

## The Use of Tobacco Purges in Therapeutic Processes<sup>1</sup>

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There are many psychotherapeutic approaches in place in Europe. Including but not limited to: emotional, behavioral, corporeal, psychoanalytic, and integrative therapies. They all claim to be the quickest and most efficient, but that does not change my point of view in a fundamental reality. When we encounter a problem, we have two ways to resolve it: either confronting it directly to understand its origin, or developing physically and spiritually with the goal of solving it, and through these means slowly being able to overcome the problem.

Traditional Amazonian Medicine combines both of these possibilities. It shows us that the human body is a vehicle of wisdom and knowledge. Traditional Amazonian Medicine utilizes elements that Mother Nature has given us to inspire and cure us, while teaching us about human nature. A fundamental question that enhances every human, be it consciously or unconsciously: “What is my nature?” otherwise phrased as, “Who am I?” Through everything that we experience during our existence, be it positive or negative, through happiness or suffering, and health and sickness, we do not stop exploring these questions to find answers. It is exactly for this reason that traditional medicine has great healing potential. When traditional medicine is put into practice, it is important to respect it. To do so, the first step is to see the rules put in place by the original practitioners, and think about purification (physical/psychological/energetic). If the patient keeps these simple intentions in mind, then knowledge, wisdom, and well-being will come naturally. For example, before drinking Ayahuasca, it is necessary to purge.

You may be asking yourself, “What is a purge?” The first words that come to mind are self-liberation, evacuation, elimination, to unblock. The word purge implies that there is something in excess that must be evacuated; something that is toxic, something heavy, and wretched (also, we remember the word purgatory, which is a transitional stage to pass into happiness according to the Christian tradition). All of these notions can be directed to the domain of the body as much as the spirit. We understand that when one purges it is to make oneself feel lighter, to feel better. Therefore, purging is a necessary sacrifice to access a more exact perspective of yourself and to liberate yourself from physical and psychological retentions that obstruct a healthy existence. In Traditional Amazonian medicine, the purge is a ceremony that combines the physical effects of a purgative (emetic or laxative) plant while also including the spiritual plane by means of the ritual that accompanies it. The technique of this medicine is very precise: it differentiates the attributes

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of every plant used and invokes the spirits with which they are associated. This gives light to specific uses and chants for every plant.

The qualification that I received gave me the possibility of working with the tobacco plant, a plant for the strong spirit. A plant that is masculine and rigorous. Tobacco cleans and clears emotional fields, fortifies the spirit of decision, cheers the patient up, encourages bravery and integrity. At the same time, it restructures and protects the energetic body and gives warmth. It is a fire plant linked to action. It is used through three methods: aerial when it is smoked, liquid (as a decoction for ceremonies and purges), and solid form. There are different purgative plants in the Amazon; some work on mental states of mind, some work on the viscera, and some work in the reproductive organs. Tobacco is a master plant, and therefore the action and effects are profound and encompass many levels.

Now I will speak a bit about the preparation and the ritual. When I administer a tobacco purge, I begin preparing myself in the morning and I fast until the day following the purge to accompany the participants who will also be fasting. Then I boil pure tobacco leaves in water to obtain a dark brown liquid with a sour taste. Afterwards, the purge is filtered to then be *icarada*<sup>3</sup> at the start of the ritual with the chant that calls the tobacco. When the participants arrive, they arrange themselves into a circle with a cube in front of them. After the circle is formed and protected, they ingest the tobacco and drink two jars of water (approximately 2.5 liters in each jar). The large amounts of water being ingested eventually induce vomiting. During this time, the chants help them in moments of difficulty, or when something within them is struggling to come out. During the purge, the participants can receive help with tobacco smoke “*sopladas*”<sup>4</sup> and perfume (tobacco smoke and/or perfume are useful in removing or lightening heavy energetic loads).

When I became qualified and returned to France, I thought, “Nobody in this country will want to ingest a plant that is usually used recreationally. Not to mention, they won’t want to drink it with the purpose of vomiting.” A few days before the first ceremony I conducted, however, I had a dream and saw the spirit of tobacco, which consoled me and helped me go into battle! Over the last three years in France, I have administered tobacco purges to about 350 people, and the outcome has been very interesting.

