



*MUSLIMS
IN
ALIEN
SOCIETY*



PROHIBITION OF
ALCOHOL
IN ISLAM



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In the Holy Qur'an the word *Khamr* has been used for alcoholic drinks. During the days of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) the sources of alcoholic beverages were grapes, dates, wheat, barley and honey. Although alcohol may be prepared nowadays from any other source, it is still considered to be forbidden as long as it intoxicates people. Islam emphasises the effects of alcohol on people and not the origin or form of alcohol.

Islam dealt with the problem of alcohol and intoxicants in an excellent way. The information relating to the prohibition of alcohol in Islam is to be obtained directly from the words of Allah alone in the Qur'an as well as from the saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the Hadith. The prohibition of alcoholic beverages is mentioned three times in the Holy Qur'an.

In *Surah Al-Baqarah*, Allah says :

- (i) "They question thee about strong drinks and games of chance. Say: In both is great sin, and (some) utility for men; but the sin of them is greater than their usefulness" (2 : 219).

There is a great sin in wine drinking and one of the things that Allah forbade is sins. The last portion of the verse tells us that there is greater harm in wine and gambling than the benefit. No sane man will approach or do anything that has a greater harm than benefit for him.

In *Surah Al-Nisa*, Allah says :

- (ii) "O ye who believe! Draw not near unto prayer when ye are drunken, till ye know that ye utter" (4 : 43).

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There are some ignorant and misguided Muslims who try to argue on the basis of this verse that the Qur'an has not specifically prohibited *Khamr*. They tend to forget that it refers to the time before intoxicants were prohibited. Before the prohibition of intoxicants altogether was promulgated, it was at least unbecoming that people should come to prayers in a state of intoxication or in a dazed state of mind on account of drowsiness or some other cause. Islam regards prayers as a monologue between a Muslim and the Creator of the universe. So he is prohibited to approach this monologue while he is drunk. He must purify himself first before he approaches *Salat*. He must be pure in mind and body, therefore, he must be sober. He must be clean in clothes too.

Salat (prayer) is Islam's most important act of worship. The Holy Prophet said: "Prayer is the pillar of Islam. The one who performs it has established his religion and the one who abandons it has ruined (his) religion." That is why some of the leading Muslim jurists consider that person as *murtad* (renegade) who abandons his prayers altogether.

In *Surah Al-Maidah*, Allah says:

(iii) "O ye who believe! Strong drinks and games of chance and idols and divining of arrows are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed. Satan seeketh only to cast among you enmity and hatred by means of strong drink and games of chance, and turn you from remembrance of Allah and from (His) worship. So will ye not then abstain?" (5:90, 91).

These three passages from the Qur'an (2:219, 4:43 and 5:90, 91) are related to the prohibition of alcoholic beverages. They were revealed in the above order but on different times and occasions. The last verse (5:91) makes the prohibition of alcohol categorical.

We are told in the last revealed verses on intoxicants that drinks, gambling etc., are abomination of Satan's handicraft.

We must, therefore, be very careful about the instigations of our mortal enemy—Satan. That is why we are to rid ourselves of all abominable things.

Another point from these *ayahs* is that Satan wants to excite enmity and hatred between us. We want to live happily and friendly and no hatred is to be aroused. So when the final stage of prohibition was revealed in the third year after the Battle of Uhud, it was only to be announced before the Muslims that liquor and drug were not to be taken by a Muslim. When the reciters of the revealed verse reached.....
.....will ye not then abstain?" (5:91) all Muslims said, "We have really abstained, O Allah". Hence they poured on the earth all the drinks that remained whether it was in a jar, mug or in anything else. They also spat out what was in their mouths.

The Messenger of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) ordered people to throw away all drinks that was in their possession. Soon after the revelation, some of the companions came back and told the Prophet that there was some drink that belonged to some orphans, what were they to do about this; spill it or leave it. He ordered the companions to throw away all drinks, no matter to whom they belonged.

Had it not been *Haram* (unlawful), the Prophet (peace be upon him) wouldn't have ordered them to throw it away. Had he not, the Apostle of Allah (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), understood that alcohol was *Haram*, he wouldn't have forbidden Muslims from drinking.

