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ROSE - WINE IN ANCIENT INDIA

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UNIVERSITY OF  
CALCUTTA

# WINE IN ANCIENT INDIA.

by

**Dhirendra Krishna Bose, B. A.**

**1922.**

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## PREFACE.

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95, GREY STREET,  
Calcutta, 26th March 1922.

} D. K. BOSE.

# CONTENTS.

	PAGES.
I. DHARMA SHASTRAS.	
Ages and Scriptures	... 1
1. The Vedas	... 4
2. The Smritis	... 10
3. The Purans	... 13
4. The Great Epics—The Ramayana and the Mahabharata	... 15
5. Buddhist Precepts	... 19
6. The Tantras	... 22
II. OTHER SHASTRAS.	
1. Artha Shastra	... 26
2. Kama Shasta	... 30
3. Ayur Veda	... 33
III. FOREIGN TRAVELLER.	
1. Greek Sources	... 37
2. Chinese Sources	... 42
3. Arab Sources	... 44
IV. LITERATURE AND ART.	
1. Literature	... 46
2. Sculpture	... 49

# Wine in Ancient India.

## I.

### DHARMA SHASTRAS.

#### Ages and the Scriptures.

*The Hindu Shastras are classed into :—*

1. Shruti, which includes the four Vedas.
2. Smriti, the work on social and family duties.
3. Purans.
4. Tantras.

The great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are included in the Hindu Scriptures, and works Artha Shastra of Kautilya and Kama Sutra of Vatsayana, though not truly Dharma-shastras are works on social domestic and political duties of men.

Ayur-Veda or science of life, deals in health and medicine, which forms a part of Atharva-veda is also included here.

Buddhism originated from Hindu philosophy, and later Hinduism is much indebted to this cult, so is its precepts too are hurriedly glanced.

According to the Hindu Shastras there are four ages, and for each age a suitable shastra is given. We find from Kularnava Tantra, in Satya-Yuga (the Golden age of righteousness, free from sin) the scriptures were the Vedas.

The second age was the Treta-Yuga (righteousness decreased by one fourth) the scriptures were the Smrities.

The third age was the Dvapara-Yuga (righteousness decreased by half) the scriptures were the Puranas.

The fourth age is the Kali-Yuga (the iron age, in which we find so much wickedness, and the decline of all that is good) the scriptures are the Tantras.\*

We shall deal only with the following :—

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| I. { | 1. Shruti or the Vedas.  |
|      | 2. Smriti or codes of law, the Dharma Shastra proper i. e. religious or secular, and domestic codes. |
|      | 3. Puranas or mythology proper.  |
|      | 4. The great epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.   |
|      | 5. Buddhist precepts, an off-shoot of the Hindu Shastras.  |
|      | 6. Tantras.  |

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\*According to historians the early ages India are divided into five epochs viz.



- II. {
1. Artha-Shastra political science.
  2. Kama-Sutra.
  3. Ayur-Veda or medical science.
- 

1. The Vedic period 2000-1400 B. C.
2. The Epic period 1400-1000 B. C.
3. Rationalistic period 1000-243 B. C.
4. Buddhist period 242 B. C-500 A. D.
5. Pauranik period 500 A. D. to 1124 A. D.

## 1. The Vedas.

Of all religious books of the Hindus the Vedas are the most respected and the most ancient. There are four Vedas, of which Rig-Veda is the chief.

In the Rig-Veda we find mention of wine. Grog shops were in existence then. Wine or beer was stored up in leather vats for the use of the public (1. 191. 10). In the sacrifice called Sautramoni-yajna wine was drunk.

But the chief intoxicating drink of those days was the Soma-juice. According to the Rig Veda the Golden-winged Hawk, brought Soma from the Heavens. (IX. 43-62) Soma-juice was the fermented milky juice of a creeper called Soma (*Asclepias-acida* or *Sarcostemma viminalis*) a plant of the family of milk-weeds. It is described as having hanging boughs, bare of leaves along the stalks, of light, ruddy (or golden) colour with knotty joints, containing in a fibrous, cane-like outer rind, an abundance of milky acid and slightly astringent sap or juice. It is this

juice which when duly pressed out and mixed with other ingredients and allowed to ferment yields the intoxicating sacrificial beverage. The process of preparation is given by Windischmann as :—

“.....the plants plucked up by roots, collected by moonlight on mountains are carried on a car drawn by two goats to the place of sacrifice where a spot covered with grass and twigs is prepared, crushed between stones by the priests and then thrown into a sieve of loose woollen weave, whereas, after the whole had been further pressed by the hand and the juice trickles into a vessel or kettle which is placed beneath. The fluid is then mixed with sweet milk and sour milk or curds with wheaten and other flours and brought into a state of fermentation.”\*

In this way the juice was kept for nine days to ferment. “The beverage is divine, it purifies, it is a water of life, gives health and immortality and prepares the way to heaven.”

It was taken with butter, curd, milk, fried or parched grains.—

Let me quote a few hymns of Rig Veda about Soma (IX. 66).

2. “O Soma ! your two leaves alternated and you attained a wonderful glory thereby.

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\* Vedic India—p. 172.

3. O Soma ! the leaves covered thee, a creeper on all sides, and you flourished in all seasons.

7. O Soma ! you have been crushed, you flow as a stream to Indra, scattering joy on all sides, you bestow immortal food.

8. Seven women stir thee with their fingers blending their voices in a song to thee, you remind the sacrificer of his duties at the sacrifice."

Another :—

“Thou Soma art the real Lord,  
Thou King and Vrita slayer too.  
Thou art strength that gives success ;  
And Soma let it be thy will  
For us to live, nor let us die,  
Thou lord of plants, who lovest praise.”

“Of all the drinks that Indra have, you are the most pleasant and intoxicating” (IX. 96).