The people that have come to me span the entire social strata:

- There are those who have practiced medicine in the Amazon and are happy to continue practicing in France. Due to legal reasons, we do not have the possibility of drinking Ayahuasca in France. La Maison Qui Chante (French representatives of Takiwasi, both Takiwasi and La Maison Qui Chante mean “The House that Sings”) does not agree with the reasons for this illegalization. Some people, however, choose to do Ayahuasca

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<sup>3</sup> The verb *icarar* refers to the word *icaro* which is a shamanic chant that in this context works to activate specific therapeutic properties of the tobacco plant.

<sup>4</sup> *Soplar* is the Spanish verb for, “to blow”. A *soplada* is a traditional way of cleaning the patient’s energy field.

sessions clandestinely anyway. We do not want to be involved in illegal practices that put the participants and/or medicine in jeopardy.

- There are those who are in therapy and find themselves blocked when it comes to a certain subject, the purge gives them a kick-start that helps them break those barriers.
- There are those who do not practice or participate in psychotherapy but are looking for answers to questions about their existence. They often have an important decision to make. The tobacco will help clarify their situation. These are often people who are very stressed or spiritually troubled and need to relax their spirit/soul.
- There are many young people who come to me because they have intoxicated themselves with alcohol and drugs, especially cannabis (marijuana) and are looking to detoxify themselves. The tobacco will help them become conscious of the noxious nature of their drug and alcohol consumption.

The first contact I had with the spirit of the tobacco plant happened during an Ayahuasca ceremony. He was sad, and showed me all of the people morally grounded in the session who barely paid attention to the shaman's chants while he was singing to the tobacco plant. The tobacco mentioned, "I am a powerful medicine and I can cure various maladies but nobody pays attention to me". Over time, I've seen that this vision was showing me the moral and psychological situation that many French citizens found themselves in. Many depressed or humiliated people whose only alternative was antidepressants that their physicians prescribed them. In many situations, these physicians know very little about psychology and of the fact that there are other, more simple and natural processes that cost less money.

At La Maison Qui Chante, there are around two purges per month, usually in a group containing 10-15 people. The purge generally allows the participants to alleviate stress while working on themselves. If the difficulties encountered in the purge are profound, then it is sometimes necessary to follow a regimen of various purges. The people who want to purge are required to fast the day of the purge, and to abstain from sexual intercourse that night, while following a strict diet for the next three days.

## **Potential Within Therapeutic Processes**

### Depression

Tobacco has very good results in people who suffer from depression. Depression is often tied to someone's deeply rooted rage and anger that they end up turning against themselves because they are not able to express accumulated feelings. These patients are usually unable to remember the origin of their depression. "When the bag is too full, it breaks".

The purge is very useful for this, it will act in many areas: it will fortify, tune up, and stimulate the patient by means of the effects of the tobacco. Although the purge focuses on vomiting, the process of vomiting has a positive effect on the psyche. The psyche feels alleviation brought on by being liberated from energetic impregnation; the psyche relates the vomit to negative emotions, anger, sadness, and/or confusion. These are different stages that the patient will go through during the

purge, and instead of feeling as if they are in a fog where they do not feel anything as is the case with many depressive patients, where they feel as if they live in a grey magma where everything has the same tint and flavor, they will begin to feel as if they can finally differentiate and identify their feelings and emotions.

### Return of the Repressed

When working with a patient in psychotherapy, there is an important moment in the healing process called the *return of the repressed*.

- This is to say that the patient becomes conscious of things that he or she has buried in their subconscious. These are usually unwanted feelings, such as pain, or hate towards the people that they are associated with. In clinical psychology, we see that this provokes conflict with the patient. These unconscious conflicts are what prevent the patient from achieving internal peace.
- They may also remember traumatic situations that they have forgotten about completely due to the immense pain associated with the experience. When this happens, it is often because the person's psyche believes that it needs to block this experience to keep on living. The moment that this event returns to consciousness is what we refer to as the return of the repressed. This event manifests itself in something called *abreaction*. Sometimes it is a method of becoming conscious of repressed traumatic events. During abreaction, the emotions tied to the trauma return with great force and the whole body is involved in the experience, as if the memory was opening itself.

