

2.1

Historical Records and Anecdotes: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times

Origin of the word 'tobacco'

Various theories are related to the origin of the word tobacco, which is thought to be derived from the Arabic word *tabaq*, meaning 'euphoria-producing herb'. It is said that the word tobacco is the Carib word *tabaco* (the name of the pipe in which tobacco was smoked).¹ It is possible that the word tobacco comes from the island of Tobago in the Carribean. Some sources refer to the origin of this word from the Tabasco state in Mexico. The word 'cigare' is derived from the Mayan word *sikar* which means 'to smoke'.² According to yet another theory, the word tobacco is derived from a Spanish word *tobaca* which is a Y-shaped instrument used by early American Indians to inhale snuff.³

Origin of tobacco

Tobacco appears to be as old as human civilization. Cultivation of the tobacco plant probably dates back 8000 years when two species of the plant, *Nicotiana rustica* and *Nicotiana tabacum*, were dispersed by American Indians through the southern and northern American continent (Box 2.1).⁴ Tobacco seeds were discovered in archaeological excavations in Mexico and Peru, and the remains of permanent settlements built around 3500 BC showed that tobacco was an important article to the inhabitants.⁴ Tobacco belongs to the family of plants called Solanaceae or the night

Box 2.1 American Indian myths about the origin of tobacco

One American Indian myth links the origin of man with that of the tobacco leaf:¹

'When the Great Spirit made the spirits of nature and the spirit ancestors of birds and animals, he conferred upon each a special power. Man he created last of all, but then found he had already given away every power, and there was nothing left to bestow upon this miserably weak, unendowed creature. So for man, the Great Spirit made a special plant: tobacco. At the first smell of it, the other spirits were filled with an insatiable craving for its fragrance. One by one, each petitioned to exchange his power for that of the new plant. The Great Spirit refused them all, saying that he too craved it, but that the gift was man's and he was henceforth free to share the plant with other spirits or to withhold it from them as he chose. And so, ever since, humans have appeased the spirits and obtained their help by leaving offerings of the leaf buried in the ground, by casting it in the air or into lakes and rivers, and most important, by burning it in the ceremonial pipe bowl.'

The Huron tribe has a beautiful legend about the genesis of tobacco.⁵

'A long time ago the soil was infertile and people were starving badly. Then the Holy Spirit sent a woman to earth to save the mankind. As she walked along the planet, every time her right hand touched the soil immediately potato would grow; if she touched the soil with her left hand then maize would appear. And, finally, when the world saw abundance of everything, the woman stopped walking to take rest. Later, tobacco began to grow on the very spot where she rested.'

shade family, which contains about 60 species including potato and the genus *Nicotiana*. *N. rustica*, a mild-flavoured, fast-burning species, was the tobacco originally raised in Virginia, but it is now grown chiefly in Turkey, India and Russia. Both the species of tobacco are annuals. Modern commercial varieties of tobacco have descended directly from *N. tabacum*.⁶

Variations in the use of tobacco

Historians believe that native Americans began using tobacco for medicinal and ceremonial purposes before 1 BC. First pictorial records of tobacco being smoked have been found on Guatemalan pottery. The documentation of the practice of inhaling the smoke of dried tobacco plants is available from the Mayan culture as early as the sixth century.⁷

Modern documented evidence of tobacco use has been available since the end of the fifteenth century. In 1449, Indians on Margarita Island, off the coast of Venezuela, were observed chewing a green herb which was carried in a gourd around their necks. It was assumed that the green herb, known as tobacco, was chewed to quench thirst.⁴

When Christopher Columbus landed in America on 11 October 1492, he was offered golden tobacco leaves but he threw them away. His crew members saw the natives smoking hand-rolled dried leaves and were intrigued by it. They became the first Europeans to witness the curious habit of smoking tobacco.⁸ In 1493, Ramon Pane, who accompanied Columbus on his second voyage, described the habit of Indians taking snuff through a Y-shaped tube. Pane is credited for being the first person to introduce tobacco seeds into Europe.⁷

Tobacco chewing appears to be widespread in the late 1500s in parts of southern America. Tobacco smoking was also popular in the 1500s. Columbus observed American Indians smoking thick bundles of twisted tobacco leaves wrapped in dried palm or maize leaves.⁴

Inhaling of powdered tobacco (snuff) seems to have come into vogue much later. Snuff was prepared by grinding tobacco leaves into a powder with a block and pestle made of rosewood. The Indians of Brazil were perhaps the first to use snuff. In Haiti, it was used as a medicine for cleaning nasal passages and as an analgesic. By the year 1519, Mexican Indians were known to have used tobacco powder to heal burns and wounds. They also inhaled powdered tobacco through a hollow Y-shaped piece of cone or pipe called *tobago* or *tobaca*.⁴

