



PIPES & EMBERS



STORIES. | REVIEWS. | PEOPLE. | PLACES. | TOBACCO. | CULTURE.

Pipe Club of India

Where Every Bowl Has a Story



Adam's Rants

Smoking in India dates back to the 16th century, when tobacco is said to have arrived in the country. But pipe smoking in particular, predates the modern briar-pipe culture when the Chillum was a prominent social presence.

The Nawabs and Zamindars took to smoking the Hookah or Gorgora in Bengal, simply as a status symbol, because smoking tobacco, mostly aromatics, was considered a hobby of the elite. This pursuit also became popular among the high society because the Indian intelligentsia and the then nouveau rich as also the Bengali Bhadrakalok in the erstwhile Indian capital at Calcutta, wanted to rub shoulders with British officials and be considered equals, which never happened.

The briar, quintessential for pipes for decades, landed in India much later in the 19th century during British presence in India. The images of Winston Churchill and his pipe got deeply engraved into minds of India's urban elite, who started importing them from London. And pipe smoking started getting identified with the intellectuals with a limited clientele.

Over a century later, pipe smoking has remained a limited hobby, among a rather niche group of individuals who not only understand the inner nuances of the art but are experimenting and trying out new combinations and blends. So, in a sense, it is more refined now.

We do not have a reliable official count of pipers, but if you believe some online sources, India has about 267 million tobacco users. But that includes cigarettes, bidis, hookah (thanks to Sheesha), and gutkha. So, the real number of pipers would be a miniscule dot in the horizon.

The depressing thing is these numbers are shrinking. A bit old data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) showed a remarkable decline in pipe smoking in India. That trend has not changed much. Pipe smoking remains a niche, specialized hobby and passion for a small group of Indians who are still pushing the barrel to keep it alive, fighting against heavily nuanced regulations. Add to that customs duties, increasing prices of pipe and tobacco and import restrictions.

There is a glimmer of hope though. Signs are that the youth are embracing smoking but not cigarettes. A recent research report on Mumbai's hookah smokers found that the majority of A recent research report on Mumbai's hookah smokers found that the majority of smokers were aged 20–24. Although this may have been pushed by the in-vogue Sheesha, it spells hope for pipers. But despite all the odds, we continue to smoke the pipe.

And that is why, the Pipe Club of India, which brings together a small community of pipe smokers from India and abroad, becomes relevant, in the crusade to keep this old art alive. From getting master carvers to create exclusive pipes to merchandise, to information and tobacco exchange among members, this Boy's Club (unfortunately) is thriving. And there's no stopping them.

In such times, we introduce this first issue of the Club's parchment, Pipes and Embers, as a last valiant effort to save this fine art. As the French said in the 16th century: Nous combattrons, envers et contre tout, - against all odds and against all opposition.



THE SOPHISTICATED PUFF

BY DR ABID B MAHAMOOD

Let's face it: cigarettes have a terrible reputation. They smell like a burning factory, make you stand under the Sun outside office, and are fiercely addictive. But what if you can enjoy tobacco without desperately feeding an addiction behind a petrol station?

Enter the gentlemanly, slightly eccentric world of the tobacco pipe. Keeping the health risks smoke inhalation aside, treating a pipe as an occasional ritual rather than a frantic habit bring out a completely different neurological and psychological proposition. Here's how it is different. Cigarette smokers draw toxic smoke directly into their lungs to get a rapid hit of nicotine. Pipers, by contrast, puff and hold the smoke in their mouths to enjoy the flavour of the tobacco, eliminating deep lung inhalation, thus changing its risk profile. Cigarettes are also loaded with burn accelerators, chemical additives, and paper treatments to keep the stick burning and speed up nicotine absorption. Pipe tobacco is just aged, cured whole leaf, free from the synthetic chemistry of cigarettes.

Typically, a cigarette smoker lights up 20 times a day. A pipe smoker undergoes a multi-step process that naturally limits consumption to a few times a week or month.

Nicotine itself is often unfairly blamed for all the evils of smoking, but outside of its addictive delivery system in cigarettes, it is a highly potent nootropic which improves your brain function. When you sit down to read or write with a pipe, nicotine interacts with nicotinic acetylcholine receptors in the brain, triggering a highly useful dual effect: Research indicates that nicotine alters electrical activity in the prefrontal cortex, suppressing distracting background thoughts, allowing you to track complex narrative arcs or even sharpening your chain of thought while drafting an essay.

Most stimulants make you jittery. Nicotine uniquely stimulates focus while simultaneously relaxing muscle tension. This balance is optimal for long, stationary cognitive tasks like typing or editing. Studies show measurable improvements in fine motor functions and working memory retention under the influence of low-dose nicotine, allowing writers

to hold complex plot lines or vocabulary in their heads simultaneously.

Research has also revealed a surprising twist: nicotine acts as a robust neuroprotective agent. Medical literature, including Frontiers in Neurology, show that nicotine directly combats the mechanisms of brain decline. Decades of epidemiological data shows that tobacco consumers have a significantly lower incidence of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Disease. While drugs cause the brain to shut down receptors, low-dose, intermittent nicotine exposure actually increases the density of nicotinic receptors, creating a dense, resilient cognitive network.

If you are looking for a way to power through your reading list, finish your manuscript, or simply force yourself to sit on a porch and contemplate the universe without looking at a smartphone, the pipe is an ancient, time-tested tool. It transforms tobacco into an intellectual companion rather than a physical master. Keep it rare, keep it deliberate, and never let it become a hurried chore.

