

CHARAS AND CHILLUM

Tips, hints and knowledge

We are all



Spiritual Beings

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This is a free web edition.

Please feel free to pass this document to your friends and family.

This document is not considered complete, but some knowledge is better than none.

Additional information might be added to future editions.

It is recommended to have (at least) a chillum handy to better understand the explanations in this book.

All comments, additional info and feedbacks would be greatly appreciated!

For comments, feedbacks, corrections and additional info, please email info@spiritualbeings.org

Thank you!

The book would like to thank Angela, Eitan, Moti, Juan and C for their valuable input.

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Spiritual Beings

Chapter 1 – WELCOME

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Hemp freedom fighters around the world and at all times. May the world see the light soon. Amen.

Concept

This book was conceived in the Himalaya mountains of India, after acknowledging that oh-so-many smokers lack even the basic knowledge regarding Charas and chillum.

It is with great hope that this book was written. Hoping that greater knowledge will lead to better understanding and consuming of Charas. Perhaps if, for example, all will know what good Charas is, none will buy bad Charas, and thus, in turn, will lead to the elimination of the production of bad Charas.

Warning

At the time of writing this book, Charas in specific and the Cannabis plant in general are prohibited in too many countries, including India.

Possession of the plant or its products is a criminal offence in some countries and the reader is advised to be fully aware of the law in these matters. The book urges the reader to work towards changing the law, for the sake of all sentient beings everywhere.

Disclaimer

Since Cannabis is still, sadly, illegal in many countries, this book feels the need to state that it does promote breaking the law by performing any of the actions described, but it does support changing the law, so it will make more sense.

Also, this book does not consider itself a 100% reliable source due to the difficulty of acquiring reliable data as well as the shortcoming of its author. Any comments would be greatly appreciated and credited.

Due to the somewhat complexity of the descriptions in this book, it is advised to have a chillum handy to exercise along the reading. If an explanation is still unclear, the book urges the reader to study more and/or contact the publication via the email specified in page 2.

Vision

Those who support legalization know that not being able to smoke Cannabis is, astonishing, only a small part of the problem caused by banning the plant.

Cannabis has hundreds of practical uses that could replace plastic, toxics, medicines, trees and many more.

Cannabis was banned in the United States at 1937. Let us join in prayer that this law won't last to be 100 years old.

Bom.

Chapter 2 – THE CHARAS

Preliminary conditions

Out of the two kinds of Cannabis, only Indica can be used to make Charas.

Charas can be produced if the Indica plant grows at an altitude of at least a thousand meters, where it's warm at days and cold at nights. At such altitudes and harsh conditions, the plants protect themselves by producing substantially more THC and resin. This resin (referred to as 'oil', by the locals) is the substance that is known as Charas.

History

Charas, a product of the Cannabis plant, can be produced in various places in the world, but India is known to be the source of it and the smoking of Charas can be traced for the past couple of thousands of years in this area.

For centuries, Cannabis was legal in India and was part of the social and religious culture. Some Hindus associate the plant with Lord Shiva who brought it to mankind from the Himalaya in order to show them the path to enlightenment.

The Buddhist tradition, which also began in India, speaks of Prince Siddhartha, who lived on a diet of only one seed per day for six years, until reaching enlightenment and becoming the first Buddha, presenting to the world the four Noble truths and the Eightfold path. Some claim that these seeds were of the cannabis plant.

To others, it is a non religious way to get connected with higher realms, and of course, for some, it is a matter of joy and not of spiritual or mental education in any way.

Making

A few months after seeding and maintaining the fields, the plants are finally ready for the making.

In North India, starting the month of September begins the 'making season'.

Locals, along with hired help, are spending days at the fields, under the sun, making the Charas.

Due to the increasing demand over the years on one hand, and increasing legal problems for the suppliers, on the other, many new problems have risen, manifesting also in higher prices for lower quality.

This phenomenon is causing what the locals refer to as 'business Charas'.

For example, different plants, at different fields, can be ready for the making at different times, at a spread of up to 2-3 months, pending exposure to the sun etc. Unfortunately, financial pressures are driving some to make as early in the season as possible.