“This is Soma, who flows wine, who is strength giving.....” (IX. 55).

(About the intoxicating properties of this juice there are sufficient evidence in the Vedas. The poet of the Rig-Veda goes into ecstasy on the virtues and exhilarating powers of Soma. The chosen few, who partook it, give most vivid expression to the

state of exaltation of intensified vitality, which raised them above the level of humanity. It was surely as potent as wine. It was a divine liquor which gave the Gods strength and immortality (LX, 108) without which they would lose their might, their eternal youth. This was the Amrita or ambrosia.

There was a sacrifice in honour of Soma in which the juice was first offered to the gods after which the priest and sacrificing party partook of the juice themselves. Needless to say large quantities of juice were used. In the invocation we find "O Soma there is nothing so bright as thou. When poured out, thou welcomest all the gods, to bestow on them immortality" A whole book (IX) is devoted to the praise of this juice and it is alleged that by the offering of the juice the gods were tempted out of the heavens !

Even the gods were not immune from disease, and the evils of intemperance were evident even among them. Indra, it is said drank so much once, that his stomach assumed huge proportions and saliva flowed freely from his mouth. And in the prayers to Soma we find an entreaty of this nature " O Soma do not derange our stomach " (8. 48. 10.)

In Yayur Veda we find that Vishva-rupa the son of Tuashtar, while performing the Soma sacrifice drank so much of the juice that he vomitted over the

sacrificial beasts ! We see from this that the Soma-juice was quite an ardent spirit.

Soma was the vedic poets' chief drink till the end of the period when *Sura* (barley beer ?) was discovered. The original Soma plant did not grow in the Punjab and it had to be collected in the mountains (Hindu Kush) and brought over. So the status of Soma juice become changed. While *Sura* became the drink of the people, Soma, despite the fact that it was not so agreeable a liquor, became reserved for its old association, as the purest drink, a sacrosant beverage, not for the vulgar and not esteemed by the priest, except as it kept up a rite.

In the Atharva-Veda we find in the after-life i. e. after death the devout are provided with seas of wine, butter, sugar, milk etc. (4-34-6.)

With a hymn of Soma we retire from the Vedas :—

“Where there is eternal light, in the world where sun is placed, in that immortal, imperishable world place me, O Soma ! flow thou for Indra.

“Where the son of Vivasvat reigns as King where the secret place of heaven is, where the mighty waters are, there make me immortal. Flow thou for Indra.

“Where life is free in the third heaven of heavens,

where the worlds are radiant, there make me immortal ! Flow thou for Indra.

“Where wishes and desires are, where the bowl of the bright Soma is, where there is food and rejoicing, there make me immortal ! Flow thou for Indra.

“Where there is happiness and delight, where joy and pleasure reside, where desires of our desires are attained, there make me immortal ! Flow thou for Indra.” (Rig Veda IX, 113).

## 2. The Smrities.

After the Vedas the Smrities come in importance. If there be any conflict of opinion on certain point between Shruti and Smriti, Shruti or the Veda is to be followed.

Smrities are the codes of law on domestic, social religious duties of man. There are many Smrities but only some of them are important. Historians think "Gautama, Apastamba, and Vasistha belong to the rationalistic period, Manu to the Buddhist period. The remaining 16 works are probably also based on ancient Sutra works, but belong to the Pauranik period".\*

Of these too Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parasara are the greatest, and their injunctions are still carried out by the Hindus.

In these we find wine is looked down upon, especially to the higher castes, it is totally forbidden. There were five most heinous crimes mentioned there, and drinking wine or spirituous liquor was one of them. (Sankhya).

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\*R. C. Dutt Ancient India P. 657.



The penance for drinking wine was very severe, "The wine drinker, should be made to drink that liquor boiling hot, until he was completely scalded." (Manu XI. 91.)

The higher castes, willingly and knowingly taking wine, are to die by drinking boiling water, milk or butter, (Yajna) or molten silver, lead or copper. (Deval).

And those unknowingly drink wine—

"He must wear sack-cloth made from the hair of the cow, must not shave, take only rice or oil-cakes once in the night for one year. (Manu 11. 93.)

He must abstain from any work or worship, and sustain himself with a small amount of food for one year. (Bishnu 51. 1. 2.) "The upper three castes must be initiated (in sacred thread) again, if unknowingly drink wine. (Parasara 12).

Gods do not accept offerings from a drunkard.

(Artri 218.)

The son should not repay his father's debts that are incurred in drinking. (Gautama 2). "All kinds of wine are forbidden to the twice borns." (Bishnu 22. 81).

"Wine must not be drunk, given or accepted." (Usana).

“To mix with a drunkard is a sin.” (Bishnu). It is strange, that the sages have made a nice distinction between Soma-juice and wine. Thus, if a Soma-drinker smells the mouth of wine-drinker, he must do penance. (Bishnu).

There are many such injunction in all the different Smrities, from these we find in what light drinking was taken ; not drinking alone but even for smelling liquor, touching the drunkard, penance had to be done !

### 3. The Puranas.

Puranas means—'ancient lore', they are mythology proper ; they generally follow the Smritis. They too disapprove of wine. Other sins are got rid of by penitence but the drunkard must die !

'Wine drinkers must suffer', that is the general injunction of the Puranas. A few quotations are given here :—

"The twice born (viz. higher castes) must not drink, smell nor think about wine." (Kurma).

"If one smells or touches wine, he must go to the purgatory named Raurab." (Padma).

"To kill a drunkard is rather an act of peity, not to say of sin." (Devi and Kalika).

There are 18 chief Puranas and some of these are very ancient, though most of them have been re-cast and re-written at later days.