MY FIRST SIXTEN, MY SPECIAL ONE

BY CARSTEN ANDERSEN

When I renounced my teenage attempts at smoking chalk pipes and corn pipes, I can state at the time of writing (the published article), that in the past year I have turned 40 as a 'real' pipe smoker. By this I am not avoiding pipes made from either chalk or corn, but for me it only really started when I got my first briar pipe. I remember it clearly. It happened on my 19th birthday, when a pipe-smoking friend, proudly presented me with a pipe. It was a smooth Half Bent Nørding, accompanied by a can of John Cotton's Nos.1 and 2 Medium. At night when the new combination was put into use, I particularly enjoyed the pipe, as I had to be a bit more mature to appreciate the traditional English mixture. The pipe is still in my collection but is really only special because it was the first. Since then, there have been many more, some in my private collection, others given away, exchanged or sold.



Collecting pipes is a nice hobby, where you can exchange and trade and where you have the opportunity to acquire a used version of a pipe that you could not otherwise afford. Let me talk about a very special pipe, purchased from new, and a pipe that was worth waiting for. As an enthusiastic pipe smoker, I have read P. C. Olrik's writings and examined all kinds of catalogues.

One evening, when I was holding an old pipe catalogue from Pipe Dan, I saw the Peewit-egg, manufactured by Sixten Ivarsson who had put Danish pipe making on the world map. Several years later, when I received my first advance on the mathematics books, an opportunity opened up to rekindle my love affair. In 1994, I was on my way to Copenhagen thinking about the Peewit-egg.

I went into Sixten's workshop in Vimmelskafet and was let in by Nanna, Sixten's granddaughter who helped Sixten in the workshop. Three generations of pipe excellence, Sixten, his son Lars and Nanna. I knew well that Sixten didn't make that many pipes anymore and was therefore very happy when he said yes to me. Over the years I had developed a fondness for the sandblasted pipes and since they were also the cheapest, placed an order for a sandblasted. He would

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THE PIPE OF THINGS

BY PCI NEWSDESK

There is a quiet side of India's smoking culture that most people overlook. You won't find it in cigarette ads. It is pipe smoking. Those who engage in it treat it more like a hobby than a habit. Instead, they will say they are 'tasting' tobacco. This is not just a catchphrase. It reflects how a pipe works. Unlike a cigarette, where smoke goes straight into the lungs, pipe smoking focuses on keeping the smoke in the mouth. Smokers puff gently, rolling the smoke before letting it go without inhaling deeply. The flavour is meant to be savoured on the tongue and through the nose, just like tasting wine or coffee. Cigar smokers often do something similar, which is why people frequently mention the two hobbies together. However, pipe smoking isn't without its risks. It still involves burning tobacco, and tobacco smoke should be treated with caution. But the ritual

is different from cigarette smoking, and that difference is key to why people start in the first place. Pipe smoking is slow. A single bowl can last half an hour or longer.

There is no quick drag and stub-out. People liken it to sipping a good whisky instead of gulping a drink. If you enter this world, you will hear names that mean little to most smokers. Aromatic blends, which may

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UK TOBACCO BILL BLOWING SMOKE RINGS?



BY NIKHIL RAGHAVAN

The next generation (at least in the UK) will be smoke-free as the Tobacco and Vapes Bill is granted Royal Assent. The UK Parliament has passed the Tobacco and Vapes Bill (April 2026), creating a "smoke-free generation" by making it illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after January 1, 2009. The legal age to purchase tobacco will increase by one year, every year, ensuring those born after 2008 can never legally buy tobacco, while stricter regulations on vaping, including packaging, flavors,

and advertising, will also be implemented. The act includes measures to ban the advertising and sponsorship of vapes and nicotine products, as well as powers to restrict their packaging, branding and displays that are designed to appeal to children. What Remains Legal People born before Jan 1, 2009, can continue to buy tobacco products legally. Smoking and vaping are still permitted in private homes. Smoking in designated outdoor areas of pubs and hospitality venues remains permitted. The ban is on the sale of tobacco to young people, not on the consumption of tobacco by those who are already of age.

So, what does that mean? A person born before that date can buy and hand it to the younger person who can still smoke it in private! The law only prevents the younger person from buying cigarettes, not smoking them!

This will effectivel mean a significant shift in how Britain approaches youth smoking, moving beyond restricting access to cigarettes. By progressively raising the legal smoking age, strengthening enforcement and tightening controls around tobacco products, the legislation seeks to make smoking less accessible and less normalised among young people. Its long-term impact, however, will depend on enforcement, public awareness and how effectively the industry's influence is countered.

In India, smoking in public places is banned under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) 2003, covering workplaces, restaurants, public transport, and educational institutions. A fine up to Rs. 200 can be imposed for smoking in public, selling tobacco products to minors, or selling tobacco products within a radius of 100 metres from any educational institution. Exceptions include designated smoking areas in hotels, large restaurants, and airports.

What do all these curbs mean? While the source of all tobacco -- manufacturers- are encouraged or not stopped from doing so, because they generate large tax revenues, the end user is targeted or given loopholes to continue to indulge in their activity.

The Bowl, The Leaves, And A Fresh Pair Of Lips

BY ARINDAM MUKHERJEE

Two years ago, when I stood at the entrance of the heaven of pipe smokers across the world, Pfeifen Huber in Munich, a tobacco and pipe shop that started in 1863 and has been ruling the world of tobacco pipe smokers across the world, my feet froze. Even after being a pipe smoker for a good 20 years, I did not have the courage to go inside those pristine doors.