The journey of tobacco to Spain is believed to have been made through Columbus's crew, who carried tobacco plants and seeds with them and introduced its cultivation in Spain.² In 1558, Philip II of Spain sent Francisco Fernandes to Mexico. When he returned to Spain, Fernandes brought the tobacco plant.⁹

Oviedo, the leader of the Spanish expedition to Mexico, described what we know as a cigarette: 'A little hollow tube, burning at one end, made in such a manner that after being lighted they burn themselves without causing a flame.' He is thought to have brought tobacco leaves back to Spain in 1519.⁸

Jean Nicot was instrumental in introducing tobacco into Europe. He was the French ambassador in Portugal, who first introduced tobacco to the French Court in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The queen of France, Catherine de Medici, was suffering from strong migraines, which Jean Nicot cured by making her use powdered tobacco. This greatly enhanced his prestige. The tobacco plant thus got its generic name, *Nicotiana* after Jean Nicot.

In 1556, Andre Thevet initiated the cultivation of tobacco in Europe. The Europeans on account of their travels rapidly spread tobacco across Asia. Nicholas Monardes, a sixteenth century physician describes that Indian priests answered the queries of their patients by means of a tobacco-induced trance. After inhaling tobacco, the priest 'fell downe upon the grounde, as a dedde manne, and remaining so, according to the quantitie of the smoke that he had taken, and when the hearbe had doen his woorke, he did revive and awake, and gave them their answers, according to the visions, and illusions whiche he sawe'.⁸

Tobacco smoking had become a popular leisure activity in Europe during the early seventeenth century. The term 'to smoke' was introduced during the late seventeenth century. Till then one 'drank' tobacco smoke, generally through a pipe.¹⁰ Though the tobacco plant came to Europe through Spain, smoking as a habit became popular in the continent from England. Ralph Lane, the first Governor of Virginia and Sir Francis Drake were instrumental in bringing the habit of smoking to the notice of Sir Walter Raleigh. A tremendous fillip was given to this habit due to the influence and patronage of such a man as Sir Walter Raleigh.⁹

One popular story about Raleigh is that of a servant who found Raleigh smoking. Thinking that his master was on fire, the servant drenched him with beer. Raleigh has been regarded as the patron saint of smoking. Though he did not introduce the plant, he perfected a method of curing the leaf, which helped in popularizing smoking among the courtiers of his time.¹¹ During the seventeenth century, indulgence in tobacco spread rapidly across all nations.

All early explorers widely reported that in native American culture, women used little or no tobacco. The rare images of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which depicted a European woman with a pipe tended to portray her as sexually promiscuous or otherwise disreputable.¹² During the 1800s in France, 'Lorettes' prostitutes were the first women to smoke publicly near the Notre Dame de Lorettes Church.¹³

Within 150 years of Columbus's finding strange leaves in the New World in the late fifteenth century, the use of tobacco became pervasive worldwide. Its rapid spread and widespread acceptance characterize the addiction elicited by it. Tobacco was initially smoked from a tube or clay pipe. This form of smoking was followed by cigars and primitive cigarettes made by stuffing tobacco in a hollow cane tube, or by rolling crushed tobacco leaves in corn husk or other vegetable material.⁶ In 1499, Amerigo Vespucci reported American Indians chewing tobacco leaves along with a white powder.¹⁴

Introduction of tobacco into India

Tobacco was introduced into India by Portuguese traders during AD 1600. Its use and production proliferated to such a great extent that today India is the second largest producer of tobacco in the world. Soon after its introduction, it became a valuable commodity of barter trade in India. Trade expanded and tobacco spread rapidly along the Portuguese trade routes in the East, via Africa to India, Malaysia, Japan and China. During this period,

the habit of smoking spread across several South Asian countries. Virtually every household in the Portuguese colonies took up the newly introduced habits of smoking and chewing tobacco. Cochin and Goa, on the West Coast of India, and Machilipatnam along the East Coast, were the main ports for Portuguese trade.¹⁵

Tobacco was first introduced in the kingdom of Adil Shahi, the capital city of Bijapur, presently in Karnataka in south India, along the trading route of the Portuguese. Asad Beg, ambassador of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, visited Bijapur during 1604–1605 and took back large quantities of tobacco from Bijapur to the Mughal Kingdom in the north and presented some to Akbar along with jewel-encrusted European-style pipes. Several nobles in Akbar's court were also given tobacco and pipes, and tobacco was appreciated by everyone. The presentation of this herb to the emperor was discussed animatedly in the court of Akbar.¹⁶

