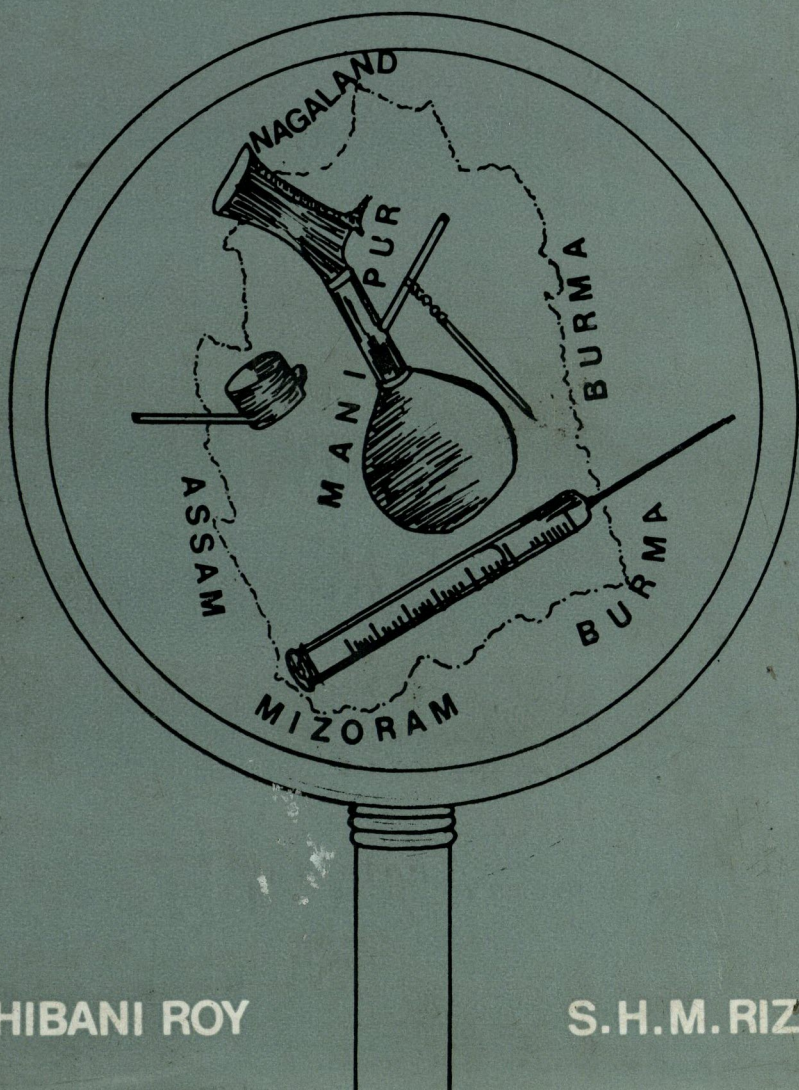


NICOTINE WATER TO HEROIN



SHIBANI ROY

S.H.M. RIZVI

Heroin—the dreaded drug is a rather new entrant in the hallucinogenic traditions (madak sanskriti) present in India while nicotine water (tuibuk) and opium (kani) are already a part of tribal cultural matrix. This microscopic case-study of the South District of Manipur highlights the use of various traditional and non traditional psychotropic substances. The mind boggling findings have been supplemented by qualitative and quantitative data collected during extensive exploration in the region during 1969-1984.

The study is multifaceted: it attempts to conceptualize human behaviour with respect to the intake of mind manifesting drug; it treats the subject from anthropological perspective; it studies the land and people from economic and sociological points of view; and, it unravels drug trafficking in the north-east border areas. It is a serious study on a serious subject but devoid of technical jargon and, as such, besides researchers, general readers shall also find it accessible.

SHIBANI ROY has been conducting field oriented and data based research to present anthropological insight in the polymix of Indian tribes which present a Kaleidoscopic pattern of tribal culture. She has several research papers and articles to her credit besides five books. Her works include 'Status of Muslim Women in Northern India' (1979); 'Kolis of Talpad Vistar' (1983); 'Muslims : Bio-cultural Perspective' (1984); 'Dawoodi Bohras—An Anthropological Perspective' (1984); 'Dhodia Identity' (1985).