Another factor of when to make is the daily weather. From September the monsoons are coming and this is not good news for the workers. In order to make Charas, one requires

at least two days of good sun, yesterday and today. The followers of the 'Business Charas' are not always maintaining this rule.

Also, in the past the fields used to surround the houses in the villages, so whole families made Charas at the comfort of being close to home. In the recent years, the police are coming every season to cut the plants and make problems for the owners of the fields. Thus, the fields have been relocated far away and require a few decent hours of walking up the mountains in order to reach them.

The pay for a worker, as of the season of 2007, starts from 100Rp a day, but can be doubled, due to different factors such as skill or payment by Tola, which is 10 (new school) to 11.3 (old school) grams of Charas.

The 'payment by Tola' system is a good example of digression in the history of making Charas. Such a payment plan encourages the worker to work faster, making more Charas per day at the expense of lower quality.

Other methods of increasing the quantity include splashing a drop of oil on the worker's hands before he/she begins the making. Thus, more resin will stick to the worker's hands, resulting in more Charas, but with a bit of an oily aftertaste.

Although most of the workers work alone and perform all actions described below by themselves, it is advised, for optimal results, that the making will be done in groups of two.

One is in-charge on harvesting the plant and its branches, removing the leaves and presenting the buds on the branches to the second worker, which is touching the buds only, and by thus actually making the Charas by rolling the bud between the hands several times:

"Every cream is Charas, but not every Charas is cream"

1 time roll – first quality cream.

2 to 4 times roll – second quality cream.

5 and up – welcome to world of fingers, chapattis, 'business Charas quality', 'Charas-but-not-cream' etc.

From the same field, a worker has a choice of producing 1 tola of 'first' or alternatively 3 tolas of 'second' or up to 15 (!) tolas of fingers.

A skilled worker can produce up to half a tola of first cream a day or 1.5 (and some say up to 2-2.5) tolas of second cream a day.

The market price, as of 2007-8, is dictating that it is definitely not worth making 'first', and it is more tempting to make 'business Charas' than to make 'second'. It is this book's hope that educated customers will tip the scale towards productions of 'second' and above.

Summarizing tips:

Ensure that:

- ✓ The plant is ready for the making.
- ✓ The workers are skilled and get paid by day.
- ✓ Workers hands are clean and dry before beginning.
- ✓ The making is done after 2 days of sun and under sunny skies.
- ✓ The making is done exactly where the plant grows.
- ✓ One is removing the leaves while the other makes.

Storing

After the Charas has been made, it must be stored in a dry cool place for a period of several months (no less than 2-3). This period allows the chlorophyll to evaporate from the Charas.

This chlorophyll, when smoked, causes headaches and it isn't healthy or adding to the turn.

Examining

It is recommended (and much easier) to examine the Charas only after it has been stored for several months.

However, the following points apply for both before and after the storing.

Open the Charas and examine it from the inside:

- Is it clean?
- Is the work even or the small pieces are at different sizes and colors?
- How is the smell?

Other points include:

- Good Charas is flexible when warm and hard when cold.
- If cream, make a snake the length of your finger from it. Then, pull from both sides gently. Good Charas should expend the snake a bit before giving in and tearing off.

Chapter 3 – THE CHILLUM

Making

Clay is the major, if not the only, substance of which most chillums are made of.

Some chillum makers cover the clay from the outside with stones, ceramics and more, but it is for decoration only and is not mandatory.

Others make chillums of crystal stones or other materials.

But most make clay chillums and decorate them only by carving shapes on the outside surface of it.

The art of making a chillum has a place of honor to the Italians and to Italy.

Not only are Italians chillum makers well placed in the list of “most wanted chillums”, Italy holds another honor of producing a high quality clay, mixed with quartz and other minerals.

Out of respect to the chillum makers, this book will not elaborate on the process of making the chillum and the stone but the following general description might be of some importance for better understanding of the chillum itself.

Making the Chillum

The making of the chillum begins by shaping the wet clay to a cone shape.

At this point the general shape of the chillum is being made. A metal stick is used for carving the chillum.

This is a process that takes at least a few good hours of work, if not days, and is important to make it right and make the clay even denser, for better future results.