Though almost all the Puranas prescribe many penances etc. for the drunk, and wine is forbidden, yet we find many examples of drinking and drunkard. It is not possible to quote all examples. We conclude the Puranas with the interesting myth of the origin of wine :—

Once upon a time, the Gods (Suras) and the demons (Asuras) were at war. The Gods approached Visnu to assist them. He asked them first to suspend hostility with the demons, and churn the ocean and obtain Amrita. So they first collected all plants and herbs that grew on in the world, and threw them into the sea of milk. Both the Devas on one side and Asuras on the other, pulled Vasaki the king of the snakes, who allowed himself to be used as the rope to twist the churning stick, (the Mandara mountain) and then churned the sea. Great was the tumult that ensued, and from the milky foam many sorts of rare and wonderful things began to come out, the sacred cow, horse, elephant etc. and then the Goddess of beauty (Luksmi) seated on a lotus, the deadly poison etc. and lastly the cup of the precious beverage (Sura). The demons did not accept her but the gods did, and after this the gods were known as Suras for accepting sura and demons as Asuras or "without wine" for not accepting her (from Sanskrit *Sura* wine, and *a* without).

Of course there are different version of the myth in some Puranas, I gave one from the Ramayana.

As the Puranas were much changed and recast after the Mahammedan conquest and so they are unsafe and unreliable as pictures of ancient Hindu life.

#### 4. The Epics—The Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

These are also regarded as great religious books.

During the age of Ramayana wine drinking was current in the society, and it was offered to the Gods in worship. Sages and hermits used wine in festivities.

The ideal wife Sita, was seen drinking with her husband in the Asoka garden in Ajodhya, after the victory over the Raksasas. (Uttara 52).

We find Sita, invoking the goddess Ganga, the river Ganges, while accompanying her husband in his banishment thus :—

“Oh Goddess, be pleased, when we come back we shall propitiate you with thousands jars of wine.”

(Ajo. 52).

We see the great hermits and sages, like Vasistha and Visvamitra, honouring guests with many kinds of foods and wines. (Bal. 53).

When Bharata was guest of Varadwaj, another sage, he too was treated with enough wine. (Ajo. 91.)

At that age the common people were addicted to

drink and merriments, and we find that after the banishment of Rama, the city of Ajodhya mourned his loss, and there were no sweet scents of wine, fragrance of flowers and other scents in the streets. (Ajo. 114).

We see the Banaras had drinking garden. So with the Raksasas. Probably these were the original inhabitants of India before the Aryans came. The streets of city of Kiskindhya, the kingdom of Banaras scented wine. Their queen, Tara was found drunk. (Kis. 33).

We find a long description of drinking garden of the Raksasas, we cull a few passages—"Here golden jars, there crystal and ruby goblets full of wine, ladies are lying disheveled by wine." (Sun 11).

In one place we find drinking was censured in the book, Laksmana, finding Sugriva, the monkey-king drunk, admonishes him thus :—

"Wine is not to be indulged in by those who are in quest of religion (or duty) wealth or love for all these are destroyed through drink." (Kis. 33).

But we find this advice was scarcely followed.

The age of the Mahabharata is later ;\* and though the common people appear to be more sober, the rich

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\* The Hindus regard so, but the historians think it otherwise. See R. C. Dutt-Ancient India Book II.

and the brave, were not so. Almost all the chief characters in the Mahabharata were addicted to strong drinks. Ladies of high families too used wine, we find the queen of Birat, sending her maid to fetch wine. (Birat 16).

The great King Yudhishthira celebrated the horse sacrifice in great pomp, and there seas of wine, lakes of butter, mountains of rice etc. (Aswa 89).

But the evils of drinking were fully depicted in the book. The celebrated clan of Yadavas, was so much addicted to wine, that their chief had to proclaim that "any one preparing wine within the city, must suffer capital punishment," (Musal 1).

But the precaution did not save them, and the whole clan was destroyed by a family quarrel started through drinking. Some 500,000 Yadavas were killed thereby!

Though the leading characters were all wine drinkers, still we find they were not quite blind to evils of intemperance, and some of the best advices of Hindu-Shastras are found here.

"To abstain from meat and wine is the best Brahmacharya or continence." (An. 22).

"Those who never touch wine in their lives are called Munis or hermits." "We can get the same

benefit as are obtained by horse sacrifice, if we abstain from wine." (An. 115).

The most celebrated sacrifice in those days was the horse sacrifice, and in the ritual of this and in coronation ceremony, we find—

"...Now the priest gives into his hand a goblet of spirituous liquor, and repeats a propitiatory *Mantra* or incantation."

When the rulers themselves used wine freely, one can not but expect his people would follow his example, rather than the precept of the Shastras. And so we find all advices for abstinence fell on deaf ears.



## 5. Buddhist Precepts.

Though Buddhism, which is based upon Sankhya philosophy, is generally regarded as a separate religion, we can take it to be a new sect or rather an off-shoot of Hinduism. Gautama Buddha, the founder, never believed he preached a new religion, he thought he was only proclaiming the reformed form of the ancient religion.

This religion is known for its great moderations in all things, adopting the golden mean or middle course, it is a system of self-culture and self-restraint.

We are not going to dwell on all the teachings of Buddha, but his instructions for conquering desires and passions and thirst of life are superb. "A more beautiful picture of life was never conceived by poet or visionary ; and more perfect system of self culture was never proclaimed by philosopher or saint"—R. C. Dutt.

Among the moral precepts of Buddha, we find

“Let the house-holder, who approves of this *Dharma*, not give himself to intoxicating drinks, let him not cause others to drink, nor approve of those that drink, knowing it to end in madness.” (Dhammika Sutra).

There are five commandments in this religion which are binding on Buddhists, laymen and Bhikkus alike and one of these is—

“Let not one drink intoxicating drinks”

To be initiated into the Buddhist order one has to accept 10 commandments and take this vow along with other.—

“I take the vow to abstain from intoxicating drink, which hinder progress.” (Mohavagga 1-12).