About his visit to the court of Akbar, Asad Beg writes: 'His Majesty [Akbar] was enjoying himself after receiving my presents; and asking me how I had collected so many strange things in so short a time. When his eye fell upon the tray with the pipe and its appurtenances he expressed great surprise and examined the tobacco, which was made up in pipefuls; he inquired what it was and where I got it. The Nawab Khan-i-Azam replied: "This is tobacco, which is well-known in Mecca and Medina, and this doctor has brought it as a medicine for your Majesty." His Majesty looked at it and ordered me to prepare and take him a pipeful. He began to smoke it, when his physician approached and forbade his doing so ... As I had brought a large supply of tobacco and pipes I sent some to several of the nobles, while others sent to ask for some; indeed all, without exception, wanted some, and the practice was introduced. After that the merchants began to sell it, so the custom of smoking spread rapidly.'⁹

Many courtiers objected to the smoking of the foreign leaf, as they thought it could be harmful. A pro-tobacco nobleman countered this concern,

stating to the emperor that objections from commoners to anything new are universal. Such an objection lack a basis of knowledge and are, therefore, not rationally defensible and that European rulers and aristocrats included many wise men and such men would not smoke tobacco if tobacco was not good.¹⁷

In the *Subhasitaratnabhandagara*, the seven Sanskrit verses of unknown date and authorship, the use of tobacco is mentioned. These are thought to be written at the time when tobacco use became extremely popular in India.⁹ The following verses provide some details about tobacco use:

Verse 2:

दरिद्रयशिलोऽपि नरस्तामाखुं नैव मुश्रति।
निवारितोऽपि मार्जारस्तमाखुं नैव मुश्रति॥२॥

Even a cat that is being driven away, never leaves a mouse; similarly, howsoever poor a man may be, he does not leave the use of tobacco.

Verse 4:

‘शक्त्तमाखुचूर्ण’ Dried powder of tobacco leaves was used for smoking and chewing.

‘सुधया अशन’ The habit of chewing tobacco powder mixed with *chunam* had become common.

Reddening ‘रगिता’ of the mouth was caused by chewing tobacco mixed with *chunam* (सुधा).

The users of पर्ण (betel leaf) and betel nut (पूग) with सार (खदिरसार), i.e. powdered catechu, also used to chew the tobacco powder in combination with these ingredients of *tambula* (betel).

Multicultural diffusion of tobacco

Tobacco could successfully seep through the diaphanous cultural membranes in many continents. This was facilitated by the medicinal properties attributed to tobacco, its ability to suppress hunger and provide mild intoxication, and its easy assimilation into cultural rituals.¹⁸ The versatility in the methods of using tobacco

made it popular across the globe and enabled its use and acceptability in various sociocultural contexts around the world. Tobacco was often used to avert hunger during travel and sustain long hours of work.¹⁵

Tobacco smoking became widespread throughout Asia. The intake of snuff prevailed in China, while tobacco chewing predominated in India. The use of pipe was popular in Africa. In India, tobacco was chewed along with betel and was offered to guests.¹⁸ Thus, tobacco also became a facilitator of social interaction.

Promotion of tobacco as a medicinal plant across the world

Among the South American Indians, tobacco was perceived to have an essential sacred function as a ‘supernatural, purifying, mortifying and revitalizing agent during life crises ceremonies’.¹⁹ It was used by shamans, in combination with other drugs, to induce narcotic or psychotropic trances as a means to enter the metaphysical plane.

With the use of tobacco in different parts of the world, began the controversy about whether it was good to smoke tobacco. There was a coterie of physicians who promoted tobacco as a medicinal plant. In the sixteenth century a leading physician of Seville, Nicolas Monardes, reported the medicinal properties of tobacco, identifying 25 ailments that tobacco could ‘cure’—ranging from toothache to cancer.¹⁸ During the seventeenth century, one authority advised a pregnant woman to refrain from consuming tobacco, while another strongly recommended it as beneficial for the growth of the foetus.¹⁸

In the sixteenth century, the European and Asian systems of medicine were based on the notion of balance. According to the European humoral system of medicine, the human body consisted of a combination of four opposing qualities, i.e hot and cold, moist and dry. All diseases were believed to be caused due to

imbalances, e.g. excess heat and excess moisture. Tobacco was attributed to have hot and dry properties and was believed to have the power to expel excess moisture from the body. According to this theory, old people were advised not to smoke as ageing was understood to be a process of the body drying up. The Chinese Yang–Yin (hot–cold) medical system also classified tobacco to be having similar medicinal properties and effects on body. Interesting accounts exist of tobacco users remaining unaffected by malaria, while non-users succumbed to the illness in the Yuan Province.¹⁸

