



TOBACCO PRODUCTS IN INDIA

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Introduction

The word tobacco was originally used to denote a “Y” shaped piece of cone or pipe called Tobago or tobaca that was used by Mexican Indians to inhale powdered leaves of a plant. Later, the plant came to be known by the name of the device, as “tobacco”. The generic name of tobacco plant, *Nicotiana*, is derived from the name of the French Ambassador to Portugal, Jean Nicot, who introduced tobacco to the French Court in 1560. *Nicotiana* is one of the 5 large genera of Solanaceae and is represented by about 68 recognized species, of which *tabacum* and *rustica* are extremely rare.

Tobacco was introduced to Europe in the late 15th century. Some time later in the 16th or early 17th century, Portuguese traders introduced it to India. Since then, tobacco use has spread rapidly seeping into all sections of society. Initially tobacco was smoked in India but later it was used for chewing and application over teeth and gingiva (smokeless form). In the course of time a spectrum of methods of use were developed.

Harmful Substance in tobacco

Tobacco is addictive, and extremely harmful to health. If tobacco was introduced today it would not be approved for consumption in any part of the world. Both smoked and smokeless tobacco contain an alkaloid nicotine, which is the main addictive agent. Apart from this, tobacco formulations contain thousands of chemical compounds, many of which are not only irritants but also potentially carcinogenic. The most potent carcinogens include tobacco-specific nitrosamines, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and many others.

Reasons for tobacco use in India

Tobacco habits are practiced in various forms, many of which are specific to certain areas of India. The use of tobacco is a complex issue influenced by a combination of social, cultural, and economic factors. What initially started mainly as peer group influenced practice and tooth-related complaints (cultural, traditional) usage has spread rapidly due to low awareness, lack of education, advertising, and availability of affordable tobacco products, mainly smokeless form.

SMOKING TOBACCO USE

CIGARETTE

About 30% of tobacco grown goes into cigarette production. Cigarette smoking is far more prevalent in urban areas than rural. Indian made cigarettes differ from their foreign counter part in many ways. About 93% American brands are filter tipped as compared to Indian counterparts which is only about 51%. Indian filters trap less nicotine due to their smaller length as compared to their American brands. Cigarette smoking usage is rapidly increasing in the youth of urban areas in both sexes.

BIDI

Bidi is the most popular form of use of tobacco in rural India. Bidis are made by rolling a dried rectangular piece of the temburni leaf into conical form secured by threads. Bidis produce a smaller volume of smoke than cigarette as they contain a small amount of coarsely ground tobacco. Yet bidis deliver more tar and higher concentration of toxic agents and nicotine than cigarettes.

CIGAR/CHEROOT/CHUTTA

These forms of tobacco are popular in certain regions of India. Cigars are made of air-cured, fermented tobacco, usually in factories. Cigars are expensive, and cigar smoking is predominantly an urban habit. Cheroots are small cigars made of heavy bodied tobacco; they have no wrapper and contain a single binder. Chuttas are coarsely prepared cheroots made by rolling a tobacco leaf into cylindrical shape and one end is tied with a thread. This product is widely used in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

REVERSE SMOKING

The term reverse smoking is used to describe the habit of smoking with the lighted end inside the mouth. In the coastal regions of Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam districts and parts of Orissa, chutta (pikka in Orissa) is smoked in this fashion. This type of smoking is often practiced by women. A typical smoker lights the chutta and draws a few puffs conventionally to ensure it is lit. It is then taken out and reversed and placed in the mouth. The temperatures of the palatal mucosa reach upto 58% in this form of smoking.

DHUMTI

Dhumti smoking is prevalent in Goa, origin of the word dhumti is from Konkani word dhumvor meaning smoke. Dhumti is a kind of conical cigar made by rolling tobacco in the leaf of jackfruit tree, occasionally in the leaf of dried banana plant or hansali plant. Unlike bidi, dhumti is not available at vendors and is prepared by individuals.

REVERSE DHUMTI SMOKING

Dhumtis are occasionally smoked in reverse generally by women in Goa.

