

INDIAN TOBACCO

AND ITS PREPARATIONS



INDUSTRY PUBLISHERS LTD.,

— KESHUB BHABAN —

22. R. G. KAR ROAD, SHAMBAZAR, CALCUTTA.

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INDIAN TOBACCO

AND ITS PREPARATIONS.

With tried Recipes and practical Hints,
and Details of every Process simply
explained and the Secret of the
Art fully exposed.

SIXTH EDITION.



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CHAPTER I.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS.

THE pleasure and solace derived from the enjoyment of the various preparations of tobacco have been acclaimed by its votaries as simply unspeakable and those of them with a facile pen have offered panegyrics with pulsating emotion at the feet of the Lady Nicotine and her most distinguished retinue. Some of them would go so far as to call tobacco 'sublime' while others would deem it a 'godsent boon to the weary travellers in the journey of life.' Is it not perplexing how the roguish tobacco which chokes one with smoke and fills with embers would capture the fancy of the young and old alike!

SPREAD OF TOBACCO.

The history of the origin and introduction of tobacco preparations in India is shrouded in mystery and there prevails considerable divergence of opinion in this matter. But all opinions converge to the view that tobacco was introduced into India by the Portuguese in the heyday of their adventurous career as a worthy present to the Grand Moghul Court of India. Its increasing popularity among the nobles led to rapid evolu-

tion and perfection in the art of making delicious tobacco preparations.

The development and spread of the tobacco habit among the Indian people is not within the purview of the present treatise. It may simply be remarked in passing here, that ever since its introduction, it has been gaining in popularity till to-day it has come to be reckoned as a most democratic substance being enjoyed by the rich and the poor alike, and there are very few commodities in India, nay, in the whole world, which are so universally relished by the people as tobacco in some form or other.

There have been campaigns against the use of tobacco preparations from time to time, denouncing this as the fruitful parent of all that is physically injurious or morally depraved. But the readers of social customs know full well how unsuccessful these have been to stem the growing tide of popularity of the drug. The verdict of those habituated to tobacco runs in favour of its preparations and considers this as innocent, wholesome, pleasing, comforting and what more as immensely invigorating. It induces a physical and mental quiet very gratifying to the habituated and brings about concentration of mind so much valued in intellectual work. The truth must, however, be acknowledged to lie between the two extremes. But without deprecating the felicity its preparations yield, it must be admitted that being the mildest of the narcotics, its use is to be preferred to that of hemp, opium, etc., and that when taken in moderation it works the least injury.

TOBACCO PREPARATIONS.

Various are the preparations of tobacco made to suit the human taste. The leaves of the plant are prepared in various forms to be smoked, chewed or used as snuff. In the West the principal uses of tobacco are in the manufacture of cigars, cigarettes, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco and snuff. Indian *cheroots* and *biris* are only the Indian prototypes of cigars and cigarettes respectively. A brief description may here be given:—

Cigars and Cheroots:—These are made with chopped tobacco wrapped in another tobacco leaf and rolled into small lengths varying from 3 to 6 inches.

Cigarettes and Biris:—These are diminutive cigars prepared with chopped tobacco, wrapped in unsized paper or leaves of other plants and rolled into small lengths.

Chewing Tobacco:—It is a solid preparation for chewing purposes.

Snuff:—A powdered tobacco preparation for the purpose of being sniffed up the nose as a stimulant or intoxicant.

Some of these forms are manufactured in India, but there are other purely Indian preparations of tobacco which widely differ from any of the above Western preparations. These are as characteristic of the Indian civilization and Indian ways of living as the above are the outcome of the Western civilization. These fall under three groups, viz., smoking tobacco, inhaling tobacco and chewing tobacco and may be classified as under:—

I. Smoking Tobacco.

- (1) Hookah Tobacco.
- (2) Biri.
- (3) Cigar.
- (4) Cheroot.
- (5) Cigarette.

II. Inhaling Tobacco.

- (1) Snuff.

III. Chewing Tobacco.

- (1) Surti.
- (2) Zarda.
- (3) Kimam.
- (4) Dokta or Gundi.
- (5) Sukha.

Hookah Tobacco is prepared by treating tobacco with treacle and owes its name to the fact that it is ordinarily smoked in a *hookah*, though for greater comfort and luxury hubble-bubbles are sometimes used in place of the homely *hookah*.

Snuff is, as already noted, prepared by special treatment of the tobacco leaves and is sniffed up the nostril.

Surti is a highly perfumed and deliciously prepared tobacco enjoyed by the rich with the betels.

Zarda is a coarser variety of *surti* used for the same purpose and enjoyed by the middle class people.