Medicinal attributes of tobacco in medieval India

Contrary to the Chinese and European systems, the Indian system of Ayurveda, also based on the concept of hot and cold, and of balance, never formally recommended the medicinal use of tobacco.¹⁸ Inhaling and smoking of aromatic herbs was practised in India in as early as the seventh century. Thus, when tobacco was introduced as a smoking substance, it was naturally considered a medicinal herb but was not recommended by Ayurveda. However, the belief that smokeless tobacco has a protective effect on teeth and is a pain killer is widely prevalent in many parts of rural India. Use of tobacco products as a dentifrice among adolescents in India has recently been reported, highlighting the continuation of the misconception till date.²⁰ Thus, due to different groups ascribing special virtues to tobacco, within a short period, it developed firm roots in the sociocultural milieu of the country. Although initially tobacco was only smoked, with time, diverse methods of smoking and chewing tobacco were devised.

A description of the tobacco plant, its ‘medicinal’ values and adverse effects is found in *Yogaratanakara*, a medical compendium composed between AD 1625 and AD 1750, which is one of the classic works in the Sanskrit literature published by Anandashrama, Pune in 1900. This text refers to tobacco as a smoking plant having

medicinal properties. It is said to facilitate smooth intestinal functioning and motion, prevent toothache by killing germs, cure itching on the skin, control wind in the body, and is also said to be useful in the treatment of scorpion bites. It is worth noting that even now, in some rural areas of India, people use tobacco for these purposes. On the other hand, notable adverse effects of tobacco use are also indicated in this work such as ‘giddiness, weakening in eyesight, and making semen less virile’.²¹

Progression of tobacco smoking in India

A Persian author’s extract lists some details of the progression of tobacco use and cultivation in India during the seventeenth century.⁹ Some pertinent points from this extract are given below.

1. Tobacco is referred to as an ‘European plant’.
2. Its cultivation became speedily universal.
3. It ‘rewarded the cultivator far beyond every other article of husbandry’.
4. Smoking of tobacco pervaded all ranks and classes during the reign of Shah Jahan (AD 1628–1658). Tobacco was often preferred over other necessities of life.
5. References were made to the use of *chillum* and *hookah*.

John Freyer in his travels during AD 1672–1681 in East India refers to the tobacco consuming habits of Moors in India, and remarks: ‘Their Chiefest Delight and Pride is to be seen smoking tobacco cross-legg’d in a great chair at their doors, out of a long Brass Pipe adapted to a large Crystal Hubble–bubble fixed in a Brass Frame, their Menial Servants surrounding them.’⁹

Due to the widespread use of the *hookah*, it soon became a general article of gift during the seventeenth century. *Hookah* is mentioned as one of the gift items listed in the things to be presented to the Faujdar of Hugli, dated 3 April 1682.⁹

Origin and popularity of the hookah

The origin of the *hookah* corresponds to the introduction of tobacco into India. When Emperor Akbar received the gift of tobacco and a pipe from a Portuguese ambassador, he took a few puffs out of curiosity and courtesy. The appreciation of tobacco smoke in the court of Akbar was objected to strongly by his royal physician, who forbade him to inhale the smoke, since he was concerned about the ill effects of smoking.²² Hakim Abul Fath, the Sadr-i-Jahan (chief justice and administrator) in Akbar's court, opposed the circulation of tobacco but Akbar permitted it. A compromise was reached wherein Hakim Abul Fath suggested a remedy to mitigate the pernicious effect of tobacco on health. He advised that tobacco smoke should be first passed through water for purification. This led to the creation of the *hookah* ('hubble-bubble' or narghile), which became the prevalent form of smoking in the country.²² Indian men and women smoked *hookahs*, wherein flavoured tobacco was used. Tobacco was flavoured with molasses and kept alight with burning charcoal, the smoke passing through a water bowl to cool and filter it.

It is noteworthy that Hakim Abul Fath sought a 'remedy' to counteract the harmful health effects of tobacco soon after its introduction, though the Europeans did not devise any measures to check the harmful effects of tobacco.²² However, passing tobacco smoke through water only filters suspended particles and in no way reduces the dangerous effects of tobacco smoke on the human body.

Due to its origin and its patronage by Mughal rulers, *hookah* became popular in those parts of India where the Mughals had a strong influence. *Hookah* was popular among men and women of aristocratic and elite classes, especially in north India. As a result, *hookah* smoking became a part of the culture, and sharing of a *hookah* became socially acceptable and got associated with brotherhood and a sign of conveying equality.²³

Under the Mughal reign, ornamental *hookah* became a status symbol, and a wide variety of



Fig. 2.1 An East India Company painting of a *bibi* (woman) sitting on a western chair, contentedly smoking a *hookah*²⁴

hookahs were available. The type of *hookah* ranged from those made of engraved silver, brass and other precious materials, and decorated with enamel or jewels for the upper class, to wooden or coconut shell for the lower class.