In every fortnight confessions and disburdenment of sins were held. And in these we find the different sins, and naming the penance for each. Drinking falls under ninety two minor offences which called for repentance only.

Society in this age was quite temperate in all things, in some cases rather austere. But this gave rise to Buddha-Tantricism, which in its turn gave place to Hindu Tantricism, about which we will consider next.

Before we take leave of Buddhism, it is proper to mention, that this philosophy has done much in moulding worlds thought. Some Christian writers admit that Buddhism in Syria was a preparation, a fore-runner of the religion preached by Jesus Christ two centuries later." While in India it gave rise to the Vaishnava doctrine of love on one side, and Kaula or Tantric doctrine of equality on the other.\*

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\* Ancient India p. 446. ✓

## 6. The Tantras.

Now we come to the most important part of the Hindu Shastras as regards wine, viz. the Tantras. There are great difference of opinion regarding these. "To the historian, the Tantra literature represents, not a special phase of Hindu thought, but a diseased form of human mind, which is possible only when the national life has departed, when all political consciousness has vanished, and the lamp of knowledge is extinct."\*

But in Bengal it played a great part, and the chief strong holds of the Tantras are Bengal, Nepal, Kashmir, and Gujrat. Other parts of India were not so affected by this ritual. In Bengal some of the most important worships are of the Tantric Gods viz. Durga and Kali, and there are still evidences of its hold on the society it once had.

We find that the Tantric age, followed the Buddhist age as a reaction. The severe austerities of Buddhism gave rise to revelry and debauchery. And this religion of ease and pleasure was highly welcome to the people. We will see here only the part wine

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\* Ancient India p. 672.

played in the Tantric rituals, other rites do not concern us.

Tantra is called "The Scripture of the present age." "In this age, the Vedic rites are as powerless as snakes, the poison fangs of which are drawn. (Mahānirbān 1. 15).

We have seen before, that wine was looked down upon in the Smritis and the Puranas, especially in worships, and if one offers wine to the Gods, he is condemned. But not so in the Tantras. There are five chief ingredients of worship and wine is one of these.

Tantra is the presentment of the Vedas which are modelled to meet the infirmities of Kali-Yuga (the present age) and in these Tantras we find the use and abuse of wine.

Wine is indispensable in Tantric rituals. Great care is taken to guard against the abuse or misuse of it. Before taking wine, it should always be purified, as there are some curses attached to it, and to drink wine, which is not purified by Mantras is a sin, and is like drinking poison.

A wife is allowed only to smell wine, instead of drinking. A house-holder, whose mind is entirely engrossed with domestic desires, "three sweets" i.e. milk, sugar and honey, are to be substituted for wine.

But as a rule wine was absolutely necessary in worship and without this one stands the risk of losing life. Ordinarily one takes five cups only, and drinks until the sight and mind are not affected, to drink beyond is bestial. But with the case of a 'hero' it is quite different, and in his case we find the famous, rather notorious couplet which may be rendered in English thus :—

“ Drink, drink, and drink again,  
Till you be flat on the floor,  
Raising yourself, drink again,  
Liberation at your door.”

There are many praises of wine in the Tantras. Wine is called 'the Supreme being in liquid form.' It is called 'the great medicine of humanity, helping us to forget deep sorrows, is the cause of great joy.' But when not purified, 'stupefies and bewilders, breeds disputes and diseases.' But when properly taken is 'the mother of enjoyment and liberation'. It 'destroys dangers and diseases and burns up heap of sin and purifies the world'. There are warnings too, and all excesses are forbidden to house-holder.

Thus we have seen all the great Shastras of the Hindus, and most of them disfavour the use of wine. Let us conclude with the words of the great

law-giver Manu, "There is no fault in taking meat, drinking wine or craving after flesh, these are quite natural, but to abstain from these is the highest attainment."

With the Tantras we finish the Dharma-Shastras proper i. e. the religious books. Now we come to other Shastras, the non-secular, political and domestic codes.

# Wine in Ancient India.

## II.

### OTHER SHASTRAS.

#### 1. Artha Shastra.

Hindu Shastras are grouped into three main divisions, viz.

I. Dharma Shastra, the religious books proper.

II. Artha Shastra, deals with wealth and worldly prosperity. Politics is a part of this Shastra.

III. Kama Shastra deals with various desires of the body. These three are the *Tribarga* or the three, for which the whole human nature moves. The first, we have just considered in detail. Of the other two, probably owing to the different foreign conquests, the national life of the Indians suffered a great deal, and consequently, the science of politics was of no use to the nation. They followed the ways of the conquerors, and Indian art and craft suffered. As Artha Shastra was of no use to the nation, so



they slowly disappeared. Of course we come across the name of different authors or their works. We know a sage, named Brihaspati, was an authority in this Shastra, but his works are now lost to us. Lately, we discovered Kautilya's Artha Shastras in tact in Southern India, and from this we cull a few passages, to illustrate in what light wine was taken in the Shastra.

From this Shastra we find the different ways and modes of management, of municipal supervision of different parts of a town ; we see wine shops (with cooked meat shop) were restricted to certain portion, and inspectors were appointed over these. We take a few passages from the chapter (XXV) of this book, to show how wine and grog shops were managed in those days.

"Liquor shall not be taken out of villages, nor liquor shops be closed to each other. Lest workmen spoil the work in hand, and Aryas violate their decency, and virtuous character, and lest fire brands commit indiscreet acts, liquor shall be sold to persons of well known character, in small quantities..... Those who are known, and of pure character, may take liquor out of the shop, or all may be compelled to drink liquor within the shops."

We wonder, whether the men of pure character,

got wine for their own use, or they were the agents or servants of the rich, sent to fetch wine. The venders of wine were put to task if they sold liquor to persons of questionable character. However we come to this later.

