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Drugs, Intoxicants & Alcoholism

During the period of Jahiliyyah (Ignorance), prior to the advent of Islam, the Arabs were very fond of wine. This love is reflected in their language which has close to 100 different names for it. Their poetry often celebrated the praise of wines, goblets, drinking parties and so on.

Since it was regarded as a sign of cultural and social eminence, a tolerant approach was adopted towards it by Islam in the early stages and it was prohibited gradually. Firstly, Allah commanded that the harm of "intoxicants is far greater than its benefit." (Qur'an 2:210). The next stage was that Allah instructed the people not to come near Salaah in an intoxicated state (Qur'an 4:43). Finally, Allah revealed the verses in which "Khamr" was totally prohibited (Qur'an 5:90).

The word used to refer to intoxicants in the Qur'an is "Khamr" and this word is not confined to wine or to an alcoholic drink only, rather the definition of "Khamr" extends to any substance which intoxicates and clouds the mind in whatever form or under whatever name it may appear.

It is narrated that Nabi ﷺ was once asked about various intoxicants which were prevalent at that time, he replied: "Every intoxicant is Khamr and every Khamr is Haram (prohibited)." (Nasa-i)

Bukhari and Muslim have quoted the statement of 'Umar ؓ in which he declared from the pulpit of Masjid An-Nabawi: "Khamr is that which befogs the mind." These words were spoken in the audience of the Sahabah ؓ and none objected to it, showing that this was the consensus of the Sahabah ؓ. This saying and the Ahadith mentioned provide a decisive criterion for defining what falls under the prohibited category of "Khamr". Therefore, there should remain no doubt that any substance, whether it be it an alcoholic drink or the various types of drugs as being classified as intoxicants. In short, anything that has the effect of clouding the mind, impairing its faculties of thought and perception, fall under the category of Khamr and remains prohibited in our Shari'ah.

This definition of "Khamr" was stipulated 1400 years ago and today's research proves the very same. Researchers and doctors have defined drugs as "any substance which brings about a change in the human mind, body or senses e.g. dagga and alcohol." (National Drug Misuse booklet) It goes on to say that whether the use of such a substance is socially accepted or not, it still remains a drug. Therefore, it is correct to interpret the word "Khamr" as all forms of intoxicants which encompass all the facts mentioned instead of only confining it to alcohol.

Harms and reason

There are sound reasons for Islam prohibiting all types of intoxicants. Some of them include:

- The harm on the individual's mind, intellect and reasoning. This power of thinking is the distinction by which Allah has distinguished Man from animals.
- The harm upon ones health. According to the pamphlet issued by SANCA, intoxicants are the cause of many other diseases. As a result of intoxicants, the heart undergoes stress which leads to cardiac failure, slurred speech, stupor and confusion, neurological disorders, and perhaps one of the most serious consequences of

intoxicants is cirrhosis of the liver. This has prompted a reputable German doctor to remark that if anyone undertakes to close all the liquor outlets in this world and to put a stop to alcoholism, then I guarantee that half of the hospitals of the world will become redundant.

- There are many other social harms as well. Among others, the adversity it brings upon families by the alcohol-abuser neglecting their needs and not fulfilling obligations towards them.

These are but a few ills which this scourge brings along. In addition, there are the spiritual, material and moral evils which become widespread in societies due to the widespread consumption of intoxicants.

Prohibition of Intoxicants

In the verse of Surah Al-An'aam, Allah links alcoholism to idol-worshipping and further declares these to be "Rijs", a term which the Qur'an reserves for extremely indecent and evil things. Allah then further ascribes them to be "handiwork of Shaytaan", which consists of only evil, and thereafter Allah commands the Believers to stay away from it if they wish to attain success.

Abu Dawud cites a narration in which Nabi ﷺ had said that if anyone consumes it (i.e. intoxicants) Allah will not accept his prayers for forty days. Sahih Muslim narrates on the authority of Jabir ؓ that Nabi ﷺ had said, "Every intoxicant is forbidden. It is a promise of Allah which He has made binding upon Himself that whoever takes intoxicants Allah will make him drink *Tinatul-Khabaal*". On being asked, he said *Tinatul-Khabaal* is the pus/perspiration of the inmates of Jahannum (Ma'aariful Hadith). Abu Dawud mentions a hadith: "Do not sit with wine-drinkers, nor visit them when they are sick, nor attend their funerals for they will come on the Last Day with their tongues lolling to one side, saliva running out of their mouths. Anyone who will see their appearance will know they are the drunkards."