Paintings of the Mughal period show both men and women smoking *hookahs* (Fig. 2.1).^{23,24} After its origin in Bihar, the *hookah* became even more popular and its manufacture spread to other parts of India in 1905.

A dictionary of Urdu, classical Hindi and English written by J.T. Platt, London, 1884 states: 'The word "tobacco" is from the language of Hayti and meant first the pipe, secondly the plant, thirdly the sleep which followed its use.'¹⁹

The *hookah* inspired many writers of that time to write in its appreciation and the peculiar sound that emanates while it is being smoked. An example: 'It is a friend in whose bosom we may repose our most confidential secrets, and a counselor upon whose advice we may rely in our most important concerns—the music of its sound puts the warblings of the nightingale to shame, and the fragrance of its perfume brings a blush on the cheek of a Rose'.²⁴

The employees of the East India Company widely adopted the habit of using *hookah* and

its use became common. It was later replaced by the cheroot as more conservative *memsahibs* (British women) started arriving in India and frowned on this strange 'native' habit.²⁴

History of cigars

Cigars originated in the Caribbean Islands. The mingling of French and British troops in Spain during the Peninsular War resulted in the entry of cigars into northern Europe.²⁵ The cigar was introduced into India around 1670.²⁵

In India, commoners used *chutta* in Andhra Pradesh. There were a few unsuccessful attempts made to mechanize cigar production in Nashik (Maharashtra). The cigar industry at Woriyur, near Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu, was a prosperous industry at one time and cigars made in this industry had good demand in the international market. Till about 1971, this industry earned about Rs 600,000 (US\$ 12,500) worth of foreign exchange. However, the prosperity of this industry declined after the Union budget of 1978 imposed a 200% excise duty on branded cigars and cigarettes, which caused a steep reduction in the demand for cigars.²⁵

History of cigarettes

Cigarettes were popular among the Aztecs in 1518 when Spanish explorers sailed to the New World. Cigarettes were introduced to northern Europe during 1850s, when the British brought it back from the Crimean War. Around 1865, cigarettes reached the United States and around 1880, cigarettes were being mechanically manufactured. The first cigarette factory, Ferme Cigarette Factory, was established in St Petersburg in Russia in 1850.²⁵

The cigarette industry

The first cigarette factory, the Indian Tobacco Company of what is now known as ITC (formerly Imperial Tobacco Company) was established in Monghyr, Bihar, in 1906. In 1912, the first brand 'Scissors' was launched. The history of ILTD (Indian Leaf Tobacco Development Division),

ITC's research subsidiary, reveals the history of production of cigarette tobacco in India. By 1928, the ILTD had obtained definite results and markedly increased the area under cultivation of Virginia tobacco.²⁶ At present, many national and multinational companies taken together manufacture about 100 brands of cigarettes.¹⁶ The economic history of tobacco cultivation and manufacture is given in Section 2.2.

Other smoking forms of tobacco

By 1610, smoking had become extensive, among all socioeconomic and gender groups. *Cheroots* were commonly smoked by both Indian men and women, and in south India. Smoking *chutta* was noted in the East Coast of India during 1670.¹⁵ Both women and men, whether nobles or commoners, smoked tobacco.¹⁶ *Beed i* smoking was mentioned in 1711. It was described as a product about the size of the little finger, containing a small quantity of tobacco wrapped in the leaf of a tree and sold in bundles of 20–30 pieces. This description of the finger-sized products corresponds to *beedi* temporarily available in India.¹⁵

Tobacco chewing in India

Tobacco, introduced as a product to be smoked, gradually began to be used in several other forms in India. It became an important additive to *paan* (betel quid).

Paan chewing as a habit has existed in India and South-East Asia for over 2000 years. Stone inscriptions from the year AD 473 are historical evidence of its existence. In Hindu culture (the predominant religion in India), *paan* chewing is referred to as one of the eight *bhogas* (enjoyments) of life.¹⁶ *Paan* chewing was adopted even by invading kings and settlers in India. It was also a part of the Mughal culture. Several Mughal rulers were great connoisseurs of *paan* and employed specialists skilled in preparing *paans* to suit all occasions. The social acceptance and importance of *paan* increased further during the Mughal era.

