio-political changes after 1896-97. After the submission of the *Hemp and Drug Commission's* report, the Government of Bengal once again introduced the *Out-still System* while replacing the *Central Distillery System*. This led to the reduction in the price of country liquor. Besides, demand for imported liquor went down because of the change in the government policy regarding the sale of imported liquor which led to a price hike. Also, under the influence of Swadeshi movement many people had abandoned foreign liquor. The Excise Committee Report of June 1908 mentioned that the total import of liquor in Bengal during the year 1907-08 had increased by 16 per-cents in volume and 17 per-cents in value from the previous year. Imports of ale beer

and port also increased three-per-cents in quantity and eight per-cents in value. The Government report argued that the growing demand for beer among the British troops caused the increase in the import of foreign liquor in India. However, there was a decrease of 8.8% in the revenue collection from the imported liquor in 1907-08 as compared as to the year 1896-97. Contrary to this, revenue collected from the head of country spirit in the same year went up by 54% in comparison to 1896-97.

Thus, after analysing all these revenue data of the 56 years, it can be said that there was a continuous growth in the collection of excise revenue. The increase in total excise revenue collected from the different heads of liquor from the year 1856 to the year of 1907-08 was 321.62%. The government excise policy, indeed, was the main reason for this increase. However, the government stated that in spite of taking several steps, from implementing alternative distillery systems to following the instruction of the GOI to control the liquor consumption, the revenue collected from the country spirit saw a continuous growth. The Government of Bengal, while identifying the reason for this growth in revenue, stated that Indians, being 'habitual drunkards' spent good amount of money on liquor. Hence, the excise and intemperance had increased.

(II)

Identifying the Offence and Disciplining Offenders

The discussion on the excise policy of Lower Province of Bengal from 1856 to 1908 has clearly indicated that Government tried to make a strong administrative structure to extract a good amount of excise revenue while making the excise laws. However, this extraction of revenue was not an easy task for the Bengal government. Important challenges came in the collection of revenue, such as need to discipline the drinking practice of the people and make it sure that these 'disciplined' drinkers would buy legal spirits from the government distilleries. The government passed several excise laws to discipline the drinking pattern of people, and violation of these laws was considered as an offence and criminalised. The government, in this process, identified home brewing of liquor as an illegal activity and considered the

consumption of Government distilleries' liquor as legal. These regulations brought the pleasure of drinking under the scrutiny of law and disobedience of these regulations was detected as an offence. In this way, the colonial government drew a link between drinking and crime. While drawing the connection between the drinking and offence, the colonial government was deeply influenced by the notion of drinking that prevailed in England during the nineteenth century.

From the sixteenth-century onward drunkenness was seen as a crime in England. The perception of drinking among the people had changed in England with the development of medical science in the second half of the nineteenth century. Medical science saw drunkenness as a disease rather than a crime. The colonial government's perception in India, therefore, was affected by two ideas while dealing with problems of the liquor business and drinking habit of the people. Thus, on the one hand, the colonial government identified the violation of excise laws as crime, and on the other hand, the drinkers were identified as offenders. Besides, the government identified Indians as 'habitual drunkards', therefore, the notion of the 'white man's burden' also motivated them to discipline the drinking habit of the Indians. These two notions had shaped approaches of Government of Bengal further. Later, the Government of Bengal brought the Police Department into the picture to discipline the drinking habit of the people. This government approach of bringing police department and excise department together to solve various problem related to the excise department led to the several clashes between the Excise Department and Police Department, and this highlighted the internal conflict of the colonial administrative structure.

(1)

The colonial government, in the process of making of a 'disciplined' drinker, first started to identify the offences related to the liquor consumption and liquor business. It has already been discussed that the ban on home brewing and legalising only the government distilleries liquor were the starting point of identifying the offence. The nature of offense also changed with time. The Government identified illicit distillation, smuggling and adulteration of liquor

as serious offenses. Any activity that led to the loss of Government revenue were identified as a crime.

Illicit distillation which was a serious offence for the colonial Government from 1856 onwards increased under the *Central Distillery System*. It has already been discussed as to how the *Central Distillery System* established control over the consumption pattern and increased revenue. The system, however, had faced several problems soon after its implementation, like corruption of the distillery workers as well as the corruption among the excise officers, non-payment of taxes by the liquor shops' owners and smuggling of the liquor. Besides, people preferred liquor from illicit distillation for its low price over the government licensed liquor shops. Therefore, the government sought for the police intervene to check all these unlawful activities. The administrative report of the Board of Excise said that success of the *Central Distillery System* depended on the constant vigilance of the police to check the illicit distillation. The provision of getting a reward for detecting the illegal distillation and smuggling of liquor encouraged police to stay alert about this matter. The continuous increase in the number of arrests had shown the active participation of the police in the process. The numbers of arrests done by the police force after the passing of the Excise Bill of 1856 and official introduction of the *Suddar Distillery System* in Bengal were as follows;

Year	Arrests
1863	867
1865	1500
1867	1149
1875-76	2596

In the decade of 1870, the number of convictions for illicit distillation increased substantially. In 1875-76 the number of conviction for illicit distillation had become 2596.⁷⁹ The government was convinced that the death rate and crime had increased due to the increase in drunkenness.⁸⁰ In this situation, the interference of police in the excise matters had increased. The

⁷⁹ September 1877, RD/ MR/ Ex, A Proceeding, Collection no. 1, Number. 41, WBSA.

⁸⁰ February 1875, RD/ MR/ Ex, A Proceeding, Col. No. 1, No.22, WBSA.

vigilance of the police department had generated an internal conflict within government administration. The excise department became critical about the role of the police department. The excise department pointed out the inefficient vigilance of the police department. As a result, some changes had happened in the working process of the police in 1868-69. The government had asked the police department to take an excise officer during the time of vigilance.

The relation between the excise department and police department had deteriorated over time. In 1874-75 a government board critically examined all the cases investigated by the police. The investigation board pointed out that four-fifth of the accused persons had been brought to trial by the agency of the regular police and only 390 by the assistance of the excise department. It shows that most of the time police department had arrested people without following the excise law and without any evidence. Excise department argued that the police department made these arrests for getting rewarded. The continuous objection from the excise department on the interference of the police on excise matters initiated the government to increase the power of the *Abkari darogas* as well as making the excise department more centralised. Besides, the government also requested to make the excise administration more centralised. At the same time, the government of Bengal also gave emphasis on the point that it would not be possible to check the illicit distillation without the help of police department because police had always been efficient to trace the illegal manufacture of liquor. The Government argued that cooperation of the police in this matter was necessary because the police department had a good network of informers and could plan a proper investigation work. Further, the police would discipline people in a lawful manner on the basis of the result of investigation.⁸¹

Excise department was opposed the government's idea of taking help from the police department on the excise issue. Several excise officers from the districts of the lower province pointed out that police had failed to check the illicit distillation in several places. The collector of Murshidabad wrote

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

that there were nine *thanas*⁸² in the districts with no liquor shops, and the people of these areas were known as great drinkers. Thus, it was quite clear that the drinkers of these areas got liquor from illegal liquor shops, situated in the bazars. The police, however, did not take any action against them. Despite these criticisms, police involvement had increased in the different sectors of the excise department. The incident highlighted the growing tension between the excise department and police department.

Along with smuggling and illicit distillation, adulteration of liquor also became a problem for the government from 1880's onward and the government took help from the police to control adulteration. However, the tendency of the adulteration by the brewer surprisingly increased in some cases after the introduction of the *Out-still System*. Thomas Evans, a missionary of the Monghyr reported⁸³:

One evil effect of the present extraordinary cheapness of the drink is the foul adulteration of the stuff now offered for sale. The *daroo* distilled at the old government distilleries was the pure essence of the *Mahooa* fruit, or the rice from which it was made and though it was intoxicating, yet taken moderately; it was not so injurious to the constitution. Not so however with the wretched concoction which is now sold as daroo, and which is drugged and corrupted with all manner of cheap and nasty narcotics, simply to make it strong and to make a little of real stuff go as far as possible. For Government distilled daroo, the people had to pay eight annas and twelve annas per bottle, while the present stuff is sold largely adulterated by those who make it, without which they could not sell it at such a low rate as six pieces or two annas per bottle.

Thomas Evans, further mentioned that the distillery liquor was mostly diluted with nux-vomica and '*dhatoora*'. As a result, people became addicted to liquor and consumed more. This adulteration of liquor, however, was injurious to health. Evans, to prove the existence of toxic materials in distillery liquor, bought a bottle of cheap liquor from two distilleries of Monghyr and sent them to the Government for chemical examination. He argued that examination of

⁸² Police stations

⁸³ Aug 1881, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 8, Collection no. 1, No. 29, WBSA.

the liquor was needed for the physical and moral good of the deluded people.⁸⁴ This act of Evans forced the government to examine the two bottles of liquor. After the chemical examination of these two bottles, the Government declared that it had been found that they contained ‘a slightly turbid fluid of the most harmless character with only 10.96 and 13.43 per cent respectively of the London proof spirit by volume’⁸⁵. However, there was no trace of drug in them.

Later, the Board of Revenue ordered the collection of liquor samples from the various *Out- stills* from the districts of Bhagalpore, Monghyr, Gaya, Nadia, Hooghly, and Patna to check the liquor quality. Further, samples of alcohol were collected from the *Sudder Distilleries* of Hooghly, Nadia and Santhal Parghana and were sent for the chemical examination. The report of the chemical examination stated that all the samples were free from the poisons adulteration of vegetable or mineral components. However, the trace of copper or zinc were detected in certain samples of *Out-stills* as well as of *Sudder Distillery* liquor. According to the chemical examiners, this had happened accidentally due to the usage of brass or copper vessels in the manufacture or storage of the liquor.⁸⁶ This report helped the government to deny all the allegations against state’s distilleries. It also argued that the main concern of the government excise policy was to ensure the welfare of the people of India and thus the Government distilleries always provided good quality liquor. However, it was the corrupt nature of indigenous people which indulged in illegal activities, like adulteration of liquor. Besides, the report also mentioned that government was determined to punish these offenders. The list below shows the number of people arrested for illicit distillation from 1854 to 1876. The list also highlighted the actual number of convicts, number of people sent to jail and amount of fine impose on them. The number of arrests also denoted how the government excise policy perceived the process of illicit distillation.

⁸⁴ Oct. 1881, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 8, Collection no. 1, serial no. 44, WBSA.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Table no: 5 (Number of arrests, Convicted, and imprisonment for the malpractice related to liquor business and amount of fine impose on the convicted)

Year	Number of Person			Amount of fine			
	Arrested	Convicted	Imprisoned	Fine Imposed	Fine Realised	Fine Distribute	Special Rewards
1854-55	1593	910	254	18,439	7,617	-	-
1855-56	1240	786	171	19,550	5822	-	-
1856-57	805	492	122	25,559	4,598	-	-
1857-58	588	311	86	9,469	3,119	-	-
1858-59	662	360	91	12501	5547	-	-
1859-60	932	541	190	17075	5396	2623	-
1860-61	798	491	120	11,938	6888	2768	-
1861-62	823	494	150	16204	5,767	2404	-
1862-63	1042	680	199	14492	6767	-	-
1863-64	867	494	149	14778	7075	4284	-
1864-65	1089	697	238	25365	12071	7034	349
1865-66	1600	1104	320	41945	18,985	14428	1091
1866-67	1149	884	428	37009	13966	9809	2170
1867-68	1321	1036	310	31631	16015	10678	1538
1868-69	1404	1078	259	34904	17885	14015	875
1869-70	1716	1398	373	42252	21397	14605	690
1870-71	1576	1312	263	27337	16141	9774	857
1871-72	1561	1191	208	21713	14239	8435	796
1872-73	2055	1676	337	42802	23320	16205	2898
1873-74	2351	1881	305	52042	26,212	20626	6294
1874-75	2032	1649	301	42116	21449	16065	3447
1875-76	2596	2158	335	51914	28163	19697	3361

By the end of the century, the colonial government almost abolished all *Out-stills* from the different parts of the provinces which led to the increase in the price of liquor. As a result, both the smuggling of liquor and illicit distillation began in many districts. Such a case, for example, was registered in Nadia. On December 1896, four people were caught for carrying country spirit from Chandannagar to Ranaghat subdivision of Nadia. The judicial trial against them had proceeded at the office of the joint magistrate of subdivision the under the *Section 61A of Act VII (B.C) of 1878*, as amended by the act of 1881, for illegal possession of foreign liquor. H. H. Risky, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal Finance Department, argued that this kind of activity of smuggling liquor was very common and due to this government had suffered revenue loss.⁸⁷

The Excise Administrative Report of the year 1899-1900 stated that many people were convicted of illicit distillation and smuggling of *Out-stills*'

⁸⁷ December 1896, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. E $\frac{1-F}{1}$ 3, WBSA.

liquor in the *Central Distillery areas*.⁸⁸ The government succeeded in identifying the offenders and arrested them with the help of the detective officers of the Excise Department. The uncooperative attitude of the Local *zamindars* and the local people in tracing the illegal brewing caused inconvenience to the government in suppressing the offences. Therefore, many people indulged in adulteration and illicit distillation with the help of local authority. The government gave an example of *Sundi* community of Bankura which indulged in illicit brewing. The local authority, however, did not take any action against them. Hence, intemperance had increased among the people. While identifying the illicit distillation and unlawful attitude of the Bengalis as reasons for growing intemperance, the government report mentioned another such incident.

The report argued that there was a case of illicit distillation of liquor reported in Calcutta by a chairman of the municipal area. The chairman reported that the brewing of the illegal liquor was happening in a *China Pattern Still* in a scheduled part of the suburb. A large quantity of liquor was found at the convict's place, and the convict used to sell liquor only to his countrymen. The government brought the convict to trials and imposed fine. The government, while describing the cases of the other distilleries, showed how the native people indulged in the illegal activities. The excise report, while talking about the illicit distillation smuggling in the hill district, stated that in this area liquor was mostly smuggled from Nepal and Bhutan for the lower class people who worked as labour and tea garden Coolies. The police had convicted 19 people for liquor smuggling in Jalpaiguri district and five people for illicit distillation and 13 people for smuggling liquor in Darjeeling. The list of the accused people with the charge of liquor trafficking and illicit distillation of liquor at the several distillery divisions for the year 1899-1900 is given below⁸⁹;

⁸⁸ October 1900, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $\frac{1R}{1}$, Sl No. 41-45, WBSA.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Table no: 6 (Number of convict for Illicit Distillation and Smuggling of *Out-still* Liquor)

Distillery areas	Convict for illicit distillation	Convict for smuggling of <i>Out-still</i> liquor
Burdwan	13	3
Birbhum	3	-
Bankura	61	31
Midnapore	33	31
Hooghly	19	-
Howrah	-	-
24 parghanas	43	3
Calcutta	1	-
Nadia	-	5
Murshidabad	1	1
Jassore	-	-
Khulan	-	-

Comparison between the offenders' statistic provided in table no 5 and table no 6 indicated the number of convicts reduced from the early years, and there were certain reasons for this reduction. Earlier most of the arrest had been made by the Police Department, and their aim was to arrest as many people as possible and claimed the reward. Thus, they hardly follow rules of the excise department. This became a conflict point for both the excise and police department. The number of convicts for illicit distillation began to fall from 1890 with the appointment of excise detective. These newly appointed excise detectives aware of the excise laws and they arrested while following the excise rules and verifying all the evidence. Besides, coming of new cheap liquor in the market and easy availability of the liquor also reduced people's urge for the illicit distillery liquor. For instance, the statistic of 1899-1900 indicated that no individual had been convicted for smuggling of liquor in the Kolkata. This happened because of the market of Kolkata was flooded with different kind low-cost spirit at this time.

The colonial government, however, took some lenient steps to control the illicit distillation and adulteration under the pressure of public opinion. The Government of Bengal and excise department decided to change the excise law and gave permission to the aboriginal people to brew a certain amount of the liquor at home in certain occasion. In Darjeeling, the excise department did not impose the tax on the private brewing, but set the limit for the brewing and possession the liquor. In 1881-82, this limit of home brewing was fixed as 12

seers, which was reduced to 4 seers in 1888. The local officer assumed that it might drive people to *Out-still* and would help generate revenue.⁹⁰ Besides, the colonial government started to use scientific apparatuses to identify offence linked with the liquor brewing. In this process, the excise department of Bengal appointed a number of chemical examiners, and the introduced a number of scientific apparatus to check the adulteration in liquor in 1889.

In spite of all these steps, the adulteration of liquor during 1890s continued. The GOI, therefore, forced the government of Bengal to abolish the *Out-still System*. At last, the government of Bengal suggested the excise department to colour state's distillery liquor with the new dying technology in 1903. The government argued that using of this method would help the excise department to differentiate the state distilleries' liquor from illicit and adulterated liquor.⁹¹ In 1903 while passing the excise bill, the government indicated that imposing a good amount fine would be the punishment for the adulteration of alcohol.

(2)

Identification of the offence related to the liquor brewing and deciding the punishment for these offences led to another question, i.e., how to implement these laws to discipline the drinkers. The GOI suggested two steps to the Government of Bengal to discipline the drinkers; first to modify the drinking pattern of the people and second, to check the illicit distillation. Therefore, the matters of excise revenue, illicit distillation and disciplining the drinking habits of the people came to a point of confluence. The Government of Bengal already changed the distillery system to increase the revenue collection and keep a check on the illicit distillation. The government, now decided that a drinker should follow the certain rules while drinking and violation of these rules turn the leisure of drinking into an offence.

⁹⁰ February 1890, , FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $Ex \frac{1-D}{4}1$, WBSA.

⁹¹ February 1903, FD/SR, B Proceeding, File no. $Ex \frac{1D}{2}1$, No. 129-133, WBSA.

The implication of the rules and norms began with the restructuring the drinking places. The drinking places were public places⁹² of the nineteenth century. Thus, different kind of people gathered in the drinking places. These led to the high possibility of gathering of criminals in the drinking house. Sumanta Banerjee, while discussing the criminality of nineteenth century Kolkata, has argued that most of the criminals of the city, like gang robbers, river dacoits, thieves, pickpockets, forgers, con-men and cheaters, cattle thieves, receiver of stolen goods, were found in the drinking houses. Thus the police had made a connection between drinking and crime and argued that disciplining the drinking places would help to discipline the drinking public.

Several instances of disciplining the drinking habit of the people while disciplining the drinking places can be found in many western countries, like in France and England, from long back. When taverns, cabaret, and café emerged as the drinking places in the Seventeenth century, labourers, vagabonds, travellers began to gather there for drinking and to relax. Gathering of different kinds of people led to conversations and disputes. These disputes happened for several reasons, sometimes on the matters of reputation, sometimes on the issue of accusing somebody for stealing money from other customers. Due to these reasons police frequently raided at these taverns to keep these disputes under control and regular search for the suspicious people and vagabonds, especially in the night and after curfew.⁹³ Elite people used to avoid these taverns and identified them as a den of the criminals. However, the link between the crime and drunkenness was not limited to within the walls of liquor shops. The number of offences related to liquor consumption increased with the spreading of intemperance. As, many people lost their reason under the influence of liquor and got engaged in several criminal activities under the influence of drink.

The colonial government, under these circumstances, followed the GOI's suggestion of disciplining the drinkers by taking control over the liquor

⁹² Certainly being a public place, the drinking houses excluded certain people, like women. However, barmaids and prostitutes could be found in the ale houses and pubs of the nineteenth century Kolkata, but they were less in numbers.

⁹³ Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century Paris*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, p.23.

shops and drinking places. Initially, the government tried to bring the liquor shops under control by introducing the licence system. Later, the colonial government sought the help of the police department. Meanwhile, the police department also detected the liquor shops as dens of the criminals, vagabonds, sailors and prostitutes. A conglomeration of these people in the liquor shops of Kolkata created problems and disturbance to the resident of the locality. Hence, several petitioned were filed to the government by residents of Kolkata in 1870. These people asked for removal or closing of liquor shops from their locality, and cancellation of licenses of the shops. Thus, the excise department, while modifying the license system, accepted the government's suggestion of allying with the police department to control the irregularities. The new excise law directed the applicants of the new liquor shops to submit application both to the excise officers and police commissioner before opening. The license would be granted only after the police verification. In this way, the government tried to discipline by controlling the liquor shops while involving the police in the matter.

The method of defining offences and offenders related to the liquor business and drinking, however, had always changed with people's perception on drinking. Missionaries, working in the Santhal areas, argued that due to the government policies the consumption of liquor had increased among the aboriginals leading to the indulging in crimes, like fighting with each other, beating their wives and being absent from the work.⁹⁴ The managers of Darjeeling Tea gardens areas stated that coolies of the tea gardens spent their salary at the liquor shops and they created a problem in the workplaces and committed domestic violence on their wife after getting drunk.⁹⁵ When these two groups of people were drawing the connection between the growing intemperance with crime, at the same time the government presented opposite view on these cases. While denying the claims of the missionaries, the Government of Bengal and excise department argued that the aboriginal people were habitual drunkards. The government argued that the drunkenness among the Santhal was controlled due to the implementation of the prohibition

⁹⁴ August 1881, FD/Ex, A Proceeding, File no. 8, coll. No. 1, Sl. No. 29, WBSA

⁹⁵ February 1889, FD/SR, A Proceeding, File no. $E \frac{10}{2}$, Sl. No. 1-4, WBSA.

on the home brewing of the liquor and introducing the government distillery system in Bengal. In spite of all these they argued, liquor consumption increased because of the growing income of the people, change in the moral and religious beliefs. The government, while replying to the tea garden managers, wrote that coolies preferred drinking because they thought liquor would rejuvenate their working capacity and helped them to beat the cold. From these two replies, it can be easily traced that initially the government did not want to accept that intemperance and crime had increased due to the government policy. The colonial government argued that the colonial excise policy had tried to control the growing intemperance and bring the drinkers under control, but it failed to do so. They stated that the people of Bengal were 'habitual drunkards' and corrupt too. Therefore, these the people were indulging in smuggling and adulteration for getting drunk even after introducing the distillery system. Thus, it would be very hard to transform the subject as a disciplined drinker.

Lastly, the Government of Bengal, under the pressure of GOI and temperance activists, accepted that the crime rate had increased due to the increasing in intemperance. Thus, the government of Bengal imposed several restrictions on the liquor sellers to control and discipline the liquor consumption pattern of the people. The government regulated the opening hours of the liquor shops, decided the storing capacity of the liquor shops, indicated the strength of the liquor, and asked the liquor shop owners not to sell liquor to the children, 'habitual drunkards', sailors, vagabonds and soldiers. The Government of Bengal and Excise department tried to discipline the drunkards while implementing all these rules on them. Besides, taking all these measures, the Government of Bengal and the Excise Department also projected that Indians, particularly the Bengalis had no self-control on their desire of drinking, and thus it was 'burden of the white men' to stop them from getting over drunk and turn the 'undisciplined' drunkards as disciplined drinkers.

Conclusion

The discussion indicated that the colonial government in India used the excise policies to control the indigenous life in the nineteenth century. In this process, the colonial government of Bengal had developed a particular kind of governmentality which helped the colonial government in two ways. First, the Government took pride in taking on the 'white men's burden' while regulating the Indian drinking practice through implementing the new governing system. Second, the excise revenue became a good source to extract a good amount of money from the people. However, these two activities of the government, regulating the public drinking and extracting a good sum of money, were standing in the opposite direction to each other. Thus, clashes happened frequently between these two motives of the government. These conflicts led to the modification of the excise laws from time to time. However, any of the laws failed to check the growing intemperance in Bengal as the motive of increasing excise revenue always remained supreme.

Soon after passing the Abkari law of 1856, the colonial government imposed a ban on the home brewing and forced people to buy liquor from the government distillery shops. The government claimed that these steps would help to check the growing intemperance. However, the amount of revenue collected from the excise department indicated that government intention was to gain control over the liquor business and bring good amount of revenue to the treasury. When the collection of huge amount of revenue by the excise department came to the notice of the British Parliament, GOI and many social reformers of India, they started to pressurise the government of Bengal to change the excise policy after 1880 and asked them to address the issue of growing intemperance. Under this pressure, the government agreed to change the excise policy. When the government realised the chances of the huge amount of revenue loss, they tried to retain the *Out-sill* distillery once again. Besides, the government argued that government had always taken steps to check growing intemperance but, intemperance increased because most of the people in Bengal were 'habitual drunkards'. Further, the Government of Bengal argued that due the growth in population; increase in the income level

of people; restriction on the sale of other narcotics, like hemp and *ganja* most of the people turned toward the consumption of liquor.

Government of Bengal once again brought some changes in the excise policy after the appointment of the *Hemp and Drug Commission*, under the pressure from the British Parliament and the GOI during the decade of 1890. Hence, the government strictly determined the strength of alcohol, opening hours of liquor shops, the age of the liquor consumer; imposed ban on the all-natural sources of alcohol, closed all the *Out-still* distilleries and reintroduced the *Central Distillery System*. However, the colonial government did not address the social reformers' demand for the complete restriction on the drinking. The government took initiatives to discipline the liquor consumer by passing laws and imposing regulations on the liquor business instead of stopping people from getting drunk.

The government identified several activities of individuals related to liquor consumption as an offence in this process of making of the disciplined drinkers. Brewing of liquor outside of the government distilleries and adulteration of alcohol were identified as illegal works. Building up these connections between the drinking and offence had brought the Police Department in the picture. Therefore, it can be said that the while bringing the liquor consumption under the new system of governmentality, the colonial government tried to discipline the traditional drinking pattern of the people of Bengal. The second chapter is going to discuss the effect of the new excise governmentality on the people while tracing the contemporary drinking pattern of nineteenth century Bengal.

Chapter 2

Interrogating Morality and Tracing the Patterns of Alcohol Consumption in Everyday Life

The discussion on the Excise Policy of colonial government and their methods of disciplining the drinkers leads us to enquire into the existing pattern of alcohol consumption in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century and how it changed over the time. While discussing the pattern of alcohol consumption among the different group of people, the present chapter traces the difference between these patterns of alcohol consumption and the reasons for those differences. The keys to investigate these differences are class, caste and gender. The present chapter begins with the discussion on the pattern of liquor consumption among the upper-class and educated young Bengalis and poses the questions, why did these sections of people start drinking, whether upper-class drinking was an age old practice or tradition or an influence of western culture and if the upper-class drinking had left any impact on the other section of the society. Further, the chapter also highlights whether drinking practice had any connection between gender and caste and how different sections of the indigenous society perceived drinking habit of each other. The present chapter also tries to find out how the colonial government, Christian missionaries and educated Bengalis looked at the drinking practice of the aboriginal people and working class in Bengal. While seeking out the answers to all these queries, this chapter is going to describe the evolution of drinking culture during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The sources for tracing this diverse pattern of drinking culture are government documents, missionary documents and indigenous writings. The government document had frozen the category of drinkers. It identified shopkeepers, domestic servants, low paid government servants, idlers, lower class people like *chamar*, cobblers as drunkards. Therefore, the colonial definition of drunkard was linked with the economic condition as well as caste of the

people. However, these documents hardly considered the drinking of the upper-class people as a problem. Missionary documents too critically examine the drinking of the tribal people as well as the working class. Contrary to these the indigenous writing posed a critical perception of the drinking habit of the entire society and identified it as an evil effect of the western civilization. Additionally, these indigenous writings used the moral and social perception to criticise the drinking practice. However, these writings also discussed the pleasure of drinking. On the basis of these perceptions, the chapter is going to trace the drinking culture of the nineteenth century Bengal.

(I)

Upper-Class drinking

The tradition of consuming various kind of narcotics always prevailed in the Bengal, even before the advent of the British in India. Biswanath Joardar, while discussing Kolkata's urban life in the nineteenth century, has argued that there were five kinds of addictions that prevailed in Kolkata. They were hemp, opium, alcohol, tobacco and opium pills. However, people were mostly addicted to hemp, opium, tobacco and opium pills. People of Bengal were consuming these drugs over a long period. People considered these drugs as a medium of pleasure as well as medicine for diseases like insomnia. Later, consumption of liquor had started in larger scale from the nineteenth century onwards. Initially, a certain section of people consumed liquor. With the spreading of western education and the emergence of Young Bengal group in 1830, the drinking practice widened among a larger group of people and liquor consumption took the shape of a menace. This menace had created different kinds of notion among the people. These divergent views on the drinking practice among the different people have provided a vivid picture of the drinking culture in the nineteenth century Bengal.

Influence of the western culture and British rule increased the consumption of narcotics, like alcohol, among the Indians.¹ However, people of older generation, addicted to the hemp, tobacco and opium but not with the

¹ See: Chapter 1 of the thesis; Biswanath Joardar, *Anya Kolkata*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2003, p. 68.

liquor, became tensed with the introduction of new narcotics and increase of liquor consumption in society. They had developed a concept of hierarchy among the drugs according to its effects on human body. For them, liquor was the lowest drug in the hierarchy of narcotics. In other words, the older generation of the addicts brought a class distinction among the drug addicts. Eventually, they ostracised drinkers from that hierarchy. These old generation addicts identified the addicts of the opium and hemp as noble in the hierarchy of all drug-addicts. These 'noble men' connoted themselves as '*Pakshi*' or Bird. These '*Pakshi*' were thinking that only hemp would seem to transcend into a high level of addiction which liquor failed to do so. The hemp-addicts argued that hemp, tobacco, and opium addicts were more courageous than a drinker.² Besides, they expressed their grief over the consumption of liquor by the Young Bengal group as it would destroy the culture of hemp, tobacco, and opium consumption.

Western education brought the newly educated Bengalis closer to the notion of rationality and the western culture. Under the influence of this culture, the educated class started to follow the western lifestyle, western food habits and established organizations. These educated class mainly consisted of the upper class and opulent natives. Gradually, this cultural transformation in this particular section of people had brought a change in the society and gave birth to the '*Babu*' culture in Bengal. Kaliprasanna Sinha³, while describing the emergence of *babu* culture and its followers in *Sketches by Hootum the Owl*, has described the existence of two types of westernized *babus* in the city. He named the first type of *babuas* 'the stylish Englishman's cow-dung bust'

²Biswanath Joardar, *Anya Kolkata*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2003, p. 63.

³ Kaliprasanna Sinha was one of the famous writers and a public figure of Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century. In the form of satire, Sinha has written *Sketches by Hootum*. This satire is the critique of the contemporary society, and it gives a 'vivid and vibrant picture of Calcutta's street life, at worst, the sum total of slang, gossip and character assassination'. The book first published in 1862. Besides, he was one of the supporters of the social reform movement in Bengal. He also translated the Indian epic, the Mahabharata. (See: Kaliprasanna Sinha, *Sketches by Hootum the Owl*, translated by Chitrlekha Basu, Samya, Kolkata, 2012, pp. xv-xxiii)

and the second type of *babu* as an ‘abominable prototype of the declassed white man’.⁴ While discussing the first type of English style *babu*, he writes⁵:

The first did everything in English style. They chatted sitting at the table, drank tea from the cups. Cigars, jugs filled with water brandy in decanters and glasses covered with a lid made of pith were laid out on the red cotton table cover, the *Harkara*, the *Englishman* and the *Phoenix* kept within easy reach. Politics and the best news of the day were the only things that excited them. They ate sitting at a table, defecated in a commode, and wiped their bottoms with paper. They had a lot of positive qualities, such as sympathy, generosity, philanthropy, modesty and so on. It was just that they were ill all the time, having drunk themselves to decrepitude. They were slaves to their wives and had banished all feelings of enthusiasm, unity and the desire to improve completely from their hearts.

While discussing the second type of *Babus*, he said that the people of this group were opportunists, imitators and domineering in nature. They tried to do social work, but their motivation was to gain fame and establish dominance over other. Besides, providing these two categories of *babus*, the author criticised the consumption of alcohol by this class on several occasions. The author also highlighted the liquor consumption by the common people. After drinking, the *Babus* became drowsy and engaged with many abnormal and deviant activities. While wittily discussing the several actions of the drunkard *Babus*, Kaliprasanna Sinha tried to highlight a severe problem of the contemporary society. He said that, in spite of having a good education, these people were just ruining their life while consuming alcohol. He argued that after getting drunk, most of the drunkards imagined themselves as a *rajabhadur*⁶ and most of them were found ‘in the gutters, roads, police stations, police lock-ups and liquor shops, gone wild.’⁷ While describing the drunken condition of the rich and spoiled young people he writes⁸:

⁴Kaliprasanna Sinha, *Sketches by Hootum the Owl*, translated by Chitralkha Basu, Samya, Kolkata, 2012, p. 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ A highest title given to the rich and powerful Bengalis by the British Government.

⁷ Kaliprasanna Sinha, p. 65.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 252

...rich alcoholic among the Bengalis excelled in whatever they did. They tried to fly like birds, fell from the terrace and died. They drowned themselves in tanks dug by their fathers. They destroyed the image of the lion and tried to take its place and immersed the drummer with the Durga idol. They boozed and went wild at the cantonment fort, railway stations and auctions and landed up at the police station. Besides, they indulged in excesses of generosity, giving tips and lectures [in a drunken state].

Sinha also accused the Brahma Samaj of being responsible for the increasing drunkenness among the educated people. He said that the new *babus*, claiming themselves as the reformers, took the membership of the Brahma Samaj, offered alcohol to their supreme being and most of the time they became dead drunk.⁹

However, it was also noticed that the *babus* of the nineteenth century consumed liquor not only for pleasure or under the influence of western culture, but also for upgrading their social status. While consuming liquor, they were trying to identify themselves as modern and getting closer to the important European people of the city. For example, though serving of alcohol was not allowed in any festival of a prestigious upper-class Hindu household, but during the first half of the nineteenth century, certain changes could be noticed in this practice. To get favour from the colonial government, the wealthy and opulent section of the Kolkata used to invite the British officers, sometimes Governor General to their houses on the occasion of the *Durga Puja*. To illustrate this fact, Biswanath Jordar, in *Anyra Kolkata* (Another Calcutta), has written, that *babus* of the nineteenth century Bengal had celebrated Durga Puja with great zeal. Often celebration of this *puja* became a ground for showing their (*Babus*’) wealth, prosperity, and power. ‘Many of the rich Hindoos vying with one another in excellence and profusion endeavour by the richness of their festivals to get a name amongst them.’¹⁰ On this occasion, rich gentlemen of Kolkata organised the live performances of *nautch* girls in their place and invited East India Company’s officers. A huge arrangement of drinks and food was made to serve to the European guests. The main intention of the *babus* in making all these arrangements was to please

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 252.

¹⁰Biswanath Jordar, p.95.

these British Officers. Fanny Parks, one of the English lady travellers in Kolkata during the early nineteenth century, had written a description of the *Durga Puja* in a wealthy Bengali house. Along with giving the description of the idol of Durga and the ambience of the host's house, she wrote that the host had invited a number of European guests and arranged delicious food, ice and French liquor for them. Besides, the host also organised the performances of the *nautch* girls for the European guests. The European guests greatly enjoyed the performance of *nautch* girls while sipping liquor.¹¹ The description of Fanny Parks gives the perception of European Society about the indigenous society. This perception depicts that the European society was wondering about the opulence the rich Bengali household and the grand nature of the religious festival. However, another group of Europeans, especially the missionaries like William Ward, a Baptist missionary, one of the members of Serampore Trio,¹² criticised this practice of inviting European guest in *puja* and serving liquor to them by the wealthy Bengalis.¹³ He visited the Raja Naba Krishna De's Sobhabazar Rajbari (Sobhabazar Palace) on the occasion of *Durga Puja* in 1806. Besides, describing the celebration of the *Durga Puja* in the Rajas's house, he said that the Raja arranged a number of food items and enormous amount of liquor for the European guest. The performance of the *nautch* girls also organised to entertain these guests. Rev. William Ward also criticised these kinds of arrangements of the Bengali and identified this culture as uncultured and low in taste.¹⁴

The incorporation of the western cultural practices in everyday life and inviting Europeans to festivals desiring social mobility brought about a change in the taste of liquor consumption of the people. Instead of serving country liquor, these *Babus* served foreign liquors, like port, sherry, brandy, rum to their European guest. While discussing the *Babus*' passion for foreign liquor, Keshab Chandra Sen argued that foreign spirits had produced the most deleterious and demoralizing effect on the natives of this country. Though, it was evident that the supply of foreign liquor had never followed any real

¹¹Benoy Ghosh, *Kolkatar Itibritta*, Bak Sahitya Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata, 1975, pp. 235-36.