Then, the chillum is being placed on its head in a dark place for a period of two three days, for the clay to dry and harden. Every couple of hours, the chillum maker examines the process, flips the chillum to stand on its other end, makes sure that it stands straight and doesn't become banana shape etc.

When the clay is fully dry, the chillum is being polished from inside.

Sand paper is being used for polish from the outside.

Carving decoration is been done at this stage.

After that, the chillum is being cooked at an oven or fire. Italian clay is being cooked at 950-1000°C, while normal Indian clay cannot withstand this heat and is being cooked at 600°C only.

After the cooking, colors and ceramics can be added, which will require at least one more cooking at 1000-1100°C.

Making the stone

The chillum maker molds the clay into a cone shape, and lets it dry laying down, while rolling it once every few hours for symmetry purposes.

Then the stone is being sand papered until it reaches the top of the chillum. After that, lines are being made.

The work with the sand paper continues until the maker is happy with the way the stone is placed (as described under 'examining the stone', page 11).

After the polish, the stone is being cooked next to the chillum at the oven or alone at a fire at approximately 700^oc for several hours.

Following the cooking, an updated review of the fit is needed, which might lead to final touch ups.

Examining the chillum

There is only one way to know for sure the quality of the chillum and that is by smoking one time a known Charas with it.

“Testing before buying? No! Testing after buying? Why not!”

Alas, due to various reasons, most chillum vendors are not allowing a testing before the purchase.

Therefore, it is important that the intelligent buyer will know what to look for in order to evaluate the quality of the chillum.

1. When peering from the loading end, stone outside (see chapter 5, page 18 – taking out the stone), and pointing the chillum to a source of light, the circle that is the smoking hole, needs to be as close to a perfect circle as possible.
2. Same position, looking at the shining inside. The shiner, the better.
3. The shape of the chillum itself needs to be in a straight line. The following test is not recommended but is mentioned so the reader would understand better the meaning of a straight chillum: if one was to (carefully!) roll the chillum on a wooden (!) floor, it would have rolled straight, and not sideways due to a somewhat 'banana shape'.

The following points are also important but are inconclusive since the decision of good or bad is mostly a decision of taste. The experienced buyer can add the following data to the accumulated impression of the work and the resulting puff.

1. Size of the holes – Bigger smoking hole means opener puffs.
2. Proportions of the holes – All combinations of small/big holes are valid, although small loading hole with big smoking hole is unheard of due to the shape of the chillum and basic craftsmanship.
3. The appearance of the chillum from the outside.

Another factor is the ease of the cleaning of the chillum, once it has been smoked. Good chillums are very dense from the inside, so cleaning is much faster and easier compared to less dense chillums.

Examining the stone

For points on how to take out the stone from the chillum, please see chapter 5 – taking out the stone, page 18.

The stone itself needs to be symmetrical.

More lines for the smoke are considered better for the smoking, but also mean harder to clean.

Most stones have straight lines but some have spiral ones. This method is considered to provide the smoke a more natural spiral flow, instead of straight.

Place the stone back into the chillum, and examine it from the smoking hole towards a source of light. The stone needs to fit the chillum properly by touching the chillum at all the points and standing straight inside the chillum while doing so.

Since stones go down with time, it is preferable that not a full cigarette can be loaded but less. Later, it will fit one cigarette and after some more smoking, it will fit more than that until, sadly, the stone will need to be replaced for a new one.

Good stones last approx 2000 loads.

Examining the puff

As mentioned before, the puff is the best way to really verify the quality of the chillum.

To eliminate other factors, it is recommended that the intelligent reader will try a chillum by smoking a self made mixing containing previously known tobacco and Charas.

The smoothness of the puff and the aftertaste is what one needs to observe. Thus, the quality of the chillum can be established.

Cleaning

It is important to clean the Chillum after every use, when the Charas is still warm and can be easily removed from the chillum and the stone.

Some also clean the chillum shortly before the use, to remove dust etc.

More on the issue of cleaning is specified in Chapter 4, page 17 – cleaning.

Chapter 4 – THE CHILLUM CEREMONY

The Ceremony

The place where the Charas and the chillum finally meet is at the smoking session.

In order to make the smoking experience as pleasant as possible (which affects, in turn, the turn) it is recommended to follow the traditional ways of smoking a chillum.