The practice of chewing betel quid reached India by the first century or earlier. Some scholars believe that it was introduced from the South Sea Islands, Java and Sumatra, through contacts with the South Pacific Islands.⁹ *Paan* chewing became a widely prevalent form of smokeless tobacco use after tobacco use took roots in India.²³ Women ate *paan* for cosmetic reasons as chewing it produced a bright red juice that coloured their mouth and lips. The ancient scriptures have mentioned the use of *paan* being forbidden to people who adopt a religious mode of life or observe vows, widows, menstruating women and students. This popular practice became a convenient vehicle for chewed tobacco. Inclusion of tobacco as one of the ingredients of *paan* highlights the importance of this product and wide social acceptability of tobacco chewing in ancient India. Tobacco was chewed by itself, with areca nut or with lime in India in as early as 1708.¹⁶

These historical accounts reveal that contemporary tobacco habits had beginnings during the seventeenth century. The Marathi poet Madhva Munisvara refers to तमाखू (tobacco), ज़रदा (tobacco used for chewing) and smoking accessories in some of his songs.

Thomas Bowrey, in his *Account of countries round the Bay of Bengal* mentioned that in the city of Achin, in the north of Sumatra, he was honoured with 'Betels and areca to eat and tobacco to chew, a custom used by all India and south seas over'.⁹

Early trade in tobacco

Tobacco cultivation started in India in the seventeenth century during Akbar's reign. Tobacco cultivation was well established by the time the East India Company arrived.²⁴ With the increase in the popularity of tobacco, it began to be grown in abundance in India. By the middle of the seventeenth century, from being a valuable commodity in barter trade it became an item of export to many ports along the Red Sea.

Tobacco use was popular to the extent that certain types of tobacco were especially imported during the early eighteenth century. The Maratha King Shahu, who was brought up at the Mughal court from where he developed the habit of smoking tobacco in his early life, used two types of tobacco:

- (i) *Surati* (obtained from Surat) and
- (ii) *Bagdadi* (obtained from Baghdad)

Both these types of tobacco mentioned as 'तमाखू सुरती' and 'तमाखू बगदादी' have been included in the list of articles ordered by Maratha King Shahu from the English, through Kanhoji Angria on 3 August 1715.⁹

Prohibitions and bans on tobacco use across the world

The demand for tobacco kept expanding steadily across the world and provided the impetus for increased production of tobacco. With the advent of controversies against tobacco use and concerns regarding the ill effects of tobacco use on human health, restrictions were laid in the past as well.

In 1586, King Felipe II, spoke of the tobacco plant as a 'forbidden and harmful plant'.²⁷ Sultan Murad IV of Turkey believed that tobacco use caused infertility and reduced the fighting capacity of his soldiers. He declared tobacco consumption to be a capital offence in 1633.¹⁸ King James I of England has been described as the most learned man to ever occupy a British throne. In 1604, he increased taxes on tobacco by 4000%, from 2 pence/lb to 6 shillings 10 pence/lb, to reduce imports to the country.²⁸ In 1604 he wrote *A counterblast to tobacco*, where he made it evident that smoking is a bad practice. In this 'counterblast', the most interesting lines are the following: 'A custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fume thereof nearest resembling the horrible stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless ...'²⁹

Tobacco reached Iran from India and Portugal through traders. In Iran, smoking of tobacco had become such a fashion that high officials and nobles used to smoke even on horseback while travelling. Soon, the habit became so popular that even the general public started offering *hookah* to guests. Since many soldiers were addicted to smoking, Khalil Pasha of Iran issued a prohibitory decree against tobacco smoking and announced that anybody caught smoking would have his lips cut and eyes taken out. There is also documented evidence of a trader who was burnt to death along with his bags of tobacco for smoking.²⁹

Prohibitions in India

Soon after its introduction towards the end of Akbar's reign, tobacco became a popular product. However, Jahangir—the son of Akbar, like his contemporaries, King James I of England and Shah Abbas I of Persia, believed tobacco to be a noxious drug and forbade its use.³⁰ Jahangir, after his accession on 24 October 1605, passed 12 orders to be observed as rules of conduct (*dastur-ul-amal*). These have been mentioned in his memoirs (*Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri*). His fifth order runs: "They should not make wine or *darbahara* (rice-spirit) or any kind of intoxicating drug or sell them."³⁰

It is noteworthy that within twelve years of its introduction in India, Jahangir noticed the ill effects of tobacco and took measures to prohibit its use. In 1617, Jahangir passed orders against tobacco smoking and he referred to the efforts undertaken by Shah Abbas of Iran to prohibit the practice of smoking (Box 2.2).

