

CANNABIS INDICA (Cannabis, Indian Hemp)

First mentioned in the *U. S. P.* in 1870, two varieties being described, named according to their origin, *Cannabis Americana* and *Cannabis Indica*. The 1880 edition continues this classification. Later editions drop the American variety, confining the drug to the Asiatic plant, until the edition of 1910, which makes no distinction between *Cannabis sativa* (American Hemp) and *Cannabis Indica*, mentioning the latter as a "variety."

Cannabis sativa, Linné, (or the variety *indica*, Lamarck), is an Oriental product whose beginnings are lost. Both Waring and Dymock state that cannabis is native to Persia and cultivated in India. Its history, as given by Dymock's *Pharmacographia Indica*, is so instructively interesting, as to lead us to give a portion, verbatim:

"The hemp plant, in Sanskrit Bhanga and Indra-sana, 'Indra's hemp,' has been known in the East as a fibre plant from prehistoric times. It is mentioned along with the Vedic plant Janjida, which has magic and medicinal properties, and is described in the Athavaveda as a protector, and is supplicated to protect all animals and properties. The gods are said to have three times created this herb (oshadhi). Indra has given it a

thousand eyes, and conferred on it the property of driving away all disease and killing all monsters; it is praised as the best of remedies, and is worn as a precious talisman; along with hemp, it prevents wandering fever and the evil eye."

The name of cannabis, together with its product, *hashish* or *bang*, threads the literature of both Arabia and India, it being continually mentioned throughout the *Arabian Nights*, for example:

"Going up to Gharib, he blew the powdered bang into his nostrils, till he lost his senses." Burton's *Arabian Nights, History of Gharib and his Brother*, Vol. VII.

Interest in connection with Oriental names applied to cannabis and its products, leads us to record the terms cited in the *Arabian Nights*, and to attempt, (perhaps unsuccessfully), to differentiate between the drug cannabis and its products, as therein given.¹

Bhang. (Burton) designates this as "The Arab *Banj* and the Hindu *Bhang*." He says, "The use of Bhang doubtless dates from the dawn of civilization, since the earliest social pleasures would be of an inebriating character." Herodotus (IV: C. 75), shows the Scythians burning the leaves and capsules in worship, and becoming drunken with the fumes. Galen also mentions intoxication by hemp. The name bhang is used most frequently in reference to the drug cannabis, but it is applied also to its products. Says Burton, (Vol. X: p. 165), "The poorer classes were compelled to puff their *Kayf* (*Bhang, Cannabis indica*) and sip their black coffee under a rainy sky." That this smoking of cannabis was very widely disseminated is shown in Vol. X:

¹ That many extravagant statements aside from thought creations are embodied in these wonderful tales all will admit. That they are based on the habits and histories of the Arabians few will deny. That in such as cannabis and other Oriental products, Burton can not be neglected, the writer of this history of drugs accepts.

p. 91, as follows: "The Bushmen and other wild tribes of Southern Africa threw their *Dakha* (*Cannabis indica*), on the fire and sat round it inhaling the intoxicating fumes." In the "Story of the Three Sharpers," (Vol. V: p. 19), the term *bast* appears as a *preparation of bhang*: "they would also expend two Nusfs (half a franc) upon Bast, which is Bhang." The term *flying bhang* refers to the best quality, "which flows fastest to the brain." For example, "Lastly she brought to them coffee which they drank, but hardly had it settled in their maws when the Forty Thieves fell to the ground, for she had mixed up with it *flying Bhang*, and those who had drunk thereof became like dead men." History of the Lovers of Syria, (*not Ala Baba and the Forty Thieves*). Vol. VI: p. 26.

The most artful bhang mixture was probably "*Concentrated Bhang* mixed with Opium, a drachm whereof would overthrow an elephant."

"Hardly had it settled well in his stomach when his head farwent his feet and he was as though he had been a year asleep."

Levigated bhang. This term probably refers to the smoke.

"He found King Toland asleep unattended; so he crept up and made him smell and sniff *levigated Bhang* and he became as one dead." Vol. VII: p. 31.

"Calling up a Marid by name Zu'azi'a gave him a drachm of *levigated Bhang* and said to him, 'Enter King Gharib's tent, put the Bhang up his nostrils and bring him to me.'" Vol. VII: p. 76.

Cretan bhang. This term occurs, as follows:

"Then the Caliph crowned a cup and put therein a piece of *Cretan Bhang*. . . . Hardly had it settled in his

stomach when his head forewent his heels and he fell to the ground.”

Bhang Antidotes. In a footnote Burton says, “As has been seen, acids have ever been and are still administered as counter inebrants, while hot spices and sweets greatly increase the effect of Bhang, Opium, Henbane, Datura, etc.” This is illustrated as follows:

“So he made him smell vinegar and frankincense.”
Vol. XI: p. 9.

“So they made him sniff vinegar, and he came to himself.” Vol. XI: p. 5.

Hashish. This term is used with many meanings, but it seems by Burton to be applied (but not restricted) to a form of cannabis taken or used voluntarily, as for example, “Another man, a *Hashish-eater*.” Possibly no better formula for the making of Hashish or description of its effects can be found, than that given on the several pages of the “Tale of the Kazi and the Bhang Eater,” (Vol. XV: pp. 194-241). From this we extract a few sentences that apply:

“Furthermore I conceive that the twain are eaters of Hashish, which drug when swallowed by man, garreth (maketh) him prattle of whatso he pleaseth and choseth, making him now a Sultan, then a Wazir, and then a merchant, the while it seemeth to him that the world is in the hollow of his hand.”