My wife and daughter, noticing my inertia, pushed me inside, literally, as if saying: **जा सिमरन, जी ले अपनी ज़िंदगी**". For me, it was a time warp into a place where, for over a century and a half, piping history was being created. The who's who of the pipers' world had been there. I was not even a spec in comparison. Inside, a smiling face welcomed me and asked me what I wanted. Hesitantly, I said, I want to see some pipes. Like a jeweller carefully putting his diamonds on a velveted tray, he produced a collection for my perusal. At first glance, I was a bit startled, disappointed actually, because none of those instruments looked new to me. These were fine pieces, he insisted. Not aware of the antiquity of Estate pipes (I did not even know they were so called), I told him, no I didn't like any. The reality was that I did not even look at any of them properly. I was thinking that he must have thought of me as a novice and was passing off "Second Hand" pipes to me. So, he put that tray back inside and pulled out another one, full of new beauties. I picked up a Peterson Tyrone Fishtail, ebony finish.



The purpose of narrating this anecdote is that, despite my two decades of pipe and tobacco indulgence, I knew little about the technicalities of pipe smoking. And that is why my association with the Pipe Club of India (PCI) over almost two years, has been a game changer. Not just for the knowledge about different kinds of pipes, (I also didn't know what a Meerschaum was), but also different kinds of tobacco, even though I am still figuring out the nuances of Latakia, Perique and Virginia. Words like Dottle, Tongue Bite, and Ghosting, were alien to me even though I have been a wordsmith all my life. But frankly, for a fresh pair of lips like mine, getting exposed to a whole new universe of tobacco was being reborn into a different world. The education has been exhaustive and enriching to say the least. But most importantly, the deep bonding with fellow pipers which I have noticed here, is an unparalleled

experience. It seems that we have known each other for decades. A few months ago, when I was in Mumbai, Pranal da, Advocate Mohak and I spent an entire evening talking in between puffs.

It did not seem even once that we were meeting for the first time in life. Bharat Chugh, RP Haran, Shiv Shankar Maitra are names I have learnt only recently, but if you hear us talk, you will think we were together in school. In college, I was told that cigarettes and Daaru are excellent bonding elements. For me, the humble pipe has done it so much better.

What strikes me most is the way fellow PCI brothers open-heartedly share their "Baccy" with others, even though tobacco is hard to get in India. They don't even blink before offering their best stock to PCI comrades. I have been a beneficiary of this benevolence many times. What, one of them even gave me a brand new, unsmoked Corn Cob pipe from Missouri Meerschaum just like that. Yes, just like that. Such is this motley crowd.

PCI members in different cities meet once in a while, an afternoon, or an evening, just to unwind over a few puffs and stories, and lots of laughter, an experience that is simply unforgettable.

There are many in this club that I have only interacted with on WhatsApp. Yet, it seems that I have known them for so long. All I can say is May this tribe thrive, May your bowl always be full, and may the fire always burn inside.

The Pipe of Things ...

sweetened with flavours like vanilla or cherry, are at one end. English blends, more robust and earthy, sit on the other. Enthusiasts discuss 'tongue bite', the sting that occurs when a bowl burns too hot. It is a small world with its own language. In India, this community remains small mainly because good tobacco is hard to find. The variety of boutique blends available abroad are not available in India. A few dedicated tobacconists in larger cities carry a limited selection. Others in the hobby learn to make do, stretch their supply, or wait, hoping that a relative or friend from abroad will bring something back. A tin of a favourite blend turns into a small treasure and is preserved for months. The time between wanting a specific blend and finally holding it can stretch for months, even years. People share advice on which blends hold up against Indian heat and humidity, how to store tobacco during monsoons, and which local pipe shops -- not many to be dedicatedly found -- still have worthwhile old stock. There is a genuine warmth in these spaces, a camaraderie among those who share an uncommon interest that few others understand. What keeps the hobby alive more than anything is patience. It is not quick habit, and in India, it can be a challenging one as well. Those who persist often describe it not as a vice but as a craft, something akin to brewing coffee or aging wine. It is a slow pleasure, rooted in scarcity, taste, and a bit of luck with who might be traveling next. But laws in India should change; or pipe tobacco. And Pipes -- a different macrocosm altogether!

Pipography 2026

Savinelli Lunaria
920 KS



Savinelli's Lunaria series is crafted in two finishes, both in burgundy- Smooth and Rusticated. Transition between the conical and deep chambered bowl and the shank is effortless. The acrylic stem, evoking the colours of the moon, features shades ranging from light to dark gray, perfectly harmonizing with the pipe's colour. An aluminium ring adds a touch of brightness and shine. The series is available in five different models, with the option to choose between a 6 mm or 9 mm hole diameter.

Peterson St. Patrick's
Day 2026 Rusticated

The Irish marque's longest-standing annual tradition, St. Patrick's Day pipes are back again for 2026, featuring a deep, rugged rusticated briar finish paired with a tri-coloured acrylic band (green, white, and orange) honouring the Irish flag and fitted with a vulcanite P-Lip or fishtail mouthpiece, revitalizing the same accent that embellished the marque's original St. Patrick's Day pipes in 1998. The pipes are available in classic shapes, in rusticated, sandblasted, and smooth finishes.



James Upshall
Countryman
Rhodesian (Est.)