The purge is a very powerful resource in the return of the repressed. As if the act of vomiting itself contains a very strong symbolic load, it makes the psyche feel as if it is regressing back to previous times. At the same time, the body can let go of its emotional and muscular shells, which favors abreaction. Tensions are released. This is made truer and more efficient by the fact that it is almost impossible to prevent the vomit from occurring. It is necessary to reach the end now that the process is out of the hands of the participant. People experience awareness, they can have strong physical sensations, and some enter a state of altered consciousness and have visions, they hear words that come from the deepest parts of themselves. Sometimes they are under the impression that it is the tobacco that speaks to them even when it is not part of their culture or custom to believe in such things.

One of my patients, an extremely depressive young man, recovered memories of sexual abuse that happened to him when he was three years old. His dreams after the purge confirmed the “footprint” of the abuse. Tobacco makes you dream. An interesting part of working with tobacco purges is that the patient can explore what happens to him/her the night of the purge in their dreamscapes.

### Phobias

Phobias are characterized by inhibitions that are strongly tied to anguish or anxiety. The person cannot carry out simple tasks such as riding an elevator, crossing the street, going through tunnels,

driving on the road, seeing blood, or encountering mice or spiders. These events may provoke states of uncontrollable panic and can lead the patient to go to extreme illogical lengths to avoid them. This also leads the patient to end up in a psychic state that can cause them to lose control. It is extremely difficult to cure phobias, often due to the fact that phobias are often passed on from generation to generation within families. In cases of women, the mother will transmit phobias to her daughter, and vice versa in the case of men. The object of the phobia often has nothing to do with the anxiety; instead the anxiety and the object are linked as a result of the displacement of a traumatic event over an object as if the subconscious had encrypted a secret message that provokes panic.

I see a patient that cured his phobias through a series of tobacco purges. She did multiple purges in a one-month span and ended up curing her phobias completely. We had worked together on her therapy for two years and we had not had any results when it came to her phobias. She could not drive through tunnels, ride elevators, or fly in planes. She wrote me a small essay, a passionate, personal testimony of her experiences with tobacco purges. She was essentially frozen to the bones. Then, during a tobacco purge, she had a vision. She found herself curled up within her mother's womb, without any anchorage, totally lost. She saw a dark ring that resembled the entrance to a tunnel, and realized that this was her birth. She unconsciously did not want a relationship with her mother because her mother was emotionally very cold. She understood that it was necessary to begin relating through a more spiritual perspective. This experience cured her phobias.

### Drug Addiction

In this section I will speak about cannabis because it is the most commonly encountered drug of abuse within youth groups in France. This drug consumption and energetic intoxication is trivialized by the powers that be. The effects of cannabis abuse are characterized by ideas dispersed in an unorganized manner, and confusion. The user regresses into an imaginary world full of images and childlike phantoms, disconnected from true emotions, and ends up losing contact with reality. The tobacco purge causes a psychic jolt, and allows the patient to become aware of his/her internal clutter. The desacralized use of cannabis leads the user to a world somewhere between a dream and a lie. The purge tends to refocus the patient and allows him to liberate himself from toxins and clean the spirit. The adolescent is often tempted by an experience that allows him to escape from day-to-day monotony. This temptation leads to an evolutionary path that corresponds to his unconscious spiritual ambitions by finding something in the material world (in this case cannabis). The things I write here were inspired by progress seen in adolescents, particularly one 19-year-old who was able to stop smoking cannabis after various purges in quick succession in conjunction with psychotherapeutic support. When it comes to cigarette smoking, yes there are people who are able to stop smoking cigarettes by means of purging tobacco. The tobacco purges cause them to become aware of what leads them to smoke, the cause often being neurotic conflicts.