“Quoth the Sultan, ‘And what may be thy description of Hashish?’ Replied the Wazir.

(*Hashish Formula*) “ ’Tis composed of hemp leaflets whereto are added aromatic roots and somewhat of sugar; then they cook it and prepare a kind of confection which they eat, but who so eateth it, (especially

if he eat more than enough), talketh of matters which reason may on no wise represent.”

Kayf. The sensation is delightful. Sonnini says: “The Arabs give the name *Kayf* to the voluptuous relaxation, the delicious stupor produced by smoking of hemp.” Burton says, “I have smoked it and eaten it for months without other effect than a greatly increased appetite and a little drowsiness.” Footnote, Vol. XV. p. 196.

Ganjah or *Gunjah*. This term, prominent in East Indian lore, is not found in Burton’s Arabian translations, but it appears frequently in Dymock’s *Pharmacographia Indica*, from which we extract as follows, pp. 320-322:

“The intoxicating properties which the plant possesses in its Eastern home appear not to have been discovered until a more recent date, but in the fifth chapter of Menu, Brahmins are prohibited from using it, and in the sacred books of the Parsis the use of *Bana* for the purpose of procuring abortion is forbidden. In Hindu mythology the hemp plant is said to have sprung from the *amrita* produced whilst the gods were churning the ocean with Mount Mandara. It is called in Sanskrit *Vijaya*, ‘giving success,’ and the favorite drink of Indra is said to be prepared from it. On festive occasions, in most parts of India, large quantities are consumed by almost all classes of Hindus. The Brahmins sell Sherbet prepared with *Bhang* at the temples, and religious mendicants collect together and smoke *Ganja*. Shops for the sale of preparations of hemp are to be found in every town, and are much resorted to by the idle and vicious. Hemp is also used medicinally; in the *Raja Nirghanta* its synonyms are names which mean

'promoter of success,' 'the cause of a reeling gait,' 'the laughter moving,' etc.

"The seductive influences of hemp have led to the most extravagant praise of the drug in the popular languages of India, but in truth it is one of the curses of the country; if its use is persisted in, it leads to indigestion, wasting of the body, cough, melancholy, impotence and dropsy. After a time its votary becomes an outcast from society, and his career terminates in crime, insanity and idiocy.

"'Who *ganja* smoke do knowledge lack, the heart burns constantly,
The breath with coughing goes, the face as monkey's pale you see.'
—*Fallon*.

"According to tradition, the use of hemp as an intoxicant was first made known in Persia by Birarlan, an Indian pilgrim, in the reign of Khusru the First (A. D. 531-579), but as we have already stated, its injurious properties appear to have been known long before that date.

"There can be no doubt that the use of hemp as an intoxicant was encouraged by the Ismailians in the 8th century, as its effects tended to assist their followers in realizing the tenets of the sect:

"'We've quaffed the emerald cup, the mystery we know,
Who'd dream so weak a plant such mighty power could show!'

"Hasan Sabah, their celebrated chief, in the 11th century, notoriously made use of it to urge them on to the commission of deeds of daring and violence so that they became known as the Hashshashin or 'Assassins.' Hasan studied the tenets of his sect in retirement at Nishapur, doubtless at the monastery noticed by

O'Shaughnessy (*Bengal Dispensatory*), in the following terms: 'Haidar lived in rigid privation on a mountain between Nishapur and Rama, where he established a monastery; after having lived ten years in this retreat, he one day returned from a stroll in the neighborhood with an air of joy and gaiety; on being questioned, he stated that, struck by the appearance of a plant, he had gathered and eaten its leaves. He then led his companions to the spot, and all ate and were similarly excited. A tincture of the hemp leaf in wine or spirit seems to have been the favorite formula in which Sheikh Haidar indulged himself. An Arab poet sings of Haidar's emerald cup, an evident allusion to the rich green color of the tincture. The Sheik survived the discovery ten years, and subsisted chiefly on this herb, and on his death his disciples at his desire planted it in an arbor round his tomb. From this saintly sepulchre the knowledge of the effects of hemp is stated to have spread into Khorasan. In Chaldea it was unknown until 728 A. D., the kings of Ormus and Bahrein then introduced it into Chaldea, Syria, Egypt and Turkey.

“‘The Greeks were acquainted with hemp more than 2000 years ago; Herodotus mentions it as being cultivated by the Scythians, who used its fibre for making their garments, and the seeds to medicate vapour baths.’”

Imported into Europe preceding 1690, cannabis passed into disuse until Napoleon's expedition to Egypt (1809-10), when it was again revived by De Sacy and Bouger. Waring's *Pharmacopeia of India* states that the "fullest account of the history and physiological effects of Indian Hemp is furnished by Sir W. O'Shaughnessy's *Bengal Dispensatory*, pp. 579-604.

Its introduction into European medicine (1838-39), followed the experiments of O'Shaughnessy (484) in Calcutta, and since that time cannabis and its resin have received a place in most Pharmacopeias. From the beginning of East Indian history, hemp has been smoked as a narcotic intoxicant, and when surreptitiously added to sweetmeats and foods, it has, in Oriental life, been employed as a narcotic with the utmost recklessness. This is shown in the exaggerations of the *Arabian Nights*, which portrays so many life habits of those times. The writer of these studies (1906) found hashish of several qualities both in the bazaars of Asia Minor and Constantinople, one specimen "extra fine hashish" costing him, in a Constantinople bazaar, over two dollars (gold) an ounce.