Upshall, along with Ferndown and Ashton, was part of a new wave of British hand-made, high-grade pipes in the late 20th century. James Upshall was founded in 1978 by Barry Jones and Ken Barnes, both from Charatan and carvers of high-end, non-standard shapes. Jones and Barnes' pipes quickly grew to being something of a status symbol, and were enjoyed by King Hussein of Jordan, Anwar Sadat, Bing Crosby, Yul Brynner, Robert Wagner and Tom Selleck. James Upshall pipes are no longer made, so this estate is priceless. Custom Handmade Briar, Rhodesian Pipes are a rare species.



My First Sixten...

call back when it was ready. To me, it took an excruciatingly long time.

Finally, when the day arrived, I headed towards Vimmelskaftet for my first real encounter with 'AN IVARSSON PRODUCT'.

The pipe lay well in the hand and had a nice puff. It was a special piece considering the pipe was a family product --Sixten had shaped the head, Lars sandblasted it, and Nanna shaped the mouthpiece.

Sixten made the last pipe in 1995, and I had one from his last ones.

My first smoke in it, later in the day, was perhaps with Smith & Sons 100 Per Cent Virginia or perhaps Cope's Escudo. And I enjoyed every second of falling in love with the pipe.

One thing is for sure. My first Sixten is mine forever.

Parts of this article was earlier published in 2015 in the Danish magazine Piber & Tobak, reproduced here with the author's permission. He owns three prized Ivarsson pipes - a Peewitt, commissioned in 1994, a Nefertiti, a birth year pipe made in 1955, and a Poker from 1982.

DHANYAM, A GRAIN, A CULTURE, A CIVILISATION

BY SHIV SHANKAR MAITRA

Long ago in ancient China, famine threatened humanity. The gods, pitying the mortals, sent a heavenly dog to steal seeds from the celestial granaries. The creature returned with grains of rice, scattering them across the land. From these sacred seeds grew endless fields, feeding villages and emperors alike. Some farmers still honour this legend by offering the first handful of harvested rice to their ancestors and to the heavens, thanking the loyal dog that stole life from the stars.

Today, archaeologists have uncovered ancient rice grains at sites like Hemudu and Pengtoushan in southern China, some dating back over 7,000 years. It's humbling to imagine those early farmers tending their paddies, watching for the perfect hue of ripened grain, hearing the whisper of wind through the fields, and celebrating harvests with heaped bamboo baskets of steamed rice.

Rice became not just a staple but a symbol of life's fragile abundance. In ancient legends, it was said to be a heavenly gift — a food to nourish both body and spirit, marking births, weddings, and the turning of seasons.

Yangzhou Fried Rice (扬州炒饭): Though it's one of China's most beloved fried rice dishes today, Yangzhou Fried Rice has a history flavoured with imperial intrigue. Legend traces it back to the Qing dynasty, during the reign of the Qianlong Emperor (1711–1799). As the story goes, Qianlong loved to travel incognito through his empire, often disguising himself as a commoner. On one such journey through Yangzhou, a chef eager to impress the emperor created a simple yet elegant fried rice using the finest local Ingredients: fresh river shrimp, barbecued pork, peas, carrots, and fragrant rice. The emperor, delighted by its balanced flavours and artful appearance, where each Ingredients retained its own identity yet came together harmoniously-praised it as a perfect example of "harmony in variety" (和而不同), a core Confucian principle. From then on, this dish was dubbed Yangzhou Fried Rice, and it became a staple in imperial banquets and later, a symbol of refined yet humble Jiangsu cuisine.

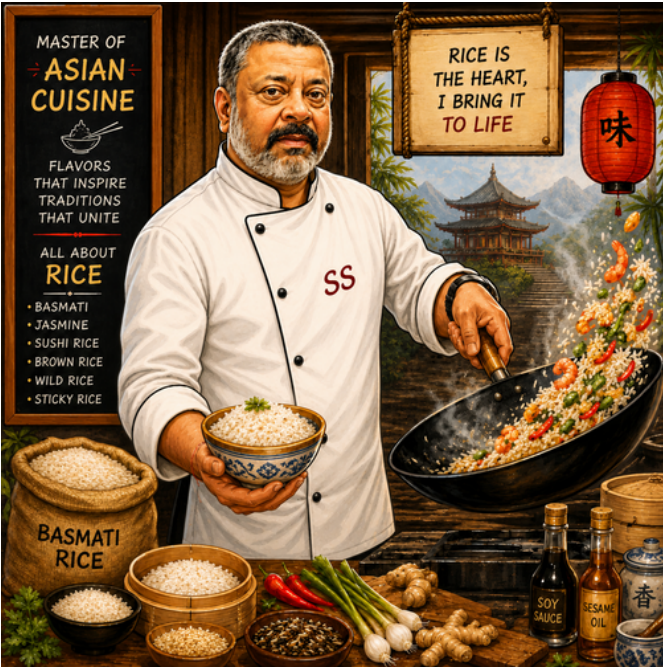
Ingredients (serves 4)

- 3 cups cooked jasmine rice (preferably day-old, cold) Break up the cold rice with your hands so it's fluffy.
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 75g cooked shrimp, peeled and diced
- 75g char siu (Chinese BBQ pork), diced
- 40g cooked green peas
- 30g diced carrots
- 3 scallions, finely chopped
- 2.5 Tbsp oil (peanut or vegetable oil)
- 1 tsp light soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp sesame oil
- Salt to taste
- White pepper to taste

Process:

Heat the wok: Heat your wok until smoking hot. Add 1 tablespoon of oil, swirl to coat. Pour in beaten eggs, scramble lightly until just set but still a little soft. Remove and set aside.