Jahangir says: 'In consequence of the disturbance that tobacco brings about in most temperaments and constitutions, I had ordered that no one should smoke it. My brother Shah Abbas has also become aware of the mischief arising from it and had ordered that in Iran no one should venture to smoke.'³⁰ However, within a few years of his orders, tobacco was cultivated on an extensive scale and, by 1623, tobacco was

Box 2.2 Indian ambassador incurs Shah of Iran's displeasure for smoking

Jahangir sent his ambassador, Mirza Barkhordar Khan Alam to Shah Abbas I, the King of Iran. Shah Abbas did not like the smoke of *hookah*. Mirza Barkhordar Khan Alam was a habitual smoker and was addicted to smoking. He always carried a golden *chapak* (long pipe) with him. While he was sitting with the ambassadors of Spain, England and the Ottoman Empire, with Shah Abbas I, at Imam Quli Khan's house, the Indian ambassador smoked from the *chapak*. The black, foul-smelling smoke went from his mouth towards the king and others. Shah Abbas I did not like this tobacco smell but out of courtesy did not say anything. He asked the Spanish ambassador in Turki, so that the Indian ambassador would not understand, whether in his country people liked to smoke tobacco. The Spanish ambassador answered that 'in Spain, except the Red Americans and black-skinned Africans, nobody likes tobacco.' The Shah laughed at it and to avoid smoke and the Indian ambassador he left the place, but not before showing his disgust by lifting the turban of the host (Imam Quli) and throwing it away.²⁹ Jahangir later quoted the edicts of Shah Abbas I against smoking, in support of his own orders of prohibition.

being exported from the port of Surat.³⁰

Edward Terry, who in his youth was chaplain to Sir Thomas Roe, the ambassador of King James I in the court of Jahangir, was in India during 1615–1618. Terry's writings mention that Indians grew tobacco in abundance.³⁰ It is not clearly mentioned in the *Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri* whether tobacco cultivation was prohibited as per Jahangir's orders. It is possible that Jahangir issued orders against the manufacture of wine but did not prohibit the cultivation of tobacco. He explicitly issued prohibitory orders for smoking of tobacco but possibly did not issue any order against the cultivation of tobacco, since it was a commodity for export.³⁰

However, Jahangir did not enforce any kind of penalty as was done by Khalil Pasha of Iran. Jahangir was certainly milder in this matter, though he was stern on some other issues of that time. This may have been because many of the nobles had become addicted to tobacco.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, the use of tobacco had become widely prevalent among warriors in the army of the Maratha King Shivaji. In 1673, Shivaji issued an official order in which he warned his officers against careless smoking of tobacco pipes. He highlighted possible damage due to fire resulting from the careless use of tobacco, which could destroy the fodder for horses, etc.⁹ The relevant extract from the order reads: 'Some will take away live coal for smoking their tobacco-pipes with, without minding the direction in which the wind might be blowing or the grass that might have been lying about, thus causing ruinous fires unexpectedly.'⁹

Influence of religion on the use of tobacco

Tobacco thrived everywhere in the world despite some social disapproval. References of tobacco being regarded as unholy in religious circles and its condemnation are cited in the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A religious Marathi Muslim poet of the seventeenth century, Shaikh Mahomad at Shrigonde village of the Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra, vigorously condemned the use of tobacco.⁹ The following information is gathered from a 32-stanza extract from his work.

1. The habit of smoking tobacco was prevalent in all ranks of society.
2. The use of tobacco was not confined only to men but was extended to women as well (Stanza 26).
3. The evil effects of tobacco are noted by Shaikh Mahomad (Stanza 30).
4. Tobacco was not viewed with favour in the religious circles to which Shaikh Mahomad belonged.
5. Shaikh Mahomad exhorts people to adopt a spiritual mode of life and avoid tobacco.
6. The above extract contains references to
 - (i) तमाखू—tobacco
 - (ii) गुडगुडी—hookah
 - (iii) चिलमी—(earthen) tobacco pipe

7. The same *hookah* or tobacco pipe was used by men and women of different castes without any sense of cleanliness. Even the Brahmins (a member of the highest or priestly Hindu caste) were addicted to its use.

The Marathi poet Madhva Munisvara also condemned the use of tobacco in this poem.

जोगी जंगम सेवडे म्हणति ते आम्हांत यावे सुखें ।
आफू भांग तमाखू सेविति तथा तें तत्व बेंधू मुखें ॥

The sentence translates as:

Whatever sermons are delivered to us by the sadhu and the wise, all that should be practised by us. We should not have the habit of taking आफू (opium), भांग (hemp) and तमाखू (tobacco), and we should also enlighten the people who consume them about their effects.

