

Hookah (water pipe)

Smoking a water pipe, also known as a Hookah, is not a present-day phenomenon. The origin of this goes back many hundreds of years ago. The first signs of the use of hookah or shisha are found in north-western provinces of India, Rajasthan and Gujrat.

Some facts about the Hookah:

- The hookah was invented by Hakim Abu'l-Fath Gilani(1588 d.), who came from Baghdad. Later he was appointed as a physician in the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar 1st (1542 - 1605 AD). At that time the smoking of tobacco was very popular among Indian nobility. Emperor Akbar was encouraged by Asad Beg, the ambassador of Bijapur, to smoke tobacco. Gilani expressed his concern about this and designed a system in which the smoke had to go through water first before it was inhaled. It was his thinking that by doing this the smoke is purified (of black smoke and tar). This new invention soon became a status symbol for the Indian aristocracy and nobility. This purification process was later adopted in industries. In processing technology we call this form of filtering a "wet scrubber" or a wet filter. "Wet scrubbers" are standard in industries who develop smoke or dangerous fumes.

- In the Arab world smoking is part of their culture and traditions. It is called Social smoking. They either use a Hookah with one waterhose , which is passed on to each other in turns, or one with a double, triple or quadruple hose. When the smoker is finished, he / she places the hose on the table in order to indicate that it is available. Most of the cafes in the Middle East offer Shisha's. Cafés are widespread and are some of the most important social meeting places in the Arab world.

- In Syria, the hookah has become a daily habit in their culture. Here it is called "argila" and can be found in almost every corner of the country. It is a social activity and it is normal for women, or a policeman during service, to take part in it. Along with smoking a Argila they play Tawla (Backgammon) or cards, and of course enjoy a cup of tea or coffee.

- In the Philippines, the hookah was introduced by Arab and Indian Muslims. It was used by a small minority within the nobility of Cotabo or Jolo, which were major trading towns.

- In South Africa, the Hookah is known as hubbly bubbly or okka pipe. It is mainly used by the people of Cape Maylay.

- In Persia, the hookah was mainly used by women. They did not go outdoors very much and this was their way to pas time. (amusement / recreation)

- It was only in the 60's and 70's that the hookah became popular in the United States and Canada.

- Physicians believe that no form of smoking tobacco is safe and that the hookah can be as dangerous as a cigarette. One hookah session lasts 40 minutes on average, in which one inhales between 50 - 200 times. With each haul you get 0,15 to 0,50 liters smoke inside your body. That is 1.7 times more nicotine than from a cigarette. A Shisha uses water to filter the smoke, but some of the carcinogenic chemicals within the tobacco are not removed from the smoke. Wood or charcoal are also used to burn the tobacco. Each of them contain their own potentially hazardous substances. In short, a Hookah is NOT a safer alternative for smokers. Nicotine is an addictive drug.