Had it not been unlawful, the Messenger of Allah wouldn't have cursed it, as well as the brewer or wine-maker, the drinker, the buyer, the server (waiter) and those present at the party. And the Prophet (peace be upon him) wouldn't have ordered

that the drinker was to be flogged.*

Muslims are told to eschew such abominations. This term emphasized the subject better than mere prohibition. It means that the Apostle of Allah translated the teachings of the Holy Qur'an by his deeds and sayings, i.e. he not only preached but practised the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

There is a very good collection of Ahadith (sayings of the Prophet) dealing with intoxicants. Some of these are given below :

- (1) Ibn Umar reported the Messenger of Allah as saying, "Every intoxicant is *Khamr* and very intoxicant is *haram* (forbidden)." (Muslim).
- (2) 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) said that when Allah's Messenger was asked about *bit* which is the *nabidh*** from honey, he replied, "Every liquor which intoxicates is forbidden." (Bukhari & Muslim).
- (3) Umme Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) told that Allah's Messenger prohibited all intoxicants and drinks that slacken a person's mind." (Abu Daud).
- (4) Abdullah ibn Abbas narrated that the Prophet said: "Abstain from *Khamr* because it is the key (source) of all evils." (Abu Daud).
- (5) Abu Hurairah reported the Messenger of Allah as

*Jabir reported the Prophet as saying, "Beat anyone who drinks wine and if he does it a fourth time kill him". He said that after that a man who had drunk wine four times was brought to the Prophet and he beat him, but did not kill him." (Tirmidhi).

Thaur b. Zaid al-Dailami told that Umar sought counsel about the prescribed punishment for drinking wine and Ali said to him, "I think you should give one who drinks it eighty lashes, for when he drinks he becomes intoxicated, when he is intoxicated he raves, and when he raves he makes up lies." So Umar inflicted eighty lashes as the punishment prescribed for drinking wine. (Malik).

***Nabidh* is a drink made from dates, raisins, honey, wheat, barley etc. The ingredients were steeped in water in a vessel, and provided the drink was used before fermentation took place it was lawful.

saying, "When one commits fornication he is not a believer, when one steals he is not a believer, when one drinks *Khamr* (wine) he is not a believer....." (Bukhari & Muslim).

This Hadith implies that one cannot remain a true Muslim, while disobeying Allah's laws by committing any of these great sins.

- (6) Anas said that the Messenger of Allah cursed ten people in connection with wine: the wine-presser, the one who has it pressed, the one who drinks it, the one who conveys it, the one to whom it is conveyed, the one who serves it, the one who sells it, the one who benefits from the price paid for it, the one who buys it, and the one for whom it is bought. (Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah).
- (7) Wa'il al-Hadrami said that Tariq b. Suwaid asked the Prophet about wine and he forbade him. When he told him that he made it only as a medicine he replied "It is not a medicine, but is a disease." (Muslim).
- (8) Jabir told of a man who came from the Yemen and asked the Prophet about a liquor made from millet called *mizr* which they drank in their country. The Prophet asked whether it was intoxicating and when he replied that it was, he said, "Every intoxicant is prohibited. Allah has made a covenant regarding those who drink intoxicants to give them some *tinat al-khabal* to drink." He was asked what that was and replied that it was the sweat of the inhabitants of hell, or the discharge of the inhabitants of hell (Muslim).
- (9) Dailam al-Himyari told that he said, "Messenger of Allah. We live in a cold land in which we do heavy work and we make a liquor from wheat to get strength from it for our work and to stand the cold of our country." He asked whether it was intoxicating, and when he replied that it was, he said they must

avoid it. When he replied that the people would not abandon it, he said, "If they do not abandon it fight with them." (Abu Daud).

- (10) Jabir reported the Messenger of Allah as saying, "If a large amount of anything causes intoxication, a small amount of it is prohibited." (Tirmidhi, Abu Daud and Ibn Majah).
- (11) 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported Allah's Messenger as saying, "If a *faraq* (*Faraq* is about eight kilograms) of anything causes intoxication a handful of it is forbidden." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Abu Daud).

To drink as much as *faraq* would be almost impossible, so the point of the Hadith is to forbid anything which might in any conceivable circumstances cause intoxication. If a habitual drunkard does not lose control over himself altogether, it does not mean that the liquor ceases to be forbidden. Islam has made certain foods and drinks unlawful primarily on the basis of the pernicious effects that these create on the spiritual and moral health of human beings. Drinking is an evil through and through—. It saps the very root of morality, self-control and God-consciousness, making man an easy prey to evil.

- (12) Abdullah b. Amr told that the Prophet forbade wine, *maisir*, the *kuba* and *ghubaira*, saying, "Every intoxicant is prohibited." (Abu Daud).

This is a comprehensive Hadith not exclusively dealing with intoxicants. *Maisir* was a game of chance and *kuba* was a kind of drum wide at the ends and narrow in the middle which was looked on with disapproval. The parts of the Hadith which refer to intoxicants are the wine (*khamr*) and *ghubaira* which was an intoxicant made by Abyssinians from millet.

