

AN ASH TRAY FOR YOUR LUNG

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THERE has been a tremendous increase in the consumption of tobacco during the last few decades. Cigarette smoking in particular has become extremely popular in urban areas and the habit of smoking hukkah and bidi is most popular with our rural population specially the low income groups, coolies, Rickshaw pullers and villagers working in their fields. Even women and children, not to talk of students, are drawn to various smoking styles. It is estimated that every eleventh man in the world smokes daily on an average five to 20 cigarettes and a chain smoker upto 40 cigarettes.

THE STORY OF SMOKING

The story of smoking seems to be as old as human history. Burning incense and inhalation of smoke derived from burning of medicinal herbs have been in vogue from ancient times. The use of tobacco however for smoking has been introduced in this country only after the habit was spread from the new world in the early part of the 16th century. Even though tobacco has been praised for its pleasurable actions and its medicinal properties, smoking was condemned as a foul smelling, loathsome custom, harmful to the brain and lungs even in those days.

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MAKING OF A HABIT

For most of the people smoking becomes a habit they cannot live without. The farmers smoke while sitting together or ploughing their fields, the educated people smoke cigarettes while taking coffee or tea on after meals. Some people smoke for getting in to a mood, some people during study, some after or before doing some heavy work and some because of anger or jealousy but there are people who smoke cigarettes and bidies in the latrines during defecation to pass smoking current in their stools. But the college girls and boys smoke cigarettes to be fashionable. Films like Hare Rama Hare Krishna with hit songs like Dum Maro Dum made smoking the "in thing".

THE PATHO-PHYSIOLOGY OF SMOKING

It is well known that cigarette and bidi smoking contains cancer producing agent—Benzpyrene Nicotine, Tar and carbon monoxide, besides very minute particulate matter of 0.01 Micron size accompanied with toxic tar vapour. It may be noted that the dust particle smaller than microns enter upto the lungs directly prevailing the nose filtration thus causing pulmonary diseases as well as imparting the lungs function by obstructing the lymph flow. Considering the fact that an average person breathes about

16 Kmt. of air in 24 hours and that the tobacco leaves contain 25% ash the lungs itself may become an ash tray which may lead to lung cancer.

TOXIC EFFECTS

It may be noted that the toxic limit of carbon monoxide gas for three hours exposure is 0.01 per cent. The dangers and fatal limits are respectively 0.2 to 0.3 per cent within 30 to 60 minutes. The oxygen carrying capacity of haemoglobin is impaired since its affinity to carbon monoxide is 250 times greater than that of oxygen. The tiny concentration of 0.01 per cent of this gas is enough to block effectively the transport of vital oxygen to different tissues, and the nicotine present normally upto 5 per cent on dry basis cause adverse effects on cumulative basis.



"Sir, Today you have an appointment to deliver the speech on **ANTI SMOKING PROGRAMME**".

TOXIC SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of toxicity begin with uneasiness, headache, lassitude, nausea, vomiting, faintness, visual difficulty, coma and death may occur in serious cases. In closed spaces without adequate ventilation or in such restricted environment, the accumulation of this gas may tend to reach toxic level. There have been incidents in overcrowded train compartments and in closed room union meetings fainting of passengers and participants respectively occurring due to heavy smoking and the resultant pollution of the room air with toxic gas.

HEALTH HAZARDS

Several societies and organisations like Medical Research Council of Great Britain, the Royal College of Physicians London, in its 1971 report, the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, Cancer Societies of Denmark, Finland, Holland, Norway and Sweden, the Joint Tuberculosis Association of Great Britain, the Canadian Department of National Health and Welfare, the Surgeon General U.S. Public Health Services and the Research Studies in India all have independently collected evidence and issued important statements on the effects of smoking on health. The Summary of diseases due to smok-

ing are cancer of lungs, chronic bronchitis, Emphysema, Coronary artery occlusion, M.I., Pharynx, Larynx, Oesophagus, Stomach, Peptic ulcer, Cancer bladder and Pulmonary Tuberculosis. The expectant mothers who are heavy smokers produce babies much smaller than the average. It is because nicotine has a vasoconstrictive influence in the uterus and induces a degree of placental insufficiency. The adverse effects of smoking range from low birth weight to an increased risk of perinatal death of the infant. In addition to the above diseases and toxic monoxide gas effects in its smoke abusing cigarette consumes as much life giving oxygen as required by four persons during breathing in the same time thus polluting the atmosphere air.

SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

The problem is to be tackled by education of the public, people's concern or awareness and public cooperation which should form the environmental welfare triangle. The U.S. senate and the house of representatives passed the Federal cigarette labelling and advertising act in July 1965 (vide Public Law 89 and 92) and each packet should bear the following statement. Caution — Cigarette smoking may be hazardous to your health. Similarly the Govern-

ment of India has also made it obligatory on the part of manufacturers to print on every packet of cigarette that "Cigarette smoking is injurious to health". Stricter measures are to be taken to prevent cigarette smoking. There should be prohibitory order regarding smoking specially in public places like Cinema Houses, Auditoria, Schools, Colleges, Aeroplanes, Buses and Trains. More stress should be given towards extensive publicity and health education of the people regarding the health hazards of smoking. The slogan of health education should be "Smoking or Health Choice is yours".

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