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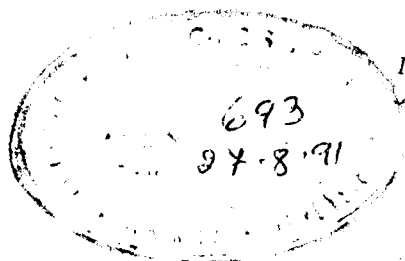
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Contents

Preface	Page vii
List of Tables	xiii
List of Illustrations and Plates	xv
Chapters	
1. Prelude	1
2. Paradigm	4
3. Psychotropic Substances--An Historical Perspective	11
4. Typology of Psychotropic Substances	35
5. Psychotropic Substances in Retrospect	56
6. Instances of Opium intake in Other Parts of the Country	78
7. Manipur-A Case Study	90
8. Overview	158
Glossary	163
References	170
Index	188
Plates	

Prelude

*Ah, fill the Cup:- what boots it to repeat
 How time is slipping underneath our feet:
 Unborn TO-MORROW and dead YESTERDAY,
 Why fret about them if TO-DAY be sweet!
 (Ommar Khayyam)*

Anthropology, the most holistic of the human sciences has so far evaded the psychotropic culture or *madak sanskriti* prevalent amongst the various communities of the world. From the most 'primitive' communities to the space age groups manifest some forms of psychotropic culture--the agents varying from place to place depending upon the ecosystem. One of the main reasons for the lack of study in this aspect of human behaviour may be attributed to the clandestine character associated with the collection, processing, distribution and consumption of these agents. However, in recent times the disastrous effects of these psychotropic substances specially amongst the youth of the affluent countries have brought to the surface the problems associated with these substances and certain terms like 'drug abuse' and 'drug addiction' have been coined. The symptoms and their cures related to the 'addicts' have mostly been dealt by the researchers in certain fields of specialisations such as medical, psychology and physiology. The social workers, on the other hand, have earnestly made efforts to eradicate 'drug abuse' for the maintenance of a healthy society. It may be added that the few attempts made by social scientists have mainly dealt with the economic, the psychological and the physiological aspects of the problem.

The studies of Dube and Handa (1969 and 1971), Chopra and Smith (1974), Cameron (1963), Deb (1977) and Hollaran (1972) mostly dealt with the rate of 'drug' users in specific areas, symptoms associated with the 'drug' use, personality and psyche of the 'drug' users and socio-economic concomitants of the users. From medical perspective the works of Seerers (1962), Rosenberg (1969), Mc. Guire and Mc. George (1974), Malhotra (1978), Mohan and Arora (1976) dealt mainly with the addicts who were registered in the hospital for treatment or university students who had sought medical attendance due to severity of certain symptoms. Chitnis (1974) and Mitra (1955) dealt in detail with the background of the drug users, their frequency and measures adopted by the government for the welfare and rehabilitation of the 'drug addicts'. In brief, the above studies were attempted to tackle the problem as it surfaced in each society but no attempt was ever made to delve deep into the values and mysteries associated with the psychotropic substances which are present in the human society since time immemorial. The time has come for the anthropologists to take up the cultural aspect of psychotropic substances from anasopic point of view.

Man, the most versatile of the species of homo-sapiens never ceases his quest for knowing and winning over the unknown phenomenon. Man utilised the available natural resources and developed permanently the method of food production which ensured a steady food supply for generations to follow, thus winning over one of the greatest weaknesses of human beings, that is, hunger. The food supply being ensured for the entire year, man had ample time to delve into the various secrets of nature. He was able to create, understand and analyse the various facets of his living. Thus developed religion, art, justice, law and science. Man tried to organise his environment to the best of his knowledge for a better living. During these trying periods man had wanted to escape from his monotonous, hard and routine life and aspired for relaxation. He devised various ways and means for his entertainment and amusement. The early man might also have learnt from the other animals. The South African elephants often engage in noisy fights after feasting on fermented fruits of the Marula tree. The Sloth bears get drunk after consuming Mahua flowers. Little robins intoxicate themselves by eating fire thorn berries. Even the relatively small sized stag beetles drink the fermented

sap of certain bushes after which they lurch and often engage in duels with other beetles unto death (Fernandes and Sathe, 1985). Such animal behaviour might have induced man to experiment with unknown substances. Moreover, the 'primitive' man had very few techniques to relieve pain and the psychotropic substances were found to be the surest and safest way for reducing pain. However, extra dosage of the same could easily kill an adversary. In this respect various forms of beverages, intoxicants, sleep producing agents and aphrodisiacs were discovered and experimented with. These agents were of various kinds and forms. Some were merely collected from nature while others were procured through the methods of refining and processing. Some others were blended with various reagents to increase their potency, while, the latest form is synthesis of chemical compounds to derive a drug of desired potency and effect. These preparations can be categorised roughly under three classes:

1. Psychotropic
2. Psychomimetic
3. Psychoactive

Psychoactive is a designating term used for a substance or drug that has a strong and specific effect on the human mind. The term psychotropic is used for those substances which produce hallucinations while the term psychomimetic has been designated to certain kinds of drugs (like LSD and Mescaline) which produce psychotic symptoms. The nomenclature so far adopted and accepted by the pharmacologists and medical personnel is based on the therapeutic value of each of the substance and terms, such as narcotic, stimulant, relaxant, euphoriant, sedative, hypnotic and hallucinogenic, have been associated in the description of these substances.

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