- (13) Abdullah b. Umar reported Allah's Messenger as saying, "If anyone drinks wine God will not accept prayer from him for forty days, but if he repents God

will forgive him. If he repeats the offence God will not accept prayer from him for forty days, but if he repents God will forgive him. If he again repeats the offence God will not accept prayer from him for forty days, but if he repents God will forgive him. If he repeats it a fourth time God will not accept prayer from him for forty days, and if he repents God will not forgive him, but will give him to drink of the river of the fluid flowing from the inhabitants of hell." (Tirmidhi).

- (14) Abdullah b. Amr reported the Prophet as saying, "An undutiful son, a gambler, one who casts up what he has given, and one who is addicted to wine will not enter paradise." (Darimi) Another version of his has a bastard instead of a gambler.
- (15) Abu Umama reported the Prophet as saying, "Allah has sent me as a mercy to the universe and as a guidance to the universe, and my Lord who is great and glorious has commanded me to annihilate stringed instruments, wind instruments, idols, crosses and pre Islamic customs, and my Lord who is great and glorious has sworn, 'By my might, none of my servants will drink a mouthful of wine without my giving him a similar amount of pus to drink, but he will not abandon it through fear of Me without my giving him drink from the holy tanks'." (Ahmad).
- (16) Ibn Umar reported Allah's Messenger as saying, "There are three to whom God has forbidden Paradise: one who is addicted to wine, an undutiful son, and a cuckold who agrees to his women-folk's adultery." (Ahmad and Nasa'i).
- (17) Abu Musa al-Ash'ari reported the Prophet as saying "There are three who will not enter Paradise: one who is addicted to wine, one who breaks ties of relationship, and one who believes in magic." (Ahmad).

- (18) In another Hadith it is reported on behalf of the Prophet that: "Liquor is the mother of many evils and it is the most shameful of all evils: anyone who drinks liquor, will neglect prayer, and may commit incestuous offences."
- (19) Al-Hakim narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "He who commits adultery, fornication, or drinks wine, Allah removes that person's faith from him in the same way as one takes off one's clothing."
- (20) Ahmad narrates that the Prophet said: "He who dies and has not abstained from drinking, Allah will make him drink from the river of Al Ghota (a river flowing from the sex organs of the prostitutes). The people of Hell will be perturbed by the nasty smell from the sex organs of the prostitutes."
- (21) Umar narrates: I heard from the Prophet say: "He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not sit at a table on which people drink."
- (22) Abu Hurairah narrates; the Prophet said: "The drinker of wine is like the worshipper of idols." (Ibn Majah).
- (23) It is narrated that the Prophet said: "He who knows one verse from the Qur'an and drinks, in the Last Day each letter of that *Ayah* will sue him before Allah Almighty, till each of them gets its right. Woe to him who is sued by the Holy Qur'an."

A group of people meeting at a bar or any other similar place, shall be gathered together by Allah in Hell, where each of them will blame the other saying: "If it were not you who had led me astray, I would not be in Hell today."

He who had been drinking wine in this world will be made by God to drink poison from Asawida (black and very poisonous snakes) that will make both the skin and the flesh fall into the vessel he drinks from. God Almighty shall accept neither the fasting or prayers nor the pilgrimage of the wine

drinker, the brewer, its seller, the person who carries it, the one to whom the wine is brought, or the person who uses the money obtained by selling wine, if these people did not repent of the bad deeds before they died. If these people repent heartily, pledging never to commit evil again Allah will accept their repentance. Otherwise, they are going to be made drink pus of Hell for every single drop of alcohol they had taken in this world.

- (24) Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) said that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not sit together with drinkers of wine, nor visit them when they are sick. Do not even attend their funerals. The drinkers of wine shall come on the Last Day with black faces, their tongues leaning on one side and saliva coming out of their mouths. Anyone who sees their filthy appearance will know that they were the drinkers of wine."
- (25) One of the wives of the Prophet Umme Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "One of my daughters fell ill I gave her some wine. Soon the Prophet entered with furious eyes saying: "What is this O Umme Salama?" I told him that I was curing my daughter. He then said, "Allah did not make the cure of the illness of Muslims from what is *Haram* (unlawful)."

The people who now-a-days take medicines and tonics with high percentage of liquor either under medical advice or otherwise should ponder over the above Hadith and leave forthwith the use of *haram* tonics and syrups. Abu Darda reported that the Holy Prophet said: "Verily, Allah sent down ailment and cure (thereof). So he made a cure for every ailment. So seek cure but seek not cure by unlawful things." (Abu Daud).

From this authentic information, it is clear that alcohol beverages in all their kinds and forms are unlawful for Muslims to consume or deal with. This includes all types of

wines, liquors, fermented beverages, pure alcohol and the like. Besides, there are some drugs which fall under the category of intoxicants. These are opium, bhang, qat (a grass-like type of plant used in Yemen). The Kenyans use a plant of the same species, called marungi marijuana (mostly used in USA).