¹²Serampore Trio was William Carey, Marshman and William Word. These three missionaries established Serampore Mission in 1800.

¹³Ghosh, pp. 405-06.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

demand. Due to the fondness and thirst of these *Babus* towards the imported spirits; like port, sherry, brandy and rum, the quantity of imported foreign liquor had increased steadily. Deriving facts from the excise reports, Sen had argued that the amount of foreign spirits imported in 1871-71 was 258,154 gallons against 187,194 in 1866-67. Besides, the total value of brandy imported in 1860-61 was 34,411 rupees, excluding customs duty; it rose to 17,71,816 rupees in 1870-71.¹⁵ Additionally, he also brought the moral issue into the context and highlighted the evil effect of the liquor consumption. Thus, he says¹⁶;

Before the English came into the country the natives had no idea whatever of British and other foreign spirits, and cannot be supposed to have felt their want before they had a taste for them. The more these stimulants have been imported into the country and used, the greater has been the demand, and now as the demand increases the supply keeps pace with it. The use of such liquors in centres of population is said to be increasing with alarming rapidity among the higher classes of the native population.

In support of Keshab Chandra Sen's argument, Rai Rajendra Mullick Bahadur stated that there was an increase in liquor consumption among the middle and upper classes within the last forty years. He said that earlier the upper-class Hindoo people hardly consumed liquor, but slowly drinking became a fashion among them. Further, he stated that Hinduism or Islam did not support and permit the liquor consumption and considered it as an evil practice. Thus, he hoped that countrymen of all persuasions would discard the practice of liquor consumption.¹⁷

The spread of the drinking practice drunkenness among the upper-class was not only limited to the urban spaces like Kolkata, but this practice also spread into the interior parts of the province. Some owners of liquor shop stated that those who acquired English knowledge turned towards consumption of foreign liquor. The magistrate of Monghyr reported that he was informed by a brandy-vendor that the native gentleman of the area, who could speak English, developed a taste for brandy along with the

¹⁵February, 1875, A Proceeding, R/MR/Ex, Coll. no. 1, Number. 24, WBSA.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

language.¹⁸ Additionally, the magistrate also said that the consumption of alcohol among the upper class increased, but this class neither consumed country liquor nor would they be found in the local liquor shops. These upper-class people had a taste of the foreign imported liquor. However, they consumed liquor in the privacy.¹⁹

A number of government officers reported the growing intemperance among the upper-class in their accounts. On 28th October 1875, Abkari Department of the lower province published a minute in connection with certain petitions presented to both the Abkari Department in Kolkata and its local branches. The minute highlights several problems of drunkenness as well as the social problems associated with the drinking practice. While highlighting these facts, one government officer reported in the minute that the liquor consumption in villages was minimal in comparison to Kolkata's drinking culture. Only, the drinking practice of upper-class had increased in the urban areas. Besides, the minute also said, 'It is very sad to see how prevalent is the opinion that intemperance naturally flows upon the receipt of English Education'²⁰. While reporting the condition of the drinking practice in Orissa, a government officer argued that western education had promoted the liquor consumption. Further, he argued that the western education eliminated the caste prejudices by the 'smattering of knowledge'. The elimination of caste prejudice encouraged the educated people to consume liquor. Excise reports of the Bhagalpore, Dacca and Monghyr also says that the 'mostly the old rich and young men speaking with deficient education became drunkard'.²¹

Changes in the economic condition of the people due to the opening of new job opportunities changed the notion of drinking among the upper and middle-class Bengalis. The new job opportunities had introduced the concept of weekly holidays from workplaces which gave a chance to these newly emerged clerical people and upper and middle-class Bengalis to spend the weekends in leisure. As a result of this, several new modes of recreation appeared in the society, like travelling to ancestor home, visiting *Maidan* or

¹⁸ Feb 1875, A Proceeding, R/MR/Ex, Coll. 4, Sl. No. 24, WBSA.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

the playing ground which situated in the centre of Kolkata, visiting the bank of Ganges, consuming drugs and alcohol for pleasure and, visiting the house of the prostitutes. The contemporary vernacular literature (*Bat-tala* literature) was much more critical to the idea of holiday's pleasures. While commenting on the pleasure of drinking and visiting prostitutes, many of the *Bat-tala* literature stated that all the drunkards became happy with the coming of Saturday. On Saturday they got a chance of having liquor all through the nights and created disturbance in an inebriated condition.²² One of the authors of *Bat-tala* literature, Chandrakanta Sikdar argued that newly rich clerks went to the famous red light area of Kolkata, *Sonagachi* on the weekends for entertainment and where prostitutes served liquor to them. Further, the writer warned while saying that the enjoyments of excessive drinking in the house of the prostitutes became worst nightmare for these newly rich people because sometimes prostitutes snatched all the belongings from them and abandoned them on the roadside after making them drunk. Most of the time police rescued the drunken and unconscious people from the roadside. Government officers also criticised the pleasure of the holiday drinking in their writings. One English doctor of the suburb said that the nature of gathering on the holidays had changed now. Now friends gathered on holidays only for drinking. As a result, the amount of liquor consumed during the holiday was incredible.²³

Thus, the nature of the upper-class drinking pattern during the nineteenth century was mainly determined by the conspicuous consumption. However, this pattern of liquor consumption changed with the changing nature of people's economic condition, notion of pleasure and taste of liquor. This drinking pattern of the upper-class Bengalis was encouraged by the contemporary liquor policy of the colonial government. Because, this liquor policy made liquor easily available in the market by opening of new liquor outlets and introducing new liquor. However, the development of the drinking culture had an adverse effect on sections of the upper-class people, as many upper-class people lost their wealth. Later, many social reformers of the

²² Chandrakanta Sikdar, *Ki Majar Sanibar (Saturday is joyful)*, 1863, ed. Adrish Biswas, Battalar Boi, Kolkata, 2011, p. 313.

²³ February 1875, R/MR/Ex, A Proceeding, Coll. No. 4, No. 22, WBSA.

nineteenth century Bengal had also criticised the practices of drinking and visiting prostitutes by upper-class people.

(II)

Drinking of the Western Educated Student

Along with the upper-class, the drinking practice was transmitted among the newly educated young people. However, there were different patterns of the liquor consumption among the students. On the one hand, some students started to consume liquor to break the social norms and to hit orthodox Hinduism. On the other hand, another group of students consumed liquor for pleasure. The best example of the first group of students was the 'Young Bengal' group. One of the faculties of the Hindu College, Henry Derozio, founded the 'Young Bengal' a group of radical Bengali free thinkers in 1828. The agenda of the group was to criticize the contemporary social orthodoxy and superstitions with the help of rationality. In this course, the member of this group and a certain section of the Hindu college became interested in the consumption of beef and alcohol. They thought that having alcohol would help them to conquer superstitions. Besides, they openly challenged contemporary Hindu society by consuming liquor. The practice of liquor consumption of the Young Bengal group was transmitted to other student of Hindu College. Later many students of the college had recollected their habits of drinking in their memories. Rajnarayan Bose, one of the famous personalities of nineteenth century Bengal, had written in '*Atmcharit*' (Autobiography) that he and his friends used to consume brandy and alcohol with beef sticks at *Gohldighi* (A place near the Hindu College) in their college days. When his father came to know about his drinking habit, he offered good quality alcohol to Rajnarayam and asked him to have a drink with him. His father asked him to stop having alcohol outside, an initiatives which failed as Rajnarayan continued to drink alcohol outside.²⁴

Not only the students of Hindu College but the young followers of Brahma Samaj were also consuming liquor. However, there were some

²⁴Rajnarayan Basu, *Atmcharit* (An autobiography), Chariayata Prakashan, Kolkata, 2013 (reprint) p. 42, WBSA.

differences in the pattern of alcohol consumption among the followers of the Brahma Samaj and students of the Hindu College. As Rajnarayan Basu mentioned in his autobiography that Hindu college students consumed liquor without any restriction, however, Brahma Samaj's followers were moderate drinkers.²⁵ Following the trend of the Hindu College's student, several students of the other colleges in Kolkata started to drink. Drinking habit had spread among the student as a menace. Somprakash, on 17th September 1864 reported with the growing drunkenness, most of the gorge-shops²⁶ were crowded with young people on every Saturday afternoon. Instead of going to school, these young people, belonging to respectable families, spent time in the gorge shops. This resulted in increase of crime rate in society.²⁷ By 1880's the missionaries also pointed out that some school teachers started drinking and that left a bad impression on the students. As a result, many school students also started to consume liquor. However, the government dismissed this allegation.²⁸ Besides, they also pointed out that the semi-educated class of Bengal, who had abandoned their religious beliefs along with superstitions and restriction imposed on them by their old generation, became addicted to alcohol.²⁹

Later, these students were attracted to other evil practices along with drinking, like visiting prostitutes, consuming other narcotics like hemp and opium along with alcohol. Somprakash, in 14th March 1864, reported that availability of alcohol in the house of prostitutes drove many students there and gradually turned these young people into drunkards.³⁰ Besides, availability of liquor and physical pleasure brought many of these young generations to the house of ill-fame. Prostitutes took this opportunity to acquire wealth. Sometimes prostitutes served adulterated liquor to these young customers to make them unconscious. When the young customer became unconscious, the prostitutes took away all the money from the young man and abandoned him by the roadside. Finding these drunkards at the roadside while creating a

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶ Local liquor shop.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 17th September 1864.

²⁸February 1882, A Proceeding, F/ Ex, File no. 6, coll. no. 1, Sl. No. 43, WBSA.

²⁹December, 1884, A Proceeding, F/ Ex, File no.2, No. 1, Appendix B., WBSA.

³⁰NNPR, no. 1699, 22nd March 1864, WBSA.

disturbance, the police arrested them. Sumantra Banerjee has argued that these young people could not complain against the prostitutes and failed to report their assault in the hand of prostitutes to the police because of family prestige.³¹

Number of contemporary author highlighted these facts in their writings. One of such writer was Michel Madhusudan Dutta. In a satirical prose, *Ekei ki bole Sabhyata*,³² Dutta gives a vivid picture of these new generation students. These students told lies to their conservative family, became friends with the undesirable people, misbehaved with their wives. However, they also talked about the necessity of women's education and at the end of the day came up as a profligate and intemperate person. Following Dutta, several other writers of the late nineteenth century also wrote the descriptions of this young English educated generation, who in the ambition of imitating of European lifestyle had started to consume liquor and other evil practices. *Friend of India* reported that a number of drinking clubs had been established in Kolkata and many young western educated people frequently visiting these places.³³

Along with the Indians, gradually the European officer also became critical of the drinking practice of the English-educated Bengali students. They argued that most of the people thought that intemperance among the students was increasing under the influence of western education, however, it would be wrong to blame western education entirely. The students were also responsible for their drinking practice as they failed to perceive western education properly. At the same time, some of the English officers said that if the students could not wholeheartedly accept the good qualities of the western education, like science while discarding their religious beliefs, then how they could cross the boundary of caste and consumed liquor under the influence of the western-education. While quoting the views of a medical officer on the

³¹Sumanta Banerjee, *The Wicked City*, Oriental Blackswan, Delhi, 2009, p. 283.

³²This is the first satire written in Bengali.

³³*Friend of India*, 10th October 1970, p. 1167.

relation between western education and growing intemperance among the students, the Minutes on the Amendment of Excise Law writes³⁴;

It is sad to think that this has been the effect of education, but it is too true to be overlooked. No Hindu can become acquainted with European science without disbelieving his own religion. Without any religious convictions and without moral training, he leaves the college a slave to his own passion and blindly follows the example of the rich and influential around him. Having a fixed idea to guide him, he yields to his own inclination and adopts habits which are foreign to his race, caste, observation...

(III)

Drinking habit of the Aborigines

Parallel to the world of the urban upper class and western educated people, there was another world of aborigines with different culture and practices. These people considered drinking as a custom, more than an act of pleasure. Their drinking custom came under the scrutiny of the colonial law and the Christian morality with spreading of the British rule and growing influence of the Christian missionaries in the tribal dominated areas of Bengal. The colonial and missionary documents describe the Santhal drinking practices from the two points of view. Most of the colonial documents did an ethnographical study of Santhal drinking habits. They say that drinking was part of the Santhal's daily life and also classified the drinking practice into three categories; i.e., mass drinking during festivals when drinks were prepared for the particular purpose; drinking in gangs on a special occasion at the drinking shops; and home drinking.³⁵ They argued that the Santhals brewed rice at home and prepared drinks from them. Initially, the government did not want to interfere in the tribal practice and let them prepared their own drink. However, when they looked their losses of excise duty in the tribal area, they introduced government distilleries and imposed taxes on the liquor in the

³⁴ February 1875, F/Ex, A Proceeding, Coll. No. 4, No. 22, 'Amendment of Excise Law', WBSA.

³⁵ July 1877, A Proceeding, R/MR/Ex, Coll. No. 6, No. 13, WBSA.

Santhal Parghana. These administrative and financial changes in the Santhal Parghana had also brought changes in the drinking pattern of the Santhals.

The missionary documents, while discussing the drinking of the Santhals, had stated when the Government illegalised home brewing by the Santhals and opened liquor shops in the Santhal Villages, the pattern of the liquor consumption of the Santhal changed. Further, these missionary documents argued that the Government was forced to modify the excise policy in Santhal Parghana under the pressure of the public opinion, and allowed home brewing occasionally, especially during the harvesting festival. Further, the missionaries agreed on the fact that there was a cultural dimension to the drinking practices of Santhal. They highlighted that rice-beer was their 'national drink', and it played a major role in their rituals. Liquor was brewed in the Santhal homes only on specific occasions and partaken by all the members of the household.³⁶ Liquor was brewed in several other occasions, including funerals, festivals, and marriages. Drinking on these occasions became a social custom for the Santhals. Preparing liquor at home cost less to the Santhals. They used rice produced in their own agriculture fields, to brew. Significantly, the missionaries highlighted the fact that the Santhals did not drink regularly. Women of the Santhal household brewed liquor at home, and they always checked the drinking of their partner.³⁷ However, this stability in the drinking pattern of the Santhal society changed due to the government excise policy.

Missionaries documents highlighted that intemperance among the Santhal had increased after the introduction of the *Out-still System* and opening of the new liquor shops in the Santhal areas. Thus, Santhals started to consume *mahua* spirits from the licensed shops or Government distilleries instead of home-brewed rice-beer. This change in drinking pattern affected the economic condition of the aboriginals. Money became an important factor for buying liquor from shops or distilleries, and therefore, Santhals men started to spend most of the money out of the family budget for buying liquor. Missionaries also pointed out that high-priced liquor and availability of limited

³⁶February 1882, A Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 6, Coll. no. 1, Sl. no. 39, WBSA.

³⁷*Ibid.*

stock in shops led to the Santhals resorting to illicit distillation. However, the government did not agree with the missionaries' perception. The government report surprisingly claimed that the changes in the liquor consumption pattern of Santhal were good for them as consumption of rice-beer was more injurious to health than the *mahua* and other spirits.

An American Missionary, Phillip, who was working in the western part of the Midnapore, which was a Santhal dominated area, had argued that a number of teetotallers become addicted to the liquor because of the spreading of the *Out-still System* in this area. Philip also mentioned that the case of a young Santhal teacher of his school who became a drunkard after the opening the *Out-still System* in the area. Phillip had to send him to a new area where no *Out-still* was available nearby.³⁸

However, the colonial government started to investigate the issue of the drunkenness of the Santhals, before the missionaries become vocal about it. Initially, the main objective of the colonial investigation was to find out whether the British excise policies in Santhal Parghana was able to check the drunkenness of the Santhal. Later, when the missionaries intervened in the situation, the motive of the government investigation changed. The Government investigating committee, now, tried to find out whether the Santhals were habitual drinkers or it was the *Out-still System* that made them addicted to the liquor. The reports of the ethnographical survey on the tribal drunkenness say that the missionaries had ardent interest in temperance and therefore, they critically looked at the drinking habit of the Santhals. While talking about Santhal drunkenness during the *Badhna festival*³⁹, J. Boywell, Deputy Commissioner of Santhal Parghana, reported that after the introduction of the government excise policy in the area, drunkenness among the Santhal was checked. Earlier, Santhals brewed liquor at home during the *Badhna festival*, then drunk excessively and made nuisance publicly. After the festival, many Santhal could be found lying naked on the streets and, in the field. The deputy commissioner reported that drunkenness among the Santhals was

³⁸*Ibid.*, no. 41-42, letter from J. L. Phillips, American Missionary to the officiating Collector of Midnapore, No. 1120, dated Midnapore, 3rd Nov. 1881, WBSA.

³⁹ Badhna Festival celebrated by the Santhal community when the paddy plantation has been completed.

nearly under control after the introduction of the distillery system and imposing restrictions on the home brewing in the area.

The Government said that Santhals had a different point of view about the rice-beer and *mahua* spirits. In 1906, the deputy commissioner of the Santhal Parganas had stated that in the district of Santhal Parghana, Santhals and *Paharis* were the principal consumers of liquor. These people consumed the liquor of their choice, like Santhals mostly consumed *pachwai* and *Paharis* were the consumers of *tari* and *mahua* liquor. They come to the shop once or twice a week, and each drank half a bottle of his choice. Consumers in town drink almost daily a quarter bottles each on an average. A Santhal or other 'low-class' consumers imbibed two seers of *pachwai* on average. While highlighting the drinking habit of these aboriginal people of Santhal Parghana, the government report mentioned that apart from being a medium of pleasure, the Santhals used *mahua* liquor as a medicine for men and cattle. Thus, many of them did not consume *mahua* liquor regularly but had it occasionally as medicines. Further, the deputy commissioner also made a comparison between the different kinds of spirits available in the district and made a different argument from the earlier perception of government on *pachwai* and *tari*. The deputy commissioner argued that *pachwai* and *tari* were less harmful than the imported European and Government made spirits. However, sometimes people died because of excessive drinking of *pachwai*.⁴⁰

Along with the Santhal tribe, tribal people of the Hill area were also accustomed to drinking. The Government report claimed that the wet and cold weather encouraged them to develop their drinking habit. Tribes of Darjeeling, like *Bhutias* and *Lepchas*, used to prepare their drink known as *murua*. Some of the tea garden managers and missionaries claimed that due to the drinking habits of these tribal people, tea-garden coolies started to drink. However, the government argued that usually, the *murua* was a harmless and weak drink, if not fermented for long. Contrary to the situation of the Santhal Parghana, colonial government did not impose ban or tax on the home brewing of *murua* by the hill tribes. Instead, the government set up a limit for home brewing. In

⁴⁰March 1906, F/SR, nos. 24, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$. 2, Letter No. 365E, Dated, Darjeeling, 5th January 1906, WBSA.

1882, the government, said that the hill tribes of Darjeeling could possess 12 *seers* of *marua* at a time. Later, the limit reduced to 4 *seers* in 1888. The government argued that these regulations might attract people to the *Out-still* liquor,⁴¹ which would earn revenue for the government.

(IV)

The Lower Class and Working Class Drinking

The discussion on the drinking practice of lower-class included drinking practice of the poor, common people, and the working class. Drinking among the people of lower class, particularly the working class was not very uncommon in Bengal during the nineteenth century. With the emergence of Kolkata as an important business centre, many people from the villages migrated to Kolkata for better livelihood and opportunities. While migrating to the new urban centre, they brought their traditional culture of entertainment with them. These entertainments were in the traditional form of popular culture, like *jatra*⁴², *panchali*⁴³, and *kabigan*⁴⁴. Eventually, these traditional art forms got marginalised with the emergence of the ‘sanitised culture’, controlled by the newly educated middle class. This marginalization of popular art form had forced the poor working class to search for a new entertainment. Availability of cheap liquor and consumption of alcohol among the upper-class people had encouraged the working class people to emulate them. These working class people gathered in groups at toddy shops and drank toddy. Kaliprasannay Sinha in *Hutom Pyanchar Naksha*⁴⁵ has described the ambience of a toddy shop. The described toddy shop was situated in Chitpore Road, and was usually overcrowded with working class people in a busy market day. He describes⁴⁶,

The sweepers, now done with the removing garbage,
came to the watering hotel and started drinking rum in

⁴¹February 1890, A Proceeding, Finance Department File no. Ex $\frac{1-D}{4}$. 1, WBSA.

⁴² An art form acted before a large group of people.

⁴³Story of the divine bodies has been written in the poetic form.

⁴⁴A performing art, where two poets verbally contest before their patrons and large gathering of audiences.

⁴⁵ This is one of the old and authentic books on the culture of nineteenth-century Kolkata.

⁴⁶ Chitrlekha Basu, trans. *Sketches by Hootum the Owl* (Hutom Payachar Naksha), Samya, Kolkata 2012, p. 253.

large swigs. They began an argument with the undertakers on the relative superiority of their professions. The wine-sellers, who acted as the mediator, now tried to please the undertaker by ruling that his vocation was superior to that of the sweeper and now conceded that the sweeper's profession was the greatest. Drummers, funeral makers, hog-keepers and palanquin-bearers took sides in this great-war on the lines of the battle of Kurukshetra. The sudden arrival of a group of dancers, exponents of *jhumur* or *gadai*, had the effect of pouring cold water on the heated debate. The liquor shop bubbled with life.

This description of the toddy shop highlighted how toddy became a source of pleasure for the working class. Further, he said that the consumption of liquor among the working class became an integrated part of the festivals. While describing the *Gajan* festival,⁴⁷ he argued that consumption of liquor and other narcotics, like *Ganja* became an indispensable part of the festival. Further, he added that in spite of the government regulation of closing of the liquor shops at early hours, people managed to get alcohol at night. He also claimed that the rate of crime, like stealing of valuable items from the household at night, rose due to an increase in liquor consumption.

It has already been discussed that how Kaliprasanna Sinha took a critical stand against the alcohol consumption among the educated Bengali *Babus*. Contrary to this stand, he supported the consumption of alcohol among the lower class people and tried to show that alcohol consumption became a mode of pleasure for the people of lower class. He admitted that sometimes people of lower-class committed crimes under the influence of drunkenness, but at the same time, he stated that drinking culture and drinking places gave an opportunity to the working class to maintain the spontaneity of life. While describing the drunken condition of the lower class people, Sinha writes⁴⁸,

A low class drunkard was bundled off by the watchmen and got a few blows of the police constable's baton, besides being slapped a fine of four annas and made to spend a night in the police lock-up.

⁴⁷Gajan festival, a Hindu religious festival, is being organized to sing the song of the lord Shiva. The program goes on throughout the night.

⁴⁸ Chitralakha Basu, trans. *Sketches by Hootum the Owl* (Hutom Payachar Naksha), Samya, Kolkata 2012, p. 65.

It has been discussed that the lack of entertainment also attracted the working class to the liquor shops. However, the reasons of drunkenness among the working class changed with the time. Establishment of mills, tea gardens, and construction of railway track in the different parts of the province helped in the conglomeration of working class people in those areas. Due to the Government excise policy, a good number of new liquor shops opened in different parts of Bengal, especially in the newly emerged working areas. Lack of any source of entertainments in these areas, excessive exhausting work, and low price liquor attracted the labourers of the mill, railway construction sites and tea gardens to the *Out-still* liquor shop of its vicinity. In a government report of February 1875, an officer had argued that drunkenness had increased among the migrant labourers. The officer added that when labourers migrated to the workplace without their family, they started to seek pleasure from drinks.⁴⁹ However, the employers and the local residents criticised the drinking culture of the labourers and the government excise policy. They opposed to the opening of new liquor shops which promoting drinking among the labourers. Certainly, these oppositions to the drinking habit of working class emerged from the class interest of the employers and the notion of the sanitised culture of the local people.

The employers blamed the drinking habit of labourers for the disturbing law and order of the working place. They opposed the government policy of opening liquor shops in the vicinity of the workplace. With the expansion of the tea cultivation, a large number of coolies migrated to these gardens. Mixing of this crowd with the hill people and the opening of the liquor shops near to the tea gardens had transmitted the drinking habits among the coolies. Usually, the aboriginals of this place, *Paharis*, consumed country liquor to survive in the cold and wet weather, but the close association of coolies of the tea gardens with these hill tribes had spread drinking practice among coolies too. The managers of tea garden were continuously informing the government about the growing intemperance among the coolies. One of

⁴⁹February 1875, A Proceeding, R/MR/Ex, Col. No. 4, No. 22, WBSA.

the managers of tea gardens in Darjeeling had written to the government that the local government officers had pressurised them (tea-garden managers) to open a liquor shop in the estates. Under this circumstance, the coolies of tea gardens would get more opportunity to drink. Besides, H. Bald, a manager of a Darjeeling tea garden wrote that the drunkenness also led these coolies towards gambling. These coolies carried on these two vices, drinking and gambling, all night long, therefore, they became incapable of doing their work in the day time. Further, Bald mentioned that coolies went to the market to buy supplies of food for the week on Sundays (the market day), and while returning from the market, these coolies got drunk and spent the bulk of their salary on drink. The effect of drinking remained on next day. As a result, the employer found a significant number of absentees.⁵⁰ Some of the managers also argued that the drinking practice also affected the working capacity of the coolies which caused a significant loss to the tea gardens. Along with this the intoxicated coolies created disturbance within the tea-garden premises and broke the law and order situation of the place. While reporting all these things to the government, the tea-garden managers asked the government to reduce the number of *Open-stills* in the area and close the liquor shops in the vicinity of the tea-gardens.⁵¹

Some of the missionaries pointed out that the consumption of liquor was ruining the life of labourers and making them absent from work. Thomas Evan, a Baptist missionary of the Santhal Parghana, had mentioned the situation of drunkenness at Jamalpore town, where a large railway workshop had been established. He reported that most of the people of the town were artisans and workmen, who received high and regular wages. This population regularly spent a proportion of their wage on the liquor. Further, Evan argued that the number of conviction for the drunkenness in the area was increasing. Besides, he also pointed out the number of absentees among servants for household work increased because of growing drunkenness among them. Further, he added, “domestic servant, who before hardly ever gave their masters trouble, through their drink are now absent two or three days a

⁵⁰Collection of papers, Relating to the Excise administration of India, Reprinted, March 1890, Letter no. 15, pp. 287-290, NAI.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, Letter no. 11, p. 274.

week.”⁵² To elaborate this argument, he mentioned an incident where a respectable Muslim of the area failed to meet him because of an irresponsible drunkard grass-cutter, who was absent from work and made the horses starve. Thus, weak horses were unable to move, and the owner had to postpone his journey.⁵³

Along with the tea garden managers and missionaries, the common people of the Bengal also criticized the drinking practice of the labourers and blamed the drunken labourers for creating disturbance. In August 1883, the members of the ‘Band of Hope’, a temperance organization of Bhagulpore, had identified that drunkenness among the people of lower class was increasing due to the spread of the *Out-still System* and the government was blamed for implementing this. In the petition to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal by the inhabitants of Gurrifa⁵⁴ and its adjoining villages highlighted the annoying behaviour of the working class. The petitioners argued that due to the spread of the *Out-still System* in the area and availability of the substandard liquor at low price had led a good numbers of people of the area, especially the millworkers to drinking. These millworkers spent almost their entire salary on liquor. The petitioners also assumed that with the starting of new construction work in the area, which brought more employment and prosperity to the younger generation, would encourage more people to become drunkards. Further, while pointing out the behaviour of the drunken mob, they argued⁵⁵:

[T]he drunken mob behave most abominably in the public thoroughfares, singing indecent songs and taking all manner of liberty with the travellers who come across them, and breaches of the peace have frequently been the result.

Along with the local people, some newspapers discussed the pattern of growing intemperance among the working class. The *Rangpur Dik Prakash* of the 7th July 1864 published an article on the effect of alcohol on the lower class. The article argued that most of the low-class labourers with small

⁵² August 1881, A Proceeding, F/ Ex, File no. 8, Collection 1, no. 29, WBAS.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ This place is near to Naihati, a suburb town near Kolkata.

⁵⁵ December 1883, A Proceeding, F/Ex, Coll no. 12, File no. 39, WBSA.

payment spent most of their salary on liquor due to its high price. Therefore, the family members of the labourer became the sufferers. However, the article also suggested that the only way to solve this was to decrease the price of liquor and number of drunkards as well.⁵⁶ Along with the moral issue, the economic effects of the drunkenness also became the important focus point of this discussion.

Many the nationalist leaders of India had addressed the issue of growing intemperance among the working class at the end of the nineteenth century. While doing so, they connected British excise policy and the exploitative nature of the British colonialism with the moral and economic degradation of the Indian working class.⁵⁷ In the presidential address of the fifth National Social Conference, held in Kolkata on 29th December 1901, Rajah Binoya Krishan Bahadur argued that the consumption of intoxicating drugs, especially the consumption of liquor, was increasing among the working class people. Due to the changes in the liquor consumption patterns and spending of a large proportion of wage on the liquor by the worker, the families of these workers were affected. In this situation, the speaker asked to promote temperance and notion of social purity among the working class. This proposal was supported by some nationalist, like Bipin Chandra Pal and Mr. Jadunath Mazumdar.⁵⁸

In reply to the nationalist criticism, the government firstly denied the fact that spreading of the *Out-still System* was the reason of growing intemperance among the working class. The government argued that it was the improvement in the economic condition of the people which led them to spend money on liquor. Besides the government argued in spite of the growing intemperance among the working class, there was a decrease in the number of convicts for drunkenness.⁵⁹ Adding to this, the report of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal argued that the consumption of liquor among the people had increased not only for the establishment of the *Out-still System* but also due to the operation of social, moral and religious changes,

⁵⁶NNPR, Bengal, 27th July 1864, No. 3123.

⁵⁷The 3rd chapter has dealt with the point more elaborately.

⁵⁸*Abkari*, No 48. April 1902, p. 51.

⁵⁹December 1883, A Proceeding, F/ Ex, Collection no. 12, File no. 41, WBSA.

increase the purchasing power and cheapening of liquor.⁶⁰ The Collector of Nadia, while reporting to the government about the growing drunkenness among the people, had remarked that people of the lower order started to consume more liquor because of the increase in the wages.

The labourers also reportedly perceived an alternative notion of drinking. According to the working class, alcohol consumption would make the labourers energetic and enable them to earn more. Further, they believed that liquor would improve their immune system and protect them from the disease like fever, cholera and other diseases which affected the teetotallers.⁶¹ The workers of the collieries argued that drinking habit did not reduce their work, but it helped them to work better. They added, the workers usually drank on holidays. The tea garden coolies argued that the manager of the collieries wanted to use the working capacity of the coolies without any interruption. Thus, the tea-garden managers or contractors of the collieries were against any leisure enjoyed by them. One of the excise reports of 1906 highlighted this situation.⁶²

The consumption of any particular kind of alcoholic drink does not interfere seriously with the consumer's power to resume work next day. Coolies have the opinion that liquor enables them to work better. As a matter of fact, in the colliery tracts, the coolies are exempted from work on Sunday and Monday. The coolies are generally paid on Sunday, which is spent in heavy drinking; and as a holiday. It is likely that the colliery managers are inclined to minimise the evil in order to prevent any sort of interference which might affect the content of their labours.

These writings highlighted how the pleasure of the working class became a ground for the conflict of interest among different groups of people. Along with the economic interest, this conflict of interest was guided by the notion of morality. Besides, these writings also indicated the liquor consumption pattern and its gradual changes among the working class. Most of the writing

⁶⁰December 1884, A Proceeding, F/ Ex, File no.2, collection no. 1, WBSA.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, Appendix B.

⁶² March 1906, A Proceeding, F/SR, nos. 24, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$. 2, Letter No. 365E, Dated, Darjeeling, 5th January 1906, WBSA.

highlighted that the working class consumed liquor from the Government breweries and licensed liquor shops. There were no references of brewing illicit liquor by them. The government tried to check the illicit liquor consumption among the labourers by opening revenue earning liquor shops in the vicinity of the working place and turned them as 'disciplined' drinkers. However, at the same time, the colonial government identified the drinking of the working class as the source of crime. This contradictory stands of the government on the drinking practice of working class to some extent shaped the perception of the common people about the drinking practice of this particular class.

(V)

Caste and Drinking Practice:

Along with the class, caste also played a major role in determining liquor consumption pattern during the second half of the nineteenth century. This can be traced both to the liquor brewing and its consumption. The strong influence of caste system on the drinking practice is clearly traced from the involvement of a particular caste in the brewing industry and liquor business. Under the influence of the caste prejudices, none of the people except one caste opted for liquor brewing as a business. This particular caste was *shuri*⁶³, and the surname of this particular group of people was *Shaw*. They used to prepare liquor and sold it to the customers in the rural areas. In the urban area, like Kolkata, people belonging to this particular caste owned most of the liquor shops other than the European pubs and liquor shops. The relation between *shuri* caste and colonial government changed over time. This particular group of people were affected most by the new colonial excise policy. Thus, over the time, this particular caste was trying to negotiate with the government for keeping their caste profession alive.⁶⁴

⁶³ Sometimes the caste has also mentioned as *shundi* caste in the colonial documents.

⁶⁴ See: January 1881, B Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 1, Col. No. 2, Sl. No. 1-2; February 1882, B Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 8, Col. No. 12, Sl. No. 19; December 1883, B Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 15, Col. No. 12, Sl. No. 37-38; April 1884, B Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 3, Col. No. 12, Sl. No. 33; December 1885, B Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 3, Col. No. 2, Sl. No. 12-14; April 1887, B Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 5, Col. No. 12, Sl. No. 15-17; April 1887, B

Continuous changes in the colonial excise policy had affected both the urban and rural *sunri* caste. These two particular groups of the same caste responded to government excise policy in two different ways. The Excise Administrative Report of the year 1899-1900 had argued that a large number of people belong to *Sundi* or *Suris* caste are the local liquor vendors in Bankura district and they indulged in illicit distillation and smuggling of liquor due to the changes in the government distillery system. The government argued that in spite of having an efficient system of detecting the offenders, it became hard to stop these illegal practices because of the uncooperative attitude of the local *zamindars* and the local people.⁶⁵ On the one hand, the rural *Shuri* caste collaborated with the colonial government to protect their interest, on the other hand, the urban *Shuri* caste took to the method of sending petitions to government and created a space for negotiation to protect their business rights. For instance, the liquor vendors in the urban areas, like in Kolkata, had tried to negotiate with the government at several points of time. The negotiation had been made between the *Shuri* caste and government on the issues of the opening of new shops, cancellation of license of existed liquor shops.

These urban *Shuris*, having the surname of Shaw, wrote a number of petitions to the government to highlighting their grievances. In comparing to the European liquor shop owners, the Indian liquor vendors suffered more due to the changes in the government policy and the cancellation of the license of the liquor shops. The Indian caste system would not allow the liquor shop owners to change their profession. Therefore, the closing of the liquor shops could lead to the unemployment of the members of this caste. Also, the colonial government always imposed the rules on those liquor shops which were owned by the Indians, and took a lenient approach to the European owned liquor shops. Hence, when the GOI asked the Government of Bengal to reduce the number of the liquor shops, the government firstly cancelled the license of the liquor shops owned by the Bengalis. In December 1885 and

Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 6, Col. No. 12, Sl. No. 18; April 1887, B Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 7, Col. No. 12, Sl. No. 19, WBSA.

⁶⁵October 1900, A Proceeding, FD/SR, File no. $\frac{1R}{1}$, Sl no. 41-45, WBSA.

March 1887, a number of petitions were filed by the local liquor vendors of Kolkata, Deno Nath Shaw, Kissor Mohun Shaw, Mohes Chandre Shaw for cancellation of their liquor shops' licences.