Kimam is now-a-days much in vogue among all classes of people. It is taken with betels like *Zarda* or

Surti and is made from tobacco wash by incorporating various spices into it. It is of viscous consistency.

Dokta forms a still coarser product in the series, generally flavoured with spices and taken with or without the betels. In some provinces it is better recognised as *gundi*.

Sukha is the lowliest in the rung meant for those who cannot even manage to enjoy in the luxury of a betel.

It is our purpose in this book to give the methods of preparations of these purely Indian preparations. But as cigars and *biris* are in popular demand among all classes of people and have come to be reckoned as suited to Indian life and conditions, details of their manufacture have also been incorporated. Cigarettes however fall outside the scope of the present volume.

CHAPTER II.

THE TOBACCO LEAF.

NO work on tobacco preparations would be complete without a treatment of the tobacco leaves, their places of growth, varieties, characteristics, constituents, etc., etc. The leaf is obtained from the tobacco plant belonging botanically to the order *Nicotiana* which though not indigenous to India, seems to have taken a friendly root in the Indian soil. The plant has been so successfully acclimatised since its introduction in India that at the present time India ranks as a big producer of tobacco in the world, being only second to the United States of America in the amount of production. The average Indian area under tobacco stands at no less than one million of acres, which shows the immensity of Indian resources in tobacco for the manufacture of the various tobacco products.

MAIN SPECIES GROWN IN INDIA.

In continental India there are now two principal species of tobacco cultivated, viz., *Nicotiana tabacum* and *Nicotiana rustica*. *N. Tabacum* is the more common, says the Agricultural Expert to the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, India in a Note on Indian Tobacco contributed to the Indian Trade Journal. It is grown all over the country, continues the same authority, and is the chief species cultivated in the peninsula.

The plant is pink-flowered with large sessile leaves and forms the most important sources of tobacco of commerce.

N. rustica is widely cultivated in eastern Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab and in Kashmir. This species differs most noticeably from *N. tabacum* by being a smaller, hardier plant with yellowish flowers and stalked smaller leaves. It also gives a higher yield of leaf and requires a shorter time to come to maturity than *N. tabacum*. This latter characteristic makes it very suitable for the damper soils of inundated areas of Bengal; for the United Provinces where tobacco is generally grown as a late summer crop which must mature early in order to be ripe before the weather gets too cold: and also for the Punjab where it is planted out in the early spring and must finish its growth before the weather gets too hot. In Burma *N. tabacum* is chiefly grown.

TOBACCO TRACTS.

The most important tobacco tracts in British India are to be found in the provinces of Madras, Bengal, Bihar and Bombay. The acreage under this crop in British India is remarkably constant, being usually just over a million acres. Though tobacco is cultivated practically in every district, the important centres are comparatively few in number. These are:—(i) the Coimbatore and Dindigal tract and the Godavari Delta of Madras (ii) the Rangpur tract of Bengal: (iii) Muzaffarpur-Darbhanga block in the Bihar District: and (iv) Belgaum and Guzerat in Bombay.

The chief centres of production and the principal varieties of tobacco under cultivation in the various provinces may here be enumerated.

BENGAL.

In Bengal, the main tobacco-growing areas are in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Rungpur, and in the State of Cooch Behar. About three-fourths of the crop is under *N. tabacum*, which includes the varieties locally known as "Bhengi," "Naokhol" and "Fingli." The remaining one-fourth is under *N. rustica*, which includes the local "Bilaite" or "Motihari" variety.

The types of tobacco introduced by the Agricultural Department include the Sumatra wrapper, and the Burmese Havana, Manilla and Pennsylvania filler tobaccos, the area under these at present being about 500 acres. Selected races of "Bhengi" and "Motihari" are now grown throughout the tobacco tract, and in other parts of the province these new areas represent 25 per cent. of the present acreage of tobacco in Bengal. Among cigar tobaccos the cultivation of Sumatra wrapper leaf has been very successful, the quality being very high. Filler tobaccos are not so successful. Owing to the light soil, they lack body and aroma, although the burning qualities are good, but Burmese Havana, Pennsylvania and Manila are now being grown on heavier soils with more success.

The finer qualities of "Bhengi" are shipped to Burma where most of it is used for making the Burmese "torch" (the large cigar smoked locally) but some is used for the ordinary Burma cheroot. The poorer qua-

lities of "Bhengi" are purchased by cigarette manufacturers. "Naokhol" finds a market in the Maldives, while "Hingli," which is grown in Central Bengal, is chiefly consumed as snuff "Motihari" is mainly used for "hookah" tobacco but a certain quantity is also used for maknig snuff.