Then about the liquor shops :—

“These shops, shall contain many rooms, provided with beds and seats apart. The drinking rooms shall contain scents, garlands of flowers, water and other comfortable things, suitable to varying seasons.....”

A fashionable cafe in those days ! But the shop-keeper, had a good deal of responsibility towards his customers, and probably that was the reason for his being so particular about their character, for we find, “When customers, under intoxication, lose any of their things, the wine dealer, shall not only make good the loss, but also pay an equivalent fine”,

Probably there was excise department in those days, and all were not allowed to prepare wine, for we find “on special occasions of festivals, fairs, and pilgrimage, right of manufacture for four days shall be allowed.” (to the people ?)

“On special occasions people (or families) shall be allowed to manufacture white liquor, Aristas, for diseases, and other kinds of liquor,” (probably medi-

cinal wines) the above refers to the medical men no doubt. The various kinds of liquor mentioned are Modaka, Prashanna, Asava, Arista, Maireya and Madhvi. The formulas of these are given there. We find Modaka was made from rice, Prashanna from flour, Asava from sugar, Maireya from molases, Madhvi from honey, all were mixed with different kinds of spices, some with other ingredients, and ferments in different proportions.

## 2. Kama Shastra.

Like the preceding Shastra, here too we have to depend on practically on one book viz. Vatsayan's Kama Sutra. Though we have many names of authors and their treatises most of them are now lost to us.

Little is known about Vatsayan, the author. From the language, style, and plan of the book, we may take it, that the book is of the same age as the Artha Shastra of Kautilya, and from these two books we get much light about the inner life, and mode of civilization, and social customs of the citizens of that age. (About 300 B. C.)

This book deals with duties daily routine of a citizen ; some are his daily duties, and some his occasional duties. Citizen, is defined as one (of-course who lives in a city), who has finished his education, and follows a profession, or has some independent means of livelihood.

Among his daily duties, wine finds no place, but we find among his occasional duties, he indulged sometime with his friends in "heavy drinking". The drinking party, met in each others houses or gardens.

They drank various kinds of wines viz., Madhvi, Maireya Sura, Asava ; about the nature of these wines, we shall consider later in our chapter on Ayurveda. These wines, were mixed with various kinds of salts, fruits, vegetables and condiments of bitter, hot, sour tastes, offering these to one another. (Book I. IV. 37-39).

In the gardens, in addition to drinking, they indulged in various kinds of games, such as cock or ram fight or gambling, or game of chance. Often they drank wine freely. They enjoyed life fully, of course in their own way, is evident from the 11 different kinds of games mentioned here. It seems strange that 25 centuries have passed since then, and we still find surviving in a modified form, many of the old games, in many parts of India. So much for a citizen, let us look at the duties of his wife. Vatsayana deals exhaustively about this too. In book IV. we find a chapter on the duties of a wife. We see the daily routine of a faithful wife, from early dawn to late in the night, how she took care of the household, her behaviour towards her elders, her equals, what she should avoid, her toilette, her dress &c., her duties in the kitchen &c., &c. Among the duties we find, preserving of pots of Sura (wine) and asava (rum) and their proper use (35) ; probably these wines were intended for the occasional festivities

mentioned before. But there is no evidence in this book that the wife used wine, but the mistress did. (IV. 11 59).

There is mention of wine, used to intoxicate maids, and then get them married against their will ; also harlots sought the help of wine-sellers for their profession (IV 91) (III 24-25). But these are not use but abuse of wine, and we are not concerned with that.

Among the qualifications of an accomplished person, we find among other, he must not be addicted to drink (VI. 11), and this was one of the qualities of a proper lover.

Even from this Shastra too we find the Indians were a temperate people.

### 3. Ayur-Veda.

The medical books of the Hindus are called Ayur-Veda, or science of life, which has for its object not only the protection of human life, but also the life of animals and even plants.\* It is a part of Atharva Veda. The Ayur-Veda is considered to be the most ancient system of medicine by Dr. Wise, in his History of Medicine ; but the age in which it was written is not known, and fragments only of the original works are procurable.

The ancient Greeks, Arabs and Persians, paid respect to Hindu medicine, and they translated many Indian books of medical science. And the translation of Susruta was a standard book in Bagdad in the 8th century. The Moors took this knowledge to Europe, and from them other nations got their healing art.

Most of the original treatises are lost to us. Only one of them the "Agnivesa Samhita thrice revised and recast, survives in skeleton, and is known as the

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\* Ayur-Veda by M. M. Gananath Sen.

famous Charaka Samhita. Of the school of surgeons headed by the royal master Dhanwantari..... only one of them the Susruta Samhita, as revised and recompiled, survives to tell the tale of mutilation”.

Charaka, dealt exhaustively with wine, their origin, qualities varieties, on the use and abuse of it ; we find from this, that wine was prepared from the grains of corn, fruit, roots, stem, flowers, leaf, bark and juice of different plants, and from sugar honey and by combinations of all these in numerous kinds of wines and liquors. Of these 14 kinds are fit for human use.

Other books, some mention 60 kinds, and some only 12 kinds of wines. But all agree in classifying all liquors in three main divisions viz :—

- (1) *Gauri*, or prepared from gura or Sugar.
- (2) *Madhavi*, or from fruit-juices and honey.
- (3) *Paiste*, or from corn-grains.

Of these, the first two are wines proper and the last is beer, in the modern sense. All these are prepared by fermenting the ingredients for some days. Some times first boiling these with sugar, then fermenting and mixing these with certain leaves and roots for flavouring purposes, and after a fortnight, the liquor is decanted or distilled, and is ready for use.



In Ayur-Veda, like all other current and some modern medical books we usually find much praise of wine, occasional warning for the abuse or misuse.

We quote a few passages for illustration. Charaka says of wine 'invigorator of mind and body, antidote to sleeplessness, sorrow and fatigue, producer of hunger, happiness and digestion.'