It has been seen from the course of the discussion that drinking meant different things for the different groups of people. From upper caste to lower caste; from western educated to uneducated people consumed liquor on various occasions with different purposes during the nineteenth century. However, with the starting of Census of India in 1871, the government published caste census. Through this caste census, the government tried to codify the behaviours and living patterns of different groups of people. This attempt froze the drinking practice in accordance with caste with no rooms for change over time. Later, the drinking practice became one of the criteria for identifying the criminal tribes. The government report of June 1908 followed this idea and it reported that in 1883-84, the Bengal Excise Commission found that one fourth of the total population of Calcutta (Kolkata) might be considered as belonging to the drinking class and most of them were from the lower caste.⁶⁶

This report of June 1908 also divided all castes and sub-castes of Bengal into three sections according to the drinking habit.⁶⁷ The people of the first category were not in the habit of drinking liquor, and they drank without the sanction of the caste. Sub-castes belong to this category were Brahmin, Chhettri, Agarwalla, Khatri, Kaeri, Jaradhar, Kasarwami, Syed Muslims, Rabi Bhat, Kurmi, Marwari, Baidya and Kyastha (Bengal). The second category of people drank habitually with the sanction of the caste, but the not at a social gathering. The sub-castes under this category were Kayasth (Bihari), Kalesar, Ranniyar, Lohar, Borhi, Teli, Kahar, Mali, Kurmi, Joysowar, Muslim Bhat, Tamoli, Kandui, Sonar, Koorja. The third category people were those who drank with the sanction of the caste norms and were habituated to consume the liquor at the social gatherings. All the lower caste people were included in the third category. These sub-castes were Kumors, Hajjam, Gaaeri, Dhobi, Dosadh, Mallah, Chamar, Mehter, Dom, Nuniya, Ahir, Goala, Mussahar,

⁶⁶ June 1908, A Proceeding, File no: E $\frac{1C}{3}$, Appendix A, WBSA.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Bathudi, Pasi, Tatwa, Jolha, Cowra, Bagdi, Muchi. This indicated that the government identified some particular castes and sub-castes as ‘habitual drinkers’.

Besides, the colonial government published a list in the census report of 1901, which provided the statistics of people engaged in drinking that formed the drinking class (See: Table no.7) in Bengal. Categorisations of the different castes according to their drinking practice and giving statistics of the drinking population, both steps taken by the colonial government froze the caste identity of the drinkers. The list published in the census reports is given below.

Table no: 7 (statistics of drinking population; source: June 1908, A proceeding, File no: E $\frac{1C}{3}$, Appendix A, WBSA.)

The number of people forming drinking class as per census 1901 ⁶⁸		
Caste	Town of Calcutta	Suburb
Madrsi	175	3894
Bagdi	7182	3894
Bauries	71	----
Dom	9625	921
Muchi	8,477	948
Mathor	1587	174
Jelia	476	108
Chammar	24,586	5, 024
Dosad	7,787	953
Koybata	34,115	7,660
Kalwar	9362	893
Khara	1,870	297
Kaora	3302	403
Kurmi	6,302	823
Mayara	6758	573
Nomosodra	1313	469
Nunia	1080	190
Pasi	1542	592
Pod	2187	303
Sunri	7024	586

⁶⁸June 1908, A Proceeding, File no:E $\frac{1C}{3}$, Appendix A, WBSA.

Sutradhar	5,656	535
Malla	3,802	81
Dhoba	9826	1364
Kahar	19,253	1,028
Kamar	7,103	484
Telinga	288	-----
Lohar	625	49
total	1181,397	28,357

Following the guideline of the 1908's report regarding the drinking population, it can be said that the 1901's census report only enlisted the statistic of the lower class drinkers and did not give any statistical information about the existing drinking population among the high castes. The statistic also indicates that drinking practice was much higher among some particular sub-castes, like Dom, Chammar, Muchi, Koybata, Kalwar and Kahar. This list helped the government in identifying the 'habitual drunkards' among the drinkers and their numbers were much higher in Kolkata, than the suburb.

(VI)

Women in the Drinking World

The drinking world of the nineteenth century Bengal was dominated by the men. The social norms of the nineteenth century Bengal had disapproved the drinking practice among women, because of, first, alcohol was considered as impure. Therefore, society came to the conclusion that the women's body needed to be protected from this impure substance. Second, during the second half of the nineteenth century, 'the Hindu women body' became a 'site of struggle' between indigenous society and western knowledge system.⁶⁹ Thus, keeping the body of the Hindu women away from the western influence was the main intention of indigenous society. While linking liquor consumption with western culture and an impure activity, the indigenous society did not allow women to consume liquor. In spite of this, women of different sections of society consumed liquor in different occasions and in different situations. However, society had a pre-conceive notion about women's drinking, and

⁶⁹Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife Hindu Nation*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2001, p. 225.

according to that only lower class women consumed liquor. This perception of society was reflected through the census reports of 1901. The colonial authority argued that women belong to certain lower castes such as *Bagdi*, *Bauri*, *Dom*, *Muchi*, *Methar* and *Jalia* drunk alcohol. Along with these castes, women belonged to aboriginal groups like Santhal, Dhangars and Kols and who settled in Calcutta and its neighbourhood, consumed liquor.⁷⁰

While questioning this existed notion, it is necessary to find answers to the questions like whether women of the upper caste had broken the existing social norms that prevailed regarding women's drinking. Further, it is also necessary to reflect on women's notions about drinking in general, and drinking of the men in particular. Along with discussing all these issues, one needs to trace how contemporary Victorian society looked at the matter of women's drinking. Before going on to discuss these questions, one thing needs to be clarified that women in the nineteenth century were not a homogenous category. Thus, different groups of women perceived liquor consumption differently. Consumption of the various kinds of narcotics was quite known to the Indian society. Thus, narcotics like opium and cocaine used as home remedy for different diseases as well as a medium of pleasure by the women.⁷¹ However, it needs to be looked at whether the inclusion of alcohol in the list of narcotics brought any changes to the women's perception of the issue.

While discussing the nature of the drinking of the different group of people in a letter to the Secretary of the Board of Revenue, Lower Province, Sajoni Kant Chatterjee, the Secretary of the Burdwan Temperance Association had argued that he was not disposed to believe that drunkenness had been increased among women under the influence of western culture. He said that none of the women of the upper class consumed liquor. Besides, women of the

⁷⁰June 1908, A Proceeding, File no: E- $\frac{1C}{3}$, Appendix A, WBSA.

⁷¹Elaborate discussion on the issue of using of narcotic as home remedy for diseases has been done in Chapter 5.

lower class also hardly consumed distillery liquor. However, he agreed that the prostitutes mostly consumed liquor extensively.⁷²

Women were the worst affected due to the spread of the liquor menace in Bengal society in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many social reformers along with many other people had argued that violence against the women was increasing with the spreading of the intemperance. Social reformer and Brahma Samaj activist Keshab Chandra Sen claimed that all the family members of the drunkards had to suffer from hunger as the earning member of the family had spent all the money on drinks. Tea-garden managers of Darjeeling also pointed out that coolies had spent half of the salary in buying drinks and after getting drunk they engaged in the domestic violence.⁷³ A number of writers of the nineteenth century Bengal had described the poor condition of women due to the growing intemperance. Besides, these creative writers also criticised the society's stand on this issue in a satirical form. One such satire was '*Ekei Ki Bale Sabhata*' (Is this called the civilization?) by Michael Madhusudan Dutta. In the story, the female protagonist was dejected by her drunkard, wicked and whore-mongering husband and while lamenting on her fate, she posed numbers of questions to the society. She asked whether western education and western civilization had spread the evil values like drunkenness, visiting prostitutes and wickedness among the young western educated people. She asked whether getting drunk, beating wife, visiting prostitutes and telling lies were synonymous with this civilization. While pointing out the bad habits of the young, educated Bengalis, the female protagonist also argued that the women were the worst sufferer of the newly emerging culture.

On one hand when a group of upper-class women suffered due to the growing intemperance among their husbands, then, on the other hand, another group of upper-class women mentioned the necessity of the liquor consumption during the religious rituals. Gynadanandini Devi, the wife of Satyendra Nath Tagore, had mentioned in her memoir that women of her

⁷²February 1887, Resolution reviewing the Report of the Excise Commission appointed to enquiry into the excise of the country spirit in Bengal, p. 151.

⁷³February 1889, A Proceeding, File no.E $\frac{10}{2}$, Appendix B, WBSA

maternal village used to drink while worshipping the goddess Kali. She mentioned that it was auspicious to drink the liquor which had been offered to the Goddess Kali.⁷⁴ Additionally, some of the upper-class women used liquor as cosmetics and also as a medicine. For instance, some of the women in the nineteenth century Bengal used liquor to wash their body.⁷⁵ Upper-class women were asked to consume liquor to rejuvenate health by the doctors. During the end of the 19th century, the medical market of India was flooded with good numbers of imported tonics. The advertisements of these tonics claimed that they would cure many health problems, and could be an elixir for the mothers of the newborn babies. However, these tonics contained a certain portion of alcohol. Therefore, the conservative upper-class families identified these tonics as impure and discarded their usage. As a result, during *Swadeshi* movement, some Indian pharmaceutical companies brought out alcohol-free tonic. It can be said that the alcohol consumption among the upper-class women was guided by the norms and regulation of the society, especially the notion of the purity versus impurity during the nineteenth century.

Beyond the domain of the upper-class, educated and semi-educated families of Bengal, there were another sections of women, belonging to the tribal world and lower-class, who engaged in drinking, and who perceived drinking habits in a different way. It has already been discussed that aboriginal people of Santhal Parghana became addicted to alcohol with the opening of government distilleries in the area. Earlier, when home brewing was allowed, Santhal women used to prepare liquor for the family on festivals.⁷⁶ Thus, alcohol consumption was regulated by the women of the family. Besides, the Santhal society allowed the women to drink alcohol on some occasions. For instance, these women consumed liquor during the festivals. The Deputy Magistrate of the Santhal Parghana highlighted this practice of drinking among women in the Santhal society. He argued that the Santhal society imposed some restrictions on the liquor consumption among the women along with giving the permission for drinking. The Santhal Society allowed the women to consume 'two or three *dubas* (cups) in the daytime and more in the

⁷⁴Chitra Deb, *Thakur Barir Andarmahal*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2011, p.40.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p.43-44.

⁷⁶February 1882, A Proceeding, F/Ex, File no. 6, coll no. 1, Sl. no. 39, WBSA.

same night when cold and dancing does not permit it to affect them so much⁷⁷. Besides, a child could receive goblet or two cups of liquor to drink only after crossing certain age. Further, the Magistrate mentioned that home brewed liquor was also used as medicine and food in the Santhal household.

Along with providing pleasure, liquor also became a source of livelihood for some particular groups of women in the nineteenth century. For instance, many European women took jobs in liquor shops. Sumantra Banerjee in *Dangerous Outcast* has argued that journey from Britain to India had become easier with the opening of Suez Canal and as a result, a large number of English women belonged to different categories with different aims⁷⁸ had landed in India. Many of them were employed in the hotels and bars in Kolkata and other cities.⁷⁹ Appointment of the women as barmaids attracted several men to the bars. Soon, the government was forced to regulate the selling hours of liquor and other irregularities of the liquor business under the pressure of several alternative voices. While revising the licence system, they took the issue of the appointing of the barmaids at the liquor shops for consideration and agreed that the appointment of the barmaid attracted the customers and helped in growing drunkenness among the people and spreading disorder in the area. Thus, the Government mentioned that it could be possible to fix the issue of barmaid with the help of *Section 37* of the *Police Act of 1866* which empowered the government to fix condition while issuing the licences. While taking the help of this law, the government argued that they had the authority “to forbid the employment of women whose service increased the consumption of liquor.”⁸⁰ The government also claimed that it was expected that some liquor shop owner would oppose the decision, but that could be encountered. Besides, the government also said in the *Section 67* of the *Barmaid Bill* that this measure might also prevent the licensed shops from

⁷⁷March 1906, A Proceeding, F/SR, nos. 24, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$. 2, Letter No. 365E, Dated, Darjeeling, 5th January 1906, WBSA.

⁷⁸Mostly these English women came to India to find a suitable groom. However most of them did not succeed and ended up choosing prostitution and barmaid’s job as occupation. (See: Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, p.49)

⁷⁹Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, p.49.

⁸⁰*Abkari*, No.52, April 1903, p. 53.

being a drinking den for the people of notoriously bad characters.⁸¹ At last in 1903, the government passed an amendment of the *Calcutta Barmaids Bill* and prohibited the employment of women in the bars. However, this law had certain flaws. The government's appointed selection committee argued that in spite of the prohibition on the employment of women as barmaids, many of the hotel's owners were continuing the practice of employing women in the hotels with several other excuses to attract the customers. Contemporary newspapers, like *Englishman*, *New India*, and *Tribune* also highlighted this fault in the *Calcutta Barmaid Law*.

The Tribune had argued that in spite of the ban on appointment of barmaids in the taverns and hotels, the hotel owners were continuing with the appointment of women as musicians. Besides, the tavern keepers used these women for other services too. While supporting the argument of *Tribune*, the *Englishman* had argued that the small shops of "cold-drinks" and cigars were as harmful as the appointment of barmaid and government should look into the issue. At the end, the whole question of drinking was linked to women.

The question of women and drinking will remain incomplete without the discussion on the liquor consumption by the prostitutes of the nineteenth century Kolkata. During the nineteenth century, large numbers of prostitutes came to Kolkata and started prostitution. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of the prostitutes in Kolkata increased due to famines and other socio-economic crisis. English soldiers and a good number of young rich and educated peoples visited the prostitutes for pleasure. Besides, these people also attracted to the easy flow of liquor at the houses of ill-fames. While entertaining the customers with alcohol, these prostitutes also drank with them. Sometimes many prostitutes robbed their customers while taking advantage of their drunken condition.

Therefore, it can be said that during the second half of the nineteenth century different group of women perceived liquor consumption in various ways. Some of the women looked at the liquor consumption as a part of

⁸¹*Ibid.*

religious rituals or as a medical remedy or as a source of the livelihood. However, most women looked at the liquor as the reason for their painful life and misfortune. It was the situation which these women were going through and strata of the society from which these women belonged which determined their perception of the liquor consumption.

Conclusion

Consumption of alcohol was increased in Bengal from the nineteenth century onwards due to the spread of western education, changes in the government excise policy, easy availability of liquor. This continuous increase in alcohol consumption had marginalised consumption of other narcotics. However, different sections of the society consumed liquor for various reasons. An increase in the alcohol consumption first noticed among the upper class of the society. Initially, upper-class people's intention of drinking was to get pleasure, but gradually this motive changed. Liquor consumption became a status symbol for these people who perceived liquor consumption as a way to upgrade their status while drinking with the British officers. This change in drinking pattern had indicated the urge of these upper-class people in abandoning the caste prejudices for social mobilization. This class was fond of the imported liquors like sherry, brandy, port, rum and whisky. Slowly these liquors became a status symbol for them. Their choice of liquor, therefore, created a distinction of taste within different classes.

The spirit of breaking social norms had motivated students to consume liquor. This revolutionary step of the students gradually made them addicted to liquor, and later they became drunkards. Their choice of liquor, indeed, oscillated between the country liquor and the foreign liquor. Contemporary society was very critical of this kind of liquor consumption, and the indigenous society blamed the influence of western education for the growing intemperance among students. Despite all these criticisms, students continued with drinking while abandoning family restrictions, caste prejudice, respect for the elders, and love for their wife.

Society in general also took contradictory stands on the drinking. In most of the cases, society looked at the drinking of the upper-class and a

certain section of the educated people as an act of pleasure. However, the same society perceived the drinking of the aboriginals, working class and lower caste people as an offence, impure and undisciplined behaviour, which needed to be disciplined. The government stereotyped certain caste and section of people as 'drunkard' while preparing the census report of 1901 and disciplining the drinking practice of these groups of people. This step had helped the colonial government to prove lower caste Indians as 'habitual drunkards', and they stated that not only the colonial excise system, but the nature of the Indians also responsible for the increasing drunkenness among the Indians. Further, the colonial government identified many tribal groups as criminal tribes on the basis of their drinking habit.

The women were also affected by the changing pattern of alcohol consumption in Bengal in the nineteenth century and women of different sections of the society perceived drinking in various ways. On the one hand, a certain section of the women considered alcohol as a source of domestic violence; on the other hand, alcohol became the source of livelihood and pleasure for certain section of the women. However, the influence of the Victorian morality and conservative approach of the contemporary society to protect the women body from the western influence dismissed these different perspectives and considered drinking practice of the women as an immoral practice.

The above discussion indicated that there were several patterns of alcohol consumption in nineteenth century Bengal. These patterns varied with the class, caste, and gender. Influence of colonialism and changing nature of the class, caste and gender in the indigenous society had made the changes in the pattern of alcohol consumption visible. Besides, this drinking practice was conflated with morality, criminality, and ultimately with the class interest of different groups. Thus, the perception of colonial authority and contemporary society about the liquor consumption patterns changed over time. This changing pattern indicated the growing intemperance in the society and left behind a moral question in the society, i.e., whether consumption of liquor was good. As a response to this moral issue, temperance movement was started in Bengal. The next chapter looks at this movement.

Chapter 3

A Career of Temperance Movement in Bengal

Rapid growth in liquor consumption among the Indians and increase in the collection of the colonial excise revenue from the second half of the nineteenth century led to the formation of the temperance movement in India by several Indian and European social reformers. Bengal's Temperance movement was led by different social groups, colonial officers, British Philanthropists and mostly educated middle-class Bengalis. While propagating the message of temperance, this movement created a parallel dialogue between the different group of people and the colonial government. On the one hand, these dialogues highlighted the exploitative nature of British excise policy and created a political awareness. On the other hand, these dialogues also forced the colonial government to take the issue of temperance seriously. While dealing with these dialogues, the chapter traces the course and the nature of temperance movement in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first few years of the twentieth century.

The temperance movement in Indian started in Bombay Presidency, and then it spread to other parts of India including Bengal. It has been suggested that the Indian temperance movement was 'organised, patronized, and instructed by English temperance agitation'¹. This is an agreement with the idea that western knowledge flowing into India in the nineteenth century had influenced different sphere of lives of Indians. Temperance movement as a part of the larger social movement seemed to be a part of such a process. The temperance movement, as we shall see below, grew in India as a part of a critique of western culture and colonial rule. Therefore, this chapter argues that while the temperance movement in India got inspiration from the West, it also had an Indian voice. However, the chapter will first discuss the temperance movement of England to trace that voice and its difference from

¹ Lucy Carroll, The Temperance Movement in India, *Modern Asian Studies*, Volume 10, Issue 3, Cambridge University Press, July 1976, p.417.

the temperance movement of India. Later, the chapter discusses the initial phase of the temperance movement in India, particularly in Bengal.

(I)

During the nineteenth century, the temperance movements started in Britain, and gradually the movement left a strong impact on Indian society.² In Britain, the first temperance movement started in Scotland, and a number of temperance associations were formed there. Among the different temperance activists, John Dunlop took the first initiative towards the temperance movement. In 1828, after his visit to France he was surprised to find that the condition of the French working class was better than the Scottish working class. While investigating the issue, he came to the conclusion that the addiction to Scottish whisky was the main reason for the poor condition of the Scottish working class. Meanwhile, he also accumulated information of the American temperance movement, and he began to promote these temperance ideas soon after returning to Glasgow. He wrote pamphlets, but most of the publishing houses were uninterested in publishing them. However, in 1829, he established the Temperance Society of Scotland. Inspired by him, a number of temperance associations like Glasgow and West of Scotland Temperance Society³ (November 1829) Military Temperance Society⁴ (1830) were established. Most of the Temperance associations initially spread the awareness of the side-effects of the liquor consumption, but from 1830 onwards members of the temperance associations began to propagate total abstinence.⁵ A number of temperance associations, like Preston Temperance

² The first temperance question appeared in America and as a result, the first temperance society, Temperate Society of Mobeat, was established in 1808 at Moreau, in the New York state. Following the establishment of this society several other societies, like American Society, New York State Temperance Society (1829).

³ This society was formed by Mr. William Collins, the publisher and editor of the *Temperance Record*. See: Samuel Couling, *History of the Temperance movement in Great Britain and Ireland*, The New York Public Library, London, 1862, p. 8.

⁴ This is the first military temperance society formed at the horse Barracks, in Glasgow under the permission and countenance of the commanding officer. The society was started among the men of the 4th Royal Irish Dragon Guards and with the hundred men from 1st Royals, and 91st Argyshire Regiment, accompanied by their officers. Later many soldiers enrolled their names as members of the society. (See: *Ibid.*, p. 9.)

⁵ Initially the temperance associations of Scotland asked people to stop drinking whisky, but it increased the consumption of beer. Thus, in 1829, Mr. Dunlop proposed to promote total abstinence. (See: *Ibid.*, p. 12.)

Society and Youth Temperance Society of Scotland tried to promote the abstinence pledge by organizing festivals and meetings and distributing circulars. Scotland, by 1840, witnessed a strong temperance movement.

Temperance movement had also been started in England during the same time. The movement though began in 1820 in England, but the first temperance meeting held in 1834. In this meeting, the doctrine of temperance was first preached by Mr Livesey of Preston. In July 1834, Mr J. Silk Buckingham submitted a resolution to the House while arguing that a committee should be appointed to enquire into the 'causes and effects' of the excess consumption of liquor by the labourers of the United Kingdom. The resolution also asked for the possible solution of the situation. The resolution was supported by a strong speech of Mr Buckingham.⁶ By 1836, a number of temperance Coffee-houses, Reading-rooms and hotels were opened in London. Several temperance meeting were organised to discuss the improvement of the intemperate labourers of the London city. Slowly, a number of temperance associations were formed in the villages of Britain. One of the temperance associations was the Metropolitan Welsh Total Abstinence Society. Some of the temperance societies like Band of Hope started, during 1840, to preach teaching of temperance among children. Members of Band of Hope argued that the future of the country mostly depended on how the young generation would perceive the drinking practice. Thus, it was needed to provide proper teaching and training of the young.⁷ Members of this group like Mrs Carlile used to visit schools and spoke to the children and asked them to stay away from drinks. With time, medical persons began to participate in the temperance movement by writing medical articles on aspects of drinking. They scientifically indicated that there were no medical benefits of alcohol consumption. They also began to propagate total abstinence.

Gradually, the churches in England also participated in the temperance movement and brought a religious and moral flavour to the movement. Their engagement had also brought a change in the nature of work of the temperance

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷ J. Jonson Baker, *The Temperance Movement*, Church of England Temperance Society, Westminster, 1910, p.24.

activists. The new teetotallers started to provide help to rescued drunkards to improve their economic and social condition.⁸ One of such church-based temperance organization was the Gospel Temperance or the Blue Ribbon Society in England, established during 1877.⁹ While prohibiting people both from drinking and selling of alcohol, the Society was trying to stop the middle class and working class people from taking alcohol. During the decades of 1880s and 1890s the temperance movement in England was not only concerned about the growing intemperance in England but also about the growing intemperance in its colonies. People like William Caine and his Anglo-Indian Temperance Association played a major role in this and later on in the Indian temperance movement as we shall discuss later.

There were two important features in the England's temperance movement. The first important feature was the role of print culture. The printing press became one of the important tools of social movement in England by 1830. Along with organizing public meetings and asking people to sign a pledge, most of the temperance organizations published magazines and periodicals to propagate their message. One of the temperance organizations, for instance, Band of Hope had published numbers of children's magazines during 1850-60's with texts and illustrations to train children in the temperance.¹⁰ Brian Harrison has argued that presses got more liberty to promote the temperance propaganda during the late Victorian period.¹¹ The second important feature of the British temperance movement was its concern about drinking among the working and lower classes and the movement took several steps to stop this.

⁸ Lilian Lewis Shiman, 'The blue Ribbon Army: Gospel Temperance in England', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December, 1981), p. 393.

⁹ Gospel Temperance or The Blue Ribbon Society was founded by Francis Murphy. He was deeply influenced by the America temperance movement during his visit to America. Both the Seller and consumers of alcohol became the target of the movement. By 1880's the movement became popular in England and over a million Englishmen had given the blue ribbon. (See: Lilian Lewis Shiman, 'The blue Ribbon Army: Gospel Temperance in England', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 395-97.)

¹⁰ Brian Harrison, 'A World of which we had no conception' *Liberalism and the England Temperance Press: 1830-1872*, *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 2, p. 144.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

(II)

The concept of 'temperance' came to India from the west during nineteenth-century. Initially, the concept was promoted by the Christian missionaries and later popularised by a number of social reformers of the nineteenth century India. During the first half of the nineteenth century, American missionaries had published several pamphlets in the Bombay Presidency to promote temperance. Thus, the temperance movement in Bombay Presidency started as a part of a social reform movement.

Unlike in Bengal, the government was far more active in controlling the intemperance, particularly the European drunkenness in the Bombay presidency. The colonial government of Bombay passed the *Vagrancy Law* in 1860, the *Bombay Abkari Act* in 1878 and *Mhowra Act* in 1882 for controlling the growing intemperance among the different group of people and the liquor business in the Bombay presidency. Soon after implementing the *Bombay Abkari Plan* in 1878, some people criticized this plan as people associated with the liquor business had suffered. Robert Eric Colvard argued that a constructive public opposition to the drinking practice in Bombay Presidency had been started with the passing of the *Bombay Abkari Law*. Later, unified public opposition helped in the formation of the temperance movement in Bombay Presidency.¹²

Meanwhile, the government increase the tax on the liquor and therefore, the toddy tappers of Panvel district called a strike in October 1886.¹³ Further, the taluka of Panvel adopted a public resolution of not to consume liquor and toddy until the colonial government brought changes in the excise policy. Soon this movement spread in the different parts of the western India, and some civil and caste organization also joined the movement. These organisations took the pledge not to pay the excise revenue to the Government and refused to consume liquor.

¹² Robert Eric Colvard, *A world without Drink: Temperance In Modern India, 1840-1940*, Unpublished Thesis, Submitted in The University of Iowa, May 2013, p. 52, <http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4592&context=etd> .

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.78.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a number of nationalist leaders in Maharashtra took an interest in spreading the temperance movement in Maharashtra. Dadabhai Naoroji and Bal Gangadhar Tilak were two of them. Due to the rise of consciousness among the people, 1900 onwards, the temperance movement in Bombay presidency became more prominent. Numbers of temperance associations in the Bombay presidency started to protest against the Government decision of opening of new liquor shops. For instance, in 1903, the Bombay Temperance Council and Ahmedabad Total Abstinence Association protested against the opening of new liquor shops. Initially, the colonial government remained neutral to these temperance agitations, but during the early twentieth century, this attitude changed according to the changing nature of the local protest. While describing the nature of the temperance movement in Bombay presidency, Mr. R. A. Lamb, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay wrote to the Secretary of Government of India, (Finance Department) that the temperance movement had widely spread in the districts of Poona, Nasik and several other parts of the Bombay Presidency. This movement in towns of Yeola and Malegaon turned into a violent agitation when ‘professional wrestlers were employed to hustle customers from resorting in the liquor shops.’¹⁴ Thus, police intervention became necessary to control the situation, and the agitators got arrested. The temperance movement in the rest of the Nasik district was limited to the temperance speeches. The district magistrate of Belgaum district issued an order under section 144 Criminal Procedure Code when the temperance movement in the district became violent.¹⁵ The government argued that due to these agitations, most of the country liquor shops faced loss as customers had been diverted to the foreign liquor shops. For example, many drinkers started to visit the country liquor and foreign liquor shops in Poona Cantonment area when temperance activists and picketers became succeed in closing the liquor shops in Poona city.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Temperance Movement in the Bombay Presidency, IOR/L/PJ/6/883, File 2741: 9 July 1908, BL.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

During 1908, the temperance movement in Poona got the government worried. *The Madras Times*, Overland edition of 16th April 1908, reported that some of the Brahmin students of local colleges got into a fight with the police officers while attacking a liquor shop.¹⁷ Later, the government arrested these students, and at the end, the Government made it clear that one could carry on the temperance movement, 'but that if they resorted to any threats or violence to the shopkeepers, the law would have to be applied'.¹⁸ The government of the Bombay Presidency informed the Secretary of State that the manner of work of the temperance workers and the kinds of questions they raised would be a hindrance in maintaining peace.¹⁹ In a private letter, G. Clarke wrote to the Secretary of State, that the temperance movement in Poona 'was undoubtedly much more political than anything else, although it attracted some bona fide temperance enthusiasts'.²⁰ The movement was led by the students. However, the government did not give permission to continue the movement, because they argued that it would cause disturbance.²¹

Leaders like Gokhale criticised the intervention of the Colonial Government in the temperance movement in Maharashtra. While delivering a speech at the annual meeting of All India Temperance Association (AITA), he said that though the question of temperance became political as it was more related to finance, moral and social issues. Protesting against the colonial excise policy was natural for the Indians as none of the Indian religions allowed drinking. Besides, Indians were not habitual drinkers. However, they became addicted to liquor consumption under the influence of the colonial excise policy.²² At the end of the speech, he asked people to take the pledge not to drink and stopped paying the excise tax to make the government helpless. He also asked Mr Gupta, an Ex-Excise Commissioner and an Indian,

¹⁷ House of Commons question on the temperance movement in Poona, IOR/L/PJ/6/867, File 1717, BL.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ House of Commons question on the temperance movement in Poona, IOR/L/PJ/6/867, File 1717: 14 May 1908, Answer to Mr. Herberts's question. No 12, dated 14th May 1908, BL.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, Extract from the private Letter from Sir G. Clarke to the Secretary of State, 23rd April 1908.

²² *Abkari*, July 1908, No.73, pp.91-92.

to endorse 'the instinctive feeling of the people regarding the drinking traffic'²³. Gokhale also said²⁴:

Yet, whenever the Temperance movement was vigorously pushed, as in Poona, the Government straightway began to regard it as an attack upon the revenue, and therefore as being intended to embarrass it. When the people who frequented the Poona liquor-shops realised that they were being watched, their sense of shame kept them away, with the result that the takings of the liquor-sellers fell considerably. The Government, however, took the view that it was impossible for them to allow such a combination; if such combinations succeeded in one direction they might become harmful in another.

(III)

Missionaries and Temperance Movement in Bengal:

After the Bombay presidency, the concept of temperance also spread in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century. In this process, two groups of people took the leading role, missionaries and the Brahma Samaj activists. Constant criticism of the colonial excise policy by these two groups forced the government to take some steps to change their excise policy.

Different missionaries, belonged to various missionary organizations, added their voices to this movement while producing the constant criticism of the colonial excise policy from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. They argued that British Government failed to stop its subjects from being alcoholic. Despite this criticism, the stand of the Christian missionaries was not always critical to alcohol consumption. During the first half of the nineteenth century, many western educated Bengalis accepted Christianity thinking that Christianity would help them in breaking rigid social norms of the Hindu society and they argued that it permitted them to consume liquor. However, mid-nineteenth century onwards different Christian organisations in Bengal started to modify their stands on alcohol consumption. After consulting the archival and missionary records, it can be said that these

²³ *Abkari*, July 1908, No.73, pp.91-92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

missionaries actively participated in the temperance movement and built up the movement in Santhal Parghana, Midnapore, and Darjeeling. Some of them took a critical stand to the growing intemperance in Kolkata as well.

In Bengal, the missionaries adopted two strategies to promote the temperance movement. On the one hand, certain groups of missionaries started to organised conferences to discuss the temperance question and criticised the government policy. On the other hand, some missionaries took individual initiatives to pull the government's attention toward the intemperance among the tribal people. Certainly, these second group of missionaries was also criticizing the drinking practice of the Santhals, but while doing so they also tried to draw the attention of the British government. This act of the missionaries had highlighted not only the problems of the tribal drunkenness but also questioned British Excise policies. The pattern of the liquor consumption of the Santhal has already been discussed in the second chapter. During the mid-seventies of the nineteenth century, these missionaries started to inform Government about the Santhals' drunkenness. They claimed that in spite of banning the home brewing in Santhal Parghana, drunkenness among the Santhal was increasing. Some of the Missionaries also criticised the intemperance of the Europeans, staying in India.

Reverend Brown, one of the active missionaries in the Santhal Parghana, had written to the government that the intemperance among Santhals had increased than the earlier period. He argued that instead of checking drunkenness among the Santhals, condemning home brewing and the introduction of government breweries helped in spreading of intemperance. Under the new rule, Santhals brought rice to the government breweries for turning that into beer.²⁵ Another missionary, Rev. Mr Cole, wrote to the Government that the private brewing might effectively reduce by the government initiative. However, this turned the aboriginal people toward the spirits brewed at distilleries.²⁶

²⁵ August 1875, A proceeding, R/MR/Ex, Collection 6, serial no. 25, WBSA.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Thomas Evans,²⁷ a missionary at Monghyr,²⁸ criticised the excise policy and argued that drunkenness among the Santhal had increased due to the expansion of the *Out-still System*. Besides, he also argued that these *Out-stills* provided adulterated liquor at a cheap rate. Thus, the low price of liquor had increased the craving for liquor among the Santhals. Meanwhile, the adulteration of liquor with ‘*nux-vomica*’ or ‘*dhutra*’ started and these liquors were dangerous for the people. Evans said that the police records of Monghyr also supported his claim of growing drunkenness in the district. According to him, there were more than some four hundred cases for the offence of drunkenness in the Monghyr police station.²⁹ Moreover, there were more cases of drunkenness which happened outside the municipal area which remained unnoticed by the police. He also reported that this growing drunkenness kept the workers, especially the domestic servants, absent from their work.³⁰ To prove his argument, Evans collected two sample bottles of the *Out-still* liquor from the distillery of the Monghyr town and sent to the government as the evidence of the adulterated liquor.³¹ With all these activities Thomas Evans played a crucial role in the Indian Temperance movement during the last decades of the nineteenth century. When William Caine, the secretary of the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association, visited India in 1890, Evans came closer to Caine and became an active member of Anglo-Indian Temperance Association.

Evans had visited different parts of India and sent a report to the Anglo-Indian Temperance Society in London on the widespread intemperance among the Indians. In one of his letters to the editor of the *Abkari*, he described the growing intemperance among the people. In the letter, he said that the liquor shops in Kolkata, especially those run by the Europeans, were disobeying the excise laws and sold liquor even after the closing time. These shops did not

²⁷ Thomas Evans was a Baptist missionary working in India since 1855. During his staying at Monghyr in 1874 he became concerned about the income of Government of India's from the taxes on alcohol. 1880 onward he started to send letters to the British newspapers and Lieutenant Governor of Bengal on this issues. (David Hardiman, p.78) Later he became a close associate of William Caine and active member of Anglo-Indian Association.

²⁸ A town in the Bihar. Besides, this town is also the district head-quarter of the Monghyr district.

²⁹ June 1881, A proceeding, FD/Ex/ File no. 8, Collection no. 1, Sl. No. 21 to 23, WBSA.

³⁰ August 1881, A proceeding, FD/ Ex/ File no. 8, Collection no. 1, Serial No. 29, WBSA.

³¹ Oct. 1881, A proceeding, FD/Ex/ File no. 8, Collection no. 1, Sl. No. 45, WBSA.

follow any regulation of the excise department. Besides, these shops appointed European girls as barmaids to attract customers. He also mentioned that Kolkata was full of drinking habits and yielded not less than Rs. 21,000,000 yearly as excise revenue. In spite of this, the city-dwellers hardly joined the temperance movement. Thus, he made an appeal to the people of Kolkata to come up with the temperance movement.³²

Dr. L. J. Phillips, an American Missionary, while replying to the officiating collector of Midnapore, argued that drunkenness among the Santhals had increased due to the expansion of the *Out-still System* in the Midnapore District. He argued that there was no connection between agricultural prosperity and the increase of drunkenness in this region. There was no such option of luxury in the common people's life, as with the prosperity of agriculture other expenses had gone up. After collecting testimonials from the local people, he said that whenever *Out-stills* had been set up, either in the villages or markets, there was an alarming increase of drunkenness. The younger generation was worst affected by the expansion of the *Out-still System*.

Not only in the Santhal Parghana, but the hill districts of the Bengal presidency were also affected by the growing intemperance among the hilly tribes. The missionaries of this area started to keep informing government and appealing to the tea-garden managers to look into the issue. The number of *Out-stills* in the Tea-Districts of Bengal increased after 1883, which caused rapid growth of intemperance among the coolies reducing their work efficiency. The letters of the tea-garden managers highlighted that the death rate and crime rate among the coolies was increasing due to the establishment of the *Out-stills* nearby tea-gardens. The number of liquor shops was increasing every year, as government organised an auction for the distribution of License every year and it had been given to the highest bidder. Supply of cheap liquor by these new *Out-stills* situated in the vicinity of the tea-gardens had left a bad impact on the

³² *Abkari*, No.9, April 1892, pp. 85-86.

health of the coolies.³³ The tea-garden managers asked the colonial government to take steps to control liquor sale.