All such intoxicants are prohibited by Islam since the evils of drug-abuse are in many ways much worse than alcoholism. Addicting drugs which produce temporary feelings of euphoria and well-being like opium, morphine, pethadine, heroin, methedrine, benzedrine ("speed") and barbituate abuse ("rockets"), hashish, charas, marijuana (cannabis) 'grass'. L.S.D., mescaline and "angel-dust" create delusions and hallucinations and insanity (psychotic states) which may last for months and even years after the drug has been withdrawn. Alcoholism and drug abuse are responsible for many admissions into insane asylums and mental hospitals and may cause permanent psychosis and brain damage. Intoxicants and drug-abuse force the victims to indulge in crime and addiction makes it impossible for the "user" to lead a normal life. Intoxicants ruin the "user's" health and may lead to an early death.

The Muslims abstain from alcoholic drinks, intoxicating drugs and swine-flesh and such *haram* things because Almighty Allah has prohibited these in the Quran and Hadith. We abstain from these prohibited things because Almighty Allah has commanded us thus and to ward ourselves from His wrath and eternal punishments by indulging in the *haram*. Allah knows what is good for us spiritually and morally as well as physically. These are the primary reasons why we abstain from *haram*: all other reasons are of secondary importance though it is useful to mention them.

Alcohol is not only a great wastage of money but also causes ulcers, stomach cancer, neurological and digestive disorders and liver ailments. And the greatest cancer risk is faced by people who both smoke and drink. The twin-evils

of liquor and gambling have ruined innumerable lives, shattered multitudes of homes, and caused more misery to mankind than all other vices put together.

The modern scientists, after carrying on a long research on alcohol, clearly say that alcohol is the mother of all evils. Drinking causes lowliness and extinguishes noble passions of mercy, sympathy and tenderness. The drunkard ventures to commit the most heinous offences of murder, rape and fornication, disgraces people and defies the law and canons of society. This is simply because an alcoholic falls into a fit of passion and loses his power of control and self-restraint. He makes desire is "god" to satisfy his sexual lust and other unlawful pursuits. This is extremely harmful for the elevation of soul because wine-drinking extinguishes the glow of faith. This point has been elaborated in a Hadith of the Prophet where he said: "A person at the time of drinking wine is not a believer." (Bukhari). In other words, a person who drinks wine is devoid even an iota of faith at the time of drinking.

According to the Shari'ah, it is the duty of the Islamic state to enforce prohibition. The punishment of a free person for drinking wine or other intoxicating liquor, is eighty stripes on the authority of all the companions. This is equal to punishment for baseless slandering. The flogging should be such as does not inflict wounds on the body beneath the skin. The Holy Prophet once said to the executioner: In inflicting the punishment, take care not to strike the face, the head or the privities.

"Flogging should not be done by a cruel executioner but by scholars who are well versed in the Islamic Law so that they should award punishment according to the letter and spirit of the law.

Reasons for Prohibition of Alcohol in Islam

There are many reasons why alcoholic beverages have been prohibited in Islam. The following are among the reasons which Muslims believe in and are taken from Dr. Ahmad H.

Sakr's booklet on the subject :

- (1) Alcohol is considered to be an abomination.
- (2) Alcohol is part of Satan's handiwork.
- (3) Drinking alcohol generates enmity and hatred among people.
- (4) Alcohol prevents people from remembering Allah.
- (5) It prevents or delays Muslims from performing their daily prayers. Even if they pray they will not understand the meaning and significance of what they are doing and saying.
- (6) Those who drink alcohol will be denied Paradise.
- (7) Those who drink alcohol are considered by Islam to be similar to those who worship idols which is also totally prohibited in Islam.
- (8) When a person drinks alcohol he is not considered to be a believer.
- (9) Alcohol is the mother of evils in society.
- (10) Muslim believe that the prophets of Allah did not taste alcoholic beverages and that alcohol was prohibited in the original scriptures of the divinely revealed religions.
- (11) Alcoholic beverages have some benefits, but sin and harm resulting from the consumption are far greater than their benefits.
- (12) Alcohol brings Allah's curse down on those who drink it, produce, sell or deal with it and those who participate in drinking parties.
- (13) Alcohol is responsible for a large number of road accidents.
- (14) Alcohol is the cause of many broken families.
- (15) Under the influence of alcohol, more homicide, rape, and other offences are committed.

For the above reasons, practising Muslims try their best to shun alcoholic beverages and those parties where alcohol is served, so as to please Allah Almighty.

And finally we seek refuge in Allah against wine and its

sister evils and against the worship of evil promptings and the Satan.

“Say: My Lord hath forbidden indecencies, such of them as are apparent and such as are within, and sin and wrongful oppression” (Al-Qur'an, 7: 33).

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