"If taken as medicine, and not for intoxication, it acts as Amrita (ambrosia) it cures the natural flow of internal fluids of the body."

"Wine is natural food but taken indiscriminately produces disease, but when taken properly, it is like "Amrita" the immortal drink."

But we also meet with these too :—

"He who abstains from all kinds of wine, escapes from every kind of physical and mental disease".

After Charaka comes Shusruta in importance, and it too follows the first in the praise of wine in general.

There is a nice ode on wine in Charaka and we give here translation of a few passages from this :—

(Wine) who is worshipped with the Gods, invoked in Sautra-moni yajna, who is Amrita to the gods..... soma juice to the Brahmans.....the destroyer

of sorrow, fear and anxiety.....who is pleasure  
happiness and nourishment (to men).....

We must not leave this subject, without mentioning a saying from Rajnighantu, a later medical book which is :—

“A Brahman must not touch wine, if a dead man has chance of regaining his life thereby, (that is by taking wine) even then he must not.”

# Wine in Ancient India.

## III.

### FOREIGN TRAVELLERS.

#### 1. Greek Sources.

We have seen from the different codes of the Hindus that most of these advocate abstinence. Let us see from contemporancy evidence, i. e. accounts left by travellers who came to India in those days how they found the Indians, whether they observed these injunctions or not.

Of these foreigners, who came to India in early times, we find the Greek account first. Some of these Greeks came after the advent of Alexander to India. Of these, some came like Magasthenes, as ambassador to Indian Court. Some, though did not actually come to India, had first hand information from Indian travellers whom they met.

Other like the Chinese, came to India on pilgrimage or to study in the Indian Universities of

Nalanda and Taxila. They generally remained in India for a few years, mixed with the people intimately, and travelled through greater part of India, visited important towns and shrines, and collected copies of Buddhist religious books and then left India. They left most valuable informations about political, geographical and social conditions of the Hindus.

Lastly came the Araba and other Mahomedan travellers after the Mahomedan conquest. We give here only the manner and customs of the Hindus as they found them. They all agree that the Hindus were a temperate people, and wine was never a favourite drink with them.

We can take Ktesias, to be the first authentic historian, who wrote about India. He had lived in Persia as a private physician to King Artaxerxes Mnemon, about 416 B. C.

Then comes Magasthenes's history, 'Indika'. He came to India as an embassy, to the court of Sandrokottos, who is identified to be the Emperor Chandra Gupta, from Saleukos Nikatar, the Greek King of Bactria. Both the original books of Ktesias and Magasthenes are lost, but the substances of the books are to be found condensed in Strabo, Pliny and Arrian.

Dr. Robertson has observed, that the Greeks through pride of their superior enlightenment, disdained to pay attention to the people, whom they considered as barbarians, and so probably anything they saw worthy in other people, they thought must be derived from the Greeks.

Nearly all the Greek historians mention that Dionysus, their wine God, came to India in remote times. He conquered the people, founded cities and gave them laws. He introduced the use of wine amongst the Indians, as he had done among the Greeks, and taught them to sow the land, and he supplied the seeds. He first yoked the oxen to the plough. Magasthenes says, "men of great learning among the Indians tell, that in most remote period, Dionysus came to India".

Polyæn says, Dionysus in his expedition against the Indians, disguised the arms with which he equipped his troops and made them wear soft raiment and fawn skins. The spears were wrapped round with ivy and thyrsus had a sharp point. He gave the signal for battle by cymbals and drums, instead of trumpets, and by regaling the enemy with wine, diverted their thoughts from war to dancing. These, and other Bacchic orgies were employed in the system of warfare, by which he subjected India and all the rest of the world. About

Dionysus's Indian expedition, there is no Indian account. Most probably it was conceived in Greek brain.

From Greek legends in Greece, we find that Dionysus (Bacchus) was the son of Zeus. He was the wine god. He became mad, and wandered about various parts of the earth. He first went to Egypt then through Syria to India. He taught the inhabitants of the places he traversed, the cultivation of vine; and introduced elements of civilization. He ruled India for a long time. He was first to crush grapes, and discovered the use and properties of wine

Alexander's followers, finding vine growing in India, and seeing the people civilised, invented this theory.

Strabo (XV.) quoting Magasthenes, says, that in India there were some philosophers, who lived in the mountains worshipped Dionysus, showing as a proof that wild vine grew there, none of which are found beyond the Euphrates. They observed also certain customs which are Bacchanalian. But he also mentioned another sect called the Sarmanes, who lived in the place, abstained from wine. Most probably these Sarmanes were the *Sramans*, the Buddhist ascetics.

But Ktesias does not mention about Dionysus.

From his account, we find the Indians were as a race sober. They never drank wine, except at sacrifices. They lived happily enough, being simple in manner and frugal in habit. Their beverage was a liquor, made from rice, instead of barley. Of the products of the vegetable kingdom of India, Ktesias mentioned a very good wine, which Lassen thinks, to be an intoxicating liquor, prepared from sugar and palm juice (toddy). Ktesias says, the cheese and wines of the Indians were the sweetest in the world, adding, he knew it from his own experience, since he tasted both. Their kings were never allowed to make themselves drunk, like the Persian King, who on particular days at the sacrifice, was allowed to do so.

He says, that wine was served to kings by maids, and if the King become drunk, the maid could kill him and become the wife of his successor. Most probably this referred to certain particular incident, not the general practice.

From Arrian's account we find that three kinds of wine were imported into India, viz., from

- (1) Layodisia, in Syria.
- (2) Italy.
- (3) Arabia.

Thus we see, like modern times, the foreigners were responsible for the introduction of wine in ancient India.