गुडगुडीचें पाणी नव्हे मंदाकिनी ।
जीर मेखूरुनि उतरलें ॥६॥
अपवित्र गांजा तंबाखूचा धूस ।
धूपारतीसम लेखू नये ॥७॥

These lines of his poem refer to गुडगुडी (*hookah*) and the smoke of गांजा (hemp) and तमाखू (tobacco) being considered अपवि (unholy) among religious circles before AD 1733. The lines translate as:

The water of the sacred Mandakini river which descends from the Meru mountain is not to be compared with the normal water of pot. In the same manner, the smoke of tobacco and hemp is not to be compared with the sacred smoke of dhoop and incense.

In the Hindu *Dharma Shashtra* (code of behaviour), the areca nut is said to please God *Brahma* (the creator), the betel leaves pay homage to Lord *Vishnu* (the protector), and slaked lime bows to Lord *Siva* (the destroyer). Ancient scriptures stipulate the number of betel leaves with which a *paan* must be made for specific individuals or use.

Sikhism and the use of tobacco

Proscription of tobacco in Sikhism has strong links with history. The tenth and last guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh made a rule that all Sikhs should abstain from smoking saying: ‘Wine is bad, *bhang* destroyeth one generation, but tobacco destroyeth all generations.’ He banned tobacco on 13 April 1699.²⁹ The same day the Guru preached that each Sikh must take an oath at his baptism (the Amrit ceremony) that they will not use tobacco, which is the first baptismal rite that explicitly asks the person to abstain from tobacco.³¹

In 1931, the supreme Sikh Authority, the Akal Takhat, made the Amrit pledge more stringent while announcing the Sikh code of conduct—*The Reht Maryada*. This code’s Section four, Chapter X, Article XVI (J) describes the first tobacco control edict that all Sikhs are supposed to follow.³² In this chapter, smoking and drug abuse are listed as part of the four misdeeds or *kurahat*.

Zoroastrian beliefs

Parsis, the Zoroastrians of India, landed on the West Coast of India during AD 936 or AD 716.³³ They fled from Persia to save themselves from the Arab conquerors who had invaded Persia.³⁴ Parsis landed in India carrying nothing but a holy flame from their temple. This small minority considers the fire as sacred and worships it. Their customs and manners forbid smoking.

Islam

The Holy Koran has no specific proscriptions against tobacco use. However, the Koran forbids the use of addictive or intoxicating substances and further proscribes harming oneself. The interpretation of these injunctions varies among

people, with smokers tending to deny that they are addicted or that tobacco use is harmful to health. With growing scientific evidence of both the addictive properties and health hazards of tobacco, an opportunity exists of seeking re-interpretation of these injunctions by Islamic scholars.

Debates around tobacco at the dawn of Independence

Mahatma Gandhi, who led the movement for Indian independence from British rule, repeatedly spoke and wrote against the use of tobacco. He believed it to be both harmful to health and a waste of money.

India attained independence in the year 1947, and the Constitution of India came into effect on 26 January 1950. A draft of the constitution was published in February 1948. According to Article 47 of the Constitution: ‘State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health.’

In 1948, Sardar Bhopinder Singh Mann, who was a member of Parliament and part of the drafting committee, proposed putting the word ‘tobacco’ between the words ‘drinks’ and ‘drugs’ in this clause. He stated: ‘I am aware that in moving this amendment, I would be incurring the displeasure of the influential members of this House.’ He also said: ‘I have no doubt that tobacco is an intoxicant and is more harmful to health than liquor ... Take the villagers; they get liquor only off-and-on, but they smoke tobacco day and night ... As far as the economic aspect is concerned, I can assure you that much greater loss is incurred on account of tobacco than by liquor.’ The Constituent Assembly rejected his motion.¹⁷

2.1 HISTORICAL RECORDS AND ANECDOTES

KEY MESSAGES

- Tobacco cultivation has a history of about 8000 years.
- Europeans were introduced to tobacco when Columbus landed in America in 1492.
- Portuguese traders introduced tobacco in India during 1600. Tobacco became a valuable commodity in barter trade and its use spread rapidly.
- Tobacco's easy assimilation into the cultural rituals of many societies was facilitated by the medicinal (and perhaps intoxicating) properties attributed to it.
- Tobacco smoking became a popular leisure activity in Europe during the early seventeenth century.
- Introduced initially in India as a product to be smoked, tobacco gradually began to be used in several other forms. *Paan* (betel quid) chewing became a widely prevalent form of smokeless tobacco use.
- Although some Chinese and European systems of medicine supported the use of tobacco, Ayurveda—the Indian system of medicine—never supported the use of tobacco as medication.
- The ill effects of tobacco use on human health were recognized even in the sixteenth century, which led to restrictions on its use even in earlier centuries.
- Tobacco thrived everywhere in the world despite social (and some religious) disapproval.