Along with the criticism, some of the Tea-garden managers collaborated with the local missionaries and founded the Darjeeling Temperance Associations in 1885. Later this society was affiliated to the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association. This was one of the earliest affiliated societies of the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association. The president of the Darjeeling Temperance Association, Mr. D. Sutherland, and its secretary, Rev. A. Turbull were among the first temperance activist who joined hand with the tea garden planters and able to start a successful agitation against the *Out-still System*.³⁴ Their main concern was to control the drunkenness among the coolies. Therefore, they asked government to bring changes in their excise policy and license system. Along with this, they requested the government to abolish the liquor traffic from the Nepal.³⁵

A number of missionaries, working in Kolkata, also become active on the temperance issue. A British Missionary conference was organised in Kolkata in 1888. The main agenda of the conference was to condemn the *Out-still System*. While doing so, the conference also proposed the issue of giving power to the municipalities to seek for local opinion on the question of opening of drink shops.³⁶ The conference also highlighted the increase of the drunkenness among the tea-gardens' coolies. The members of the conference stated that the location of a liquor shop near every tea-garden was promoting the drinking practice among the coolies. Another missionary conference held in September 1908 in Kolkata, where the missionaries took up the issue of distribution of new licenses for new liquor shops. The conference argued that the government's effort to check the illicit distillation by distributing new licenses for the liquor shops was not helpful enough. The negative effect of distribution of new licenses, as they put, 'far outweigh any advantages' and

³³ February, 1889, A proceeding, FD/ Ex, File no. E $\frac{10}{2}$, Serial No. 1-4, Appendix B, WBSA.

³⁴ *Abkari*, No. 11, October 1892, London.

³⁵ *Op.cit.*

³⁶ Debate in the House of Commons on the Excise Administration of the Government of India, 30th April 1889, WBSA.

the 'closer association of the Government with the liquor traffic or even the possibility of its being identified with the retail sale of liquor is strongly deprecated'³⁷.

The temperance movement led by the Missionaries became stronger with the visit of William Cain in 1888. He came to India to promote the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association in 1888. In this visit, he travelled different parts of India, and after reaching Bengal, he met Thomas Evans. Evans's work experience in India and his perception on the Indians' usage of narcotics, like alcohol, cannabis, and opium, helped Caine to understand the drinking pattern of the Indians. Soon after returning to England in 1892, Caine started a journal named *Abkari* and begun to criticise the colonial excise policies in India. Soon, William Caine's criticism pressurised the British Parliament which was forced to appoint the Hemp-Drug Commission in 1892 to investigate the different usage of narcotics in India. Besides, the House of Commons asked the Government of India to modify the excise policy. Caine had politicised the temperance issue in India³⁸, and several political leaders in India became interested in the issue. The Anglo-Indian Temperance Association organised lectures and magic lanterns shows, distributed temperance literature among the young people, and the Members of the organization, like Keso Ram Roy of Varanasi, composed songs on the temperance issue to propagate their message. Initially, the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association collaborated with the several Indian social reform organizations, like *Brahmo Samaj*, *Arya Samaj*, and several other Christian Organizations. Later, the connection between the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association and India National Congress became stronger. At the beginning, Congress as an organisation was not much interested in the temperance issue. Some of the early nationalist leaders, Dadabhai Naoroji and Bipin Chandra Pal, became interested in the issue and participated in the annual meetings of the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association. In this way, a connection between the temperance movement and the mainstream national movement was

³⁷ *Abkari*, October 1908, no, 74, p. 120.

³⁸ Lucy Carroll, *The Temperance Movement in India*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Cambridge University Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/311914>, p. 427.

established and the missionaries like William Caine, Thomas Evans played a major role in that process.

(IV)

Bengali Social Reformers and Temperance movement:

Along with the missionary approaches, some of the reformers of the nineteenth century Bengal also formed a parallel temperance movement in Bengal. Most of these social reformers visited England, and their interaction with the temperance association in England during the visit had modified their perception of temperance. After coming back to India, they started to criticise the colonial excise policy and launched the temperance movement in greater scale. Among these reformers, Keshab Chandra Sen was the most prominent name.

During the time of Young Bengal movement (1830-40), most of the young, educated pupils started to drink alcohol to break the social norms and religious orthodoxy. Their drinking habit spread to the other section of the society. After 1860, a significant part of the population became addicted to alcohol consumption, and the statistics of excise revenue prove that fact.

Peary Churn Sircar, the head teacher of the Bethune School, took the first initiative to start a temperance movement in Bengal, and founded The Temperance Association on 15th November 1863. This Association had two monthly magazines, one was in English, named *The Wellwisher*, and another was in Bengali, named *Hitoshadhok*.³⁹ These two magazines kept asking the government to appoint a committee to investigate the drinking problem. Later, the Brahma Samaj took forward this temperance activity under the leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen.⁴⁰

1857 onwards Keshab Chandra Sen became closely associated with the different reformative activities and social works in Bengal. In

³⁹ *Abkari*, No. 38, Peary Churn Sircar, October 1899, p. 142.

⁴⁰ Surat Congress and Conferences, *A collection of the Presidential and inaugural speeches*, All India Temperance Conference, G. A. Natesan & co., Esplanade, Madras, 1909, p. 96, BL.

1868, he formed a temperance association. In the inauguration session of this Association, Keshab Chandra had invited many important Indians and Europeans, along with the Viceroy. In that meeting, he appealed to all the invitees to join in the temperance movement in India. Later, his idea of temperance was shaped further during his visit to London in 1870.⁴¹

During the visit to London, Keshab Chandra Sen interacted with a number of temperance activists and attended number of meetings of many temperance associations. While attending these meetings, he also got the chance to convince the British public to the harmful effects of the colonial excise policy on Indians. He advocated that the Government of India must appoint an inquiry committee to investigate the issue of growing intemperance and find fault in the excise policy.

After coming back to India, he formed the Indian Reform Association on 11th November 1870 with the aim of social and moral reformation of the society while promoting the message of temperance. This Society organised meetings to promote temperance and number of labourers attended these meetings. In 1871, such a meeting was organised in Baranagar⁴². Next year the organization started to publish a temperance magazine.⁴³

Sen also wrote letters to the government while criticising the colonial excise policy and suggested necessary steps to control the intemperance. In one of such letter, written on 18th April 1873, Keshab stated that the intemperance among the people gradually became a menace to society. There was a considerable increase in drunkenness among the native population, especially among the well-educated class. He argued that earlier no one touched wine due to the fear of being outcast by the society. However, drunkenness among the people was increasing with the spread of education and due to the opening of a large number of liquor shops. He also discussed the effect of intemperance upon social life and

⁴¹ Mukhopadhy, Arun Kumar, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, Information and Technology Department, Indian Government, New Delhi, Date of publication not given, P. 58.

⁴² A Sub-urban city, situated near to Kolkata.

⁴³ Mukhopadhy, Arun Kumar, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, P. 21.

morals of the people. He said that domestic life of the drunkard suffered mostly due to the consumption of excess liquor and negligence towards the wife and children. Moreover, drinking had made people physically weak and easily affected by different diseases. Thus, most of the drunkards faced a premature death.

Keshab Chandra Sen also claimed in a letter that crime rate had increased with spreading of intemperance. He wrote⁴⁴,

The instance of petty crimes and heinous offences committed under the influence of drink are of frequent occurrence, as may be proved by the criminal records of the country. But far more numerous and serious are the cases of those who have wrecked their character and sunk into the lowest depth of depravity, dragging a large circle of association and neighbours into the vortex of their contagious influence.

He also mentioned that intemperance in Bengal had reached such a point that young people of the age of fifteen and sixteen became addicted to drinking. Growing intemperance had ruined many families and left them in a destitute condition. Many women were widowed and left alone with their orphan child in a miserable condition. Thus, Sen argued, intoxicating liquor had degraded the physical, moral, and social condition of the country and also became an obstruction in the path of reform. While criticising the Excise department, Sen said that the excise department facilitated the spread of drunkenness by multiplying liquor shop and had no intention to impose sufficient restriction upon the sale and consumption of intoxicants. Besides, the importation of increasing amount of liquor also created a larger demand among the particular group of people. The increase in the excise revenue showed the gradual increase in the consumption of country spirits and foreign wines.

In the end, Sen had suggested that the government should check the growing intemperance by not issuing any new licenses for liquor shops; reducing the number of shops in the cities; regulating the opening hour of the liquor shops, and checking the illicit sale. Besides, he also hoped that,

⁴⁴ November 1874, RD/ MR/Ex, A Proceeding, Coll. 1, Sl. no. 14, p.2.

The time has come when the whole subject of excise administration in this and other presidencies, ought to be carefully examined in all its bearing, financial and ethical, with the view of removing the stigma which attached to the British Government of deliberately teaching the natives of India to drink by testing them on every side with temptation.

To support his argument, Keshab Chandra also mentioned a number of testimonials of important people on the increasing intemperance. These people were Pundit Iswarachandra Vidyasagar, Dwarka Nath Mitter, Unnoda Prashad Banerji, W. S. Atkinson, J. Sutcliffe, Rev. J. Long, Rev. J. Barton. All of them argued that liquor consumption among the educated Indian had increased and the health of the people deteriorated under the influence of the liquor consumption.

In the following years, Keshab Chandra Sen also formed another society, named 'Band of Hope' to promote the temperance agenda. This society had a mouthpiece, and it was circulated free of cost among people. This society was always critical of government excise policy. Under their pressure the, government brought changes in the excise policy.⁴⁵

After the death of Keshub Chandra Sen, many other members of the Brahmo Samaj had continued that movement at the local level. For instance, in Dacca Region, Brahmo activists, like Chandi Krishna Kushari and Braja Chandra Roy helped the local temperance association to preach the temperance ideas among the people of Dacca.⁴⁶ Another Brahmo activist, Ananda Mohan Bose had become one of the great supporters of the temperance movement in Bengal. Initially, he was influenced by Keshub Chandra Sen and became a social reformer. Later he founded Sadharan Brahmo Samaj and continued the works of social and moral progress along with work for temperance movement.⁴⁷ He was president of the Metropolitan Purity and Temperance Association of Calcutta. Besides, he also became a member of the Purity Committee started in Kolkata by the Christian

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁶ *Abkari*, No. 9, April 1892, p.87.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, No. 31, January 1898, P.4.

Missionaries. During his visit to London during 1894, he actively participated in some of the temperance meeting.⁴⁸

Influenced by the temperance movement of England, along with the reformative and temperance works of Keshab Chandra Sen, a number of educated people of Bengal formed temperance associations in Kolkata and in the suburban towns. Members of these temperance organizations had signed a pledge after joining the temperance organization and started to fight against growing intemperance. They organised several meetings. In these meetings, the members presenting papers on temperance and later published them as pamphlets for circulation. Robert Eric Colvard in his dissertation '*A World Without Drink: Temperance in Modern India, 1880-1940*' argued that the Indian temperance leaders and workers were influenced by the British and American temperance organizations and their concept of temperance. The western concept of temperance was translated by these Indian temperance workers.⁴⁹

Indeed, the temperance workers were influenced by the western notion of the temperance. It was inevitable because of two reasons. First, the development of print media helped to spread the western concept of temperance among the educated class. Besides, during the second half of the nineteenth-century, a few social reformers had visited London and other cities of Britain, which brought them closer to a number of temperance associations of Britain. After coming back to India, these social reformers implemented these ideas of temperance. However, it can be said that the western concept of temperance could not totally hegemonise the temperance movement in India. The temperance workers maintained an Indian essence in the temperance movement while incorporating many aspects of their ideology. They kept a critical approach to western civilization and the colonial government. Several temperance pamphlets were written from this perspective, and the temperance associations circulated these pamphlets free of cost.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, October 1906, No. 66, p.120.

⁴⁹ Robert Eric Colvard, *A World Without Drink: Temperance in Modern India, 1880-1940*, Unpublished Thesis, The University of Iowa, 2013, p.3.

The Temperance Association of Kalna⁵⁰ argued in one of its pamphlets that drunkenness had increased due the eradication of the 'Kingdom of Heaven' (*Dharmarajya*) by the British government. The expansion of the English education destroyed the religious belief of the people and made them drunkards. The pamphlet appealed to the leaders to bring back the people to the path of righteousness. Besides, the pamphlet also asked the Government to take strong steps to check the intemperance, and to sacrifice the excise revenue for the welfare of the subjects.⁵¹

Another pamphlet of Hali Town Temperance Association, '*Maadaka Sebaner Abaidhata o Anishtakarita Bishayak Prabandha*'⁵² published as early as 1865 talked about the side effects of the alcohol consumption while accusing western education for encouraging pupils to adopt a drinking practice. This pamphlet asked people to start temperance movement while following the footsteps the social reformers of Kolkata, like Peary Churn Sircar.

Another temperance association of Magura⁵³ also published a pamphlet, named *Sura Pan Ki Bhayankar*⁵⁴. This pamphlet was written by Prysankar Ghosh. In this pamphlet, he argued that instead of spreading knowledge and giving people a good healthy life, western education introduced some evil practices, like liquor consumption. The social and moral character of the people was degraded due to alcohol consumption. Alcohol subdued all good feelings of people; therefore they committed numbers of crimes under the influence of alcohol. While criticizing the western concept of using of liquor as medicine or as a way of amusement, he claimed that liquor consumption only ruined good health and a sound mind. Besides, continuous consumption of liquor would damage the internal organs.

⁵⁰ A Suburb town in Bengal.

⁵¹ Anonymous, *Madya panner samajik fal o tannibaroner upai* (Social impact of the intemperance and how to condemn it) Kalna, 1890.

⁵² Banarjee, Gopal Chandra, *Maadaka Sebaner Abaidhata o Anishtakarita Bishayak Prabandha* (Discourse in Bengali on the Impropriety and injuriousness of the use of Intoxicating Drugs and Drinks), Kolkata, School Book Press, 1865.

⁵³ A suburb town of Bengal.

⁵⁴ Priya Sankar Ghosh., *Sura Pan Ki Bhayankar* (Consumption of Alcohol is dangerous) Kolkata, School Book Press, 1864.

Therefore, he suggested people to stop consuming liquor and indulge more in cultural activities, and sign a pledge of not to drink alcohol.

Similarly, another temperance association of a suburban-town named Kalutola published a pamphlet, named *Sura Pan Bishayak Prastab*⁵⁵. This pamphlet highlighted the evils of alcohol consumption and criticised the use of alcohol as medicine. The main purpose of writing this pamphlet was to convey the message to the educated people that drinking practice was ruining the family life of the people, increased the domestic violence and destroyed wealth. Thus, the pamphlet asked people to leave the drinking habit for the good of this country and for themselves.

Work of these temperance associations gave a critical perception of the colonial excise policy to people. 1870 onward educated people of Kolkata wrote letters to the government criticizing the government decision of opening of new liquor shops. In October 1876, the colonial government decided to open a liquor shop at Mirzapore Street. This decision was challenged by the local people of that area. The government report said that Rasik Lal Banerjee and others of Mirzapore asked the government not to open the liquor shop. However, the government did not listen to them and informed that government saw no reasons to step back from the decision of the opening of the liquor shop.⁵⁶ In 1877, Sarod Churn Mitra and other residents of Hatibagan had written to the Government to modify their orders of opening new liquor shop in Hantibagan. Government replied that there were no reasons to modify the order which was already passed on the question of opening a new liquor shop at Hantibagan.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the efforts of the social reformers motivated people to challenge the government decision of opening new liquor shops. The economic critique of colonial excise policy by the pamphlets of the temperance associations was taken forwarded by the Indian National Congress. While doing this, the Congress connected the temperance issue with the mainstream Indian national movement.

⁵⁵ Anonymous, *Sura Pan Bishayak Prastab* (Argument on Consumption of Alcohol) Kolkata, School Book Press, 1864.

⁵⁶ October 1876, R/MR/ Ex, B Proceeding, Collection no. 2, Sl. No. 5.

⁵⁷ August 1877, R/MR/Ex, B proceeding, Collection 2, Sl no. 12 to 14.

Eventually, Indian National Congress also brought forward the issue of growing intemperance among the people though initially did not participate in the temperance movement. While discussing the Congress's approach to the temperance issue, William Caine argued, "Congress has always been lukewarm and poor-spirited towards the Temperance question generally – although they are themselves total abstainers". Further, he also said, "if the Congress is wise in its generation, it will boldly range itself with the advanced reformers of Europe and America, and declared war on everything that intoxicates." While mentioning of the role the Congress in temperance movement in a dispatch to the Secretary of State on the Abkari policy in India, Caine had argued that Congress should extend their support to the local temperance associations and stand on the side of total abstinence.⁵⁸ The newspaper like *Madras Standard* also criticised the INC's neutral position on the question of temperance and asked to change the stand. Further, the newspaper said that being an all Indian organization of educated people, INC should take the responsibility of saving the people of the country from this evil practice.⁵⁹

The connection between the National Congress and AITA became stronger from 1889 onwards. AITA members started to participate in the annual sessions of INC. Parallel to this, AITA members also participated in the several meetings of the Social Conference, organised by INC to discuss the social issues. Therefore, many members of the INC became interested in the temperance issue with the participation of AITA's members in INC's programme and their efforts of highlighting the issue of temperance.

Rev. G. M. Cobban, an AITA member, argued during 1889's annual meeting of INC that due to the endless discussion on the Abkari question from the past few years had pressurised the government to modify the Abkari laws. However, these modifications of Abkari laws hardly succeeded in controlling the drunkenness. The government should take some strong steps to reduce the growing intemperance among the Indians while sacrificing their economic

⁵⁸ *Abkari*, April 1895, no. 21, Temperance and congress, p. 48.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

profit. While supporting the argument of Rev. G. M. Cobban Mr. Dinesh Eudjee Wacha, a member of INC, argued that the government never listen to Indians' appeal of the modification of the excise law. Therefore, he opined that INC and AITA should jointly pressurise the government for a rapid change in the Excise Laws. Later, Rev Thomas Evans, another active member of the AITA had expressed his gratitude to INC for incorporating the issue of the growing intemperance among the Indian in the annual discussion and supporting the initiatives of the AITA's in this matter. He argued that the evil of intemperance had spread rapidly under the British rule. While giving the example of the Government of Bengal, he said that the Government of Bengal was uninterested in closing the *Out-stills* or reducing the number of liquor shops by introducing the 'local opinion' system. The government of Bengal thought that implementation of the 'local opinion' system would cause a considerable amount of revenue loss.

Thomas Evans also said that Indians too were responsible for the growing intemperance. He argued that most of the Indians overlooked the caste and religious prejudices and started drinking. However, he also warned people that drinking practice might bring an early death to them. Lastly, he asked the people to take a pledge of not to drink.⁶⁰ At the end of the meeting, INC adopted the resolution of supporting the temperance initiative of William Caine and AITA.⁶¹

Participation of the AITA's members in the different sessions of the Social Conference had also made several Indian leaders interested in the temperance issue. Motivated by the speech of Rev. Fletcher William, president of AITA, delivered in the 12th session of the social conference, Amanda Mohan Bose argued that it was good for the people of India that the England's temperance activities had also extended to India. Besides, he called the friends of the Temperance movement as the friends of India and appealed to the audience of the conference to take the resolution of spreading the temperance message among the common people of India. Besides, he also asked Congress members to support the temperance initiatives of the William Caine and the

⁶⁰ *Abkari*, April 1890, No1, 'Abkari and Excise at the Indian National Congress', pp. 15-18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Anglo-Indian Temperance Association in India and London.⁶² G.C. Maitra, another member of INC, argued during the 13th session of the social Conference that colonial government should take strict measures while granting the licenses. Several other members of INC had also supported this fact. During this session, the INC incorporated the temperance issue in their programme and decided to support the initiatives of the several local temperance associations.⁶³

During the Lahore session of 1900, Congress once again proposed a resolution against the growing intemperance among the different Indian classes. The resolution identified the supply of cheap liquor as the reason of growing intemperance. Therefore, the resolution asked the Government of India to prepare a similar law like the *Maine Liquor Law of America*, or the *Local Opinion Act* and impose an additional tax on liquor.⁶⁴ The resolution was passed unanimously. 1900 onwards, a change could be noticed in the approach of the several Congress leaders towards temperance issue. Interaction with the members of AITA, enormous growth in the excise revenue and spread of the temperance movement in the different parts of the country interested several Congress leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal and Ramesh Chandra Dutt on the issue of temperance. These two leaders played a major role to promote temperance in Bengal.

In 1900, Bipin Chandra Pal visited England and America and attended several meetings of different temperance associations. He also participated in the World Temperance Congress as an Indian representative. Attending these temperance meetings had turned him as a staunch supporter of the temperance movement. Therefore, after coming back he delivered several lectures on temperance in different parts of India. While delivering lectures, he argued that growing intemperance was one of the reasons for the weak condition of the countrymen.⁶⁵ Besides, he claimed that intemperance was more than a social and moral question than a political one.⁶⁶ He said that the

⁶² *Abkari*, April 1899, No.36, P.66.

⁶³ *Abkari*, April 1900, No. 40, Indian national Congress and Social conference, p. 53.

⁶⁴ *Abkari*, April 1901, No. 44, P. 48.

⁶⁵ *Abkari*., July 1900, No. 41, p. 93.

⁶⁶ Lucy Carroll, *op.cit*, p.419.

gradual change in the perception of the Congress had happened after the visit of the Honorary Secretary of the AITA to India.⁶⁷

Later, another famous Congress leader, Ramesh Chunder Dutt promoted temperance movement while developing a critique of colonial excise policy. He argued that increase in excise revenue had not only happened due to the high excise tax but because of the increase in intemperance among Indians, particularly among the lower class people. This critical stand about the colonial excise policy encouraged the INC to include temperance activities in their programme. Several local levels Congress leaders started to spread the message of temperance among the people. Ultimately, during the Swadeshi movement, the picketing of the liquor shop became one of the popular methods of protesting against the colonial rule in Bengal.

(V)

Government Responses:

Government responses towards the growing intemperance and the temperance movement varied according to the situation. Initially, the government response was neutral towards the temperance movement. The growing strength of the temperance movement all over India and the establishing of a connection between the different temperance associations with the mainstream national movement worried the colonial government.

Very interestingly, during the nineteenth century when intemperance and alcoholism increased among the British troops, the colonial government took steps to check that. Though, the British colonial government tried to regulate the soldiers' life, but mostly they became unsuccessful in doing so. Under the influence of Victorian Ideology and Victorian Society⁶⁸ the

⁶⁷ Lucy Carroll, p.420.

⁶⁸ "Victorian Society was obsessed with hygiene, longevity and physical exercise and under this framework of thinking, the body (of the mercenary soldier) could not be allowed to be dissipated in promiscuous whoring and reckless drinking – which used to be the norms among soldiers and officers in 18th century India." By implementing restriction on drinking and the sexual behaviour of the soldiers the colonial government wanted to discipline and make the army fit to serve to the empire. (Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, p. 68.)

government once again tried to check the soldiers' life by passing Cantonment Act in 1864. The aim of the act was to regulate the everyday life of a soldier, especially their sexual encounter with prostitutes. Besides, this law also regulated the supply of liquor to the cantonment area and its circulation among the soldier. The act also declared that violation of this regulation was strictly punishable.⁶⁹ Comparing to this stand of the colonial government on the liquor consumption, the responses of the colonial government to the growing intemperance among the Indian subject was quite the opposite.

The government's reply was varied while responding to the criticism of the excise policies by the missionaries, British philanthropists and the educated Indians. The intensity of the temperance movement, people responses and most importantly the stand of the British Parliament on the temperance issue shaped these government responses and modified the excise policies of the Government of India. The responses of the colonial government in Bengal can be divided into three phases. The first phase of the government responses to the temperance movement started after the complete introduction of the *Out-still System* (1879-1888). The second phase started at the time of the appointment of The Hemp and Drug Commission (1889-1895), and the third phase started with the incorporation of temperance agenda into the mainstream national movement (1895 till 1908). During the third phase, National Congress also took the issue of growing intemperance and the excise policy to criticise the colonial Government. Thus, during this phase, the Government's responses toward the temperance movement changed noticeably.

In the first phase, the criticism of the government excise policy was started by different groups of people, like missionaries and educated Bengalis soon after complete introduction of the *Out-still System* in the end of 1870s. This pressure of the criticism forced the Government of Bengal to investigate the issue and justify the excise policy while supporting the *Out-still System*. The government argued that the reason of growing intemperance among the

⁶⁹ Act no. XXII, Military Cantonment Act 1864, A Collection of the Acts, Passed by the Governor General of India in Council in the year 1864, Calcutta Military orphan Press, Calcutta, 1865. Source: <http://lawmin.nic.in/legislative/textofcentralacts/1864.pdf>

Indians was not the introduction of the *Out-still System* in the different parts of Bengal, but growth in population, the easy availability of the cheap liquor, economic prosperity of the people and opening of new job opportunities, which led to the migration of labourers and growing drinking habit among them. Besides, most of the Indians were 'habitual drunkards' and poorest person in the country could brew liquor at home due to the easy availability of different materials for liquor brewing.

Further, on the request of the Thomas Evans, the government collected liquor sample from Monghyr and examined. In the report, the government informed that the *Out-still* liquor is free from any adulteration. Besides, the report also mentioned that the chemical officers had collected *Out-still* liquor's samples from the districts of Bhaglpore, Gaya, Nuddea, Hooghly, and Patna. Further, the *Sudder Distillery* liquor sample also collected from the district of Hooghly, Nadia and Santhal Parghana. After that, these liquor samples were sent for the chemical examination, and samples were declared free of any adulteration.⁷⁰

Under the pressure of the temperance movement, the colonial government also made an enquiry about the growing drunkenness and closed a number of the *Out-stills* to control the drunkenness among the masses. The government closed those shops which were convicted with illicit distillation and supply of illicit liquor to the labour in the tea gardens. Now the government claimed that they closed these shops for the welfare of the people while sacrificing a large amount of revenue.⁷¹ Besides, the government highlighted the fact that in spite of reducing the number of *Out-still*, a considerable amount of smuggling was carried on from Nepal.⁷² At the same time, the government encouraged the drinking of foreign liquor and they impose equal duty on the foreign imported liquor and country liquor. The government also made it clear that the possession of imported foreign liquor could be considered as legal.

⁷⁰ December 1881, A Proceeding, FD/ Ex, File 8, Collection no. 1, Sl. No. 56.

⁷¹ November 1880, A Proceeding, FD/Ex, File no. 1, collection no. 8, Sl. No. 1.

⁷² August 1881, A Proceeding, FD/Ex, File no. 1, collection no. 8, Sl. No. 13 to 16.

The strong criticism of the Government excise policy by the Bengali reformer and Christian missionaries forced the colonial government to appoint a commission to enquire into the effect of the *Out-still System* in Bengal and the nature of intemperance. The name of the commission was Bengal Commission of 1884. The Government also appointed Babu Krishna Bihari Sen, the Brother of Keshub Chandra Sen, as a member of the commission. While submitting the report, the commission had mentioned that excessive drunkenness had spread throughout the Bengal Presidency due to the excessive cheapness of drink made from *Out-stills*. They also made a calculation that the consumption of intoxicating drink had increased in eight years by 135 per cent. Due to the reports of this commission, the colonial government was forced to alter the system of distribution of the licenses. As a result, there was a great reduction in the number of licenses issued. The reflection of these changes also could be noticed in the collection of revenue.⁷³ As we have seen in the first chapter that the rate of increase in the excise revenue periodically came down during the decades of 1880s.

Two kinds of government responses can be traced towards the temperance movement during 1888 to 1895. Some of the British officers and some of the members of the British Parliament became more critical of the British excise policies in India. During this period, William Caine was actively criticizing the Government of India's excise policy in the British Parliament. Report of the Debate in the House of Commons of 13th March 1888 shows how some members of the parliaments accused the Colonial Government of India of the extension of spirit licenses for the collection of revenue and helping in the spread of intemperance among the Indians. In the House of Commons, William Caine took a strong stand against the reintroduction of the *Out-still System* in India. He argued if the Indian Government asked the people of India about their opinion before opening a new *Out-still*, then nobody in India would support that plan. Thus, Caine suggested that that Government should appoint enquiry commissions in different provinces. He suggested including a large number of Indians in the committee. He also said

⁷³ India and the Excise Revenue, Report of the Debate in the House of Commons of March 13th 1888, Native Race and liquor traffic United Committee, Westminster, London, S.W.

that the current excise policy might be extracting a right amount of revenue, but it caused disaster to the people of India.⁷⁴

Caine's argument created two kinds of reaction in the House of Commons. On the one hand, members of Parliament, like Mr S. Smith, Sir G. Campbell supported Caine's perception of Indian Excise Policy. Mr S. Smith said that the reason for increasing of intemperance in India was the unwise excise system adopted by the Government. To support his point of view, Mr Smith quoted from the Bengal Commission's report. He also said that earlier people of India used to prepare their drink, but the imposition of restriction on the home brewing by the British Government forced them to come to the liquor shops. Besides, the government was only concerned about the revenue and, therefore, liquor tax was the easiest way to collect that.⁷⁵ In this situation, Mr S. Smith suggested to the government to implement the local opinion system to control intemperance. Sir G. Campbell also agreed with Mr S. Smith, and he also asked the British Government to check their excise policy in India.

While opposing the argument of S. Smith in Parliament, Sir Richard Temple argued that Government of India should impose liquor tax to control the intemperance. He claimed that drinking practice had prevailed among the Indians even before the coming of the British. He said that except some tribal people, most of the people of India were the supporter of temperance. Besides, Government introduced the *Out-still System* in the India, especially in Bengal under certain special circumstances. British Officers like Sir J. Goest directly supported the Government of India's Excise Policy. He said that Indians had different consumption pattern. Sometimes *Central Distillery System* could not meet the demands. Due to these reasons, Government of India introduced different brewing system in various parts of India. The Under-Secretary of State argued that William Caine had exaggeratedly described the side effects of the liquor consumption and they could not understand the difficulties of the British Administrative officers, who were working in India.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-12.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

This debate left an important impact on the Government response toward the temperance movement in India after 1889. This debate not only highlighted the problem of growing intemperance in India, but it also discussed the usage of opium among the Indians. After 1888, Excise policies became one of the important debatable issues in the British Parliament. Meanwhile, W. Caine had visited India and submitted a report on the usage of different intoxicants by Indians. He had mentioned in the report that government excise policy was also responsible for the growing addiction towards the alcohol and other narcotics. This report forced the British Parliament to appoint the Hemp and Drug Commission in 1892 to investigate the issue. The Commission submitted its report on 1894.

The Hemp and Drug Commission Report was able to change the government response. The Report tried to project the Government's concern about the opium addiction of the people of India. However, the report by passed the liquor question. Therefore, the government continued with the same liquor policy and once again reintroduced the *Out-still Distillery System*. In a parliamentary debate of House of Commons in 1899, S. Smith once again pointed out the fault in the Indian Excise policy. He said that the excise policy of the Government of India was still encouraging the establishment of spirit distilleries, liquor and opium shops at new places and simultaneously the collection of excise revenue also increased. Under the influence of Government excise policy, many people with poor salary had spent most of their wages in liquor consumption which led the family towards the poverty. Besides, the crime rate also increased under the influence of liquor consumption. Thus, S. Smith asked for the complete prohibition on the liquor business. He mentioned that Indians would support this government decision of complete prohibition on liquor consumption as every Indian religion opposed the idea of liquor consumption by their followers.

An honourable member of Evesham⁷⁶ in House of Commons, while supporting the S. Smith's arguments, argued if people of India did not support the illicit distillation and liquor traffic then the government should take a step

⁷⁶ Evesham was a part of British House of Commons.

forward to impose a complete prohibition on the liquor.⁷⁷ While replying to all these criticisms, the Under-secretary for Foreign Affairs (Sir Jas Ferguson, Manchester, N. E) said that the opponent group should recognise the good intentions and philanthropic efforts of the Government of India before the criticism. He stated that due to the Government control, it had been possible to check liquor consumption. The Government of India had taken certain steps which increased the revenue without increasing its consumption. The best example of this policy was Bombay Presidency. He also said that though the same policy was implemented in Bengal, the result was not effective as Bombay.⁷⁸

The on-going debate in the British Parliament and changes in the temperance movement in India had compelled the colonial government to bring changes in their attitude to the temperance movement and Indian excise policy. The colonial government became worried by the growing connection between the INC and temperance movement. The nature of the temperance movement was also changing under the influence of INC. In this situation, the government identified the character of Temperance movement as anti-British and considered the members of INC and AITA as two sides of the same coin. Therefore, the Colonial Government started to disqualify the members of AITA from Government jobs.⁷⁹ This kind of incident was noticed in the North-Western province. One of the British officers stopped a qualified Indian from joining the revenue department because of the person's association with the temperance movement and AITA. William Caine took this point seriously and wrote to the Secretary of State.⁸⁰

Also, the government imposed regulations on the temperance movement. In Bombay presidency, the government said temperance movement should be non-violent. Once, the Congress incorporated the temperance issue within its agenda, it brought a change in the government

⁷⁷ *Parliamentary Debate*, April 1899, p. 28.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁹ House of Commons question for the disqualification from the service of those Indians who identify themselves with the Congress and Temperance movement, 13th June 1893, IRO/L/PJ/6/332, File no. 944, British Library.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

attitude. For instance, the government attitude to the Bengal Excise Policy, as well as the temperance movement, changed with starting of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal.

The continuous criticism of the Santhal Parghana's excise policy by the missionaries also made the colonial government to modify the excise policy of the area. An Indian employee of the colonial government, Pandit Ram Ballbh Mishra, had reported the growing intemperance in the region and after consulting the local officers, he asked government either to increase the duty on the liquor or to decrease the strength of liquor consumed in the town areas of that district.⁸¹ The Deputy Commissioner of Santhal Parghana, however, argued that consumption of liquor had increased because of the general prosperity of the drinking class, and reduction in the price of the liquor. He suggested that government should encourage people to consume country spirit instead of illicit liquor. Some new shops were opened in the Santhal Parghana, which checked the illicit distillation of the liquor. In spite of these, some areas of the districts were still under illicit distillation and provided a bottle of liquor in one anna. Contrary to this sometimes price of licensed liquor went up due to transportations cost. Thus, he suggested that government should not increase the price of licensed liquor. Following this suggestion, the excise commissioner of the region did not increase the liquor price⁸² and imposed the equal duty for the urban and rural area. The Excise department also decided to keep a check the consumption of liquor in this district, and if necessary, they would propose to reduce the strength of 30° and 60° UP to 20° and 50°.⁸³

The Government also took steps to modify the excise policy in Kolkata City. They appointed a commission to investigate that. While forming this

⁸¹ March 1908, A proceeding, FD/SR/E, File No. E $\frac{1-C}{2}$, no. 3, WBSA.

⁸² The liquor price Dumka and Godda subdivision had been decided for the year 1908-09 as follows:

	Dumka			Godda		
	As.	P.	a gallon	As.	P.	a gallon
20° UP	10	6	"	11	9	"
50° UP	6	6	"	7	3	"
70° UP	4	0	"	4	6	"

(Source: March 1908, A Proceeding, FD/SR/E, File No. E $\frac{1-C}{2}$ 3)

⁸³ *Ibid.*

commission, the government invited different temperance associations of the city to join the committee. The government asked these associations to inspect the liquor shops in the city and report their observation to the government. The colonial government asked them to make an observation on the basis of certain points. These points were as follows⁸⁴;

1. The number of on and off retail licenses⁸⁵ required for the country and foreign spirit respectively.
2. The location and distribution of shops
3. The separation of country and foreign spirit shops
4. The limit of retail sale
5. The hours of sale
6. The question structural defect in shops.

After making an investigation while following these criteria, the committee recommended certain rules for the 'on' liquor shops. The committee also asked the government to close some shops in the different wards of the city. Besides, the suggestion for fixing the timing of the liquor shops and quantity of sealing liquor was placed before the government of Bengal.