## 2. The Chinese Sources.

Of the Chinese travellers, who came to India, two are most famous, and happily, both have left accounts of the people and their civilization. The first of these, is Fa Hian. He left China in 399 A. D. and came through Central Asia to India, and remained here up to 414. He recorded, among other things, "throughout the country, the people kill no living things ; nor drink wine, nor they eat garlic or onion, with exception of Chandals only. In this country they do not keep swine nor fowls, and do not deal in cattle, they have no shambles or wine shops in their market places."

He travelled through many places in upper India, and after collecting many copies of the Buddhist sacred books, he sailed from Tamralipi, at the mouth of the Ganges, and thence he sailed to Ceylon, thence visiting Java returned home.

After Fa Hian, came Houen Tsang. He left China in 629 A. D. and came through Central Asia to India, where he lived and travelled for many years, and finally left for China on 645. He too gave a general description of the arts and manners of the



Hindus, with whom he mixed intimately. His account is very important to the historian, but we are concerned here with the drink and drinking habits only.

The Kshatriyas were fond of the juice of the grape and sugar-cane. Vine was not indigenous to India, but was introduced here from Persia, probably by the Greeks, and at the time of Houen Tsang probably it was very common. Then he says, "the Vaisyas used strong fermented drinks, and the *Sramans* (Buddhist priests), and Brahmans, used a sort of syrup, made from the grapes or sugar-cane, but not fermented."

Other Chinese travellers came to India, the land of Buddha, for pilgrimage or study. A Chinese writer, named Tsang, records the name of 56 Chinese travellers that came to India from 1st. century after Christ ; but sorry we have got no account of their travells yet.

### 3. Arab Sources.\*

After the Mahomedan conquest, many Arab travellers came to India. Some of them mentioned about wine drinking here. Iben Fakia, an Arab traveller, mentioning about the punishment of wine drinker, in Kumar Kingdom, near Travancore, says that red hot iron bars were left on the bare bodies, till they are cold, and many died thereby.

Al-Masudi says, "the Hindus are free from drink habits, and those who take wine, are degraded in social status, not because their religious books forbade the use of wine, but because wine deranges the mind too. If a king is addicted to wine, his subjects depose him".

Suleman—the Arab historian says, "the Hindus are abstemious people, they are never luxurious, wine is looked down upon, and a King, who drinks wine is not truly a King".

Iben Khurtuba says, "In India, the Brahmins never take wine, they pass their days in study."

Alberuni, who came with Mahmud of Gazni, as

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\* The accounts of the records from Arab writers are taken from Kumar A. K. Deb's "Sura" (wine).

prisoner from Khiva, records "Wine is forbidden among the Hindus, but the Sudras may take it, but can not sell."

Thus we see that at even at the close of the 12th century, the Hindus observed strictly the injunction of the Smrities, and probably the Tantric doctrine did not gain any hold over the society even then.

# Wine in Ancient India.

## IV.

### LITERATURE AND ART.

#### 1. Literature.

Life is reflected in the literature of a nation, so let us look to ancient literature. We have already considered the great epics, and the mythological stories, and have seen heroes and chief characters in these, were not free from drink. So with the characters in the dramas. The rich and wealthy invariably indulged in wine. We have no space to quote many passages from these. Only we give here the excellent observation of Mr. R. C. Dutt :—

“ We know from *Sakuntala* that there were grog shops, which were frequented by the very lowest castes ; while among the courtiers of a luxurious court, and among the profligate and the gay, drinking was not unknown. *Bharavi* has a canto. on joys of drinking, and *Kalidas* too often speaks of ladies

whose lips were scented with perfume of liquor ! Nagananda has an amusing passage relating to an intoxicated courtier in search for his mistress,—a slave girl. Drinking was almost universal in royal courts, and the ladies of royal house-hold did not refuse their share ! The Katha Sarit Sagara (chapter 110) thus describes the drinking hall of King Naravahana Dutta. "It was full of goblets, made of various jewels, which looked like so many expanded lotuses and strewn with many flowers, so that it resembled a lotus bed in a garden ; and it was crowded with ladies with jugs full of intoxicating liquor, who made it flash like the nectar appearing in the arms of Garuda. There they drank wine, that snaps those fetters of shame that bind the ladies of the royal household,—wine the essence of Love's-life, the ally of merriment !"

"The mass of the middle classes and the industrial and agricultural classes abstained from drink as they do to this day."\*

We suppliment a few passages only to this excellent extract, let me say here, that the industrial classes of the present age are not so sober as in Mr. Dutt's days (only 50 years hence).

In Mrichchakoti, we find that profligate youths

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\* Ancient India p. 788.

came to the house of a woman, to drink iced wine. (Act. IV).

In Ratnabali, we see at the ceremony in honour, of the God of Love, citizens, both male and female being drunk, revelling in song and dance (Act V.). We find wine is called 'ornament of woman.' (Act III). We find in Raghubansa, the victorious army of Raghu indulging in coconut-wine (4-42), in the Mahendra hills, and in wine at a vineyard in Persia (4-65). In this, we find the last of the Raghus indulged in wine so much and other debauchery that he died a premature death.

There are many passages showing ladies freely indulging in wine. It is a favourite with the poets to say that *Bakul* flower does not bloom, unless a lady has soaked it with a gargle of wine. Perhaps suggested by this wine scented flower.

Wine is called the 'fruit of enjoyment' in Megha Duta.

In those days of ease and plenty, wine was an object of enjoyment surely, but seldom we find the masses abused it.

## 2. Sculpture.

Like literature and art, sculpture too reflects the life of the nation of the particular age. Sculpture and art begin in India just at the Buddhist period. Let me quote Dr. Fergusson, "When Hindu sculpture first dawns upon us in the rails at Buddh Gaya and Bharut B. C, 200 to 250 it was thoroughly original, absolutely without foreign influence....."

The art certainly declined when the gate-ways at Sanchi were executed in first century of the Christian era...Its downward progress was arrested (probably) from a school of art implanted in that land by Bactrian Greeks or...by direct intercourse with Rome and Byzantium).