This book believes in Noble doubt, and is hereby presenting not only the ceremony details and traditions, but also some hints of the logic behind it.

For example, the ceremony is done while sitting in a circle.

The sitting is not only a sign of having time to experience and enjoy the session, but it is also a more respectful and safer way to smoke.

Aside of the unity represented by sitting in a circle, it is also more practical for the passing of the chillum between the participants.

When these matters, as well as the procedures described below, are done well, the result is a better experience for all.

Preparations

This book believes that one should take the time to enjoy one actions.

However, from a quality point of view, the moment the cigarette has been roasted, the clock is ticking. Every moment adds humid to the tobacco and reduces the quality of the flavor.

For this reason and others, it is advised to make the following preparations before beginning the mixing, or immediately after it, and for sure always before the actual smoking.

A checklist includes, besides having the Charas and the tobacco:

- ✓ Safi – a smoking cloth, that is colorless (i.e. white – in order not to inhale chemical colors for no use), thin and airy. Those that use cloth tend to wet it a bit for creating a smoother taste, which it does, but also adds water to your lungs, resulting in wet coughs over the drier coughs of those who don't wet the safi. A rolling bandage, folded 2-4 times is considered a good safi for those who prefer their safi dry.
- ✓ A fire source to light the chillum. Long matches are recommended. Matches are generally preferred over lighters since wood fire tastes better then gas fire (ask any cigar smoker).
- ✓ A cleaning cloth to clean the chillum.
- ✓ A cleaning stick – optional.
- ✓ A mixing ball – optional.

Mixing

The mix has only 2 ingredients:

1. Charas
2. Tobacco

One is advised to begin with the Charas.

The Charas

The quantity of the Charas that is needed per chillum (or per cigarette) varies.

Using cream is preferred, not only due to reasons such as higher quality and better taste, but also since one needs to put less quantity than when using non-cream, and there is also a very useful way to know how much to put in the mix.

It is by making a long snake (or a few short ones, if the Charas isn't so good as to make a nice long snake) at the size of the index finger and using that amount for the first time.

Thus, one has a reference point and next time one can add/remove length or width until reaching a balance that is valid for all future times of using this specific quality and is also serving as a reference point for future qualities.

When using non-cream Charas, one has to crumble the Charas and visually estimate the quantity needed. Although some of these qualities might be very hard, especially at cold weather, it is strongly recommended never to heat the Charas.

Putting too much Charas in the mix results in a heavier taste while putting not enough results in a burning sensation.

After the snake/crumbles is ready, the mixer turns to the tobacco.

The tobacco

In most climates, the humid causes the tobacco to become moist.

Therefore, it needs to be roasted before use.

Roasting tips for cigarettes:

- ✓ Position the cigarette so that the rolling line is facing up.
- ✓ Heat the cigarette in an even manner from below and the sides by holding the flame close to the cigarette while constantly moving the flame back and forth. Make sure the paper doesn't heat too much and catches fire.
- ✓ When ready, lick the rolling line and peel off the filter and the line will follow. The licking is the reason why one didn't heat the rolling line before.
- ✓ Dump the tobacco from the cigarette to the mixing ball (or to the hand).
- ✓ Moll the filter so the remaining tobacco that is there will be added to the mixing ball as well.

Now that the roasted tobacco is in the mixing ball, the mixer needs to mull it to the smallest pieces possible and to remove the wood or tobacco that can't be mull to smaller bits.

It is important that the tobacco will be in the smallest pieces possible, so it will be burned and not smoked.

The task of preparing the tobacco is easier for those using cream Charas, since the mixing ball contains at this point only tobacco, so the big pieces can be easily removed without risk of removing also Charas pieces from the ball.

Tobacco for rolling self cigarettes is not recommended for use in chillum on account of being very moist and hard to dry out.

The mixture

Now comes the time to add the cream Charas into the mix. The mixer is to take off small parts of the Charas snake, the smaller the better (so the pieces will fully burn) and add them to the mix as even as possible.

Cream Charas is somewhat sticky by its nature, so make sure to spread it around and mull it together with the tobacco every once in a while, until the entire amount of the Charas has been added.