By 1907, the relation between the temperance associations and the British-Indian Colonial Government had not changed much. The temperance associations of Britain maintained a critical approach to the colonial government on the excise issue. Despite this criticism of the GOI, the Government of Bengal did not change their stand on the issue. Government perception on the argument of the temperance associations on Indian issue could be seen from a letter, written by Morley⁸⁶. In that letter, Morley had written to Minto⁸⁷ on 2nd August 1907⁸⁸;

⁸⁴ June 1908, FD/SR/E, File No. E $\frac{1C}{3}$, No. 20 - 21, WBSA.

⁸⁵ A liquor shop with 'on' retail license shops enable the customers to consume liquor at the shop's premises, however, a 'off' retail license shop enabled the customer to buy liquor from the shop, but not to consume within the shop's premises.

⁸⁶ John Morley was the State Secretary of India in 1909.

⁸⁷ Lord Minto was the Viceroy and Governor General of India. in 1909.

I had a deputation of good people of the temperance persuasion here yesterday. They are not altogether satisfied with the report of the Excise Committee. I told them in a good natured unofficial sort of way that I could not press this upon you but that I would forward to you, as they wished, a memorial setting out what they think desirable beyond the recommendations of the Committee. This I will do. Some of the statements interested me a good deal. 'It's rather horrifying to think that in introducing the factory system, we may also introduce the familiar features of our cotton towns (I was born in one), a cluster of taverns selling foul liquor at the mill gates

Conclusion:

Started under the influence of western temperance movement, the temperance movement of Bengal developed an Indian voice and a unique character with time. First, in spite of deriving a pattern from Britain for the temperance movement in India, like formation of organization, signing of pledge, circulation of the pamphlets and spreading the message of temperance among the people of different social groups, the Indian temperance movement developed a criticism of aspect of western culture, especially of western education. Social reformer and a temperance activist, Kasheb Chandra Sen had argued that increase in the number of liquor shop was proportionate to the spreading of western education. Earlier, a large number of people did not touch liquor as they were scared of being ostracised by the society. With the spreading of Western education, a large number of educated people started to consume liquor.

Second, the temperance movement in India, particularly in Bengal, had developed a criticism of the British excise policy. The Christian missionaries started the criticism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Some of them argued that Europeans were responsible for the spreading of intemperance. 1880 onward these missionaries accused British policy of spreading intemperance among the aboriginal people of Santhal Parghana, Midnapore and in Darjeeling.

⁸⁸ Letters from Morley to Minto, India Office Private Papers, Mss Eur, D573/2, f179: 2nd August 1907, BL.

Third, though the temperance question related to the social and moral issue, but it was gradually politicised. 1870 onwards most of the temperance activists brought an economic perspective into it. While showing the constant growth of excise revenue, they were trying to argue that the main motive of the British excise policy was not to check the intemperance among their subjects, but to extract maximum revenue. This was slowly becoming part of the rising economic nationalism of the Indian intelligentsia. The coming of William Caine to India and his speeches on temperance left a strong impact on the people. Both the economic critic of colonialism and Caine's speeches had been motivated many Congress leaders to join this movement. In Bengal, two important Congress leaders, Bipin Chandra Pal and Ramesh Chunder Dutt criticized the British liquor policy. Bipin Chandra Pal argued that temperance question was a financial question as well. While giving a lecture in the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association, he argued that excise revenue was one of the main reasons of Indian poverty.

Fourth, the politicization of the Indian temperance movement had changed movement's nature. For instance, the temperance movement in Maharashtra gradually took a radical turn. For example, in some places, people used muscle to shut down the liquor shops. As a result, police also became oppressive to the temperance activists. However, the temperance movement in Bengal always had been a part of a non-violent programme. During the time of anti-partition movement, picketing of liquor shops became an integral part of Swadeshi movement. Several temperance meetings, organised during this period, were pointing out the evil effects of alcohol consumption and as well as government's role in the spreading of intemperance. Besides, they criticised government excise policy and asked Government to modify that. In this way, the temperance movement formed a base of anti-British feeling among the mass of people.

Fifth, the British colonial government denied all the allegations made by the Christian missionaries and Indian social reformers. While denying the missionaries' argument the government argued that though the excise policy had tried to control the intemperance, consumption of liquor had increased due to economic prosperity of certain group of people. However, the tone of the

government changed with time. During 1880-90, when the temperance activists, like William Caine, started to put pressure on the British Parliament and asked them to form a committee to investigate the British excise policy in India along with the pattern of consumption of different narcotics by the Indians. Under the pressure of the House of Commons and the report of the Hemp and Drug Commission, GOI asked the provincial governors to bring some changes in the excise policy. Besides, incorporation of temperance issue in the mainstream politics by the Indian National Congress had changed government's perception of the temperance movement. During the first decade of the twentieth century, when temperance movement became a part of the nationalist movement in India, the government started to take strong steps against the movement and its activists. However, the temperance associations still continued their work and criticised the government excise policy.

From the above discussion, it is apparent that the temperance movement in Bengal started with bringing the issue of growing intemperance among the people, and gradually the movement succeeded in connecting the temperance issue with issues of British exploitation, in particular through extraction of revenue from the Indians. While criticizing the government excise policy and western culture for liquor consumption, the temperance movement in Bengal, as well as the temperance movement in India, gradually evolved an 'Indian voice' and became an integral part of nationalist agitation against the British policies. INC and other people, for example, took the method of picketing of liquor shops during the Swadeshi movement. Later, during the time of Gandhian phase of the national movement, anti-liquor campaign became an integral part of Indian freedom movement.

Chapter 4

The Subaltern Voice in the World of Temperance: Tracing the Geo-Cultural Space of the Drinking Public

The temperance movement of Bengal began to develop an anti-liquor awareness among the different sections of the society through organizing public meetings and distributing pamphlets. The question arises that whether the notion of temperance among the people of Bengal was entirely developed under the influence of the temperance movement led by the educated Bengalis, European philanthropists and missionaries or did the uneducated sections of the society perceive the evil effects of the alcohol consumption independently and start an anti-liquor agitation parallel to the temperance movement of the upper class. One needs to trace if the anti-liquor agitation led by the subaltern group¹ connected with the mainstream temperance movement and how the mainstream temperance movement looked at this. While looking into these issues, this chapter is trying to trace the subaltern voice in the temperance movement in Bengal by looking at popular culture. This chapter also examines how the drinking places of the nineteenth century Bengal were formed in parallel with the temperance movement and if there were any subaltern place within that newly formed drinking place.

To trace the temperance activity of the subaltern section of the society this chapter is looking into the creative world and popular culture of nineteenth century Bengal and has chosen some of the elements of the popular culture, like paintings, vernacular literature, proverbs, and advertisements which took alcohol as the one of the theme and reflected the subaltern voice on the liquor consumption. Paintings and literature are the reflectors of the society, as painters and writers have taken their subjects from the everyday life. Similarly the proverbs, which are mostly created and spread orally, give a glimpse of contemporary society's mentality. Advertisements are also

¹ Here the subaltern term indicates the lower class, uneducated or semi-educated section of the nineteenth century Bengal.

reflectors of the contemporary market's demands and supplies. Besides, the figures, used in the advertisement tried to reflect the claims of the product's manufacturers and enhance desire of the customers for the product.

(I)

Several painters and lithographers of the nineteenth century Bengal critically looked at the growing intemperance in the society and its consequences. This criticism was been reflected through several popular art forms of nineteenth century Bengal, like 'Kalighat Painting', and lithograph paintings. The first part of this chapter discusses how the painters perceived alcohol consumption, and then the discussion will highlight on the some of the pictures where these artists reflected their perception of liquor consumption. Kalighat Paintings of nineteenth century Bengal was a popular form of art which developed over the century and was marginalised with the development of Lithograph painting of the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century onward, newspapers emerged as popular media and a medium of advertising the popular commodities. The printing press used lithograph paintings to advertise commodities. Compared to the Kalighat Paintings, the accuracy of these lithograph paintings was better, and therefore, the lithograph paintings reflected the artists' perception and conveyed the message of manufacturer company to the customers more clearly while popularising the products. However, it can be said the lithograph paintings mostly reflect the demand of the client, rather than the artist. Therefore, the second part of this section has discussed how these lithograph paintings and advertisement reflected the drinking culture.

1) Reflexion of Drinking Practice through the Kalighat Paintings:

In the nineteenth century, a place named Kalighat in the southern part of Calcutta became popular due to an old Kali temple. Throughout the year pilgrims used to visit this temple, and that led to the accumulation of different kind of people at that place. One of this group of people were *Kumbhakars* or earthen pot makers, who settled down near this old Kali temple, and started to prepare pictures as a souvenir for the pilgrims. These pictures were named after the place and known as 'Kalighat Paintings'. Initially, these migrated

Kumor or the earthen pot-maker class began to paint mythological figures along with preparing earthen pots and dolls to sell them to the pilgrims. Later, they extended the theme of paintings. Improvement of the paper industry and the availability of cheaper and thinner quality paper than the local handmade paper during this time helped these artists in their creation. The painters had used watercolour or only soft pencil sketches against the clear background. Adaptation of these new techniques helped these painters in producing good numbers of pictures in less time and less cost along with making a departure from the traditional paintings of Bengal, like scroll paintings.²

It has been argued that in spite of its dissimilarity, the Kalighat Paintings have a connection with the British art form of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. W.C. Archer argues that these paintings were a by-product of the British art form and the art can be understood only against its background.³ While opposing the Archer's argument, Indian scholars have argued that the identity of the Kalighat Paintings is inherited from the traditional Indian art and folk art. For instance, the marked linearity and bold stylization of the Kalighat Paintings had been developed from the folk tradition of scroll paintings. While following the tradition of the scroll paintings, the Kalighat painters used the brightness and opacity of the watercolour and shading of the pencils to show the volume and more to reinforce the rhythm of lines.⁴ B.M. Mukherjee has argued that Kalighat Paintings were an entirely indigenous form of art as the characteristics of Kalighat Paintings, which were identified by Archer as a western influence, could also be found in the traditional paintings of Bengal during the pre-British era.⁵ Although it is very hard to date these pictures, but on the basis of the themes and the name of the artist some periodization has been made.⁶

It has been said that that though initially these Kalighat Painters had chosen mythological characters as their subject of creativity they expanded

² Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a new 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal*, Cambridge University, 2007, P. 20.

³ W. C. Archer, *Bazar Paintings of Calcutta*, H.M. Stationery Off. London, 1953, p. 6.

⁴ Guha-Thakurata, p. 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Suhashini Sinha and C. Panda (ed.) *Kalighat Paintings*, Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad, 2011, p.18.

that area and incorporated contemporary city life as a theme of their work. As Tapati Guha-Thakurata has argued that the Kalighat Paintings had chosen different new themes and images, from whom some of the themes were ‘drawn from subjects typical of British and ‘company paintings’, however, most of the themes emerged from the contemporary Bengali society, especially from the Babu society. She also said that in the course of choosing a theme from the contemporary society, the painters had chosen three characters, i.e., ‘*Babu*,⁷ and dissolute womaniser; corrupt and licentious priest, and bazar courtesans’⁸. They picked these three images to criticise degraded morality of the contemporary society of Anglo-Indian Kolkata through their paintings.⁹ Besides, the painters chose graceful images, like the *Picture of Yashoda*, showing the maternal grace and the lyrical beauty of *Radha*. Their main idea of choosing these themes was to project both the good and evil ideas against each other.¹⁰

While criticizing the degraded morality of the contemporary society through different characters, these painters chose different actions of the characters and framed them. In this process, consuming liquor by the *Babu*, Priest and the fallen woman was not left out from the artistic speculation. Both the contemporary society and these painters identified alcoholism as evil and thought that consumption of liquor was one of the reasons of the moral degradation of the society. Thus, the Kalighat painters had painted few pictures of a dandy, womaniser *Babu* along with corrupt and licentious priest while they are consuming liquor.

One of the pictures of the *Babu Culture* series in the Kalighat Paintings’ is ‘*Babu’s* wine consumption in the presence of his mistress’ (picture no. 1, entitled as ‘A *Babu* holding a wine glass in the company of a

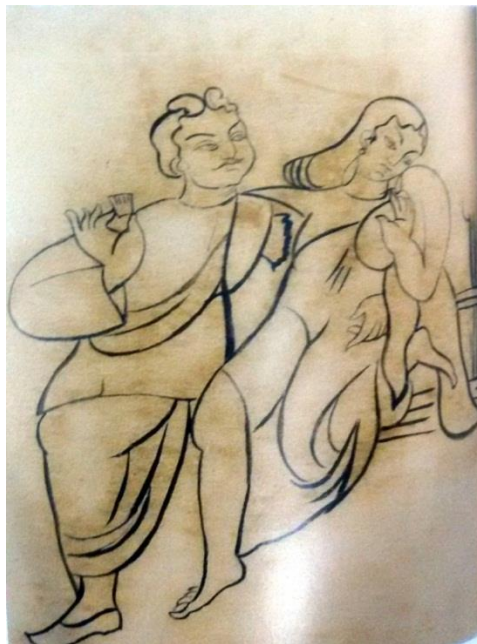
⁷ With the promotion of western education and the emergence of newly rich people in the Kolkata had given birth to a new life-style, known as Babu Culture. Description of this culture has been well described by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. While describing the Babu Culture, he has identified some of the characteristics of this culture, i.e., undisciplined life-style, consumption of different narcotics, keeping the mistress, and leading a luxurious life. Not only Bankim Chandra, but most of the other writings of the nineteenth century Bengal had described the Babu Culture in similar fashion. All these aspects of Babu Culture had been chosen by the kalighat painters, thus, it produced a series of paintings on this issue.

⁸Sinha and Panda (ed.) *Kalighat Paintings*, p. 21.

⁹ Tapati Guha-Thakurata, p. 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.21.

courtesan')¹¹. From the artistic point of view, this picture has the characteristic of line drawings against the blank background. Besides, the picture was painted on a plain paper with black ink. In the picture, it has been shown that a young foppish *Babu* is holding a glass of wine in his right hand, and his eyes are heavy with drowsiness. This picture is indicating some features of the 19th century *Babu* culture of Kolkata, like drinking, the culture of visiting courtesans and how these two socio-moral evils of the nineteenth century linked with each other through *Babu* culture. Besides, the picture shows how a glass of wine could bring the dandy *Babu* and a fallen woman closer. However, the painters also carefully portrayed the pleasure of drinking while producing the criticism against the contemporary society. The facial expression and posture of the male figure in the picture are reflecting that pleasure of a drunkard while drinking.



Picture No. 1(A babu holding a wine glass in the company of a courtesan, *Kalighat Paintings*, p. 66, pic no. 35.)¹²

In another picture, the Kalighat Painters also showcased how a licentious *sadhu* tried to seduce a woman while offering her alcohol. This picture came under the *Mahanta Elokeshi Series Painting*. These paintings were prepared on the theme of the *Mahanta-Elokeshi scandal of*

¹¹ This picture is preserved at the Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata.

¹² Sinha and Panda (ed.), *Kalighat Paintings*, 'A babu holding a wine glass in the company of a courtesan', p. 66, pic no. 35.

Tarekaswar.¹³ Elokashi, a village woman of Trakeswar, went to the *Shiv temple* to pray for a child. Her husband, Nabin, worked in a printing press at Kolkata and stayed outside of Tarekaswar. Taking advantage of Elokeshi's vulnerable condition, Mahanta of the temple intoxicated her and took sexual advantages of her. Besides, he started an affair with her. Later, Nabin heard about this affair from the villagers. He asked about this to *Elokeshi*, and she confessed everything to Nabin. Hearing this, Nabin tried to take her away from Tarekeshwar. However, he was continuously thwarted by the Mahanta, his followers and Elokeshi's family. 'Finally driven to despair and jealous anger, Nabin killed his wife, by beheading her with a fish cutting knife on 27th May 1873'¹⁴. Both Mahanta and Nabin were put on trial. Several newspapers had reported this trial, a number of plays were written on this case. In fact this case became a creative inspiration for many people. Kalighat painters did not stay behind. They prepared number of pictures on this theme. While doing so, these pictures were influenced by the Western Art form as well as by the theatrical art form. However, here the concern is, how did these painters depict the consumption of intoxicating drugs, especially liquor.

In this series, one picture (See: Picture no. 2) has shown Mahant was forcing Elokashi to drink alcohol. The projection of the human body and the theme of the picture clearly indicate the *Babu* culture of the time. Besides, the figure of Elokeshi 'portrayed as a vulnerable and powerless woman, preyed upon by the domineering Mahant, and led into unfortunate circumstances by the people around her'¹⁵. The Mahant is mercilessly presented as a licentious priest, who steals money from the temple and indulged in immoral activities. The picture has depicted the part of the story where Elokeshi had requested the Mahant for medicine, and the Mahant took that opportunity to drug her before taking sexual advantage of her.¹⁶ The painters had tried to link liquor consumption with the adultery and immoral practice. While doing this, the

¹³ *Tarakeshwar* is pilgrim for Hindus, situated in the Hooghly district. There is an ages old shiv temple in this place and main priest of this temple is known as Mahanta. During the nineteenth century, these mahantas were becoming corrupted, involving in drinking practices, seduced village women and having affair with them. The Mahanta-Elokashi case had highlighted all these illicit practices of the Mahantas.

¹⁴ Sinha and Panda (ed.), *Kalighat Paintings*, p. 80.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.83.

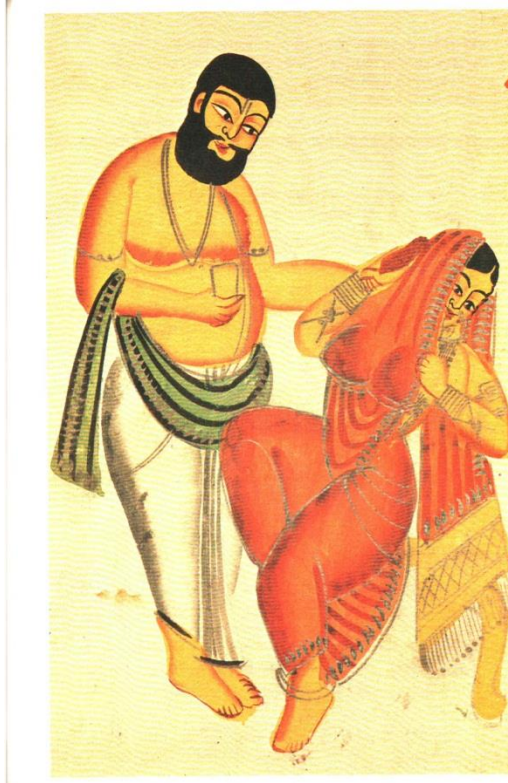
¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

artists were trying to convey the message that people were becoming immoral under the influence of the liquor consumption. The painting highlighted two characteristics of the contemporary society, first, the man figure represents the drinking habit of the nineteenth century, along with the pleasure of drinking. Sdifferent evil activities were committed during the state of drunkenness, like visiting prostitutes and indulging in adultery. Second, the female postures show the rejection of liquor consumption. The rejection of the liquor consumption by the woman figures perhaps reflects the artist's and society's perception of liquor consumption by women. Later on, *Bat-tala Print Culture*¹⁷ incorporated these pictures in novels and plays to illustrate their subject matters. However, sometimes they changed the appearance of the bodies according to their convenience.¹⁸ It could be said that Kalighat Paintings and incorporation of these pictures in *Bat-tala Literature*¹⁹ projected a visual effect before the people about the evil effects of liquor consumption.

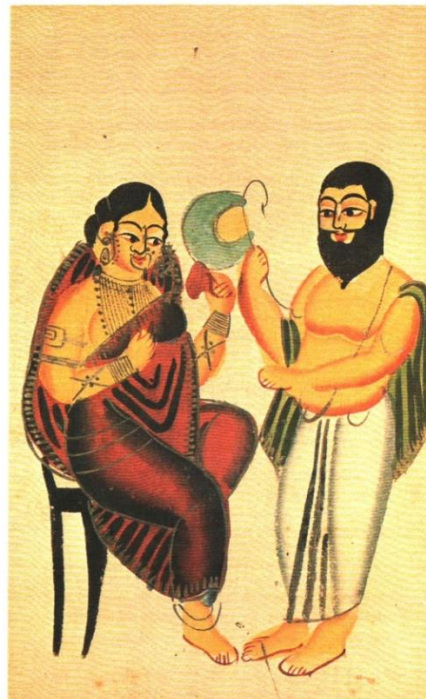
¹⁷A number of inexpensive printing presses started to mushroom around Bat-tala area in north Kolkata. These presses were referred as Bat-tala Press as per their location. These presses of Bat-tala area produced 'almanacs, religious and mythological literature, sensational novels and romance, plays songs on topical themes' and circulated them in cheap price. Most of these literatures were written on colloquial style and captured the contemporary popular imagination. (See: Anindita Ghosh, 'Cheap Books, 'Bad' Books' in Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty edited *Print Areas*, Parmanent Black, Delhi, 2004, pp. 169-70)

¹⁸ Sripantha, *Battala*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 1997, pp. 83-85.

¹⁹ Popular literature of nineteenth century Bengal. These literature were published by the Bat-tala printing press.



(Pic no. 2; Mahanta forcing Elokeshi to drink alcohol; Source: *Kalighat Paintings*, p. 83, pic no. 61)



Picture no.3 (Mahanta was using a hand fan to comfort Elokeshi after drinking liquor, 1880 (Source: Sri Pantha, *Mahanta o Elokeshi Sambad*, Ananda, Kolkata, 2005 (reprint)

Picture no 3 is showing the consequence of the picture no. 2. After drinking liquor, Elokeshi became bold, her shyness had gone, and she became comfortable with the priest. Through this picture, the painter had tried to convey the message that liquor consumption made the women forgetful about their responsibility and vow of chastity and indulged them into adultery. Besides, it also represents that the liquor consumption was breaking the hierarchy and social order of the society. Therefore, a Brahmin also started drinking. The painters of these paintings wanted to spread these messages because of the traditional values, which they were carrying from their village society. These painters came from the village and then settled in the city. However, they still followed the village norms, especially the hierarchy of the social order. This hierarchy could be found in the relation between man and woman, between priest and followers and it was accepted as the right order. After coming to the city, they found that the old hierarchical order was interrupted due to the influence of western culture.²⁰ To criticise that western influence which brought changes in that hierarchical order, the painters created these pictures.

Along with the Babus, some of the *Kalighat Paintings* on the mythological theme also show the state of intoxication among the Gods. One of such painting was Mahadev. According to the mythological tradition, *Mahadev* is one of the major gods, who lives in the cremation ground and accompanied by ghost and witches. He has a vehicle, which is a bull, named Nandi. He consumed bhang and other intoxications, thus in most of the time, he was the state of intoxication. This picture of *Mahadev* shows all these features of this mythological figure.

The *Kalighat Paintings* represented the alcohol consumption from different points of views. While on the one hand some of the pictures criticised liquor consumption, on the other hand, some pictures reflected the pleasure of drinking. The facial expression of the figures in the pictures and the background story of the pictures reflected the moral stand of the artists on the drinking practice of the nineteenth century, i.e., whether consumption of liquor

²⁰ Guha-Thakurata, p. 23.

was immoral or an act of pleasure. This question was further carried on by the Lithograph Paintings and vernacular literature of nineteenth century Bengal.

2) Lithographs and Advertisements on Liquor:

Initially, *Bat-tala* printing presses used Kalighat hand paintings to illustrate the story of the *Bat-tala literature*, but as the demand for the *Bat-tala* books increased, printers of *Bat-tala* presses started to use lithograph paintings²¹ for its faster production and lower cost. Thus, the demand of the *patua's*²² picture reduced. Besides, a number of manufacturing companies of furnished goods and several other items started to advertise their products on newspapers. These companies took the help of the lithographs to promote their products. It helped in the prosperity of the lithographers.

In the process, they prepared several woodcuts of the variety of liquors, especially alcohol-based tonics. Good numbers of imported health tonics were launched into Kolkata's medical market at that time. Local pharmacists also started to prepare this kind of tonics. As a result, a competition started in the medical market between local and imported health tonic.²³ Western pharmaceutical Companies published good quality advertisements in different English dailies of Kolkata to promote the medicinal wines. Local pharmacists of Kolkata began to give advertisement in vernacular newspapers and printed pamphlets for distribution to compete with these European companies. Due to lack of capital, these pharmacists sought help from indigenous lithographic artists. One of the artists of the lithograph and wood-cut's advertisements of the late nineteenth century was Priya Gopal Das (1870-1929). He was one of the popular artists who prepared a number of advertisements for different products of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

²¹ Lithography has been emerged in nineteenth century India with the development of the printing press. By mid-nineteenth century onward, several local vernacular printing presses used this printing style for greater production of book in cheap rate. Initially, wood has been used to produce lithograph plates. Later metal plates were used for lithograph.

²² A painter community of Bengal, who used to earn their livelihood while painting on the materials like cloth, paper, and plum leaf. Their art work is known as '*Pata-Chitra*'.

²³ Details description of these tonics and about the competition has been discussed in the next chapter 5.

century Bengal. He had given a new dimension to the theme and appearance of these advertisements.²⁴



Picture no: 4 Advertisement of Dr Major's Electro Sarsaparilla (Source: Asit Das, *Unish Sataker Kath Khodai Shilpee Priya Gopal Das* /Priya Gopal Das: A lithographer of the Nineteenth Century, Ananda Publishers, 2013, p. 161, Pic no. 171)

Advertisements of tonic, prepared by Priya Gopal, contained several minor details of the products while having an aesthetic look. Some of these advertisements had been drafted for Manna's Co-operative Sarsa²⁵ (See: Picture no. 5), Star tonic for Malaria, and Dr. Major's Electro Sarsaparilla (See: Picture no. 4). These advertisements contained human figures and calligraphy. Most of these advertisements have women figures with long hair, beautiful face, good health and wearing beautiful clothes. Mostly these figures were the replica of the Western Arts. The main motivation for creating these pictures was to create a desire among the consumers for the products. Certainly, this motivation of the creating such advertisements worked, and these advertisements were able to convince the customers. From 1880 onwards some of the Bengali almanacs also started to publish lithograph

²⁴ Asit Das, *Unish Sataker Kath Khodai Shilpee Priya Gopal Das* (Priya Gopal Das: A lithographer of the Nineteenth Century), Ananda publishers, 2013, p. 38.

²⁵ A health tonic, produced by the local pharmaceutical company of nineteenth-century Bengal.

advertisement of tonics. Noticeably, these almanac advertisements used mythological figures as a model for the tonics.²⁶



Picture no: 5 Advertisement of Manna's Co-operative Sarsa (Source: Asit Das, *Unish Sataker Kath Khodai Shilpee Priya Gopal Das /Priya Gopal Das: A lithographer of the Nineteenth Century*, Ananda Publishers, 2013, P. 160, Pic no. 170)

Using female figures in the advertisements of several commodities was quite common in the nineteenth century. Gautam Bhadra arguing the same and said during using of models for commercial visual was quite common and “indispensable in the world of consumption”²⁷ at the end of the nineteenth century. The artists wanted to draw the customers’ attention and “stirring up desire”²⁸ through these advertisements. Gautam Bhadra also argues that these images were a site of the “intertwining of desire, taste, and piety”²⁹. Therefore, these advertisements were able to stimulate people in having the tonic or medicated wines. Due to the popularity of the tonics, the advertisements of these tonics or medicinal wines began to appear in the pages of Bengali Alamanc, which became an important part of the Bengal’s everyday life in the nineteenth century. Certainly, the advertisements of the medicinal wines or

²⁶ Gautam Bhadra, Pictures in Celestial and Worldly Time, in Partha Chatterjee and *el.ta* (ed.) *New Cultural History of India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2014, p.313.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

tonics³⁰ and the different alcohols of the nineteenth century had highlighted the drinking pleasure of the people.

Parallel to these advertisements in the vernacular press, it is necessary to look into the advertisement section of English Newspapers and medical Gazetteers of the nineteenth century Kolkata. A number of advertisements for alcohol and alcohol-based medicines appeared in these printed materials from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. However, unlike the vernacular advertisements, most of these advertisements of English Newspapers were not fabricated with the human figures or landscapes. Some of the advertisements in Medical gazetteers contained figures, but the numbers were few. Most of the advertisements gave attention to the messages which were needed to put across. Thus, the advertisements consisted of the details like the manufacturing place of the alcohol, their price, and relevant information, the address of the shop from where the customers could buy the product.

Most of the pharmaceutical companies and alcohol brewing companies promoted their products through advertisements. For instance, R. Tode and James's Brown Company had given the advertisement in the *Friend of India* about their wine products, like Brown Sherry, Pale Sherry, Port Wine, Light Claret, Newly Golden and Co.'s Madeira, Scott Penfold & Co's Malmsey Madeira along with their rates. Besides, the company also informed the readers that these wines were in the sale at the warehouse of *Colvin, Aiuslie, Cowie and co*. They also requested the *Mofussils'* (suburbs) residents to contact their agent for these products.³¹ Apart from these companies, other wine companies were *D. Wilson and Co.* (an Italian merchant company of wine), *Messer Cockburn And Co.*, *Messer Wauchope*, and *Messer Dive Roberts and Son* (British wine companies). Some of the companies had

³⁰ Most of the tonics, manufactured in the nineteen-century, contained alcohol. Therefore, some people considered them as a form of liquor. However, the proportion of alcohol and the strength of that alcohol in the tonic were much less than the regular alcohol available in the market. Therefore, later the colonial government determined the strength of alcohol existed in the medicated wines. (See: chapter 5th in the thesis)

³¹ *Friend of India*, 22nd January 1846, p. 50.

collaborated and put their efforts together to sell French wine, like *Sparkling Mo Selle Clarets* and champagne in Kolkata.³²

Most of the time these European wine companies had contact with Calcutta-based agency houses to sell different kinds of alcohols in the city. Thus, soon after the importation, these agencies had given advertisement for sale of liquor. Sometimes these companies offered discounts on the cash purchase of the liquor.³³ As time passed a variety of alcohols were imported in India, and the advertisements of these products continuously appeared in the Newspapers. In the mid-nineteenth century, imported wines and champagne created a huge demand in Kolkata. Besides, new kinds of imported alcohol, like whisky, brandy, and soda water were launched in Bengal's liquor market in 1860. One of the suppliers of these imported spirits was Messer Flokard & Co.

All these advertisements highlighted growing demand for liquors and alcohol-based medicines in Kolkata among a certain group of people as they considered alcohol as a medium of pleasure as well as a medicine. Soon a critical perception about the medical usage of alcohol emerged under the influence of temperance movement and development of medical science. Despite this, the demand of these tonics was increasing. The advertisements, unlike the paintings, promoted the consumption of alcohol and alcohol-based tonics among the people as they were able to generate the desire among the customer of having them. Both the paintings and advertisements were created by the subaltern group of the society; however, the audience of these creations were different. The appeal of the Kalighat Paintings was limited to the indigenous people, especially to the village pilgrims. Thus, artists had chosen the notion of morality as a theme to represent the order of the social relations, which declined under the influence of western culture. However, the artist of these lithographs and advertisements chose to showcase the pleasure of drinking to create a demand for the alcohol and alcohol based tonics among the educated people. Therefore, indigenous paintings on drinking practice highlighted both the pleasure and evil of drinking practice and advertisements

³² *Ibid.*, 4th June 1846, p.366.

³³ *Ibid.*, 26th January, 1871, p.113.

were focusing on the pleasure of drinking. In this way, the paintings and lithographs of the nineteenth century Bengal showcased the subaltern voice on the issue of drinking.

3) Literature and Alcohol:

As with the paintings, the drinking culture of the nineteenth century Bengal had also influenced the literature of the contemporary age. Literature is being considered as the mirror of the society. Vernacular writers of the nineteenth century had chosen different contemporary social issues as a theme for their writing. Drinking culture was one of these themes. While writing on the drinking culture, these writers wanted to make people aware of the ill effects of the drinking. In this process, these writers had followed a certain structure. This structure is centred on two things. First, they described the horrible effects of drinking practice on people. Second, the writer also asked people to abandon the drinking while appealing to people's moral instincts.

Besides, the literature on drinking theme could be divided into three broad categories. These categories are comedy or farce, pamphlets, and medical writings. Irrespective of these major categories, most of the literature on the alcohol and alcohol consumption described the evil of drinking. However, there were certain exceptional writings. Through all these different styles of writing the subaltern perception of drinking has been reflected and the link between the subaltern perception of drinking and the educated people's perception of drinking was established.

Initially, the criticism of drinking culture through literature has started in the form of farces. The first farce was written by Michael Madhusudan Dutta, *Ekei Ki Bole Savyata?* (Is it called the civilization?), which criticised the excess drinking habit of the western educated Bengalis. The main protagonist of this farce was Naba Kumar, a student, member of the Young Bengal Group³⁴ and son of a wealthy *Vaishnav* zamindar. Nabin's father, a staunch *Vaishnava*, was against drinking and smoking. However, Nabin and his friend Kali were addicted to all these harmful practices. Thus, Nabin

³⁴ Followers of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio.

always told lies to his father. Nabin was one of the founders of the *Ghyanatarangani Shava* (Ghyanatarangani Society). Nabin and his friends established this society to reform the harmful practice of the society and to empower the women. Unfortunately, the society's activities were paradoxical to the agenda. This paradox could be easily traced from the difference between the speech and works of Nabin. In that speech, Nabin argued that though the members of his society were atheist, rejected all superstitions of Hindu society, and were enlightened with the western knowledge. He argued that women should have liberty, and society should allow the widow remarriage. India remained an uncivilised country without all these developments. Moreover, he said that India was like a prison except the *Ghyanratangani Society*. This society had provided a free space to the newly educated Bengalis, and within this society, they were allowed to do anything.³⁵ However, in reality the society became a place for these newly educated young people to fulfil their forbidden desires. At the gathering of this society, Naba babu, his friends and followers consumed liquor, made merry and called prostitutes to entertain them. All these modes of the entertainment were the characteristics of the nineteenth century Babu culture. While criticising these behaviours, *Dutta* described Nabin's lax attitude and rudeness to his wife. Besides, he also described the attitude of Nabin toward his wife under the influence of alcohol. All these activities of Nabin's had made his wife asking the question if the western education and the Western civilization stood for drinking alcohol, having beef and visiting prostitutes. This last dialogue of Naba's wife seemed like a revolt against the contemporary Babu Culture.

Following this farce, where Michael Madhusudan Dutta has criticised the lifestyle of the contemporary western educated Bengali Babus through the character of Nabin,³⁶ several other parodies were written on the drunkards and drunkenness. Tek Chand Tagore had written *Maad Khaoa Baro Dai Jaat*

³⁵ Michael Madhusudhan Dutt, *Eki ki bole Savyata?* In Dr. Kshtrya Gupta (ed.) *Ekei ki bole Savyata?* O Buro Saliker Ghare Row, Des Publishing, Kolkata, 2009 (second edition), p. 119.

³⁶ Some of the critics have argued that the character of Nabin reflected the personal life of the author. To a certain extent, this argument is true. Michael Madhusudhan Dutt's had also consumed excess liquor. However, Dutta never visited prostitutes. It could be said that on the name of social reform and removal of the superstitions many of the young generation of the nineteenth century Bengal became drunkards.

Thake Ki Uppai (Consuming Liquor is under obligation than how to save caste) in 1862.³⁷ Here he argued that, in spite of knowing the fact that consumption was injurious to their health, the drunkards had made *ganja* and alcohol indispensable commodity for their life. They spent their entire income on the drinking and became penny less. The author had also argued that only drunkard's wife could save his life while asking him to abandon the alcohol consumption.³⁸ He said that drinking practice had become endemic in this country. Thus, educated and prestigious personalities of Bengal were also coming under the influence of it. Further, he commented that it would be hard to save the society in this condition.

In 1874, Chandra Kishor Basu Majumdar wrote *Mada Mahatta* (Glory of Spirit). In this writing, the author described the contemporary socio-economic condition in a poetic form. In this piece of writing, he personified alcohol and ironically praised her. Once again this highlighted how the drinking culture of the nineteenth century was destroying the life of the young generation. While describing this, the author wrote³⁹:

It looks like holy water. However, it is a poison

Nobody knows how powerful liquor is

Liquor is graceful. Thus liquor gives blessing to anyone

Moreover, the one, who receives this blessing from liquor, his life
became full of obstacles

One will become ill soon after drinking

Later, the drunkards become a patient of liver or are paralysed forever

At last, liquors send its disciples to the hell.