Its effects were certainly apparent at Amaravati in the 4th and 5th centuries, where a school of sculpture developed partaking the characteristics of both those of Central India and the West."\*

We have quoted the long extract to elucidate our points later.

We see that the "Asoke's pillars," as they are called at Gaya have some figures carved upon them,

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\* History of Indian Architecture p. 34.

showing the manners and customs of those days, and these are one of the earliest sculptures of early Indian art. Here we find domestic scenes representing love-making and drinking.\*

Then we come to Bharut rails, "making love and drinking are not represented here as at Sanchi—nor are the females represented nude as they are at Muttra. All are decently clothed from waist downwards at least, and altogether the manners and customs at Bharut are much purer as the art is better than it is in the more modern example at Sanchi. † These are truly Indian Arts without any foreign influence.

Then we come to Muttra School which has distinct trace of foreign influence—chiefly Greek. We find here "busts of two figures, a male and female, either making volent love to each other, or drinking something stronger than water." ‡

The beautiful rails at Sanchi portray men and women eating and drinking and making love.

In Grunwedel's *Buddhist Art in India* edited by J. Burges we find an interesting figure from the Sanchi rails, we quote his words :—

\* *History of Indian Architecture* p. 86.

† *History of Indian Architecture* p. 91.

‡ *History of Indian Architecture* p. 93.



“On the eastern gateway.....two figures are represented riding horned lions. One of the heads is clearly not of Aryan type, the woolly negro-like hair and thick coarse shape of the whole head—surprise one, this same figure holds a bunch of grapes in his hand. In India wine is unknown. There appears to be no word in the early-language for vine, or its cluster.\* Probably vine signifies the foreign influence. We also see two figures of two pedestals that are in Lahore Museum figured in that book. They are distinctly of Gandhara or Greek origin. One represents some Bacchanalian orgy, even the men in whose knee the women are seated look more Romans than orientals.” † The second represents “a vintage scene, in which boys, leopards, a scene of dalliance. Bacchus on a leopard and wine press of Europe (unknown in India but common in Persia) are in a distinctly Byzantine arrangement of the grape vine.” In the Ajanta cave we have got pictures of drunkards.

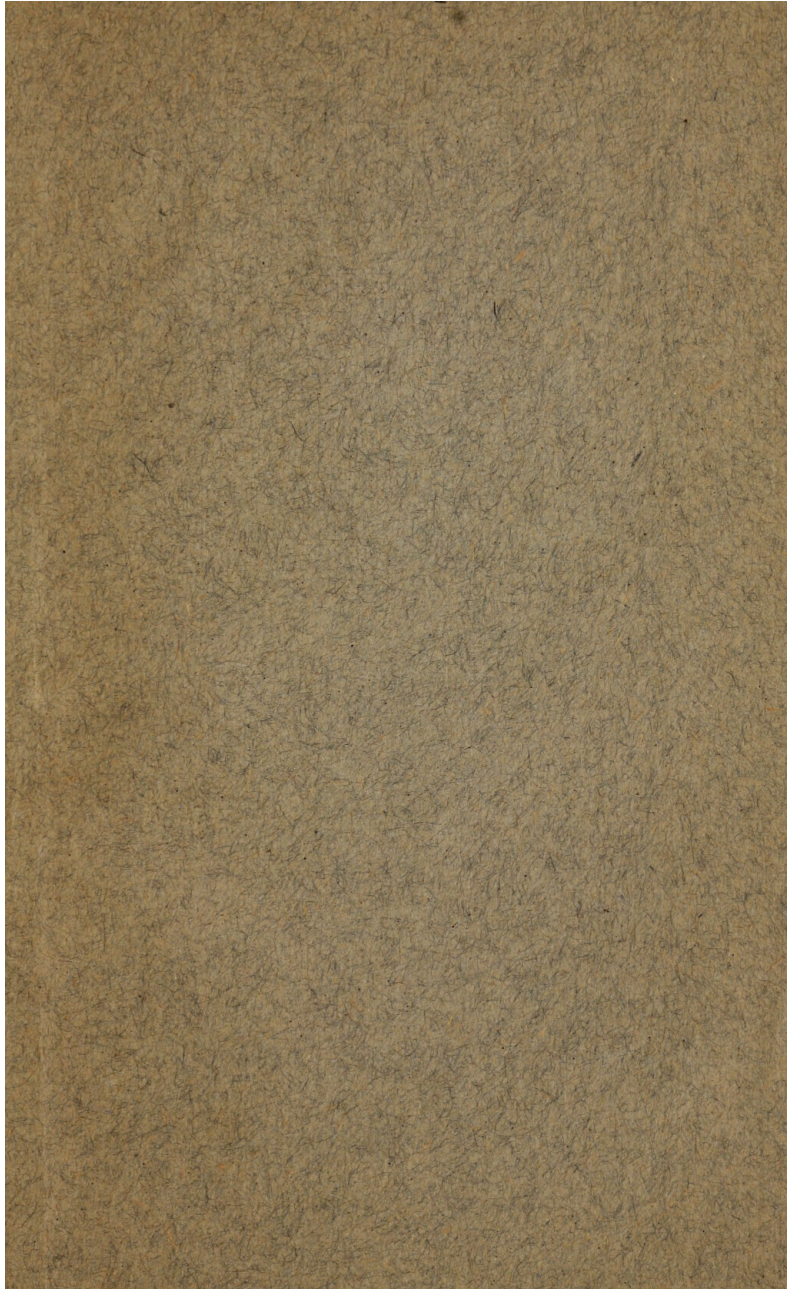
From all these we conclude that wine drinking was known in society in those days though not very common.

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\* Buddhist art in India p. 33, 34.

† Ibid p. 150.





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