In Bengal, tobacco seeds are sown from August to September: transplanting of seedling is done from October to December and the crop is harvested in March-April. Whole plants are generally harvested but individual leaves only in some types when the dew has dried off in the morning. These are left in the sun for one to two hours and then carried to the drying shed which may or may not be a special erection. As a rule, the cattle-shed and outhouses serve this purpose. The plants are slung on bamboos tip downwards, a foot or so apart. The process of drying takes about 3 weeks. The leaves are then stripped from the main stalk and placed flat in heaps, stalk inwards, to ferment, the heaps being closely watched and turned periodically to prevent over-heating. Fermentation takes about two months, after which the heaps are opened and the leaf made into "bands," each containing 20 to 30 leaves of about the same size. The tobacco is either sold in this state or kept in heaps to mature. The yield is about 700 to 1,000 lbs. of dry leaf per acre.

MADRAS.

In Madras the most important tobacco-growing centre is the Guntur district where about 100,000 acres are annually under this crop. The centres next in im-

portance are in the Vizagapatam, Coimbatore, East Godavari and Madura districts in the above order. *N. tabacum* is the main variety grown.

In the Guntur district the tobacco leaf grown is lighter and is of a golden colour. It can be used for cigarettes and most of that leaf is exported to foreign countries for that purpose. 'Adcock' and 'White Burley' varieties are grown in the district to some extent but the main Virginia variety is 'Harrison's Special' of which there are about 40,000 acres in the Guntur district. Besides the country brown tobacco of Guntur is used for cheap cigraettes in Japan and Europe and for pipe tobacco in England. Cigar tobacco is also grown to some extent.

The tobacco grown in the deltaic islands in the Godavari and Kistna rivers, is used for making a Burma type of cheroot; and has the reputation of being the best. The tobacco grown on the black soils in the neighbourhood of Guntur is used for the manufacture of cigarettes: and the tobaccos grown in the Dindigul part of Madura district and commonly named as *Usi-Kappal* and *Wara-Kappal*, the former yielding a bright leaf used as fillers for high class cigars in Trichinopoly. The tobacco has also got fairly good quality. The tobacco is exported to Burma and elsewhere. The tobacco produced at Sivakasi is famous for its aroma and is in great demand for chewing purposes all over the Presidency. The tobacco of Salem district is dark in colour and is used for cheroot making. The bulk of the tobacco grown in other parts of the Madras Presidency is fit only for the manufacture of local cheroots, snuffs, beedies and for chewing.

In Kistna district the crop is grown in the deltaic islands and in the black soil areas. Firms interested in the purchase of leaf for cigar and cigarette manufacture make their own arrangements with the cultivators for growing the variety of tobacco which they require. In the Vizagapatam district a large portion of the tobacco grown is consumed locally and in addition a considerable amount of cheroot leaf enter from the Godavari and Kistna districts. In the Godavari District, tobacco grown in the Lankas has the reputation of being the best. In the Coimbatore district, the type called Meenampalayan has established a good name as a chewing tobacco.

Sowing and transplanting of tobacco in the Madras Presidency take place at widely differing dates extending from July to February, depending on the districts in which cultivation is carried out. The dates of harvesting are consequently equally various. In the Guntur district sowing and transplanting take place from October to December and harvesting takes place from February to March. In Vizagapatam and East Godavari sowing takes place in August, transplanting in September-October and harvesting in January-February. In Coimbatore, on the other hand, sowings and transplantings are done between the months of July and October and harvesting usually occurs between October and February.

BIHAR.

In Bihar, there are two main blocks of tobacco grown, the most important one being that included in

the Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga districts where the crop covers a compact block of about 70,000 acres. The area of second importance is in the Purnea district where there are about 46,000 acres. This latter is closely connected with the tobacco area in North-West Bengal, which has its centre in Rungpur.

In the Muzaffarpur-Darbhanga block the variety grown is *N. tabacum*, and is largely bought up by merchants from Calcutta, although merchants from the Bombay side are sometimes buyers. It is used for the 'hookah,' for making fillings for the beedi (indigenous cigarette); the poorer quality being made into snuff. The Purnea block is simply an outlying part of Rangpur and the information given under Bengal, applies to it. The produce is bought up by Bengalis.

The raising of seedlings in Bihar begins about August or September and when the plants are three to four inches high they are transplanted in the fields, which have been thoroughly well manured and cultivated during the monsoon. The seedlings are planted out in October-November at three feet intervals in both directions, and are watered daily until they take root. Subsequent cultivation consists in maintaining a good deep mulch on the field with the idea of keeping down weeds and of providing the aeration so necessary in tobacco cultivation. As a general rule the crop is not irrigated in these parts.

Harvesting of the crop begins in March, each plant being cut as a whole when it is mature. For some days after cutting, the plants are spread out in the field and then the leaves are removed from the stems. These