Stir-fry shrimp & pork: Add the remaining oil. Toss in the shrimp, char siu, peas, and carrots. Stir-fry



over high heat for about 30 seconds. Toss in the cold rice. Stir quickly and break apart clumps, ensuring every grain is coated with oil and heated through.

Season: Add light soy sauce, a pinch of salt, and white pepper. Stir well to evenly distribute the seasonings.

Return the eggs: Add the scrambled eggs back to the wok, breaking them into small pieces as you mix.

Finish with aromatics: Toss in chopped scallions, drizzle with sesame oil, stir once or twice, then turn off the heat. Serve immediately.

Tips for Authentic Flavour: Day-old rice is key for texture. Don't over-sauce it. For vegetarian option exclude the meat proteins and include variety of mushrooms, tofu, carrot, peas, pak choy, etc.

Rice and its connection to Indian life cycle:

The First Bite of Life
The sun had barely begun to break through the eastern horizon when Aryan's mother, Savitri, walked through the thatched doorway, cradling a golden bowl in her hands. Inside it was the sacred rice, cooked with ghee and fragrant herbs, as sweet as the promise of spring.

Today was a special day — the day Aryan would take his first bite of solid food. The ritual was called Annaprashana, a ceremony steeped in age-old tradition, where a child began his journey into the world of solid nourishment. But in Aryan's family, it was more than just a meal. It was a moment when life itself was offered to the child, and with it, the blessings of the gods.

Savitri carefully arranged the offerings on a woven mat of bamboo, placing small bowls of milk, honey, and curd alongside the rice. The rice, always the central element, symbolized the foundation of life — the nourishment of the body, spirit, and soul.

Vedamitra, Aryan's father, stood silently by the sacred fire — the Agni who had been invoked at the yajna weeks ago. He sprinkled sacred soma leaves over the flame, whispering the mantras of gratitude for the gift of life and the promise of prosperity. Then, he turned to his son "Aryan," he said gently, "This grain has traveled through the air, the earth, and the fire. It is the food of the gods, and now it is yours. With it, you will grow strong and wise, and with every bite, you shall honour those who came before you."

The family gathered around, each person placing their hands on Aryan's head, blessing him with the words of the ancients. "Tamaso mā jyotirgamaya, mrityor mā amritam gamaya" — from darkness, lead me to light; from death, lead me to immortality.

The moment was palpable with the weight of generations. Aryan, wide-eyed, gazed up at his mother as she dipped her fingers into the golden rice and gently placed it into his mouth. It was as if the whole universe had paused to watch. The taste of rice, cooked with love and sanctity, was a gift more precious than anything he could understand. It was not just food; it was a ritual of life itself.

As the rice touched his lips, a divine fragrance seemed to fill the air — a promise that with every grain of rice, Aryan would inherit the wisdom of the past, the love of his family, and the strength of the earth. His life had just begun, but in this moment, it felt as though everything he needed — every blessing, every protection — had been sealed in that small morsel

of rice.

Growth
The morning mist still clung to the banks of the Sarasvati River as young Aryan wiped the dew from the rice stalks. It was the season of Sharad, the time when the first grains of vrihi turned from green to pale gold under the gaze of the rising sun.

His father, Rishi Vedamitra, stood by the sacred fire, preparing for the Agnihotra yajna. The rice had to be perfect. Not one grain broken, not one husk incomplete. For these were not mere grains, but messengers — carrying the prayers of men to the gods through hungry tongues of flame.

"Aryan," called Vedamitra, his voice steady as the river's flow. "Bring forth the new rice. It must be the first harvest, untouched by salt or spice, pure as dawn's first light." The boy obeyed, cradling the rice in a woven basket. He had watched his mother wash it thrice in the river's sacred waters, each rinse a chant, each swirl a petition for health, rain, and good fortune.

As the priest intoned the Rigvedic mantras, Aryan placed the rice beside the altar. Mixed with clarified butter (ghee) and fragrant soma residue, it was placed upon the fire. The flames hissed and danced, carrying the rice delicate fragrance skyward. This was no ordinary meal. It was believed that in its smoke, the gods tasted Earth's offerings, ensuring balance between realms. The rice fed not only bellies but destinies.

After the yajna, Vedamitra saved a small heap of the consecrated rice. That night, it would be scattered across the fields, blessing the soil, the river, and the unborn grains yet to come. A portion would be pressed into Aryan's palm, a silent vow of lineage and duty. rice was not just sustenance, but the thread binding heaven and earth, men and gods, birth and death. *(To Be Concluded...)*

TEA, TOBACCO AND TRANQUILITY

BY SHEEL KHANNA

Tea and tobacco are perhaps a match made in heaven. They match well, go well together and complement each other's qualities hiding their follies.

While tobacco can be overbearing and settle deep into a man's psyche, tea, the softer being, can melt away sharp notes or settled flavors that may be too bold for one's liking. The result of this union can be pure bliss.

If pipe is for the tongue, tea is for the olfactory as it appeals to our sense of smell, and the blend of aromas from the tea and the tobacco creates an experience that is not just distinctive, it is sublime. Tea tasting is an art and intensely personal. No two individuals can have the same experience with the same flush. Flavors are subjective and based on a person's experiences and memories and influenced by flavours picked from across the world. Above all, our memories, our experiences, our culture and where we live, moulds our opinion.