Whether cream or not, mull it a bit more till the mixture is evenly spread.

Loading

Traditionally, the Chillum is always held using the right hand. The right hand is considered cleaner and stronger. Holding or passing a chillum using the left hand might offend some participants in the ceremony.

Before loading, it is recommended to take out the stone (procedure is elaborated on chapter 5, page 18 – taking out the stone), insert it again in a spinning motion and shake the chillum a bit (while holding it tightly, close to the loading hole) to ensure that the stone isn't 'dancing' inside.

Then the actual loading begins:

- Hold the chillum in a vertical position in your right hand while covering the smoking hole a bit, creating somewhat of a cone shape funnel with your hand.
- Pour the mixture from the mixing ball using the left hand while making sure no pieces fall outside the chillum.
- Mixing ball aside, push very gently with your left thumb or finger the mixture into the chillum so to make it evenly spread. Do not push too much, as some do in order to fit the entire mixing into the chillum, since it might affect the taste in a negative way. Remember that the mixture needs to fit the chillum, not the other way around.
- Make sure that the mixture is only in the chillum or slightly on top of the hole.

Cover the smoking hole with the smoking safi and present to the chillum starter.

Some use a ring to hold the safi in place, for ease of use when smoking and passing.

Holding

There are various ways of holding a chillum but the ideas behind them are same.

- Do not touch the safi or the chillum directly with your mouth.
- Create a shape with your right hand (or both hands) that when inhaling from it, some vacuum will be created and a mixture of air and smoke from the burning mixture in the chillum will be inhaled. Thus, the THC binds better with the blood and the effect is stronger.

As mentioned before, there are various ways of holding the chillum by using one or two hands. The most simple (and, yet, effective) way is by placing the smoking side on the thumb's root while covering the chillum with the rest of the fingers.

Lighting

Lighting the chillum is usually a task for two people: one to light and one to start.

Long wood matches are preferred to light the chillum due to their comfort and cleaner fire than the gas fire.

One needs to draw two matches, place them in a 'v' shape with an angle of approx 30⁰ and light them.

Make sure that the flame between the two matches is one and begin the lighting.

The other, holding the chillum, needs to take puffs without inhaling (!) but simply exhaling the smoke from your mouth sideways (be sure not to exhale towards the chillum, since that will blow the mixing away).

After a few puffs, the lighter participant verifies that the 'head' is fully lightened in a perfect circle and puts the matches aside.

The participant with the chillum can now exhale the entire smoke from the mouth and inhale a decent puff before passing the chillum.

Passing

Traditionally, the chillum is being passed counter clock wise, i.e. to the right.

Passing the chillum is also being done with the right hand, while the left hand can support the right hand at its elbow (stability and respect), cover the heart or do nothing at all.

The chillum is being accepted in the same manner.

Smoking

It is advised to pump the puff by inhaling once or twice (if exhaling, then sideways) before taking the actual puff, in order to assure that the head is fully lightened.

Placing the left hand in front of the chillum while puffing is useful for its service as a reflection of the light coming from the head, as well as somewhat blocking full air access, resulting in higher inner burn.

After inhaling the puff, one needs to continue inhaling air, even after the chillum has been moved aside, in order for the burning sensation to move downwards towards the stomach. This is very important in order to avoid coughing and bad taste.

Once the burning sensation is gone, one can pass the chillum and gently exhale the smoke.

Some even exhale, inhale and exhale again to increase the effect of the puff.

It is customary to announce when passing a chillum that can produce only one more puff, by saying: "Last".

Once the chillum has been burned out, it is time to flip it.

Flipping

The flipping of the chillum, in order to take out the stone, is a somewhat dangerous procedure and many chillum owners prefer to do it by themselves and not let others flip the chillum for them.

Remove the safi from the chillum and use it to cover the loading hole.

Hit the safi with your bare hand (at its root) once to loosen the stone, which will jump in the chillum.

If the stone isn't loose, hit it again.

Carefully flip the chillum and let the remaining ashes fall, while holding a finger close to the hole, to prevent the stone from falling.

If the Charas, the mixing, the lighting and the smoking of all the participants have all been well, the ashes that remain are very few and all burned out i.e. white color.