Further, the author has described the behaviour of a drunkard. He said that most of the time, the unbalanced drunkard fell on the road and got hurt while returning from the house of prostitutes or going home from the alcohol shop

³⁷ Tagore, Tek Chand, *Mada Khao Bara Dai Jaat Thake Ki Uppai* (Consuming Liquor is under obligation than how to save caste), Kolkata, 1862.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11.

³⁹ Basu Majumdar, Chandra Kishor, *Mada Mahatta* (Glory of Spirit), Gupto Yentra, Kolkata, 1874, p.3.

after heavy drinking. These drunkards were mostly spoiled brats of rich households. .

Another farce writer of this time was Bhola Nath Mukherjee. He had written several parodies on this theme. One of these parodies was *Apanar Mukh Apani Dekho* (Look to Your Own Face) (1907)⁴⁰. Through some imaginary characters, the author has depicted several evil practices of the contemporary people of nineteenth century Bengal, like excessive drunkenness, visiting prostitutes, limitless eating, squandering money, doing injustice and being inimical towards others. While describing the drunkenness among the rich men, the author said that the rich people had justified their liquor consumption by saying that liquor consumption was good for health. Besides, they said that religion had also sanctioned the alcohol consumption. These group of people thought that social reform would be successful if they gave education to the women and introduced widows' marriage. However, all attempts of these social reformers had been destroyed by their addiction to alcohol and prostitute.⁴¹ Besides, after getting drunk, these people created the disturbance. Mukherjee also argued that these rich people justify their excessive drinking while getting support from the religion and existed medical knowledge, whereas they criticised the drunkenness of lower class and called them uncivilized. Mukherjee had written some other parodies on the same theme. These parodies are, *Kichu Kichu Buji* (Something can be understood), *Koner Maa Kandhe ar Takar Putoli Bandhe* (Bride's Mother Laments and Fills Purse with Riches).

A few young Bengali students began to visit England to pursue higher studies in the nineteenth century. Many of these students started to follow European lifestyle after reaching England, and that lifestyle continued after returning to India as well. These students tried to present themselves as perfect 'sahebs'. In this process, they blindly followed the European culture, consumed liquor, and dismissed all indigenous belief. They were, however, at the same time engaged in social reform. The first step of their social reform was to educate their wives. But, their parents and the wives of these educated

⁴⁰ Bholanath Mukhopadhy, *Apanar Mukh Apani Dekho* (Look to Your Face), Kolkata, 1907.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46

'*sahebs*' were uncomfortable with their drinking practice and certain other lifestyle changes. Also the family members of the *Babu* also became afraid of being declared outcast. During this time, traditional Hindu society disapproved the idea of going abroad, consumption of forbidden food, or acceptance of Christianity. Committing any of these acts would lead the entire family of the person being declared outcaste. Often, the family organised a purification ritual for the person who visited England. Sometimes, this created a matter of dispute between parents and their educated children. In some of the cases, the dispute ended with the father disinheriting the son from property. Contemporary popular demand encouraged writers to choose this theme of the conflict between the indigenous practices and European practices, to write on.

On this theme, Vidyasundar Bhattacharya wrote a parody, named *Ekei Ki Bole Bengali Saheb?*⁴² (Is this called a Bengali Saheb?). In this parody, when the protagonist, Gopal, returned from England, his parents asked him to perform a purification ceremony. The parents suspected that Gopal had consumed beef and liquor during his visit to England. This demand of parents had made the protagonist angry. However, he was persuaded to go through the ritual by the elderly persons of the society. In fact Gopal said that he would sacrifice his life to save the country and culture. While describing Gopal's character, the author stated that he never consumed liquor and possessed a good nature. While making Gopal a perfect model of Bengali Saheb, the writer tried to argue that in spite of going to England, one should not blindly follow western culture, especially should not consume liquor.⁴³

These discussed farces and parodies tried to make certain points; first, the women were the worst sufferer of the increasing drinking habit among Indians. Second, most of the parodies criticised the liquor consumption from the moral point of view. While doing so, these parodies argued that indigenous culture continuously got weakened due the imitation of the drinking culture by western educated Bengalis. The writers also argued that only the abandoning of the drinking practice could revive the prestige of indigenous culture.

⁴² Bhattacharya, Vidyasundar, *Ekei ki bole Bangali Saheb?* (is this called Bengali Saheb?), Kolkata, 1880.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.8-11.

Pamphlets of the several temperance associations were another kind of vernacular literature which also criticised the drinking culture. During the time of organising several meetings to discuss their work plans, progress, and the condition of drunkards, these temperance associations of Bengal published a number of pamphlets written by the members of the temperance association. One of these pamphlets was *Madya Paner Samajik Fal o Tannibaran er Upai*⁴⁴ (Result of Drinking and How to overcome that). This pamphlet had been written on the occasion of the seventh meeting of Kalna Temperance Association. The writer started the discussion while identifying the reason for drinking. He argued that the laxity of the society and religion were the main reasons of growing intemperance.⁴⁵ He pointed out that no religion supported the liquor practice. However, some followers of the Hindu religion had misinterpreted the religious texts to justify drinking practice. Thus, the author suggested that one should be careful while interpreting the religious texts. Contrary to this, while fetching an instance from the Islam, the author had argued that Muslims were teetotallers. A Muslim would prefer death than to drink alcohol or to take western medicines. In spite of all these, educated Bengalis consumed liquor while blindly following the European culture. Further, he said that people should be aware of some facts about drinking which were ignored by them while drinking. These facts were (i) drinking practice was not suitable for the Indians and (ii) all Europeans did not drink regularly. Besides, he also criticised consumption of liquor by women and upper caste⁴⁶; and also established a link between crime and drinking. At the end of the pamphlet, the author asked people to adopt punitive methods to discipline drunkards and make it sure that the drunkards should feel guilty of liquor consumption. He also asked teetotallers to come forward and helped the drunkards to get rid of their bad practice. Further, he also requested the government to increase the price of alcohol and close the *Open-Stills*. Moreover, this writing identified alcoholism as a disease and suggested several remedies for that.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, *Sura Paner Samajik Fal o Tannibaroner Upai* (Social impact of the intemperance and how to condemn it) Kalna, 1890.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁶ Author has argued that earlier lower caste people, like *Suri, Bauri*, had only consumed the liquor. Gradually, the upper-class people also started liquor consumption.

Another pamphlet was *Madak Seban er Abaidhata o Anisthata Bishayak Prabandha*⁴⁷ (Discourse on the impropriety and injuriousness of the use of intoxicating drugs and drinks). Gopal Chandra Banerjee, the writer of the pamphlet, had presented this at the Hali town's Temperance Association in 1865. This pamphlet was divided into three parts. In the first part the author identified the reason for drinking; in the second part he discussed the effects of drinking; and in the final section, he discussed the methods of banning the drinking practice. He argued that people started drinking under five circumstances; first, they drunk liquor forget their pain, trace, and to be happy. Second, some people had started drinking under the influence of their friends. Third, sometimes doctors recommended alcohol as a remedy, and it turned some people as a drunkard. Fourth, some people consumed liquor while imitating others, and fifth, Western education also influenced many young and educated Bengalis to consume liquor. Addiction to the liquor might be converted a person into a drunkard, and eventually, the person lost self-control. Therefore, sometimes the drunkards committed crime and violence under the influence of liquor.

Temperance Catechism,⁴⁸ written by an anonymous missionary, described the view of Christianity on the habit of alcohol consumption. The essay stated that Christianity disapproved the habit of liquor consumption. According to Jesus, wellness of human and pleasures of drinking and smoking were standing on the opposite pole. While stating that alcohol was forbidden, the writer argued that fermented foods were unhealthy for the mind, organs, and ultimately this food turned any person as emotionless. Thus, the drunkards could easily become inhuman and turn into a criminals. Unlike the other descriptive or creative writings on alcohol and drunkenness, this essay was written in a dialogue form and had tried to give answers to every query related to alcohol. However, replies to these questions were written mostly from the religious perspective, though, the medical perspective was not ignored.

⁴⁷ Gopal Chandra Banarjee, *Maadaka Sebaner Abaidhata o Anishtakarita Bishayak Prabandha* (Discourse in Bengali on the Impropriety and injuriousness of the use of Intoxicating Drugs and Drinks), Kolkata, School Book Press, 1865.

⁴⁸ *Temperance Catechism*, Bengal Branch of the W.C.T Union, Calcutta, 1899.

Another piece of writing named '*Madira*' (Spirituous Liquor) has written by *Bhubaneshwar Mitra*. This essay addresses the audiences at a meeting of a temperance association. However, it was different from the earlier temperance essays. Unlike other essays, this essay discussed different facts regarding alcohol, like different kinds of alcohol, their functions, and its manufacturing process. Lastly, the writer concluded while saying that alcohol was a harmful food and dangerous to life. Though Indians were copying European culture and started drinking, they could not realise that European wines were better than Indian wine.⁴⁹ Moreover, all European did not drink. Most of the European had abandoned the drinking habits after knowing the medical facts regarding alcohol consumption. However, Indian never looked into these facts. Further, the writer described the process and consequences of alcohol addiction. In addition to this, the author also argued that drinking alcohol would slowly damage mind and body and ultimately caused death to the drunkards.

Lastly, Mitra has blamed the western education, colonial government, and the colonial excise policies, for the increasing alcohol consumption. He argues that the government distributed a large number of licences to liquor shop's vendors for collecting more revenue. Besides, he also highlighted the failure of Hindu religion to discourage people from drinking. The writer asked the government to consider drinking as dangerous and as offensive as widow burning and infanticide and suggested the complete prohibition on the liquor consumption.

Although these last two discussed proses were written in a different manner, they shared some common grounds with the other discussed essays. These common grounds are to discourage people from drinking, and to highlight the ill effects of drinking practice. Besides, the concept of growing economic nationalism, which was developed in the last half of the nineteenth-century, had affected some of these writings. Thus, one finds that in '*Madira*' (Spirituous Liquor), *Bhubaneshwar Dutta* argued that the readers might be surprised after knowing the amount of excise revenue collected by the British

⁴⁹ Bhubaneswer Mirta, *Modira* (Spirituous Liquor), Kolkata, Swraswati Printing Press, 1871.

Government. He also added that the government invested this huge revenue for their own purpose and never for the Indian people. They encourage drinking among the Indians for more revenue. After collecting the excise revenue, they drained that elsewhere.⁵⁰ In spite of knowing all these facts, he kept faith in the colonial justice system. Therefore, at last, he appealed to the government to pass an anti-liquor law.⁵¹

While spreading the horror of drinking, these prose writers had followed a certain pattern. First, they collected information from medical research on alcoholism. During the second half of the nineteenth-century number of western medical journal had come to India. After translating information in English, vernacular medical journals of Bengal came into circulation. It was argued that initially, a drunkard was a casual drinker. Soon he became addicted to it. Slowly they started consuming more liquor, which damaged several organs one by one. At last, he lost control over his mind and became mad. This madness ends into death.⁵² Most of the writings on the temperance had described the pain of a drunkard in the same way. Sometimes horrors of drinking were being described through the parody. For instance, in *Maad Mahatya* Chandra Kishor Basu had described the pain of a drunkard through parody. In this parody once a drunkard asked Goddess Durga to bless with a never ending stock of liquor. The drunkard thought that only never-ending stock of liquor would help him to survive. Otherwise, he would lose everything due to heavy indebtedness to the liquor-seller.⁵³ The writer said that, although liquor was consumed by the low-class people, but it was admired by the rich people. In spite of being poison, people loved it as an elixir, and this love led people to destruction.⁵⁴

Some of the writers used religious texts to stop people from having liquor. In this process, they were mostly giving examples from ancient Indian culture and the Hindu religion to show that none of these had admired drinking. To support their arguments, some of them quoted from old Sanskrit

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Chandra Kishor Basu, *Maad Mahatya*, Gupta Yantra, Kolkata, p.5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

books and tried to prove that these texts indicated people used milk and honey as an alternative to alcohol during religious rituals. Besides, they argued that both Islam and Christianity never approve liquor consumption.⁵⁵ In all these approaches, one can see the influence of revivalism, which was developing in India at the same time to encounter the intervention of Western culture and law into the indigenous life.

However, these written documents expressed the perception of educated class and appeal of these documents was limited to the newly emerging educated Bengali middle-class. Thus, the perception of the uneducated common people on drinking culture remained untouched by the any of this literature. The common people's perception can be traced from Bengali proverbs. Proverbs emerged from the spontaneous expression of people through their daily experiences. They expressed the people's experience and truth of the community in a precise way and witty manner.⁵⁶ In the Mid-nineteenth century, scholars like Rev. James Long had collected several Bengali proverbs and published them in a collected Volume⁵⁷. In this process, he collected some proverbs on the alcohol consumption. These proverbs reflected the people's perceptions about alcohol and its consumption. The following are some explanations;

“*Young Bengal Khude Nabab*”⁵⁸

“Young Bengals have presumed themselves as a small king.”

This proverb is a satire on the followers of Derozio, known as Young Bengals. While criticising the contemporary staunch Hindu practices, they started to consume liquor and beef. These pupils thought that they were able to liberate themselves from the existed social norms by consuming beef and alcohol. However, the people perception on this issue was different, and this perception was reflected through this proverb.

⁵⁵ Anonymous, *Madya Paner Samajik Fal* (result of drinking on society), Kalna, Unknown Publisher, Date unknown, pp. 31-46.

⁵⁶ Sudeshna Basak, *Cultural History of Bengali Proverbs*, Ghyan Publication, Delhi, 2010, pp. 11-17.

⁵⁷ Rev. J. Long, *Pravadmala* (The thousand Bengali Proverbs), Calcutta, 1868.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, proverb no 310, p. 17.

Besides, some proverbs reflected the character of the drunkards and those who were indulged in distillation, for instance,

*“Muchi er nak nei, ar shuri er kan nei.”*⁵⁹

“Cobbler has no smelling organ, and liquor maker has no ear.”

*“Sudkhar ar madkhar saman.”*⁶⁰

Usurer and drunkards are equal

*“Beta maad khai, maa daine.”*⁶¹

If the son drinks alcohol, then the mother is a witch.

The last proverb highlights that it is the responsibility of the family, especially the mother to stop the child from having a drink. If the mother fails to perform this responsibility, then she must be a witch. Besides, people used to give a comparison of drinking practices to highlight the folly of the voice. One of such proverb is;

“Dudh bechi mad khai”

“He sells milk and drinks spirits.”

These perceptions gave the alternative view of the common people against the educated people’s perception on drinking habits. Because some of the educated people of the nineteenth century thought that liquor consumption might uplift their social prestige, but the common and uneducated people judged the liquor consumption from the moral point of view.

Sudeshna Basak, in her book, has argued that Bengali proverbs were created on different subjects, like on God and Goddesses, mythological characters, on social life, the human body, habits and culture, nature, agriculture, food, addiction and so on. Proverbs on liquor consumption could easily be found in nineteenth-century Bengali society. Through these witty expressions, these proverbs had revealed the people’s perception of drinking. Some of these proverbs are:

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, Proverb no. 2320, P. 128.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, Proverb no. 2965, p. 163.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, Proverb no. 1997, P. 110.

1. *Dinek madya pan / ek haptha matha dhara*

“Drink one day/Headache for a week.”⁶²

2. *Matal, dental, singhe, biswas nei teene*⁶³

“Drunkard, animal with teeth and horn, not to be trusted.”⁶⁴

3. *Bagbazar e ganjar Adda, Guli Konnagare/ Battalate Mader adda, Chandu Bowbazare*⁶⁵

“Ganja is available at Bagbazar, Guli is in Konnagar/ Battala is famous for alcohol and Bowbazar for chandu”⁶⁶

4. *Diyo na go bgagabati, Amay matal pati/ Matal e amar baro bhoi*⁶⁷

“Dear goddess bgagabati, do not give me a drunkard husband/ I am afraid of drunkards.”

The first proverb shows the inverse relationship between health and the alcohol. The second proverb has indicated the drunkard’s aggressiveness after drinking. The third proverb has identified the several famous places of different narcotics. The last proverb has shown the woman’s perception about the drinking practice. It can be said that these proverbs mentioned above are clearly express four general perceptions of the common people about drinking during the nineteenth century.

(II)

The drinking space of nineteenth century Bengal:

This section highlights the emergence of the drinking places in parallel with the temperance movement and existence of critical approach to the alcohol consumption by different groups of people in Bengal. The relation between the emergence of drinking places and its relation with the power structure is another point of this discussion.

⁶² Sudeshna Basak, *Cultural History of Bengali Proverbs*, Ghyan Publication, Delhi, 2010, p. 81.

⁶³, Rev. J. Long, *Pravadmala* (The thousand Bengali Proverbs), Calcutta, 1868, proverb no. 1297, p. 78.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Biswanath Joardar, *Anya Kolkata*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2003, p. 63.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.67.

Establishment of the liquor shops and effort to gain control over the liquor shops by the government was a common feature for centuries. During the seventeenth century, most of the taverns in France were situated on the outside of the city. Due to this reason, these tavern keepers escaped from the excise rules. However, the French Government revised Excise Polices in the 1670 and 1680 and brought more areas under Excise Department. This affected the business of the taverns, situated outside Paris. The Government did this to collect more taxes, especially to increase wine tax and establish control over these taverns.⁶⁸

Also, the gathering of subaltern people in the taverns and the punch houses was not a feature only of nineteenth century Bengal but was quite common in other countries too. Different kinds of drinking places, like tavern, café, were established in France in the seventeenth century and many people visited them. With time, these places became the popular places for ‘Parisian entertainment and leisure’.⁶⁹ Tavern keepers sold space to their customers along with drinks. Thus, Brannen has argued that these taverns and cafés “stood between the public and private, between work and recreation”. In taverns people gathered in a group, got drunk, engaged in conversation, sometimes their interaction turned into arguments and then ended up with violence. In spite of that people from different social strata visited drinking places created a space for themselves within a public space. Thomas Brannen has also said that the interior decoration of the taverns indicated the nature of its customers.⁷⁰ However, it could be said that during the eighteenth century the drinking places of France had provided a place to their people to relax.

After consulting a map on the Public Houses of Victorian London of 1886⁷¹, it could be said that during this time numerous public houses were built up in London. Most of the public houses were concentrated near the river Thames and railway stations. The reason might be the arrival of the sailors and travellers the city. These pubs provided space to them. Later, several more

⁶⁸ Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century Paris*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, p. 82.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.84.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-134.

⁷¹ The Public Houses of Victorian London, 1886, Midland House, West Way, Botley, Oxford, OX2 0PH.

pubs were established with the expansion of industrialisation and formation of the working class. After consulting the two maps of London Public Houses of 1887 and 1899, Brain Harrison adds that the geographical distribution of the Victorian Pubs in London could be traced to places near slums, beside the railway stations and places where the working class people resided.⁷² Harrison further said that mostly these pubs were situated in the road junctions and they easily attracted the pedestrians due to having more than one entrance.⁷³ Harrison has also argued that in the Victorian London, pubs provided space to people, especially to the newly migrated villagers. In the pubs, the lonely migrants made acquaintances and overcame solitariness of the city life. However, the upper class never visited these pubs, and later gin-palaces were established for them.⁷⁴ The inclusion of women in the pub was started with the introduction of wine licences⁷⁵. Thus, many pubs were built near parks to attract the women.⁷⁶

These public houses of the London city also provided other kinds of entertainment to its visitors. Most of the pubs had a music hall. As a result, pubs played a major role in the development of music during the Victorian period. Also, many organizations were formed in the pub, and revolutionary ideas were spreading through the pubs. It could be said that mid-Victorian London had pubs for everybody's taste. Although these pubs had created spaces for different groups of people, but these spaces were not independent. The government always tried to control this space by introducing the licence system and several regulations. For instance, the Government warned the pub owners that engaging in any kinds of revolutionary work might cancel the shop licence. The government also controlled the pub hours and imposed

⁷² These working class people were residing at the place bounded by "Bethnal Green Road/ Commercial Street/ Whitechapel Road/ Cambridge Road". There were several public houses established in this place. (see: Brain Harrison, 'Pub', in H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff edited *The Victorian City*, Vol. 1, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London 1873, p.169.)

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁷⁵ The Wine License was introduced in England by William Gladstone in 1860. Further this Wine License brought clearance to the British Policy of Off-License, which was an intervention of Victorian Era and completely urban phenomena. The wine license, which also encouraged in the opening of off-License wine shops, had increased the women customers in the shops. As with the help of the act, these women purchase wine from the off-shops and consumed that in home. (see: *Ibid.*, 167-68)

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168

restrictions on the access of the pubs by children.⁷⁷ The pub culture of France and Britain created spaces for different people, and the gathering of various people in the pubs made the governing authority suspicious about this place and therefore, they imposed restriction on the pub's owner and tried to regulate the drinking of the lower class people.

In India, drunkenness had expanded among the larger group of people in the nineteenth century Bengal for several reasons. For instance, certain group of people consumed liquor due to the lack of other forms of entertainments; some consumed liquor to upgrade their social status or to break the social norms, some consumed liquor to overcome the solitariness of the city life and yet other as part of their traditional social and cultural life. Drinking alcohol in pubs, liquor shops etc. created a private space for every drunkard within a larger public space. Besides, this discussion is also trying to trace the location and ambience of the liquor shops along with the role of colonial government in regulating the location of the liquor shops along with its structural orientation.

Kolkata started to develop as a metropolis from the beginning of the nineteenth century and created several job opportunities for different groups of people. Also the implication of new revenue settlements was that it forced many rural people to migrate to Kolkata in search of livelihood. In this process of migration, these villagers brought rural folk culture with them. This culture helped these migrated rural people to escape from the worries of the city life. Initially, the existing city culture incorporated the folk culture within its structure and gave birth to a number of entertainments like *Kobi Gaan*, *Swang Natch* (clown dancing), *Panchali*, and, *Yatra*. These performances brought various groups of people together while entertaining them. However, these traditional forms of entertainments were identified as vulgar by the newly emerged 'sanitised culture'⁷⁸ of the western educated elite and middle-class Bengalis, and therefore these folk cultures were marginalised.⁷⁹ In this

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁷⁸ The sanitized culture emerged due to spreading of western education and development of print culture.

⁷⁹ Sumantra Banerjee, *Parlour and the Streets*, Seagull, Calcutta, 1998, p. 199.

condition, lower class people were only left with the liquor consumption to entertain them.⁸⁰ They usually got drunk in the toddy shops in the *bazaar*.

Kaliprasanna Sinha has not only described the everydayness of the lower class while remarking that they were finishing everyday work, proceeding towards the liquor shop, and getting drunk. It also was the relaxing moment of their daily life and in this moment of relaxation, these working class people engaged in conversation with the same social group. One might say that this place was a den of criminals and undisciplined people as the customers engaged in fighting soon after drinking. However, these places of disturbance definitely created space for the recreation of the lower class. The government reports also supported this fact. '*The report of the local committee appointment to consider and report on the number, location, and distribution of licenses for the sale of spirituous liquor*' has argued that there were five liquor shops in the ward no. 1, Kolkata⁸¹. These liquor shops were mainly visited by the sweepers and the low-class consumers.⁸²

Another kind of drinking place was created by the Soldiers. Numbers of foreign sailors came to Kolkata as it emerged as an important trading centre. Hence, several taverns and hotels had been established in the city to accommodate them. Most of these taverns and punch houses were situated in the Lalbazar area or in around Flag Street⁸³. These taverns were unhygienic and unhealthy. These places provided poor quality alcohol and punch to the Sailors. Sometimes these Sailors were served punch mixed with obnoxious drugs by the taverns. In spite of these facts, sailors gathered in these sites as liquor consumption became the easiest amusement for them and consumed alcohol spiked with drugs. The soldiers soon became unconscious after drinking the spiked alcohol. Taking advantages of the situation, thieves snatched everything from the unconscious soldier and abandoned them on the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁸¹ The area in between Sambazar and Circular road was considered as Ward no 1 by the colonial Government. Ward no 1 was situated in the north Calcutta and also mentioned in book, *Sketches by Hootum the Owl*.

⁸² June. 1908, A Proceeding, F/SR, E $\frac{1-c}{3}$ 10, No. 21, WBSA.

⁸³ The area was called Flag Street "because of the strings of flags across the streets that lead to the eating house and grog shops".(see: Sumantra Banerjee, *The Wicked City*, Orient Black Swan, 2009, p. 65)

road-side. This kind of incident was quite common in nineteenth century Kolkata. Soon, the government became conscious about these incidents and planned to bring the hotels under the license system to control these situations. In spite of all these arrangements, taverns were still continuing as the gathering places of criminals and were known as ‘dens of criminal.’⁸⁴ Along with the Flag Street, some of the liquor shops situated at ward no XXV of the Calcutta Municipality (the *Kidderpoore* Docks and its adjoining areas), were crowded with the sailors.⁸⁵ In these liquor shops, however, the sailors were served with the foreign liquor.

Along with the sailors, native criminals also visited taverns and grog shops at Lalbazar. A report of Justice of Peace, published in 1800, has argued that there were five types of criminals hanging around in the liquors shops of Kolkata. These criminals were, “gang robbers, river dacoits, cutpurses or pickpockets, petty thieve, cattle thieves, counterfeiters, cheats and swindlers and cheats and receiver of stolen good”.⁸⁶ Availability of liquor in the taverns brought these native criminals to the European sailors, vagabonds. Sometimes these sailors got closer to the native criminals and under the influence of alcohol they jointly committed crimes.⁸⁷ Thus, these punch houses or hotels were continuously staying under police observation. The increase in the rate of the offence had forced the colonial government to bring them under control by passing several laws and conducting police raid. Through these laws, the colonial police and Excise Department had not only determined the working hours of the taverns and liquor shops, but they were also codifying the structure of the liquor shops.

These drinking places in the city were not homogenous in nature. Thus, the liquor shops of the nineteenth century Kolkata had created different spaces for the different groups of people, like students, working class, sailors, criminals and upper class. The educated people created drinking places in the form of several associations. They consumed liquor and mostly engaged

⁸⁴ Bidisha Chakroborty, et al., *Calcutta in the Nineteenth century*, Nyogi Books, New Delhi, 2013.

⁸⁵ June 1908, A Proceeding, F/SR, file no : $\frac{1-C}{3}$ 10, no. 20, WBSA.

⁸⁶ Sumanta Banerjee, *Wicked City*, Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, 2009, p. 40.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, P. 63.

conversation in Associations, also known as *adda*.⁸⁸ Several contemporary writings talked about this space.

Contrary to the drinking places in Kolkata, the drinking places in suburbs and villages were more like public places as people from the different section could gather with the purpose of drinking. For instance, drinking was a part of Santhal life. They were usually brewed liquor at home and consumed home brewed liquor in their joyous and saddest moments. They consumed liquor in groups and celebrated in festivals, like *badhna*. Drinking after the funeral was also common among them. Besides, it was considered as food by many of them. Brewing liquor was always being a family matter for the Santhals. However, the situation changed after the government put restrictions on home brewing. Santhal began to go to the liquor shops for having liquor. Thus a new public place in the form of liquor shops was opened in the Santhal villages, and this public place changed the lifestyle as well as the drinking habit of the Santhal.

Drinking culture had not only created a place of recreation for different people, but it also created a site of negotiation between different groups. Both the colonial government and various temperance associations had tried to control the drinking practice while getting control over the drinking places. Besides, the gathering of different people in the liquor shops had made the colonial government suspicious about the liquor shops. Simultaneously, drunkenness was detected as a crime by the colonial law. The colonial government also became interested in controlling of the liquor shops to maintain law and order. Moreover, the colonial government also tried to condemn the illicit sale of liquor while imposing regulations on the liquor shops. These factors forced the government to pass laws and launched regulations for the drinking placar.

The government appointed a committee to investigate the working process of the liquor shops. They tried to relocate and restructure these liquor shops on the basis of the recommendation of the committee. While doing so, the government had modified the process of distribution of licenses, and

⁸⁸ 'The Lost World of the Babus' in Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.), *Calcutta The Living City*, Vol. 1, Calcutta, OUP, 1990, p.71.

calculated the numbers of the existed shops in the Calcutta and the suburbs. 1870 onwards, the colonial government became more conscious of this matter. They imposed several laws before giving permission to establish a liquor shop.

Following the recommendation of the Lieutenant Governor, the Excise Department had formed a committee in September 1907. This committee was given a work of preparing a report on the location of different liquor shops and distribution of licences for the sale of spirituous liquor in Kolkata and suburb. The committee was incorporated the excise commissioner, chairman of the Kolkata Corporation, and Commissioner of Police along with Mr W. C. Madge, Babu Priya Nath Malik, Maulavi Badr-ud-Haidar⁸⁹, Khan Bahadur as members. The Calcutta Corporation nominated the last four members. Eighteen meetings were organised, and different temperance organizations of the city also asked to join the committee. This Committee had inspected fifty liquor shops of Kolkata and its suburb. Besides, they had orally interviewed thirty-three witnesses and carefully considered a number of objections. The Committee faced problems to submit the report within December 1907 due to the diverse opinions and unawareness of a large number of people about this committee. These lacunas had left limited scope for discussions and investigation on the issue. However, a report was prepared. This report had produced information on the following six subsections. These subsections were '(i) the number of 'on' and 'off' retail licenses required for country and foreign spirit respectively, (ii) the location distribution of shops, (iii) the separation of country and foreign liquor stores, (iv) the limit of retail sale, (v) the hour of sale, and (vi) the question of structural defects in shops'⁹⁰. It could be said that the report highlighted the colonial government's plans of gaining authority over these liquor stores. In this process, they also derived support from natives and temperance associations' opinions on the location of the liquor shops.

After visiting several liquor shops in the city, the Committee had reported that there were a large number of liquor shops in the city, situated at

⁸⁹ These three Muslims were the members of Mohamadan Society.

⁹⁰ June. 1908, A Proceeding, F/SR, E- $\frac{1-c}{3}$ 10, No. 21, WBSA.

the conspicuous places.⁹¹ Besides these shops had some construction defects; for instances, they were less airy, situated in such location which could tempt the casual drinkers and constructed in such way which could promote the illicit sale of liquor. The committee wanted to close these liquor shops, but they faced several difficulties. These difficulties were, (i) if one or more than one shop were closed in the same location then remaining places would be over crowded. (ii) If they closed the liquor shop before the end of the license, then it would be a violation of the law. Thus, the Committee could come to any single decision. However, the committee made some recommendation and planned to submit that to the Lieutenant Governor. The committee suggested to reconstruct the liquor shops and its vicinities.⁹² These also highlighted how the Committee, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, was trying to control the drinking places and drinking habits of people.

The committee made the first recommendation on the location of the drinking space while saying that the minimum distances between two liquor shops should be a quarter of a mile. Further, they said that shops should not be opened near any religious places and schools. It should be situated in a moderately crowded street so that the police could supervise the shop easily. Besides, the shop must not be located at the corner of the street, and should be opened in a place where a bonafide demand existed. The second recommendation was made on the restructuring of the liquor shops. Thus, they recommended that the liquor shops should be airy, clean and well ventilated. Besides, the liquor shops should sell liquor only at the scheduled hours, and should avoid the illicit transaction.⁹³

Besides, the committee asked the liquor vendors to follow certain rules while constructing a public bar to prevent the structural defects⁹⁴. The main

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ “The question of structural defects in liquor shop was discussed at the conference held on the 11th July 1905. The Honorable member of the board, the commissioner of Excise and commissioner of police attended this meeting. It was detected in the meeting that; (i) that double frontage (in two main streets) should be allowed (ii) that the excise shop and any drinking rooms attached to it should be compact and shut off entirely from the dwelling house. (iii) that sufficient windows should be allowed to permit of ample light and fresh air entering

reason for imposing these rules was to check the illicit sale of liquor and increased the excise revenue. The committee asked the liquor vendor to construct a bar with one door entry, and the door should be opened into a public road. Besides, the space of shop should be airy, and every part of the bar must be visible from the street. Further, the committee also recommended that,⁹⁵

... a bar should extend along the back of the room facing the street, and store-room should open inside the bar and not be accessible to customer so as to use as a sitting room. Residential quarters should be provided above the shop, but these should not be accessible from the shop.

Gambling and other kinds of entertainments were strictly prohibited within the liquor shop's premises. Further, the committee condemned the gathering a large group of people in the pub.⁹⁶ The Committee also suggested that the drinking hours should be restricted from 9 am to 9 pm.

Along with these restrictions, the Committee also recommended some suggestions on the process of relocating drinking places. While doing so, the committee had prepared a list of the liquor shops situated in Kolkata and its suburbs; and according to the situation, they recommended different actions against these shops. Later, they identified two problems in relocating these liquor shops. These problems were, (i) most of the liquor shops were situated at odd places. Thus, it would be impossible for the authority to move these shops to a new location. (ii) If the excise department allotted a new site to these liquor shops, then the rival group of the relocated liquor shop's vendor would create obstacles. Further, the committee suggested that the government left with two options in this present condition; i.e., (i) either to close the disputed shops altogether, or (ii) to permit the vendor to continue to its objectionable site. Thus, the committee thought it would be better if the Government or the municipality could handle the situation by acquiring the

the shop and drinking room; these windows to be covered with fine mesh wire gaze." (Source: Sept 1907, A Proceeding, F/SR, No. 29, file no. E $\frac{1-C}{3}$ 27, WBSA.)

⁹⁵ Sept 1907, A Proceeding, F/SR No. 29, file no. E $\frac{1-C}{3}$ 27, WBSA.

⁹⁶ Sept 1907, A Proceeding, F/SR, No. 1, file no. E $\frac{1-C}{3}$ 21, WBSA.

sites, erect buildings and lease them to the vendors.⁹⁷ They also argued that if the colonial government accepted their recommendation of restructuring and relocating of the liquor shop, then the number of the liquor shops would be decreased. The committee also prepared a list on the basis of assumption. The list was as follows:

Table 8: Number of liquor shops in Kolkata and around, 1908⁹⁸

Name of the locality	Existed number of shops in Calcutta and suburb	Number proposed for abolition	Number to be retained after abolition
Calcutta proper	52	8	44
Suburbs	39	8	31
Manicktola municipality	4	...	4
Cossipore-Chitpore	6	1	5
Howrah Municipality	22	2	20
Bally Municipality	4	...	4
Total	127	19	109

From the above discussion, it can be said the colonial government tried to control the liquor shops while imposing rules on them. Their main intentions of doing so were (i) to maintain peace in the locality, (ii) to control the license and number of liquor shops in the city, and (iii) to collect maximum revenue from the shops and (iv) to stop illicit distillation. In the process, they got support from the temperance associations. Temperance associations also became co-operative to the government, because they wanted to control people's drinking with the Government help. In spite of these, liquor shops in the colonial Kolkata attracted several people from the different social background and provided space to them for recreation. However, these shops were unable to provide cultural space like the western world's pub.

Conclusion:

The subaltern world had expressed its anti-liquor stands through the different form of creativity, like paintings and proverbs. However, most of the time, the subaltern voice merged with the mainstream temperance movement

⁹⁷ June. 1908, A Proceeding, F/SR, E $\frac{1-c}{3}$ 10, No. 21, WBSA.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

of educated people. The temperance movement led by the educated section of the society tried to hegemonies the temperance movement of the uneducated class by representing the subaltern voice through literature and regulating the drinking habit of the subalterns with government's help.

A cultural and geographical place of drinking had been created in Bengal in this process of representing the subaltern voice in the world of temperance by the subaltern group and the educated section of the society. These spaces were continuously shaped and reshaped by the consequences of the modification in contemporary excise policies. Besides, the temperance movement and continuous changing notions of drinking practice were playing an important role in the formation of cultural and geographical spaces.

The cultural space was mostly influenced by the morality of the contemporary society as well as by the popular demand. For instance, the painters of the Kalighat painting were influenced by the contemporary notion of temperance and indigenous perspective about drinking. Their paintings reflected these factors to meet the contemporary popular demand. Contrary to Kalighat Paintings, initially lithograph artists produced paintings for a particular group of people. Lithograph paintings, being a medium of advertising, represented a glittery picture of the alcohol market. Thus, these paintings hardly represent the subaltern voice. The lithographers produced pictures which put across the message of leisure of drinking.