Within this, there are some Golden Rules on pairing your tea with your tobacco. The lighter the tobacco, the tea has to match it like a herbal white tea. But if your tobacco blend is dark, your tea should don a darker hue. A richer, darker Virginia tobacco, for example, would pair wonderfully with a similar rich cup of black tea.

Tea tasting is done by two



processes, Olfaction or dependent on the olfactory senses, and Gustation, dependent on the tongue. The human nose has 400 types of olfactory receptors. The complexity of the human nose and genetic coding that influences how odors are perceived by individuals makes odor detection and

perception a complicated — but informative — task for humans. In contrast, human tastebuds have only five types of receptors, sweet, salty, bitter, sour and savory. Humans have around 900 genes that can code olfactory receptors, allowing us to detect up to 10,000 different odors; how each is

perceived depends on the DNA sequencing of those 400 types of odor receptors.

Now let us look at the pairing with flavours of tobacco. According to Pipe connoisseurs, the general rule is that the aromatic intensity of the pipe tobacco should match that of the beverage. Thus, tobaccos with a lighter profile should be paired with more delicate beverages such as champagne or wine and full-bodied tobaccos with hard drinks such as whiskey. And the same logic is applied to darker varieties.

But tea pairing is a different ballgame. For instance, Black teas are fully oxidized, resulting in dark, rich cups of tea that are high in caffeine. If you enjoy your black tea with milk and potentially a cube or two of sugar, then you should go for an English blend of tobacco as these two make an excellent pair. And if your black tea is just black, pair it with a darker Virginia or Virginia-Perique tobacco and it'll work wonders. If you like Earl Grey lovers, tobacco with citrus notes like Orlik Golden Sliced is a must-puff if you're looking for a sublime pairing.

And the last thing in this dynasty, our good old Chai. As this brew is made by blending spices with tea, and usually served with sugar and milk, it is best paired with strong cigars as there is the black tea inside. Season: Add light soy sauce, a pinch of salt, and white pepper. Stir well to evenly distribute the seasonings. *(To Be Concluded...)*

PCI Tobacco Reviews

CORNELL & DIEHL BAYOU MORNING FLAKE

C&D describes Bayou Morning Flake (BMF) as a "VaPer lover's delight with 25 per cent Perique and Old Belt Red Virginias". The flakes are mostly dark brown in color with a few red Virginias sprinkled in between. It is in a Broken Flake format which is easy to prepare and has a tin note that is predominantly Perique with notes of plum and stewed fruit.

The tobacco lights up quickly and doesn't require more than 1 or 2 relights. It burns down completely to a fine ash with minimal to no dottle residue, except during monsoons. Compared to other VaPers, BMF's room note is slightly stronger and pungent thanks to its high Perique content. The taste is also strong, which shifts to a peppery fruit-like flavour mid bowl. The tobacco must be smoked slowly or else it will give this harsh cigarette like flavor. A noticeable characteristic of BMF is that it is full bodied and strong. So, the nicotine hit will be felt in the initial few puffs itself.

DR ABID B MAHAMOOD



DAVIDOFF GREEN MIXTURE

I have been dabbling with tobacco and experimenting with new ones, blending and boldly going where (perhaps) no man has gone before. Yet my scales are tilted mostly towards non-aromatics. When I smoked cigars, I never touched infused ones.

My bias against aromatics is not an isolated one. If you check Savinelli's website, they say: "Non-aromatic pipe tobaccos are generally considered more 'pure' because they lack the heavy artificial or natural flavour toppings added to aromatics. English blends featuring Latakia or Burleys, produce their inherent earthy, nutty, sweet, or smoky characteristics of the tobacco plant without masking agents.

So, when I laid my hands on the Davidoff Green Mixture, (the name itself was intriguing), more by chance than intention, my initial impression was that it would be a hard, aromatic blend, laced with the house's preferred additives.

I was in for a surprise. Davidoff Green Mixture turned out to be considerably more subtle and

understated than anticipated. Both the room note and the flavour were pleasantly mild, rather than being overtly sweet or perfumed.

Having previously experienced some C&D aromatics, particularly the Apricot & Cream, which I found to be a bit overwhelming, the Green Mixture offers a refreshing gust of fresh air.

I've been piping for just four months and smoking cigars for a good six years. My personal favourite blend so far, had been the Nutty Irishman from C&D. Yes, it's an aromatic. I can't say it's the best overall, but it's the best of what I've tried. So, the introduction to Davidoff Green Mixture opened a new world for me, one offering a master blend of Burley, Virginia and Black Cavendish. The best was the almost total absence of tongue bite which made the experience much smoother.

It is much more approachable and can easily be enjoyed throughout the day without the flavour becoming tiresome. This blend presents a mild to medium strength, delivering a smooth, gentle smoke with a delightful combination of soft floral notes, a hint of vanilla, and a delicate sweetness. The aromatic qualities remain in the background, allowing the natural tobacco flavour to shine through. For my preferences, this blend is less about a strong aromatic impact and more about providing a smooth, balanced, relaxing, and effortless smoking experience.

Strength: Mild-Medium
Aromatic: Mild/Subtle
Flavor: Floral • Vanilla • Light Sweetness
Best for: All-day smoking

ROHITH REDDY

Chicago Pipe Show: The World's Greatest Celebration of the Pipe Community

BY K. T. PRASAD

For pipe smoking enthusiasts across the world, there is one annual event that stands above all others -The Chicago Pipe Show. More than just an exhibition, it is a celebration of craftsmanship, tradition, friendship, and the enduring culture surrounding pipe smoking. For the last 30 odd years, this remarkable gathering has brought together artisans, collectors, retailers, blenders, historians, and hobbyists from every corner of the world.