In view of this, it is imperative not only to stay far away from this evil but even to ensure that our children and youth stay away from it and develop a dislike for all types of intoxicants especially of drugs. Drugs are widespread among youth and it is the Islamic responsibility of parents to save their children.

One cannot be complacent that it cannot happen to one's children. Statistics in this regard are frightening. According to SANCA, in South Africa one quarter of all youth are using drugs and rapidly becoming addicted to them. According to a survey, 65% of High School learners in the major urban areas have tried drugs (*You*, Feb., 1989). Of course these statistics spread over a wide-spectrum of society. But what drives the youth towards using such dangerous drugs?

Reasons for substance abuse

Various reasons for this trend have been suggested, but in the Western World as is the case with HIV/AIDS, instead of tackling the root problem, millions are being spent on treating the symptoms of the problem.

Three things may serve as deterrents:

1. It is commonly accepted that one of the greatest causes of drug addiction amongst the youth is "peer pressure". The negative influences of a group of friends can exert unpleasant and unnecessary pressures on a child. Parents allow children the freedom to mingle and choose friends as they please. Nabi ﷺ had 1400 years ago spoken these words of wisdom: "A person follows the path of his friend."
2. It is a commonly accepted fact that children who come from a strong and disciplined family life are less likely to be at risk or take to drugs. Therefore, within the home, there should be effective communication with our children, love, and a sense of presence. The father must play the important role of steering and setting the values for the family. If the youth do not get Islamic values from home, the outside influence is bound to take over. There is no religion or creed which has emphasized the

importance of family life the way Islam has. Islam has discouraged all social and economic habits which lead to the break-up of family life. Adultery, which is treated lightly in the West, is abhorred in Islam as one of the harms of it is that it is one of the principle causes of instability in family life.

3. One of the greatest reasons for resorting to drugs is absence of spiritual fulfillment. The Western World and the Media in particular, advocate in various ways that there is nothing in life but the transient pleasures. This emphasis on unrestrained pleasure naturally results in the conclusion that there is nothing of permanent value, nothing is worth respect, and all traditions regarded as sacred must be rebelled against. A youngster brought up in such an atmosphere, will feel bored and psychologically empty. For life is not only pleasure but responsibilities as well. If the objective is only pleasure, alcohol and drugs (intoxicants) offer the quickest escape from the realities and responsibilities of life. Spiritual fulfillment will only be achieved through the wholehearted adoption of Islam.

Intoxicants in Social Context

The prohibition of intoxicants in Islam is not only confined to partaking of it, rather it extends beyond that. It includes staying away from drinking parties or gatherings at which intoxicants are served. Musnad Ahmad and Tirmidhi have narrated a hadith of Nabi ﷺ on the authority of 'Umar ؓ, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, must not sit at the table where intoxicants are served." 'Umar bin Khattab ؓ, the rightly-guided caliph, as reported by Al-Hamidi, used to administer the Islamic punishment of eighty lashes not only on those who partook of intoxicants, but even to those who sat with them, even if they did not partake of the intoxicants. (Al-Halal wal Haram - English)

This prohibition also includes the giving of intoxicants and alcohol as a gift. Alcohol cannot be received or given by a Muslim as a gift even if it be from or to non-Muslims. Al-Hamidi has reported in his Musnad, "A man brought wine to Nabi ﷺ who informed him that it is prohibited."

Furthermore, it is also Haram to trade in any type of intoxicants. Nabi ﷺ had cursed ten categories of people. Included amongst the ten are: one who carries it, serves it, acts as an agent for it and also one who sells it. By implication, all those dealing and distributing drugs are cursed by Allah.

Can anything worse be inflicted on a human being than the curse of Allah? To curse means to pray that a person be consigned to eternal damnation. Thus, a person who deals and distributes drugs remains deprived of Divine Mercy and Benevolence.

May Allah save us and our youth from this evil scourge. *Aameen.*