The print market of the nineteenth century Bengal also took a temperance approach toward the liquor consumption. This approach was totally hegemonies by the educated section of the society. Contrary to the print culture, the proverbs of the nineteenth century sarcastically criticised the liquor consumption and represented the subaltern perception in more appropriate manner.

The connection between the leisure and drinking had formed the geographical space of liquor consumption. The liquor shops and taverns of the nineteenth century Bengal had provided alcohol and space of recreation to the culturally marginalised lower-class people, western educated pupils, and criminals. However, the colonial government and the temperance associations

wanted to gain authority over these places. On the one hand, while gaining control over the liquor shop, the colonial government wanted to extract more revenue; condemned the illegal sale; and tried to maintain law and order in the city. On the other hand, the temperance association wanted to control the drinking place to check the drinking practice among people. Thus, the conflict between these interests and the notion of pleasure had created a regulated drinking place. These developments show the nature of domination of the Victorian morality and the colonial power over the people's life during the late nineteenth century and people's perception of drinking. In spite of all these liquor shops still continued as the place of recreation for the subaltern group in the world of temperance and 'sanitised culture' of the educated section of the nineteenth century Bengal.

Chapter -5

Discourses on Usage of Liquor: Elixir or Poison

Discussion on colonial excise policy, liquor consumption pattern and emergence of the different mode of protest against the existing patterns of liquor consumption led to the question whether liquor had always been used as a medium of pleasure or it had some other use too in the nineteenth century. The present chapter is going to look into the medical world of the nineteenth century to answer this question. The Indian concept of body changed with the coming of the western notion of the masculinity in the nineteenth century. This western concept of masculinity said that Indian body was weak because of not having several foods items under the influence of religion.¹ On the contrary, the western body was much stronger because of having meat and liquor.² Therefore, consumption of meat and liquor started to consider good for a healthy the body from the second half of the nineteenth century onward.³

From the beginning, the British Colonial government used medicine as a 'tools' to expand their territory in India. With the help of medicine, both the colonial government and Christian missionaries intervened into the indigenous society by healing Indians as well as British soldiers. Initially, the colonial government did this medical intervention with the help of European doctors. However, as time passed, the existing number of Western-educated doctors did not meet the requirement of colonial government. Thus, the colonial government established a Medical College at Kolkata in 1835, introduced a medical course in India and started practising western medicines to treat patients.

¹ See: Rosinka Chaudhuri, *Freedom and Beef Steaks*, Orient Blackswan, Delhi, 2012, p. 17; Frank F. Colon, 'Dinning out in Bombay' in Carol Breckenridge (ed.) *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.96.

² This concept also changed with the beginning of vegetarian movement and the temperance movement in England during the end of nineteenth century.

³ M.K.Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Navajivan Trust, 1927, p. 18; Pradip Kumar Bose, (ed.) *Health and Society in Bengal*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2006, p. 26.

During the initial period of colonial rule, European doctors mostly used alcohol as medicine to deal with several diseases in India. Throughout the nineteenth century, several research on tropical medicines ultimately helped in the invention of medicinal products for the tropical diseases. These inventions not only marked the victory of colonial knowledge, but also reduced the usage of alcohol as a medicine. In spite of this, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, there were several examples of using alcohol to treat diseases, like fever, typhoid and erysipelas by western doctors.⁴ However, the indigenous society was always critical of this practice of the western doctors. Using alcohol as a remedy had generated different kinds of responses in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, this chapter is going to investigate the various medical usages of alcohol as well as its impacts on the Europeans and indigenous people. The attitude of the European doctors, colonial government and indigenous people are the another concern of the present study.

(I)

When Narcotics became Medicine

From ages, narcotics were used as painkillers and medicine for sleeplessness in different societies. There were different kinds of narcotics, opium, hemp, cocaine and alcohol widely used in India and West during the nineteenth century. In West, the doctors referred opium to cure malaria and sleeplessness. In India, it was used as an ‘important self-administrated household remedy’.⁵ Opium pills were used to treat ‘diarrhoea, dysentery, chills, recurrent febrile attacks, and the neuralgic troubles of the malaria cachexia, asthma, chronic coughs, rheumatic pains, diabetes, gravel’.⁶ Many times mothers gave the infants a little amount of opium to keep them quiet and comfortable. Besides, a small amount of opium also helped infants to digest food.⁷ One of the statistics of 1892 claimed that almost 5 to 10 per cent people

⁴*Cikitsak-o-Samalochaka*, June-July, vol.2, No.6-7, 1896, p. 143.

⁵ John F. Richards, *Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.36, No. 2 (May, 2002), p.404.

⁶Cited in, *Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 405.

of Bengal, Gujarat and Sindh consume opium. The same report also argued that in comparison to alcohol and *ganja*, opium was less deleterious.⁸

During the end of the nineteenth century, medicinal use of cocaine had also been started. The medical journal, *Svasthya*, has mentioned that from the twentieth century onwards medical usage of cocaine had expanded, and it was used to treat burns, scalds along with other skin diseases, like Eczema, Erysipelas, Rheumatism, Neuralgia, etc. Cocaine became effective for all these diseases as it was easily absorbed by body fat.⁹ The Indian Medical Gazette highlighted other medical usages of cocaine. For instance, some doctors recommended cocaine for the treatment of heart disease, as it could easily control high blood pressure. Cannabis was used to make the patients tranquil in asylums.¹⁰ However, when it came to question of the medicinal usage of alcohol, one could find different usage of alcohol during the nineteenth century. It was used as a painkiller, diluter for other medicines and also as a tonic.

From the Nineteenth century onwards, European medical practitioners used alcohol to treat diseases like cholera and malaria. In both cases, alcohol helped to keep the patients under control. *Friend of India*, while quoting a report from *The Hindoo Patriot*, reported that doctor Richard became successful in curing Asiatic Cholera by giving a small dose of alcohol (one eighth of an ounce) to the patient. According to the doctor Richard, a little dose of alcohol made the patient's condition stable. Few of the medical journals wrote that certain amount of alcohol consumption might have increased the resistance power against venereal diseases. Besides, in high fever, influenza, weak pulses, nervous exhaustion and typhoid, usage of alcohol was quite effective.¹¹ Also, to treat skin diseases, like acne, doctors recommended an alcoholic solution.¹² Thus, treat several diseases at the hospital, doctors referred a certain amount of alcohol which appeared as a spirit in the medical

⁸ *Indian Medical Gazette*, July 1892, p.111.

⁹ *Svasthya*, Ashwin 1308 (Sept-Oct. 1901), Vol. 5, No.6, p. 204.

¹⁰ James H. Mills, 'Colonialism, Cannabis and the Christians: Mission Medical Knowledge and the Indian Hemp and Drugs Commission of 1893-4', David Hardiman (ed.), *Healing Body, Saving Souls*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2006, p. 179.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.143.

¹² *IMG*, Oct 1884, p.307.

registers. As the time passed, several medicines with alcoholic composition came into the market for curing several diseases.

(II)

When Alcohol became Elixir

Initially, the popularity of the alcohol-based tonic could be found among the Europeans. The unsuitable tropical weather and attack of the several tropical diseases had increased the death rate among the Europeans staying in India. Therefore, rejuvenation of the poor health and staying ever young became the ultimate desire of Europeans during the nineteenth century. Several European pharmaceutical companies, especially London and American based pharmacists; launched tonics claiming that consumption of these tonics led to healthy life. These tonics were known as medicated wines as per the existence of alcoholic components in them. To capture an international market, these London and America based medicinal companies gave advertisement in several issues of medical journals, like *The Indian Medical Gazette* (IMG). These companies gave advertisements of their products in IMG while stating its usefulness along with testimonials of these products. Sometimes these drugs manufacturing companies described the components of their products. It can be presumed from the language and appearance of the advertisement that the target group of these foreign medical companies were Europeans in India, doctors practising western medicine and educated upper and middle-class section of the Indian society.

After consulting several issues of IMG, it can be said that there were two kinds of medicated tonic were available on the market, like Malt-extract and Medicated Wines. Doctors referred these tonics to the patients of anaemia and neurosis for recovering health. Each company claimed different beneficial aspects of their products to differentiate from other's products. Sometimes they launched the same product with different taste. Some of these tonics were 'Good Will Wines', 'Burrough's Beef and Iron Wine', 'Dusart's Syrup' and 'Wine of Lacto-Phosphate of Lime and Maltine', etc. Advertisement of these tonics appeared in the different issues of *Indian Medical Gazette* during the years of 1867 to 1899.

The content of the advertisement of 'Good Will Wine', a product of the London-based manufacturing company, said that the product was suitable for all ages. Those, who would not consume quinine, could consume Good Will Wine. Besides, the company also introduced another product, Orange Quinine Wine, which was prescribed by the doctors.¹³

In the advertisement of the 'Burrough's Beef and Iron Wine,' it was claimed that, a pure medicated wine which was prepared from the 'finest beef with citrate iron' and was good source of strength and helpful for convalescents. The company also introduced another mixture of 'Beef and Iron Wine with Quinine'.¹⁴

Another medicated wine was 'Dusart's Syrup' and 'Wine of Lacto-Phosphate of Lime'. The advertisement claimed that this product was quite popular in the hospital of London and Paris as it helped in the 'natural restoration of muscular fibre and bones. Besides, it helped to digest food, increased appetite, and beneficial for new mothers, and improves the vital energies'. Besides, the syrup was useful in convalescence, treating rickets, imperfect growth, dyspepsia, neurological diseases, wounds, fractures and all affections of the osseous¹⁵ system and anaemia.¹⁶

The advertisement of 'Chapoteants Wine of Pepsic-Peptide Tonic' claimed that it was effective in convalescence by improving the process of digestion. The advertisement claimed that this tonic was good for the weak digestive system as it did not contain any meat extract. Besides, pepsin and peptone particles could easily dilute in blood. So the manufacturing company of this medicated wine argued that it would be better to call their product as a health supplement, than a tonic. Thus, the company asked doctors to recommend this product to women, aged person, children, in diseases like, anaemia, diabetes, dysentery, fever, weakness and exhaustion.¹⁷

¹³ *IMG*, Advertisement, Dec 1875.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Relating to or compose of bone.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, March 1886, Vol. XXI, No. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Along with these medicated wines, there was another kind of tonic, known as Malt Extract or Malt. Mostly, Malt based tonics was diluted with cod-liver oil. Another London-based company, named 'Fletcher and Fletcher Company', launched a wine tonic, named 'Vibrona'.¹⁸ Besides, there was 'Malt Extract' produced by Squire Company. The Squire Company claimed in the advertisement that this Malt Extract was prepared from the finest malted barley, at a very low temperature, and by a special process, under strict supervision. It contained valuable nutrients. It was claimed that consumption of malt would keep away diseases and it would be best if this solution was consumed with Squire's pepsine. In 1884, the Malt Extract won the best award for the category of malt extraction in the National Health Exhibition.¹⁹ Another Malt Extract was 'Verdict' manufactured by 'Burroughs, Welcome & co'. This company claimed that their product was the best, and one could combine this malt with cod-liver oil and then it would be easily digested.

Another pharmaceutical company, Maltine Manufacturing Co. Ltd, used to prepare malt-extracts e. This company had launched a product named Maltine, made from the extract of malted barley, wheat and oats. Besides, this product was available in different maltine preparations, like Maltine with hops, Maltine with Alternatives, Maltine Ferrated, Maltine with Beef and Iron, Maltine with peptones, Maltine with phosphates, Maltine with Phosphates, Iron and Quinine, Maltine with Phos, Iron, Quinia and Strychnia, Maltine with Hypophosphites, Maltine with cod-liver oil, Maltine with Cord-liver oil Iodides, Maltine with Cord-liver oil and Phosphorus, Maltine with Cord-liver oil and Phosphates, Maltine wine with Pepsine and Pancreatine, Maltine with Pepsine and Pancreatine, Maltine Wine, Maltine with Iodides, Maltine with Phosphorus Compounds, Malto-Yerbine, and Malto-Viburnia.²⁰

During the second half of the nineteenth century in India, when several foreign manufacturing companies of medicated wine or tonic had launched several tonics in various compositions and advertised them in medical journals

¹⁸Finance Department, Separate Revenue, B proceedings, October 1906, File E $\frac{1D}{7}$, Nos. 114 to 119.

¹⁹*IMG*, Vol. XXXI, No. IV, April 1884.

²⁰*Ibid*, February, 1813.

and newspapers, then the indigenous pharmaceutical companies did not stay behind. Influenced by these advertisements of imported tonics, local pharmaceuticals companies started to manufacture medicated wine. For instance, one of the local Indian medicinal companies, named Indian Chemicals & Pharmaceutical Works, launched medicated wine named 'Ashwagandha Wine' (Picture no. 6). The Indian Chemicals & Pharmaceutical Works also prepared a hologram for the tonic to protect the product from the forgery. The company claimed that consumption of the product would give people energy, increased potency, muscles, strong nerves and good health. Importantly it was suitable for everyone.²¹ Another indigenous tonic of this time was 'Yamini Arrack'²². It was claimed in the advertisement of this tonic that it was effective in stomach problem of every season.²³

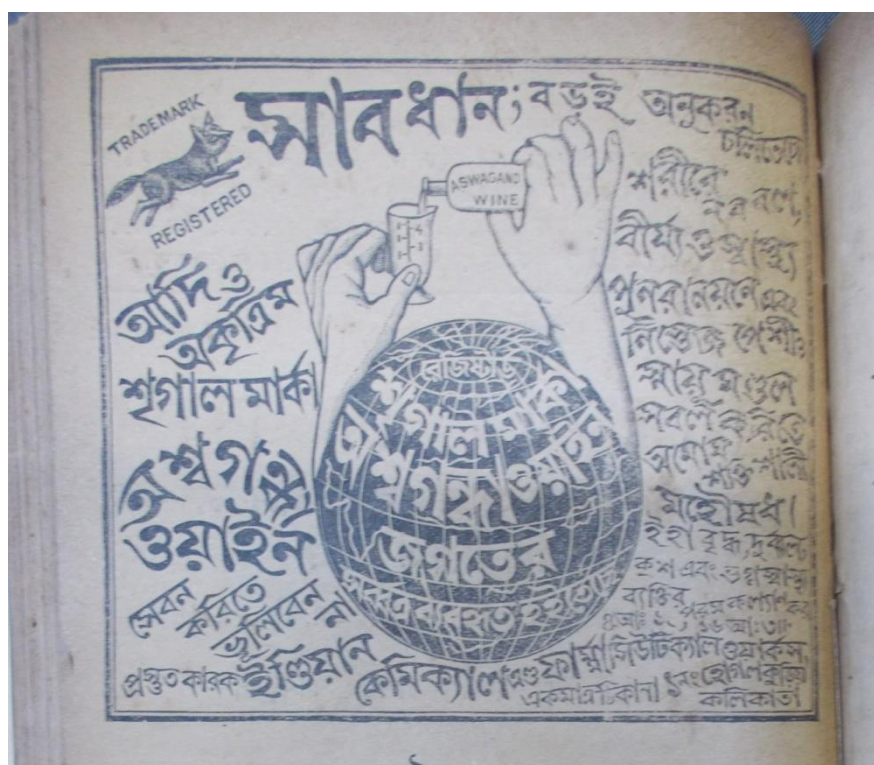
Thus, from all these advertisements of tonics, it can be said that the market for alcohol based tonic and other alcohol based medicines flourished in India from the second half of the nineteenth century. These tonic companies understood the desire of people for good health, strength and therefore, they prepared the content for advertisement of their products which could easily attract the customers. The main target groups of all these medicine companies were Europeans living in India. Gradually, these tonics became popular among the educated and rich upper and middle class of the Bengali Society. As the demand for the imported tonic and alcohol-based medicines was increasing, several local pharmaceuticals companies started to prepare non-alcoholic tonics. In this process, the growing competition between the indigenous and foreign pharmaceutical companies on the effectiveness of their product on the indigenous body came into the light. The beginning of the Swadeshi movement helped the local pharmacists to promote their product as these local pharmaceutical companies claimed that their products were prepared with indigenous formula and free of alcohol and in spite of that these products were as good as imported tonics. However, it hardly affected the popularity of imported medicated wine. Therefore, one needs to investigate the responses

²¹ *Chikitsa Tatve Bigyan*, Vol. 7, No. 8, *Kartik* (October-November), 1319 *Bangabda* (1913), p.144.

²² The term 'Wine' was translated as Arrack in Bengali.

²³ *Cikitsak*, February 1899, Vol. 3, p.21.

and perspectives of the different groups of people on the different usage of alcohol or alcoholic mixture as medicine. These responses will be traced through the perspective of three groups: the European doctors, the colonial government and indigenous doctors.



Pic. no. 6, Advertisement of Ashwagandha Wine (Source: *Chikitsa Tatve Biglyan*, Vol. 7, No. 8, *Kartik* (October-November), 1319 *Bangabda* (1913), p.144.)

(III)

Perception and Responses on the Medicinal usage of Alcohol and Alcohol Based Tonics

1) Perception of the European Doctors

The appearance of the advertisements of the imported medicated wines in several English newspapers along with the recommendation of the different doctors on behalf of these medicated wines indicated that many European doctors often referred the medicated wines to the people. Besides, it has already been discussed that many doctors of the western medicine used

alcohol for curing the diseases. However, the second half of the nineteenth century onward some of the western doctors changed their stands on the usage of alcohol-based tonic and alcohol as a medicinal remedy. Thus, it created a controversy among the European physicians and medical missionaries. Doctors, who criticised the medicated use of alcohol, argued that though a certain amount of alcohol could be good for patients, but excessive consumption would be injurious to health. They suggested that physician consultation was necessary before using alcohol as a medicine. Many of them agreed to the fact that consumption of alcohol left grave effect on the body and mind. They criticised consumption of tonic as many people started to consume tonic as a remedy, but gradually became addicted to it and eventually became drunkards.

Many European doctors claimed that disease could be cured without using alcohol-based medicines. For instance, usually, doctors recommended a dose of alcohol to cure Eutcric fever; however, an article of *Indian Medical Gazette* suggested that physicians could treat Eutcric fever without alcohol. The article gave the example of the London Temperance Hospital. The doctors in that hospital never recommended alcohol as a remedy and successfully reduced the mortality rate better than the British-Indian Army and U.S Army where alcohol was used as a remedy of Eutcric Fever.²⁴

G. F. W Ewen, a medical practitioner in the Punjab Asylum, wrote an article while mentioning several case studies of insane people and their treatment at Punjab Central Asylum. Most of the case studies showed that the reason for becoming insane was drinking. All of these patients were habitual drinkers, and at the end they became insane.²⁵ While analysing these cases, Ewen took the help of psychological analysis of the cases. Later in April 1906, C. J. Robertson, an official superintendent of the Punjab Central Asylum argued that the excessive consumption of liquor along with other narcotics made people insane, and in 1906, eight per cent patients of the Punjab Asylum became insane due to this cause. Further, he added that there were some differences between insanity due to alcohol and that following the abuse of

²⁴*IMG*, May 1904, p.173.

²⁵*Ibid.*, Nov. 1904, pp. 401-413.

hemp. While identifying country liquor as most injurious, he said that excessive and habitual consumption of alcohol, along with other narcotics, would make people melancholic, insane and quarrelsome.²⁶

The pattern of liquor consumption changed with time. The government restriction on the brewing and sale of country liquor drove many people to the newly launched alcohol based medicine. Therefore, consumption of the alcohol based tonics increased, and people became addicted to it. Surplus availability of tonics in the market increased the consumption of these kinds of liquors on the excuse of healing. Medical shops became the new suppliers of alcohol. In 1873, *Friend of India* had reported Babu Mohun Sircar's argument on sold and use of medicated wines. The report said, Babu Mohun Sircar had argued that large quantity of brandy and other spirits could be obtained from dispensaries, especially at night. Though the medical shops were allowed to sell wine up to four ounces, but they easily exceed that limit and sold illicit liquor without a license and were making a significant profit out of it. He said that to buy alcohol; most of the young Bengalis went to medical shops, where their father had an account. Certainly, while buying illicit liquor, the customer was supplied 'with the spirit packed and labelled as an ordinary medicinal phial and voucher' was made out of quinine or fever mixture. If the father of the young Bengali had enquired about the purchase of medicated wines, then most of the time young Bengali had replied that in the absence of a doctor they helped the unwell servant of their house. In the end, Babu Mohan Sircar asked the government to take legal action against these malpractices by imposing a restriction on the illicit sale of alcohol in the medical shops.²⁷

Christian missionaries also become critical towards the medicinal use of the alcohol. In 1892, the Bengal branch of W. C. T Union published a pamphlet, named '*Madak Dravya Bishaya Proshnottor*' (Temperance Catechism), which discussed the menace of alcoholic consumption. As the discussion proceeded, the author of the pamphlet discarded all arguments associated with the use of alcohol on the medical ground. They disproved the notion that alcohol consumption restored body temperature and argued that

²⁶*Ibid.*, April 1906, p.129.

²⁷*Friend of India*, April 17, 1873, p. 434.

alcohol neither gave strength and blood nor increased creativity of a person. While giving a reference of a London-based hospital, the pamphlet said that mortality rate was low in those hospitals as they never recommended alcohol or alcohol based medicine to their patients. Additionally, the pamphlet claimed that excessive consumption of liquor created a blockage in blood vessels.²⁸

The development of this anti-alcoholic notion among the European doctors practicing in India was followed by the formation of anti-opium agitation in England during the same period. Throughout the nineteenth century, England had seen criticism of opium trade as well as its medical usage by different groups of people. Especially, evangelicals and Quakers were deeply disturbed with the medical usage of opium. Missionaries become unhappy when they saw, in spite of knowing the fact that opium was injurious to health, British colonial power forced the Qing Emperors of China to accept opium as a trading commodity. Besides, it became a moral issue for the Missionary as well as a hindrance for preaching Christianity.²⁹ Therefore, missionaries in China had gathered scientific data to prove that the use of opium as a drug is injurious to health.³⁰ Later, these data were carefully used in International Opium Conference. Soon after this, the criticism of medicinal usage of narcotics started in India. This criticism of narcotics began with opium and cannabis, was also followed by alcohol. The Quaker reformers formed an anti-opium Society for suppression of opium trade. Several reformers and liberal minded persons of the British Parliament had enrolled themselves in the society. The society gradually expanded its influence on the several other section of the society, like methodologist, Baptists, Presbyterians, utilitarian, and many others.

However, it was difficult to suppress the opium trade and its production. Opium was the major source of revenue for the British colonial government during the nineteenth century. Besides, being a narcotic, opium was also used as medicine. Indians believed that opium was less harmful than

²⁸ Anonymous, *Maadaka Drabya Bishaye Prashna Uttar* (Temperance Catechism), Bengal Branch of the W.C.T Union, Calcutta, 1899.

²⁹ John F. Richards, *Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.36, No. 2 (May, 2002), p. 382.

³⁰ Cited in, Hardiman, p.172.

alcohol. Further, both Hindu and Muslim religion had approved its consumption. Therefore, regardless of gender, Indians used opium for different purposes. Despite all these facts, the anti-opium activists appealed the Government to stop the opium trade. By 1891, there was a high demand for the closing opium trade. In 1892, with the coming of Liberal Government in power, the demand for the closing opium trade became stronger in England. On November 1892, the General Council of the Suppression of Opium trade sent a memorial³¹ to the Earl of Kimberley. This led to the appointment of the Royal Commission on Opium³² by Queen Victoria.³³ The commission submitted its official report on 16th April 1895 and gave answers to several questions associated with opium as well as alcohol consumption. However, while submitting the report, the part which discussed the problem of alcohol consumption in India was totally ignored. In the report, the committee suggested to ban the free sale of opium. However, the medicinal usage of opium had been permitted by the committee. Noticeably, during 1890's there was a decline in the medical usage of opium in England. Doctors started to use alternative medicines like, quinine, chloral, and bromides as a substitute of opium while treating fever and sleeplessness.³⁴

This anti-opium movement in England was later linked-up with the temperance movement in England with the participation of William Cain, a member of the House of Commons and founder of Anglo-Indian Temperance Association. During late 1888, William Caine visited India to promote the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association. It has already been discussed that the

³¹The memorial was based on the resolution of 1891, represented the public demand of closing of the opium trade.

³²The Royal Commission on Opium: The Commission was appointed by Queen Victoria in 1892. The Committee consisted of nine members, among them seven were British and rests were Indian. Baron Thomas Brassey had appointed as its chairman. Name of the other members were, Aethur Fanshawe, Sir James B. Lyall, Robert G. C. Mowbray, Henry Wilson and Aurtur Pease, Sir Willam Roberts (a Manchester Physician), Maharaja of Darbhanga Laksmishwar Singh and Haridas Veharidas, the former chief-minister of Junagarh. The members of the Committee did an extensive survey in India, interviewed a large number of people belong to different strata of the society to collect the witnesses. However, most of these people were belong to the upper caste and intellectual section. Along with the Indians, the committee interviewed several Chinese people. Ultimately, the committee submitted its final report on 16th April 1895. The recommendations of the Committee were: i). ban on the free sale of opium in the shops, ii). Medicinal usage of opium would be permitted. (Richards, pp. 388-396.)

³³Richards, p. 386.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p.407.

temperance movement had been started in Bengal from the 1870 and got a momentum with the visit of the William Caine in 1888. During his visit, he came across the usage of cannabis in asylums and its ill effect on the health of patients.³⁵ At the same time, he criticised medical usage of alcohol and pulled up the colonial government for being unable to stop the medical use of alcohol. After returning to England, Caine raised questions on the Colonial Government's practice of medical usage of different narcotics with a particular reference to cannabis. This generated a debate in the House of Commence. Ultimately, the House of Commence had appointed Hemp and Drug Commission³⁶ to investigate the issue. The Anglo-Indian Temperance Association started to publish a quarterly magazine, *Abkari* from 1892 under the guidance of the William Caine. Along with promoting temperance, this quarterly magazine also published a number of articles on the harmful effect of alcohol on the human body and criticised the medicated usage of alcohol. One of such article, 'Doctor and Drinking', published in April 1896, argued that instead of providing good health, alcohol caused several health problems in the human body, especially in kidney and tissues.³⁷ Another report in the magazine highlighted the fact that many patients admitted to the hospital due to alcohol consumption. Another article, 'The use of Alcohol by Nursing Mothers', by Dr Norman S. Kerr, claimed that consumption of alcohol or alcohol based tonics by the nursing mothers was not good for the infants because it caused dehydration and even death to the infant.³⁸

In spite the debates on the medical usage of liquor during the nineteenth century, the colonial government in India hardly wanted to bring any changes in the policy related to the medicated wine and alcohol. Only after the submission of the reports by two commissions, the Royal Commission on Opium and Hemp and Drug Commission, several changes took place in the excise policy of British India. Restrictions were imposed on the sale of different intoxicating drugs. Modifications had been made in the

³⁵Hardiman, p.173.

³⁶Hemp and Drug Commission: the commission was established to inquire about the cultivation and trade of hemp drugs. Ultimately the commission put some restriction on the sale of hemp in India. (Hardiman, p.183.)

³⁷*Abkari*, April 1896, No.24, p.41.

³⁸*Ibid*, pp.48-49.

existing excise laws. These two things affected the policy of treating diseases with the different intoxicates, especially with opium and alcohol. In India, along with the British Government, the educated people and doctors also became conscious of this. Noticeably, though medicated usage of opium was permitted, but 1895 onwards there was a continuous decline in its usage in England.³⁹ Besides, some changes occurred in the perception of doctors about medicated usage of alcohol. These changes occurred due to the development of medical science in England during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

Many doctors had written several articles on the *Indian Medical Gazette* (IMG) after the submission of the report of Hemp and Drug Commission. Most of these articles tried to describe the responses of Indian as well as the European doctors on the issue. One of such article appeared on January 1894 in *Indian Medical Gazette* on the Royal Commission on Opium. The major argument of the article centred on the medical evidence. The article accumulated perceptions of several doctors on the government restriction on opium usage. Most of the Indian doctors supported the medicated usage of opium. They argued that moderate consumption of opium could give good health and longevity. Besides, opium could be used as food and as a condiment by the poor in a malnourished country. Further, these Indian doctors demanded that if the colonial government had tried to impose a restriction on opium usage, then they should impose a limitation on the consumption of alcohol and *ganja*. They considered alcohol and *ganja* as more injurious than opium. One of the expert on poison, Dr Lethbridge, had supported this fact.⁴¹ Hence, government's criticism of indigenous drugs, like *ganja* and opium, inspired indigenous doctors to criticise the consumption of alcohol. All these criticism and inputs of the European doctors on the medical usage of alcohol forced the colonial government to investigate the issues related to medical usage of alcohol as well as different diseases of the indigenous people which occurred due to alcoholic consumption.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Martin J. Winter, *Reconstructing the Crime*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.190.

⁴¹ *IMG*, January 1894, Vol. No.1, pp. 20-24.

2) The Colonial Government's Responses to Medical Impact of Liquor and the Medicinal Usage of Liquor

Submission of Hemp-Drug Commission Report and Royal Commission's Report to the British parliament had forced the colonial government of India to reconsider their excise policy in India, especially on the medical usage of alcohol. Initiatives had been taken by the colonial government to collect information about the medicated use of narcotics, like opium and liquor. The excise department had tried to collect information about the different usage of alcohol, especially its medical usage among the 'natives'. While doing so, the government also sought to find out physiological impacts of alcohol on the indigenous society. To elicit information, Major Belford, an I.M.S, and a member of Excise committee, had prepared a set of questions. Before sending these questions to several British officers to answer, Belford sent them to the Lieutenant Governor for the approval. Along with general questions on a different kind of liquor consumption, Major Belford put few health related queries within the question set.

Major Belford's questions can be divided into three categories, like administrative, social and medicinal. All these questions were trying to gather administrative and social information related to the consumption of liquor in different parts of Bengal. Besides, few other questions were trying to elicit information if there were any evidence of medical usage of country spirit, *Tari* or *Mahua* at different parts of Lower Bengal. Some questions were trying to collect information whether there was any toxic effect of liquor had been found among the local people. Besides, the British officer also wanted to know if alcohol had some nutritious value and if the appetite was affected by the alcohol consumption. Further, he added, if the officers had ever observed any symptoms on any special system like digestive, renal, nervous, generative diseases occurred due to the action of any particular liquor then they should inform. Lastly, the excise department had put the question to know the indigenous perspective 'of relative harmfulness or harmlessness of any particular alcoholic drink' and asked different administrative officers to report all these matters. However, few of the administrative officers gave answers to these questions.

After receiving the approval of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, the excise department had selected several government officers along with nine medical practitioners⁴² and sent the selected set of questions (See Appendix No.1) to answer. The Board of Revenue of the lower province had approved and appreciated this initiative.⁴³ A set of questions was also sent to several Indians and British officers. The Secretary of the excise committee had despatched the set of questions to doctors and the chemical examiner of government on 8th December 1905, and the excise department requested them to reply soon.

While answering the health-related questions, Lieutenant Cornel D. G. Gawford, an I.M.S and Civil Surgeon of Hugli, reported that he had no idea whether any diseases occurred due to any alcoholic consumption or usage of 'native spirit' as medical remedies. However, he mentioned that excessive consumption of country spirit might cause liver abscess and in 1904 and 1905 he had operated on twelve such cases. Further, he also notified a death of a woman due to excessive consumption of alcohol. He writes⁴⁴,

Out of twelve, six admitted for drinking of country spirit or of toddy, and out of those six, three recovered, two died, and one is under treatment. Four gave a history of dysentery only, with two recoveries and two deaths. Two denied having had dysentery or having taken drink, both of them died. One was a woman of respectable family, the other respectable man who asserted that he had never tasted liquor, and I think that in neither of these cases had the disease anything to do with drink.

The collector of Muzaffarpur replied that consumption of liquor had been increased during the festivals and fairs, however, he was not aware of any of the particular kinds of alcoholic drink had affected the working

⁴²Name of Selected physicians were, Lieutenant-Colonel C.P. Lukis, I.M.S, Principal of Medical College; Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. A. Harris, I.M.S., and acting Professor of Materia Medica, Medical College; Major L. Rogers, I.M.S., Professor of Pathology of Medical College; Lieutenant-Colonel D. G. Crawford, I.M.S., civil surgeon of Hooghly; Lieutenant-Colonel J. B. Gibbons, I.M.S., civil surgeon of Howrah; Major B. C. Oldham, I.M.S., and a civil surgeon, Patna; Lieutenant-Colonel T. Graingee, I.M.S., civil surgeon Muzaffarpur and Captain C. R. Stevens, I.M.S., Civil Surgeon, Cuttack. The committee had also sent a copy of this set of questions to Captain J.A. Black, I.M.S, who was also working as a chemical examiner to Government. (Source: March 1906, F/SR, nos. 22, File E $\frac{1-c}{3}$ 1, WBSA.)

⁴³ March 1906, A Proceeding, F/SR, File E $\frac{1-c}{3}$ 3, nos. 24, WBSA.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$ 5, nos. 26, WBSA

capacity of a person. Besides, he suggested if a meal was taken by a moderate drinker after consuming liquor then the intoxication remained under control. Moreover, he wrote about several health problems occurred due to the consumption of different kinds of country spirits. For instance, on one hand, he told that different kinds of country liquor manufactured from *Mahua* or mixed with several materials might have after-effects on the body like gastric irritation and burning sensation in the eyes. Besides, *Tari* produced much secretion of urine. It did not much excite the sexual desire. It had no particular effect on the nervous system and mental and moral state. However, it had a cooling effect and used to improve appetite. On the other hand he argued that liquor causes more disorder of the liver, excited the nervous system, as well as the mental, moral states and the sexual desire. It increased temperature of body and also increased the craving for food.⁴⁵ He traced a connection between consumption of liquor and crime and said that consumption of liquor increased crime rates, violence, mischief, and insulting women, irrespective of the character of the drink'.⁴⁶

After consulting with Kalimpong Government Estate and local excise officers, the deputy commissioner of Darjeeling had stated that in his district people mostly consumed country liquor and *Pachwai*. Most of the people considered *Pachwai* was beneficial and country spirit was harmful for health. Besides, imported liquors, beer, and country rum were imbibed too.⁴⁷

A. W. Cook, deputy commissioner of Manbhum, had elaborately answered most of the questions asked by the Excise Department. He informed that in Manbhum district most of the people consumed spirit distilled from *mahua* and *gur*. A moderate drinker of the area consumed about one bottle of liquor daily, which was weak and strength was varying from 85 U.P to 95 U.P⁴⁸. Thus, three-fourths of a seer of *Pachwai* of such strength could be drunk by an ordinary consumer. In spite of these, people also consumed *Pachwai* almost invariably in the afternoon or after work hours. During the

⁴⁵ March 1906, A Proceeding, F/SR, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$. 3, Sl no. 24, Letter no. 278E, WBSA.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter No. 365E, Dated, Darjeeling, 5th January 1906, WBSA

⁴⁸ U.P is a unit, used to indicate the strength of the liquor.

festival most of the aboriginal tribes consumed an excessive amount of liquor. However, at the fairs, people maintain a process of self-policing on their drinking practice. It was noticed that average customers drink about two bottles of liquor on the occasion of festivals. Further, Cook mentioned that he was not sure about the effect of drinking on the working capacity of the aboriginal people and some people argued that drinking did not reduce the working power of the people.