This year's Pipe Show had a huge Smoking Tent erected for the purpose, apart from five or six smack breakaway halls for various pipe

related workshops and displays. Walking into the large ball room was an unforgettable experience. Rows of tables displayed handcrafted briar pipes, meerschauts, estate pipes and accessories, each reflecting the unique style of its creator. The diversity of craftsmanship ensured that it attracted both newbies and seasoned collectors.

What truly defines the Chicago Pipe Show is its people. Conversations happen naturally and knowledge is shared freely. Topics ranged from tobacco blending and pipe restoration to design philosophy and collecting strategies. The sense of openness made the experience

deeply enriching. Meeting artisans in real life added another layer of appreciation.

Seeing the care and precision behind each creation transformed every pipe into a story of craftsmanship and dedication.

The show introduced visitors to both classic blends and new creations, offering opportunities for discovery and exchange of opinions. Friendships deepened and conversations extended into dinners and informal gatherings.

As the end, attendees left not only with pipes and tobacco but also with rich memories, inspiration, and strengthened connections within the global pipe community.



Confessions of a Peterson Hoarder Why My Savinelli Cart is Always a Bridesmaid



BY DR ABID B MAHAMOOD

I have a digital ghost that haunts me. If you open my online shopping carts, you will find a graveyard of Italian Savinelli pipes. They are beautiful and objectively excellent. Yet, every time I close to click "Buy," I freeze. I walk over to my pipe rack, grab a Peterson, and think, "Not today, Italy. Not today."

Collecting Tobacco pipes is entirely driven by individual quirks, and the mysterious laws of human preference. One person's Holy Grail is another person's dust-collector. My personal taste is firmly rooted in Dublin, Ireland, i.e. Peterson. My collection is anchored by a deep love for Peterson's craftsmanship. Despite my stack of Peterson's, especially the 606 including my stunning Rosslare 606 with its gorgeous dark stain and amber-coloured acrylic stem, and my striking 606 Green Spigot, I have a serious, unapologetic weakness for repeating my favourite shapes. This chunky, straight pot design the 606 Pot is my ultimate comfort zone.

It feels substantial in the hand, stays remarkably cool, and features a wide tobacco chamber. These are supreme vessels for English and Balkan tobacco blends, letting the Latakia, Oriental, and Virginia leaves breathe and meld together beautifully. This shape of the 999 Rhodesian is pure perfection with a bend precise for a comfortable clench. The bowl feels like it was custom moulded for my palm. This medium bent Apple of the System Spigot 303 is a jaw-hanger, with Charles Peterson's legendary internal moisture reservoir delivering a dry, cool smoke. Because of its specialized engineering and condensed chamber, my 303 is strictly reserved for Virginias and VaPers (Virginia/Perique). Recently, I have developed a massive appreciation for French and English pipes, specifically Chacom, Comoy's, and Ropp as they smoke remarkably dry, cool, and clean. Will I ever eventually buy one of those sitting in my cart? Maybe. But for now, my heart belongs to my diverse army of Petersons.



When Pipers Meet...

Taking liberty to suitably modify the oft heard and timeless adage, **Where there is Smoke, there are PCI pipers**. And when that happens, there is bound to be a lot of fire, nee, not just in their bowls, but in their belly as well. For, when this motley crowd meets across the country, a lot more exchange happens than just words. Within all that smoke, we exchange tobacco, pipes and so much more, just to give our fellow pipers a taste of what appealed to us individually.

This camaraderie is extremely infectious. Most of us in the twilight of life, (With a lot of youngsters as well), this new bond is a great discovery, one to feel peaceful about. One to cherish. One for keeps. And a Pipe does that all.

Can you believe it?

So, here's presenting how we bond, how we run shoulders and hold our hands to celebrate life with the Shank and stem in place. Keep smoking guys. As we have said, **Every Bowl Has A Story**.



PCI Delhi



PCI Coimbatore



PCI Kolkata



PCI Hyderabad



PCI Chennai



PCI Mumbai

Down The Pipeline

A Journey Into The Smoky Memories Of Chembur

BY PRANAL K. BHATTACHARYYA

This is reminiscing about the times when world was different from how we know it now. Smokers were tolerated, if not celebrated. It was a way of life and part of the culture globally. While Pipes entered India through Goa around 1600, spreading to Maharashtra and Gujarat, it was Kolkata (formerly Calcutta and then India's capital city) which became the main gateway through which pipe smoking culture entered India's elite society. Piping grew beyond hookahs and beedis in India as early as the 1700s and early 1800s. While cigarettes were still the pocket borough of Bengali and Malayali masses, pipe smoking got identified with education, the civil services, the legal profession, academia, and literary circles. Members of the emerging urban elite took to pipe smoking with Briar pipes to rub shoulders with the British civil servants, and military officials. And quite ironically, much before Charminar stuck to the lips of Kolkata's youth and old, pipe smoking had made their way into the Bangla heartland. It was in the British capital of India in the mid-19th century that pipe smoking first became a widespread, fashionable trend. Charminar became centre stage much later in the 1960s when the Kolkata's famous Adda culture became a household activity. The

