



## DŪĠ-E WAḤDAT

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**DŪĠ-E WAḤDAT** “beverage of unity,” concoction made from adding hashish extract (*jowhar-e ḥaiš*) to diluted yogurt (Šahrī, VI, pp. 412, 423). The resulting tonic is drunk by certain mystics as a hallucinogen during their rites. ‘Alī-Akbar Dehḵodā, in his compendium of Persian proverbs and dicta (1339 Š./1960, I, p. 255), quoted a verse from Kamāl-al-Dīn Ḳojandī (d. 803/1399) in which the use of the narcotic by a Sufi sheikh is mentioned. Apparently some less scrupulous Sufis used the drink to attract followers (Šahrī, VI, p. 419).

A similar draft called *bangāb* was made from boiling cannabis leaves in water or milk or simply by adding powdered *bang* to water, which was sweetened with sugar. Those who sold this tonic were called *bangābī* or *bangābsāz* (Dehḵodā, s.v.). Whether or not it contained *dūġ* it was known by the generic name *dūġ-e waḥdat* and also as “cannabis tea.” In early 20th-century Isfahan *dūġ-e waḥdat* was reportedly called by the generic name *bang*. It had a noxious smell, and drinking it sometimes caused death (Mahdawī, p. 102). According to Ja‘far Šahrī, a drink containing more than two grains would be fatal to the nonaddict (III, p. 748). The medieval pharmacologist ‘Alī Heravī (ca. 447/1055) also mentioned the danger of overdosing on *bang* drinks, though he set the acceptable amount of the drug as no more than half a grain in a single draft. Those who overdose first lose sensation in their limbs, then foam at the mouth and develop redness in the eyes. As countermeasures Heravī suggested forcing down milk to induce vomiting (p. 88).

The wide distribution and long history of use of cannabis led Weston La Barre to suggest that it has been part of a “religio-shamanic complex of at least



Mesolithic age,” paralleling that of the more famous *soma* (pp. 93, 95-96). Drinking *bang* is well attested in classical Persian poetry (e.g., Farroḳī, p. 212 l. 4245; cf. Faqīhī, p. 729; Qazvīnī, IV, pp. 56-57; Browne, pp. 521, 569 n. 1, quoting Ḥāfeẓ and Jalāl-al-Dīn Rūmī).

The active ingredient of *dūġ-e waḥdat* is *bang*, extracted from the leaves of the cannabis plant; the chemical agent is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Among the best-known effects of the drug are anxiety followed by euphoria, a sense of excited well-being, rapid emotional change, heightened sensory awareness, feelings of enhanced insight, fragmented thought, impaired short-term memory, altered perceptions of time and space, a shifting sense of identity, hunger, and restlessness and hyperactivity followed by drowsiness and sleep (La Barre, p. 104). Most such feelings lend themselves well to what is known of mystical experience.

The chemistry of cannabis is nevertheless not well known, though it is certain that the mode of preparation influences its interaction with the human body. The part of the plant that is used may also influence the nature of the “high” (Segelman et al., p. 273). Tetrahydrocannabinol is a chief chemical component of cannabis, but it is by no means certain that it is the chief pharmacodynamic element. La Barre mentioned, for example, that “the whole marihuana fluid extract is approximately three times as potent as equivalent amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol.” Furthermore, the absorption of THC when smoked is three times as effective as when it is ingested. Be-

cause THC is soluble in body fats, its effects are cumulative, which may account for the widely varying experiences described by those who have taken it (La Barre, pp. 103-04; cf. Williams-Garcia, p. 142).

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