HOOCLI SMOKING

Hookli is a clay pipe commonly used in Bhavnagar district, Gujarat. It has a stem 7 to 10cm long with a mouthpiece and bowl. The stem can be wooded with detachable bowl to reduce heat. Prior to inserting tobacco to the bowl a stone is kept to block tobacco from entering the stem. Few grams of sun dried tobacco flakes/powder are moistened with molasses in the palm and stuffed in the bowl and lit. Pie is smoked intermittently. This habit is seen solely in men.

CHILLUM

It is a straight 10-14cm long conical pipe made of clay. The chillum is held vertically, and to prevent tobacco from entering the mouth a pebble is placed. It is packed with coarsely cut tobacco and a glowing charcoal is kept on the top. The narrower end serves as the mouthpiece, wrapped in damp cloth to prevent mouth from heat and from tobacco entering the mouth. Chillum smoking is practiced in northern and eastern states of India.

HOOKAH

It is an Indian water pipe, the origin of it corresponds with the introduction of tobacco in India. It is said the Emperor Akbar received gift of tobacco and a pipe. He took a few puffs out of curiosity and courtesy. His physician forbade him from inhaling the smoke from tobacco which was an unknown substance. He suggested that if the smoke was passed through water it might become safer and hence the invention of hookah. Coarse tobacco packed in the bowl is lit by charcoal and smoke is drawn through water which cools and filters it. Mainly prevalent practice in villages.

VAPE/ELECTRONIC CIGARETTE

An electronic cigarette (e-cigarette), or vape, is a device that simulates smoking. It consists of an atomizer, a power source such as a battery, and a container such as a cartridge or tank. Instead of smoke, the user inhales vapor. As such, using an e-cigarette is often called "vaping". This form has become very popular in the newer generations. The atomizer is a heating element that vaporizes a liquid solution called e-liquid that cools into an aerosol of tiny droplets, vapor and air. The vapor mainly comprises propylene glycol and/or glycerin, usually with nicotine and flavoring. Its exact composition varies, and depends on matters such as user behavior. E-cigarettes are activated by taking a puff or pressing a button. Some look like traditional cigarettes, and most kinds are reusable.

SMOKELESS TOBACCO USE

These forms are prepared, chewed or sucked over the time then either swallowed or spitted out once it becomes bland. Smokeless forms are extremely popular among females too.

PAN (betel quid) with tobacco

Pan chewing is an ancient habit dating more than 2000 years. It has four main ingredients: betel leaf, areca nut, slaked lime and catechu. After its introduction in the 16th century, tobacco became an important part of the quid. A variety of commercially available forms of tobacco are available for this purpose. Both tobacco and areca nut are potential carcinogens here.

PAN MASALA/GUTKHA

Chief ingredients are areca nut, slaked lime, catechu, and condiments, several brands have tobacco in them. It is essentially all the elements of quid in a non perishable form, which can be kept and carried along for days. Available in attractive pouches/tins of varying weights and price. Extremely popular in India among masses.

MAINPURI TOBACCO

Components are tobacco, slaked lime, finely cut areca nut, camphor and cloves. Prevalent in parts of Uttar Pradesh.

MAWA

It is sold by vendors in cellophane paper tied like a small ball contains areca nut, tobacco, slaked lime and few drops of water. At the time of use the packets are taken in the palm, rubbed vigorously to homogenize the contents, then opened and flakes of unmixed tobacco are removed and mixture is chewed, then transferred to the mandible vestibule and sucked for 10 - 20 minutes till it becomes bland.

KHAINI

Two ingredients tobacco and slaked lime are carried separately in double ended or dual joint steel containers. Every use small amount of both taken in the palm are rubbed vigorously by thumb to make mixture alkaline and then place in mouth either in vestibule near premolars (Maharashtra/Gujarat) or near lower incisor (Bihar, UP) or dorsum of tongue (Bihar) . It is not chewed but sucked till bland.

PRODUCTS FOR APPLICATION

Several smokeless tobacco preparations like misri, gudhaku, bazaar, lal dant manjan, kala dant manjan and creamy snuff are intended primarily as dentifrices. However their use soon becomes addiction. Interestingly most of these products are used by females.