emerging elite of Bengal, the Bhadrakalok took to British habits of drinking tea, wearing London tailored suits, and of course smoking Briar pipes. But what I wish to share is probably a random sample of what many would have experienced in their formative years. I would like to walk down memory lane to touch upon the pipe-smoking culture I witnessed while growing up in the then quaint Mumbai suburb called Chembur. I was quite fortunate to be a part of the community, that had folks who studied or lived abroad, in countries like the USA, France, Italy, and the UK. Being a Bengali by descent, which also added to my exposure to smoking culture (through my years, I have noticed that Bengalis used to be more smoke friendly than people of other ethnic descents). My father, a scientist of repute, was a smoker. He picked up pipe smoking during his days in Chicago and continued his pursuits even after relocating to Mumbai. Many of his friends, especially a close physicist friend and another from the merchant navy, were ardent pipers. It was quite natural to find pipers in the colony where I grew up. A whiff of tobacco from somewhere or an uncle taking his evening stroll with a pipe clenched between his teeth was not an uncommon sight. From a very early age, I was exposed to the room notes from the smoking



pipes. Mr. Mitra was a prolific aromatic, and Dr. Roy was a Virginia man. My father toggled between the two depending upon his mood. At that time, I was fascinated by Mr. Mitra's pipe tobaccos as they came across as sweet and had a nice aroma lingering in the room. The Virginias were more like cheroots to me at that time.

pre-dinner smoke and a wee dram. And then there was this TamBram Gentleman living close to Chembur station, who used to clench his bent billiard and walk the streets with keen observing eyes wearing a Veshti. Speaking about attire, unlike what was projected in Indian movies, and common in Kolata- pipe smokers mostly in three piece

Slightly sweet, but mostly dry kind of room note. Then, there were some folks known to us in neighbouring areas. Mr. C and his three friends who used to congregate in his house porch with a bottle of whiskey and blends of their choice. Their idea was to identify the best home-made blend using 3 Nuns, Capstan and Presbyterian. Then there was Mr. Vasudevan, who had a huge collection of Savinelli pipes. He used to walk up to Mr. Ashok Kumar Ganguly's (Dadamoni of course,) bungalow every other evening for the

suits or such, the people I am talking about were quite comfortable in any non-specific attire during their pipe routine. For example, my father entrusted Mr. Mitra and Dr. Roy to welcome all the guests entering the reception hall decorated for my wedding. Picture this: Two senior citizens, wearing pure white starched dhoti and kurta (Bengali style), with pipes between their lips, puffing away at the entrance. Many of my friends, influenced by the then modern dressing etiquette, found it strange, funny to be precise. But My father-in-law, a pipe smoker himself, was quite happy to see this and send his daughter off to a family familiar with pipe smoke. Little did he know that his son-in-law would soon join the gang to become a dedicated piper. It is clear that life was quite different then and pipe smoking elevated a person's stature much the same way the ultra-luxury Cohiba or a Macallan 60 single malt does in today's society. These gentlemen had contributed a lot to shape my early life, introducing me to pipe smoking. It got truncated after initial start due to paucity of time, but a first love is never forgotten. Fifteen years ago, I re-ignited that passion (literally), with a much more matured mindset to appreciate this fine art. I feel fortunate and dedicate my smokes to all these gentlemen.

Pipes & Points



Cigars: The Art of Making It Your Own

BY MOHIT GIROTRA

Why I Roll My Own Cigars, Modify My Whisky, and Chase Experiences Rather Than Recipes
There is something strangely satisfying about taking something that is already considered complete and asking a very simple question: "What if I made it a little more... mine?" I've realized over the years that this instinct has quietly shaped almost every hobby I've ever fallen deeply in love with. It began with whisky. Not because I wanted to improve what generations of distillers had spent decades perfecting. Far from it. I have enormous admiration for the craftsmen who produce extraordinary single malts and bourbons. They have already created something beautiful. But admiration and personalization are two very different things. Whenever I opened a bottle, I found myself experimenting - not recklessly, but thoughtfully. A few drops of water. A different glass. A change in serving temperature. Later, perhaps an unusual cocktail that respected the whisky rather than buried it. Sometimes a hint of citrus. Sometimes spice. Sometimes simply slowing the pace at which I drank it. None of those changes suggested the original whisky was incomplete. They simply acknowledged something equally important. Every palate is unique. Every evening has a different mood. Every conversation asks for something slightly different. A bottle may be

finished by the distiller, but the experience is finished by the person holding the glass. That realization eventually led me somewhere I never expected. Into tobacco. Cigars Are Not Just Rolled Tobacco: To many people, a cigar is a finished luxury product. To me, it slowly became something entirely different. A cigar is architecture. Every leaf contributes something unique. A ligero doesn't simply add strength - it changes rhythm. A seco doesn't merely burn - it creates transitions. A wrapper isn't decoration - it becomes the first impression, the aroma, the texture and, sometimes, even the memory you carry after the ash has long disappeared. Once I understood that, buying cigars stopped being enough. I wanted to understand why they behaved the way they did. That curiosity became exploring. Exploring became Experimentation. Experimentation eventually became blending & rolling. Commercial cigars are remarkable achievements. Some are so balanced that they deserve to be studied, and I still enjoy many of them today. But then I think about



art. You can spend a lifetime admiring Picasso, Monet or Rembrandt. There is enormous joy in appreciating genius. Yet there is an entirely different kind of joy in standing before a blank canvas and placing the first brushstroke yourself. You are unlikely to create another Picasso - and that isn't the point. The point is expression. The painting becomes yours because every decision reflects your own eye rather than someone else's. Rolling cigars feels exactly like that. I was never trying to recreate a Montecristo, a Fuente or a Padron. Those cigars already exist, and they already exist in their finest form. My objective was never replication. It was exploration.