Further, while discussing the relation between the diseases and alcoholism, Cook wrote that few of the drunkards said that they suffered from the loss of appetite because of excessive drinking, but no such after-effects as drowsiness or trembling had come to notice. Even the doctors had not observed any maniacal or other exceptional mental states following the use of any particular alcoholic drink. However, lastly he stated that effect of the country liquor on the human body depended on the quality of the liquor. It was believed that *Mahua* liquor was less injurious to health than *gur* liquor or rice spirits.⁴⁹

The deputy commissioner of the Santhal Parganas had reported that Santhals and *Paharis* of the area were the major consumers of liquor, but they had their personal choices. Santhals were mostly consumed *Pachwai* and *Paharis* were the consumers of *Tari* and *Mahua* liquor. They come to the shop once or twice a week and each drink at the most half a bottle. However, consumers in town drink almost daily quarter bottle each on an average. Whereas a Santhal or other 'low class' consumers imbibed two seers of *Pachwai* on average. Besides, Santhals used *Mahua* liquor as a medicine both for men and cattle. As a result, though many of them who did not consume *Mahua* liquor, but had it occasionally as medicines. Contrary to this, non-aboriginal and rich people of the area imbibed spirits in large quantities without considering its injurious effect on the health. The Europeans of the Santhal Parghana were the only consumer of imported liquor. In this way, the bulk of the population became addicted to liquor consumption. Thus, he rated liquors according to its harmfulness in following the order: *Tari*, *Pachwai*, and

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Country Spirit. He considered *Tari* and *Pachwai* were more harmful than other spirits. In addition to it, he argued that many men died due to the excessive drinking of *Pachwai*. However, the number of this kind of habitual drunkards was less.

A Civil Surgeon of Santhal Parghana had reported that most of the people were moderate drinkers and mostly drink in the evening hours after work, but, sometimes they drink in the morning hours which affected labourers' work capacity. Besides, the civil surgeon said that consumption of country spirit had weakened the human body. If a person imbibed it excessively in the evening, then it unfitted for the drinkers to work at the next day morning. However, he did not know what amount of liquor would lead to this kind of situation. Further, he argued that in compare to the country spirit, rice-beer was far more innocuous. A man could resume work in the morning after excessive drink of rice-beer. Further, he said that if rice-beer would be fermented for a fortnight, and thereafter it consumed for the little amount, then there was a possibility that the consumer would lose his control. At the same time, the Civil Surgeon informed that he did not know if any liquor had ever produced intoxication among the people in spite of imbibing in a small amount. Thus, he suggested that people should take warm food afterwards the consumption. Additionally, he said, though during festival season consumption of liquor had increased among the Santhals but in the bazaar days' excessive consumption of liquor was also noticeable.⁵⁰ After consulting the view of Reverend E. H. Whitley of the S. P. G mission, the civil surgeon said,

‘more than one heard death from over drinking of spirit at a bazar, and the number of persons reported to the Magistrate as having died on their way home after drinking at the bazaar is very great.’⁵¹

The civil surgeon informed that the side effects of immoderate drinking of different kinds of country spirits were varied from each other. For instance, if Rice-beer and *Mahua* consumed immoderately, then the drinker would find himself intoxicated unless he slept well. If people continually consumed this

⁵⁰*Ibid*, Letter no. 212E, Ranchi, dated 6th January 1906, WBSA.

⁵¹*Ibid*.

spirit, then he might find 'trembling of hands' or loss of appetite. Additionally, he emphasised that the effect of *Mahua* was bad. It would make drinkers short-tempered, fierce and mental imbalance. Additionally, he said that the tribal society imposed some restriction on drinking among the women even after giving permission of liquor consumption. Therefore, the tribal society permitted the women to consume 'two or three dubas (cups) in the daytime and more in the same night when cold and dancing does not permit it to affect them so much'. Besides, the children above certain age received goblet or two cups of liquor to drink.⁵²

Lieutenant Col. J. B. Gibbons, I.M.S and Civil Surgeon of Howrah, had reported that he did not come across any unusual condition referable to the use of any particular alcoholic liquor in Howrah or elsewhere. However, he also said that he had come across a few cases of neurosis where alcohol might have been the cause. Further, he stated that use of aconite as 'doctor' spirit was quite usual. He also heard that few people added a little quantity of arsenic to their liquor for its supposed aphrodisiac effect.⁵³

Captain C. R. Stevens, M.D., F.R.C.S, I.M.S. and civil surgeon of Cuttack said there were no unusual cases regarding the liquor had happened in the district. He reported that Alcoholic neurosis was very uncommon amongst the drinkers of the lower-classes in his district. However, their digestive, renal or nervous systems were affected in the usual way by the use of liquors, especially those people, who consumed the country liquor. Being aware of the fact, the low-class people hardly care about that and continuously consumed country spirit.⁵⁴

Captain L. Rogers, professor of pathology in Medical College, Kolkata said in most of the post-mortem cases, cirrhosis of the liver had been found, although, he was doubtful about the fact if these diseases occurred due to excessive consumption of liquor. While discussing causes of the liver disease in India, Captain L. Rogers had referred to another article from the Indian

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$. 7, Sl no. 28, Letter No. 102E, Dated, Howrah, 16 January 1906, WBSA.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$. 10, Sl no. 31, WBSA.

Medical Gazette by Captain Megaw, I.M.S. In that article Captain Megaw argued that most of the patients suffering from the cirrhosis of the liver because of consumption of excessive alcohol. Thus, Captain L. Rogers says:⁵⁵

the amoeba is constantly found recently topical abscess of the liver, and this disease does not originate among alcoholic in cold climate, I consider alcohol to be only a predisposing cause of liver abscess and not the direct cause of the disease.

Captain Sutherland, an I.M.S of the Lahore Medical College argued in the Indian Medical Gazette that cirrhosis of the liver was often found among the Indians, but it did not indicate that they were indulged in excessive consumption of alcohol. Col. T. Grainger, an I.M.S and Civil Surgeon of Muzaffarpur, had reported few cases of alcoholic neuritis among the natives, especially among the men who consume large quantities of presumably European liquor.⁵⁶ Besides, L.T. Col. G.F.A. Harris, I.M.S professor of Materia Medica, Medical College, had also stated that he had come across a few cases of alcoholic neuritis of an unusual type affecting 'the upper and lower extremities'.⁵⁷

Contrary to all these arguments, the Superintendent of Excise Revenue, Howrah, said that a moderate drinker of country spirits or *tari* does not find difficulty in resuming work next day, but excessive consumption of all sorts of liquors or alcoholic beverages interfered seriously with the consumer's power of resuming work next day. He also mentioned that natives consider *tari* to be harmless and country spirits to be less injurious than imported liquor. A large number of drinkers preferred country spirits apart from cost. However, the upper class preferred imported spirits.⁵⁸

Soon after gathering all these information the excise department proposed the modification of the excise law. While modification the excise department had denied any medicinal usage of the *Pachwai*. However, the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, File E $\frac{1-c}{3}$ 12, Sl no..32, Dated 25th January 1906 , WBSA

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$. 14, Sl no. 36, WBSA. Letter No. 278E, 4th January 1906, WBSA

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, File no. E $\frac{1-c}{2}$. 2, Sl. no. 38, WBSA.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, File E $\frac{1-c}{3}$ 19, Sl no.41, Letter No. 237E, 17th January 1906, WBSA

excise department had already stated that they were not sure about the effectiveness of the spirit, which obtained by distillation or dilution with other components, like liquors mixtures, compounds or preparations as medicine. The colonial excise department of Bengal, therefore, decided to impose some restriction on the sale of medicated wine from 1903.

First, the excise law of 1903 had notified that then both the seller and consumer should be liable to fine with two hundred rupees or more if any chemist, druggist, apothecary⁵⁹ or keeper of the dispensary would possess or sell to the customers any spirit or fermented liquor which had not been bonafide as medicinal wine.⁶⁰ Second, a penalty of 1000 rupees or incarceration would impose for authorising or conniving at unlawful manufacture, cultivation or sale of liquor. Third, the punishment of three to five months rigorous jail would be sentenced to any chemist druggist, apothecary or keeper of a dispensary if they connived or engaged in the illegal manufacture or sale of any excisable article, or the illegal cultivation and collection of plants from which an intoxicating drug could be produced.⁶¹

In 1906, the Board of Revenue forwarded a copy of correspondence of the Government of India and Government of Bombay to the Excise Committee of Bengal. The correspondence suggested the imposition of excise restriction on the sale of tonic wines and similar presentation of such a nature that they might be likely to take the place of ordinary wines and affect revenue.⁶² Certainly, this restriction affected the business interest of several pharmaceutical companies of medicated wines. One such company was Messer Fletcher and Fletcher & company of London. This company manufactured a medicated wine, named *Vibrona*. They wrote a letter to the Government of India and Lieutenant Governor of Lower Province informing them of their loss due to the restriction on the sale of *Vibrona* in Bengal. However, in reply, the Board of Revenue had reported that after consulting the facts disclose by the Excise Commissioner, the Lieutenant Governor was of

⁵⁹ A person who made and sold medicines in the past.

⁶⁰ Dec 1903, A Proceeding, F/SR, Sl no. 16 File no. E $\frac{10}{5}$, WBSA.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Oct 1906, B Proceeding, F/SR, E $\frac{1D}{7}$, Sl. No. 111 to 113, WBSA.

the opinion that Messer Fletcher, Fletcher & Company did not suffer from serious loss.⁶³

A new excise law was passed in 1908 in which *Clause 70 section b, no. i*, attempted to solve the problem of arresting respectable chemist if they indulged in the selling of illicit and dangerous drugs. This new law authorised the local government to take the decision on the issue of illegal sale of medicated liquor by the pharmacists. However, at the same time, the law said that it should be ‘considered desirable to let the sub-clause stand as will be imposed on the exercise of the power in question’.⁶⁴ Therefore, it can be said that the colonial administration bypassed the actual question of the harmful effect of the alcohol and alcoholic medicine by passing some general laws against the illicit sale of the liquor and medicated wines. The excise department of Bengal did not impose any strong prohibition on the sale of medicinal wines or on its usage in spite of identifying the injurious effects of alcohol and alcohol-based medicines on the human body and its working capacity by the colonial officers and doctors. The intention of the government was evident too. 1896 onward, medicated wines and imported liquor became the important source of excise revenue.⁶⁵ This neutral position of the colonial government on the medicated usage of the imported alcohol based tonics and the criticism of the medicinal use of liquor by the European doctors had determined the indigenous perspective about the medicinal use of the alcohol.

3) Indigenous Responses Towards the Medicinal Usage of Alcohol

Along with the European doctors, indigenous society had possessed different notions on the usage of alcohol as a remedy. This indigenous notion about the usage of medical wine was guided by the religious norms, contemporary political developments and revival of the ancient knowledge. Many Bengalis believed according to religious norms that liquor consumption was a taboo and

⁶³*Ibid.*, Sl. No. 114 to 119.

⁶⁴June 1908, A Proceeding, F/SR, E $\frac{1-A}{1}$, Sl no.Nos.6-7, WBSA.

⁶⁵During the decades of the 1890, colonial government of Bengal imposed restriction on the brewing and selling of the country liquor under the pressure of the government of India. Therefore, curb in the supply of the country spirit had turned many people to the imported liquor and medicated wines. In this situation the excise department did not want to lose the revenue.

consumption of liquor would ostracise them from the society and they lost their caste. Besides, people were suspicious about ingredients of western medicines. They assumed that alcohol was a premier composition of western medicine. Therefore, the consumption of western medicine led to the losing of their caste and religion. However, people's perception about opium was vice versa because opium was regarded as an indigenous drug which could be consumed as medicine. Being protective about the purity and chastity of the women, the indigenous society, especially the Hindu religion discarded the consumption of the medical wine or any other western medicine by the women.

During the time of Swadeshi movement, a number of nationalists promoted Ayurvedic medicines and criticised the western medicine for promoting alcohol as medicine to build the anti-British sentiment.⁶⁶ Madhuri Sharma has argued that during the Swadeshi movement numbers of nationalists criticised the western drugs and promoted Ayurvedic medicines. For instance, Madan Mohan Malviya criticised the western medicines as they contained 'alcohol and other ingredients, forbidden to Hindus'.⁶⁷ In Bengal, several pharmacists established their medicine companies during this period. The owners of the Swadeshi pharmaceutical companies claimed to promote medicines that were prepared with the indigenous methods and did not contain any alcohol. In 1910, when the *Zandu Pharmaceutical Company* was established, they declared that they used indigenous and natural ingredients for their products. Following the pattern of European tonics, *Zandu* launched *Draksha Asava* for refreshing body and mind.⁶⁸ However, this tonic was non-alcoholic in nature.

A critical approach of indigenous medicine towards western medicine was however, not always there. David Arnold has argued that interaction between western medical practices and indigenous knowledge of medicine had started during the first half of the nineteenth-century and the both of the

⁶⁶Mridula Ramanna, *Health Care in Bombay Presidency*, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2012, p.170.

⁶⁷Madhuri Sharma, *Indigenous and Western Medicine in Colonial India*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2012, p. 73.

⁶⁸Ramana, p. 177.

medical epistemologies were co-operating with each other. The necessity of identification the unfamiliar diseases motivated western doctors to do so.⁶⁹ However, the nature of interaction between the Western and Ayurvedic medicine started to develop a critical perspective on each other during the second half of the nineteenth century. Several factors played a major role in this development. On the one hand, spread of western education was leading to a criticism of indigenous medical knowledge by western physicians, degrading the position of indigenous medicine. On the other hand, Indian revivalist approaches tried to justify eastern medical knowledge by reading of old Ayurvedic texts and were critical of western medicine. A certain section of educated people started to read the old texts on Indian medicine. Thus, the indigenous scholars argued that the western medical doctors could not access the old Sanskrit texts on medicines due to lack of knowledge of the language and were thus unaware of India's ancient medical knowledge. Therefore, these scholars suggested that it would be fruitful if the colonial government appointed Ayurvedic doctors to teach indigenous medical knowledge in medical colleges in India.⁷⁰ Besides, these educated people also criticized Western remedies for harmful effects on indigenous people. A Medical Journal, named *Anubikshan* published an article named 'Indigenous Medicine and Its Teacher'⁷¹ which argued that:⁷²

Indigenous medicines effectively keep the local populace free from diseases and in good health. As men of discernment will all agree, European medicines – though capable of effecting prompt cures – are detrimental to the health in the long run. The extent to which European brandy, port, quinine and mercury-based medicines have harmed our national health over the last 50 years, even a thousand diseases will come nowhere near it. We have benefited temporarily from the excessively liberal quantities of quinine and other European medicines administered by dull-headed European physician in treating our ailments, but the excessive doses of such medicines generating heat have damaged our health forever.

⁶⁹David Arnold, *Colonizing Body*, University of California Press, England, California, 1993, p.46.

⁷⁰As quoted in Pradip Kumar Bose (ed.) *Health and Society in Bengal*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2006, p. 119.

⁷¹*Anubikshan*, Pous (December-January), B.S 1282 (1875-76), p. 118.

⁷²Health and Society in Bengal, p. 118.

The above quotation indicates that all Indian doctors were not agreed with the usage of alcohol as a medical remedy. Besides, they identified it as injurious to health. However, the practice of referring alcohol as remedy continued by European as well as few indigenous medical practitioners. Several vernacular medical journals of Bengal, published during the late nineteenth century, discussed this issue along with other matters related to health, hygiene, diseases and remedies. While discussing all these issues, medical journals were trying to make people aware of health related issues.

A medical journal of the late nineteenth century, *Svasthya*,⁷³ published several articles on the medical usage of alcohol and its effects on the human body. The anonymous writer of this article argued that consumption of alcohol was not indispensable but quite harmful. However, if anyone consumed it proportionately, then it would give them good health like a non-alcoholic person. The author had suggested that if one would consume drink which contained one-ounce alcohol in it, then it would be good for health. Thus, he listed the quantity of different kinds of spirits which contain one ounce of alcohol in it. The list is given below;

Table no. 9: comparison between the alcohol with other spirits on the basis of strength (Source: *Svasthya*. Vol.5, No. 4, *Shraban* (July) B.S 1300 (1893), p. 108.)

<p>20 ounces beer contain 1-ounce alcohol in it 10 ounces claret contain 1-ounce alcohol in it 5 ounces port sherry contain 1 ,, ,, ,, 2 ounces brandy contain 1-ounce alcohol in it</p>

According to the table and author's assumptions, alcohol would be innocuous if one adult person with sound health could consume 20 ounces beer or 10 ounces claret or 5 ounces port sherry or 2 ounces brandy in a day. However, this limit was said to be suitable for Europeans but harmful for the Bengalis. The author suggested people of Bengal should not consume alcohol in any form. Further, he stated that excess consumption of liquor caused high blood

⁷³ This was a Bengali medical journal of health and sanitation. Editor of this journal was an ex-civil surgeon Dr. D. D. Gupta. The journal was published from Kolkata.

pressure and damaged internal organs, especially it badly affected capillary nerves.⁷⁴

Another medical journal, named *Cikitsak-o-Samaloachaka*⁷⁵ published a few articles on alcohol while taking a different stand on its usage as a medical remedy. This journal's attitude on this issue was comparatively positive to the use of medicinal wines than the other contemporary medical journals. Noticeably, during the year 1896, this journal had published two articles on alcohol, one was *Surar Ki Amayik Kriya* (Amiable effect of Alcohol) by a physician named Dr Bihari Lal Chaudhary, and another was *Madya Pana* (Drunkenness) by an Ayurvedic doctor, named *Kaviraj* Ishan Chandra Bisharad Bondhopadhyay.

A renowned Ayurvedic doctor of Kolkata, *Kaviraj* Ishan Chandra Bisharad Bondhopadhyay, had written an article while expressing the view of Ayurveda on the use of alcohol as a medicine. *Kaviraj* argued that alcohol could be used as a medical remedy. Deriving reference from two articles, one by Akshy Kumar Dutta and another by Peary Churn Sircar, the author argued that if alcohol was consumed under doctor's supervision, then it could cure several diseases. However, people did not follow that and became addicted to alcohol. He quoted from Ayurvedic books like *Sutra Samasthan* and *Charak Samhita* of Charak, *Nidansthana* by Banabhatta to support this fact.⁷⁶ After consulting these Ayurvedic books, he argued that the Ayurveda had considered alcohol as a remedy, but at the same time, it warned about side effects of alcohol. These side effects were the toxic effect on the health, causing a psychological problem and affecting the heart, blood vessels. Therefore, he argued that only doctors could approve consumption of alcohol by patients and Ayurveda also supported that fact. He concluded by saying that alcohol could be used as medicine.⁷⁷

In the other article, named 'Amiable effect of Alcohol' Dr Bihari Lal Chaudhury had argued that though excessive consumption of liquor badly

⁷⁴*Svasthya*, vol.5, no. 4, *Shrabana* (July) B.S 1300 (1893), p. 108.

⁷⁵This was also a monthly journal, published articles on medicine, surgery, hygiene. Editor of this journal was Dr. Satya Krishna Roy. This journal printed by Chaitanya press, Kolkata.

⁷⁶*Cikitsak-o-Samaloachaka* vol.2, no.9, 1896, pp. 234 & 281.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 287.

affects the human heart, stomach, and nervous system but it had some positive impact also. Alcohol might have been useful for patients as it increased blood temperature and eased digestion. However, the dose should be fixed as per doctor's instruction and Dr Bihari Lal Chaudhury discussed what should be the dose for a patient.⁷⁸ In conclusion, he said as it had been seen that from ages people had prepared and consumed alcohol for different purposes, so it was necessary for a human.

While criticising the different usage of alcohol from the medical point of view, the doctors also bought a social perspective in the criticism. For instance, some doctors had linked liquor consumption with the notion of morality. Thus, one of the articles, in *Svasthya* argued that along with physical damage, liquor consumption also made people selfish, inhuman and immoral. Poor people became easily addicted to the liquor consumption than the upper class. Lastly, the author criticised the colonial government for indirectly encouraging liquor consumption and making a financial profit out of excise revenue.⁷⁹ This argument of the author was clearly influenced by the Christian missionaries' criticism of the colonial excise policy.

Therefore it can be said that in spite of being critical to the medicinal usage liquor, the indigenous stand on the medicinal wines was divided into two categories. On the one hand, some of the indigenous doctors agreed that alcohol could be used as medicine, but only under the supervision of the doctors. On the other hand, some medical practitioners and believer of the indigenous medicines completely discarded the medicinal usage of alcohol while considering them as unsuitable for the Indian body. Their argument was supported by the existing norms of the Indian religions.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it can be said that during the nineteenth century, use of narcotics as medicine was quite common among the Indians and Europeans. However, people of certain section criticized this approach and demanded to impose a ban on the medicinal usage of narcotics. The key

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, No. 6 & 7, P.144.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.145.

point of criticising the medicinal usage of narcotics was the effectiveness of these narcotics on the human body. Later the religious, national, moral and financial issue were connected with the medicinal usage of narcotics. The criticism of medicinal usage of narcotics by the different group of people eventually forced the House of Commence to appoint the Royal Commission and the Hemp and Drug Commission to investigate the issue during the second half of the nineteenth century. Later, the recommendations of these commissions forced the colonial government to introduce laws to regulate the sale of narcotics in general and the medical usage of narcotics in particular.

In this context, the debate on the medicinal usage of alcohol came into the light. Many Europeans and Western-educated Indian doctors used alcohol to treat several diseases in the nineteenth century. This led to generate different responses among the indigenous people. Many of the doctors were critical towards the medical usage of alcohol due to certain religious notions and restrictions. Noticeably, reference of medical use of alcohol in Western Pharmacopeia also made the indigenous people believe in the existence of alcohol compositions in the western medicines. Along with indigenous populations, certain groups of people in England, like missionaries, Quakers and liberals of the House of Commence, became critical towards medicinal usage of narcotics along with alcohol. Besides, the report of the Hemp and Drug Commission also criticised the medicinal usage of liquor.

The Report of Royal Commission and the Hemp and Drug Commission on India had created a general apathy among the European doctors on the use of alcohol or other narcotics as a medicinal remedy. This changing perspective of the medical science towards the medicinal usage of alcohol motivated these European doctors to give emphasis on the moderate use of alcohol. European doctors had suggested that before using alcohol as a medicine, consultation of a physician was mandatory. However, at the same time, many European doctors totally disapproved the medical use of alcohol. All these developments made the colonial government conscious about the use of several narcotics along with alcohol. Therefore, the colonial government tried to collect information about the indigenous notion on the medicinal usage of alcohol, like whether the indigenous people considered alcohol as a

medicine or did they consider it as a medium of pleasure. In this course, they had found that excessive use of alcohol like country spirit, *Mahua* and *Tari* led to several diseases along with mental diseases. Despite these facts, the Colonial Government informed that the aboriginal people, like Santhal, used the *Mahua* as medicine. Further, the investigation reports of the Excise Committee of Lower Bengal on the medicinal usage of liquor brought several facts to the light, first, in spite of being a medium of pleasure different people used country liquor as medicine, especially the tribal people. However, excessive consumption of the country liquor affected human's digestive, renal and nervous system. Thus, several British officers and doctors categorised country liquor as harmful. Second, many people consumed medicated wine to recover their health, but it also left several negative impacts on the human body. In spite of knowing all these facts about the medicinal usage of alcohols neither the colonial government, nor the excise department of Bengal took any step to prohibit the medicinal use of the alcohol. Rather, with the help of their neutralized stand on the issue, a number of European and American pharmaceutical companies launched the medicated wines in the market. Therefore, the second half of the nineteenth century saw a flourishing market of the alcoholic tonics.

While tracing the indigenous responses, one can find a divergence in their perceptions. When the colonial government did not take any strong step to impose a prohibition on the medicated use of alcohol for their financial gain, then the nationalist people of Bengal took the issue to build anti-British sentiment among the people. This trend became strong with the starting of Swadeshi movement from 1903. In this situation, two kinds of perceptions came into existence on the issue of medicinal use of alcohol and alcohol-based tonic. On the one hand, nationalists criticised western medicines for using alcoholic ingredients in them and tried to promote Ayurvedic medicines. On the other hand, few of vernacular medical journals like *Svasthya*, *Chikitshak* had tried to promote the benefits of the moderate use of alcohol as a medicine. It can be said that they were unable to eliminate the influence of western medicine from their life. However, the revival of Ayurvedic medical practices

during the *Swadeshi* movement tried to check the western influence and medicinal use of alcohol.

Another noticeable thing was the relation between women and liquor consumption. It was found that the prohibition on alcohol consumption for women had existed within many section of indigenous society. On the one hand, the caste Hindus imposed a restriction on the consumption of western medicines by women, particularly the widows, as those medicines contained alcoholic substances in them. On the other hand, the tribal community tried to impose a limit on the alcohol consumption by women. Therefore, it can be said that while imposing the restriction on the consumption of the liquor or alcohol based tonics by the women, the contemporary Indian society tried to protect the women's body from the influence of the liquor. While following the religious norms, the indigenous society considered the alcohol-based medicines as impure and unsuitable for the Indian body. Also, to compete with the foreign pharmaceutical companies, some local pharmacists prepared tonics and promoted them as non-alcoholic and suitable for the Indian body.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, wellness of the human body and hygiene became an important issue for the British government under the influence of the Victorian ideology. The parameter of health, structure of the body and the level of the strength had been determined, and the advertisements of tonics claimed that having the tonics would help to attain that level of bodily perfection. However, the difference between the western notion of bodily perfection and Indian concept of bodily perfection, along with contemporary socio-economic, religious and moral perspectives led to the controversy on the usage of alcohol based tonics in the late nineteenth century Bengal. Therefore, the Indian body became a ground for conflict between the colonial government and temperance activists in Bengal.

Conclusion

Liquor, one of the important sources of pleasure, became a lucrative source of revenue for the colonial power in Bengal in the nineteenth century. Besides, the colonial government used the excise department, new distillery systems along with scientific and medical developments in the field of liquor brewing to extract good amount of revenue as well as to establish dominance over the native body while disciplining the liquor consumption pattern. This process of establishing hegemony over the indigenous society and disciplining the consumption pattern of the people of Bengal, however, did not remain uncontested. Indian social reformers and nationalists began to criticise the colonial excise policy and colonial government from the moral viewpoint. The nationalists, while criticising the excise policy, started to build an anti-British sentiment with the help of new knowledge system and power structure, like social organisations and print media.

Realizing the potentiality of liquor as a revenue generating commodity like opium, the colonial government in India passed a consolidated Excise bill in 1856 and implemented several rules and laws on the liquor business in the subsequent years. The excise department identified state-owned distilleries as a legal source of alcohol; imposed ban on the home brewing; determined the price rate and quality of the liquors, and guided the people towards liquor consumption in a particular direction. Therefore, disobeying of any government rule related to drinking was considered as an offence. The government tried to form a group of disciplined drinkers while following these steps and used state apparatus like police and excise department to achieve their goal. Using of state apparatus to discipline the drinkers brought into light the internal conflict within the structure of government administrative system. The indigenous society also did not accept all these excise policies without resistance. The conflict with the colonial administration helped the people of Bengal to build a resistance from the below.

Some of the liquor businessmen took the path of adulteration and illicitly brewed liquor and paid the excise taxes irregularly. The colonial government was critical towards these malpractices. Later, when the GOI asked to submit a report on the effectiveness of the excise policy, the Government of Bengal stated that the excise policy in Bengal failed to control the spreading of the intemperance due to the corrupt practice among Indians. Some of the owners of liquor shops adulterated liquor with toxic substances to make the liquor stronger, manipulate the liquor qualities for their own profits and fix the price of the liquor on their will. These malpractices caused to various health problems, indebtedness and drunkenness among the people.

The initiative of the government to create the disciplined drinkers affected the traditional consumption pattern of liquor; first, strict control of government over the brewing of alcohol, and secondly, increase in the import of the foreign liquor. Besides, the influence of western education, new employment opportunities and the introduction of the concept of weekends, establishment of tea-gardens, coal mines, and railway workshops changed the liquor consumption pattern. Further, the influence of Victorian age and the traditional knowledge system of India had shaped the notion of drinking in many ways. Therefore, Indian people perceived drinking liquor in various manners. The western educated people perceived drinking as a way to oppose the orthodoxy of the society and the opulent upper-class considered drinking as an instrument to upgrade the status. The approach of government toward these two groups, in spite of castigating them sometimes, was quite positive.

Drinking was an essential part of the everyday life of aboriginals and the working class, as they perceive the drinking as a custom and the only mode of pleasure and recreation. The colonial government and the educated section of the Bengal society developed a critical approach to the drinking practice of these two groups. The drinking of the lower class and working class was seen as a criminal offence. The tea gardens' managers, missionaries and the colonial government stated that the drinking habit of the labourers increased crime and disturbance at

the working place. Further, the government denied the blame on government distillery system for promoting intemperance among these lower class, lower caste people and aboriginals. The government stated that intemperance among these groups of people had increased because of an increase in the income of working class which enabled them to spend more money on liquor, and these groups of people were 'habitual drunkards'. The colonial government identified certain lower castes as 'drunkard' community in the census report of 1901 and froze the category of drunkards.

The liquor consumption pattern changed with the increase of imports of foreign liquor in the late nineteenth century. The import of foreign liquor had happened in two forms; i.e., spirits and medicinal wines. Imported liquors sold to the customers for drinking purpose and medicinal wines sold for both rejuvenating health and pleasure. Use of the alcoholic components by the pharmaceutical companies led to the discussion on the effectiveness of these medicines on the Indian body. Therefore, numbers of Indian and European doctors criticised the recommendation of tonics by western medical practitioners. This critique of the western medicine helped to revive the indigenous medical system. This revivalism of Indian medicine got a momentum with the beginning of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. The Swadeshi movement used the concept of the *Swadeshi body*¹ and built an anti-British sentiment among the Bengalis. The movement, while informing the people about the harmful effect of the alcohol based western medicine on the Indian body, began to encourage people to discard the alcohol based western medicine and accept the non-alcoholic indigenous medicines.

Indian nationalists, several social reformers of Bengal and England along with the Christian missionaries, working in India, began to criticise the colonial excise policy from 1860 onwards for promoting intemperance in India. Organizations like Brahma Samaj and Sadharan Brahma Samaj also participated

¹The *Swadeshi body*, as promoted by the Swadashi movement, was free from the western influence, strong enough to resist the colonial operation and hegemony.

in the Bengal's temperance movement. Some Christian missionaries initiated the temperance movement in India. They argued that instead of imposing a complete ban on the liquor, the government only declared the home brewing of *Deshi Daroo* (*Pachwai* and *Handia*) as illegal practice and forced people to consume more liquor from the state-owned distilleries. Therefore, intemperance among the aboriginals and working class increased and they, gradually, became poor. This growing poverty among these groups of people led them to engage in several crimes.

The voice of the uneducated common people also strengthened the temperance movement of Bengal. These lower-class people used more creative methods to address this social issue. The popular culture of that time, like proverbs, paintings, lithographs became their method to express the resistance against the colonial excise policy. This creativity got support from few contemporary Bengali writers. Numbers of satires on the drinking culture of the various groups of people highlighted the drinking pattern of the people and its changes. These writings identified the western civilization and western education as the reason of the growing intemperance in India. Further, these writings also questioned the perspective of those educated Bengalis who believed that the British rule and influence of western civilization were good for India. This constructive way of criticising the excise policy of the government and the contemporary drinking culture had given a new dimension to the temperance movement in Bengal. Later, this dimension helped to link the temperance with the Indian national movement.

The British Parliament pressurised the Secretary of the State and GOI to address the issue of growing intemperance in India when all these criticisms of colonial excise policy by the Bengal's temperance movement reported to the British Parliament. A group of members of the British Parliament supported the temperance movement in India. As a result, the GOI asked the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to give an explanation for growing intemperance in Bengal and modify the excise policy. The provincial government of Bengal, under the

pressure of the GOI, began to change the excise laws, re-structure the liquor shops while imposing rules on them and identified the customers to whom liquor would be sold.

Throughout the years, 1856-1908, the Excise Department of Bengal and the Government of Bengal were continuously changing the distillery system either under the pressure of Government of India and public opinion of Bengal or to extract more revenue. Soon after passing of excise law in 1856, the government turned all the state's distilleries into *Central Distilleries* with the motive of controlling the liquor consumption among people. Later, the *Central Distilleries* transformed into the *Out-still Distilleries* as the government realised that the former system led to the loss of revenue, increased smuggling and illicit distillation of liquor. The availability of the liquor and intemperance increased among the people after a change in the distillery system. The excise revenue data indicated a continuous growth of excise revenue in every year.

The colonial government used the drinking habit of the indigenous people to exploit the people during the second half of the nineteenth century. This exploitation happened in an indirect way, mostly in the name of welfare of the indigenous people. The colonial government identified the Indians as habitual drunkards and stated that it was the responsibility of the government to check the intemperance among the Indians. However, the colonial government in Bengal and the Bengal Excise Department never wanted to solve the problem of growing intemperance because of the revenue. The present study, therefore, while taking liquor consumption as an entry point to investigate the socio-economic, cultural and political development of the colonial Bengal from 1856 to 1908, argues that inverse relation between the personal profits of the liquor traders and government intention of extraction of more revenue from liquor had started a long-term conflict in socio-economic arena of the Bengal. As the excise policy began to affect the life of the common people while spreading intemperance among the people, another conflict emerged in the surface, i.e., the conflict between the temperance activists and colonial government. Later, the incorporation of the

temperance issue in the national movement had politicised the issue of temperance. Therefore, it can be said, liquor, despite being a medium of pleasure, able to played a major role in the formation of the anti-British sentiment among the people while revealing the exploitative nature of the colonial rule.

Appendix

In the early twentieth century excise department became much worried about the physiological effects of alcohol on the 'native society'. To solve the confusion on this matter and elicit information 'of a more or less general nature as to the physiological effects of the various classes of liquor drink in India', Major Belford, I.M.S and member of Excise committee had been prepared a set of questions and a copy of it had send to the Lieutenant Governor while asking for permission. These set of questions is given below.

1. What kind of spirits or other forms of alcoholic beverages are chiefly consumed in your district (i.e., spirits or fermented liquors made from rice, mohwa, millet, gur, toddy, molasses, etc?)
2. Are the spirits obtained from outstills or from distilleries?
3. Can you give information as to the practices obtaining with regard to alcoholic consumption as regards the following points-
 - (a) Can you ascertain and state how much is consumed daily on an average by a moderate drinker of spirits or other fermented liquor (pawchwai, tari, etc.)?
 - (b) Is the amount consumed in the evening usually, or at any other particular time, or is it taken throughout the course of the day?
 - (c) On the occasion of fairs or other festivals, is drunkenness specially prevented in your district?
 - (d) Can you give any idea what would be the average amount of liquor consumed per head at such private or public festival?
 - (e) Is it usual to dilute to any extent the liquor consumed?
4. Does the consumption of any particular kind of alcoholic drink interfere seriously with the consumer's power to resume work next day?

5. As the quantity of a liquor is believed to be shown more by the character of the onset of the symptoms as also by after-effects, can you give any information on the following points? Thus:
 - (a) Does any particular liquor in your district speedily produce helpless intoxication even when consumed in relatively small amounts?
 - (b) Is recovery from such intoxication particularly slow?
 - (c) Are there any particularly noticeable after-effects such as loss of appetite, altered temperature, long continued drowsing?
 - (d) Have you any experience in your district or elsewhere with reference to any cooperation between apparently purposeless crimes of violence and character of the liquor consumed?
 - (e) Any maniacal or other exceptional mental states following the use of a particular alcoholic drink?
6. Can you state any unusual condition referable to the use of any particular alcoholic liquor in your district or elsewhere?
7. Have you any knowledge of cases of alcoholic neuritis among natives? If so, would you kindly briefly state your experience in this connection?
8. Have you observe any symptom *specially* referable to the action of any particular liquor on any special system, e.g., digestive, renal, nervous (including change in mental and moral states), generative, etc.?
9. Do you know of any definite diseases referable to the consumption of India manufactured liquors differing from those produced by European spirits?
10. Is there any variety of country spirit with which you would connect these speciality (specialities)?
11. Is 'doctoring' of spirits with nux-vomica, dature, tobaccoo (tobacco), aconite or other drugs known to be employed in your district?
12. Have you knowledge of confirmation of such adulteration by analysis of the liquid by Chemical Examiner to Government or other analyst?

13. Can you give any information as to natives' ideas of the relative harmfulness or harmless of any particular variety of alcoholic drink?
14. Is there any marked preference-apart from cost-in your district for country-spirits or those made in India by European methods of manufacture?
15. Is drunkenness commoner during any particular season (e.g., tari season)?
16. Have you from personal observation or hearsay, formed any opinion as to whether "pachwi", "tari" or other fermented liquor produces worse effects in general than spirits or *vice versa*?
17. Have you any other observations to make not included in the foregoing list of questions?

(Source: March 1906, F/SR, nos. 22, File E $\frac{1-C}{3}$ 1, WBSA)

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