If the stone isn't out yet, hit the chillum on to your hand, this time in a reverse position (Chillum upright, loading end facing down).

It is important to keep the palm tight and hit the chillum on the lower part of the palm, at the end of the hand coming from the thumb, where there is a bone.

At times, the stone still does not come out. For more info on how to handle this situation, please see chapter 5, page 18 – stuck stone.

Cleaning

After the stone is out, both the chillum and the stone needs to be cleaned. One needs to clean the stone while another cleans the chillum using a stick wrapped with thin cloth, or without a stick, simply by blowing the cloth through the chillum, holding it tight from both sides by two people or by wrapping around one's taws.

Make sure that the chillum and the stone are as clean as possible before announcing that the cleaning session is over.

Closer

Usually, cleaning the chillum is faster than cleaning the stone, therefore, return the chillum to its case and wait for the stone.

Once the stone is clean, place it in the chillum and close the case.

“Chillum katam, Baba nai katam”

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Chapter 5 – Misc

Taking out the stone

The way to take out the stone involves hitting the chillum at the loading hole with the bare hand.

Keep your left palm open at its fullest in a tight position and aim to hit the chillum with the lower part of the palm, almost at the end of the hill coming from the thumb, where one feels the bone.

Hold the chillum straight in the right hand and hit it with your left hand to loosen the stone, which will jump in the chillum.

If the stone isn't loose, hit it again.

Carefully flip the chillum into your left hand. The stone should come out.

If the stone isn't out yet, hit the chillum on to your hand, this time in a reverse position (loading hole facing down, chillum hitting hand).

If after hitting the chillum a few times on the hand, the stone still does not come out, then it is time for extreme measures.

Stuck stone

Place the chillum on its head, standing on a wooden surface, and insert a straight wooden stick (make sure the end is flat and not sharp) from the smoking hole. Hit the stick with a flat piece of wood gently at different points on the stone, making sure that it is hitting straight on the back of the stone, until the stone is out.

The reason that wood is being used is since it's weaker than clay, thus no harm can be done to the chillum itself.

Deep cleaning

It is recommended, once in a while, and only when needed, to perform deep cleaning for the stone and at extreme cases, for the chillum as well.

The method to clean a chillum is also described here but it is this book's belief that such a procedure is very rarely needed, if at all, and is generally not recommended.

Deep cleaning – with wet safi

A highly recommended way to deep clean a stone is by using a wet safi and wrapping it around the stone.

After ten minutes, remove the wet safi and clean the stone. The substance that was holding tight to the stone before, now comes out with much more ease.

To deep clean a chillum, when dirty at its inner top (stone level and above) is by inserting the wet safi from the loading hole, stone outside, and waiting ten minutes before cleaning.

This procedure is needed only once in a while, when the stone (or the chillum) gets too much Charas on it and it cannot be removed in normal cleaning.

Deep cleaning – with hot milk

The process described here is generally not recommended, except in extreme cases.

- Place the chillum (stone next to it, if cleaning the stone as well) in cold milk and heat them together.
- As the milk boils, dark dirt will appear on the surface, coming from inside the chillum.
- After a few minutes of boiling, extinguish the fire and allow the milk to cool down.
- Pick up the chillum and clean it thoroughly.
- Change the safi to a different one, that is dry, and continue the cleaning.

Broken chillum

Most people believe that once a chillum has been broken, it cannot be used anymore and usually the chillum is being put aside, thrown away, or buried.

However, there are two other options.

If broken only at top or bottom, it is sometimes possible for any chillum maker to cut the chillum, polish it and adjust a new stone.

Another option that has been reported as successful is to glue the chillum using milk in the following way:

- Heat milk until it boils.
- Hold the chillum parts in both hands and dip the broken parts in the rising foam of the milk until the broken areas are fully covered by the foam.
- Lift the chillum from the foam and join the pieces together by applying pressure of your hands.
- Cover the chillum with cello tape from the smoking to the loading hole several times to keep the pressure for a few hours more.
- Allow a few hours for the chillum to cool down.
- Remove the cello tape.
- Clean the chillum.

If all was done well, the chillum should be ready for use. If not, the process can be repeated.