### Neurotic Conflicts

It is important to remember that neurotic conflicts are sustained by intense feelings of guilt that provoke ambivalence, such as, “I would really like to do this, but I simply can’t.”

I will continue with an example of a 45-year-old man that had stopped smoking on his own accord many years back. When he came under my care, he began to participate in tobacco purges. At the beginning of a tobacco purge that I was administering, he approached me and told me, “I don’t know what is going on. Ever since I started purging tobacco I’ve been smoking 5 or 6 cigarettes a day. Shouldn’t these tobacco purges have the opposite effect? Can you observe me during the purge to help me find out what could be going on?” I agreed to observe him during the purge.

While closing the purge, however, I realized that I had completely forgotten his request. In spite of this, I went to see him and spoke to him in a reassuring tone: “You are in a phase of life during which you have to make important decisions. There is a professional choice that you doubt but you must take stance on. This internal conflict brings you back to conflicts that you lived with your father when you were 9 years old”. He then looked at me with surprise and told me: “That is exactly what I lived in the purge and I understood that all of those conflicts that I experienced with my father are coming back. That is what was blocking my personal process”.

What can we learn from this episode?

- He did not need me to find answers to his questions. His process was autonomous.
- The purge brought back repressed conflicts.
- I had been “in the loop” of what was going on without knowing what he was living because the tobacco smoke I had blown on him at the beginning of the ceremony had built a true bridge between us, relating the participant’s (patient’s) body with the operator’s body (myself).

Following this experience, I learned that I had a lot of information about the participants thanks to the spirit of tobacco. I did not know how to express my thanks to the spirit of tobacco for this help. This spirit helps me aid patients by knowing which chants to sing at what time, and who might need assistance during the purge.

### An Example of Neurotic Conflict

This story is about a 40-year-old man that experienced failed romantic relationships for a period of 7 consecutive years. He noticed that his relationships would end after 8 or 9 months with no logical reason behind the rupture. This realization brought him into a state of depression for not being able to find his other half. The tobacco purge helped him remember a transgression that he had committed during his life. He had insisted that one of his ex-girlfriends have an abortion. He did not know how to end the relationship but during a “break” period, they had intercourse and she became pregnant. Due to his lack of commitment to the relationship, he persuaded her to abort the child. Subconsciously, he hadn’t forgiven himself for aborting his unborn child and so he unconsciously would sabotage his relationships within the span of a gestation period. Due to the

regression of memories and emotions, the purge was extremely painful for him. He decided to symbolically make reparations for having aborted a child and a few months later he met a woman with whom he is making a new life. His current relationship has surpassed the fateful 9-month span.

### Trans-generational Engrams

Trans-generational engrams are memories transmitted through kin across multiple generations. These engrams may trigger the repetition of aforementioned memories in the patients' lives. They act as an unconscious force that pushes the patients to commit the same mistakes that his parents or ancestors have made. More clearly, the patients will act in the same "spiritual state" and end up knowing and experiencing the failures of their ancestors. Basically, the spiritual level of the patient has been affected by the acts of his or her ancestors.

At the end of the day, knowledge of spiritual laws and the order of non-transgressive behavior of the living can help heal these wounds. Now that these psychic engrams are deeply rooted in the subconscious and in our psychological structure, it is necessary to educate oneself to heal them. It is necessary to learn about appropriate spiritual behavior and to connect with reparative rituals. I cannot count how many times I have seen grandparents resting on the shoulders and backs of patients during a purge. I've seen patients purge dead ancestors, transgressions, and through these experiences they have learned to reconcile with the spiritual dimension.

There are still so many things left to say, but I hope you have been able to get an idea of the possible positive effects that a tobacco purge can elicit in a patient. I hope you have been able to see the reaches of its healing efficiency, its ecological value, and its cost-efficiency. The difficult part is that it requires bravery on the part of the patient, which is a contrast to traditional western medicine where all one has to do is swallow a pill. These purges are more about cleansing different levels of the body, spirit, and mind.