

Islam's Approach to the Problem of Drink

The first hint regarding the evil of drink was in a general command to the effect:

Say, "Verily did prohibit my Lord shameful deeds those apparent of them and those concealed, and sin and rebellion without (any) right, and that ye associate with Allah, for which hath not been sent down any authority and that ye say against Allah what ye know not " (Al-Quran, 7:33).

This general command includes all kinds of indecencies and the scholars of exegesis, particularly take the word "them" sin to refer to drink.

This general command is made more explicit in verse No. 219 of the Chapter Al-Baqarah, which makes the positions vis-à-vis all kinds of intoxicants more clear. It is to the effect, "

They ask thee, concerning wine and lots (gambling and games of chance), say in both these is great Sin, and also (some) profits for men, but their sin is greater than their profit " (Al-Quran 2:219).

Here we have a clear indication of the attitude of Islam, towards two of the vilest evils, which corrupt human society, with the revelation of this verse, many of the believers gave up drinking, becoming fully conscious of the underlying force of the verse.

Divine Ban on the use of Liquor

It has been related that in the absence of a categorical prohibition, the use of liquor in social gathering did not cease. In a certain assembly it so happened that under the influence of drink, the prayers were conducted in an atmosphere lacking decorum and due reverence, whereupon the Divine Command was issued more categorically in regard to the use of drink at prayer times, to the following effect

"O ye who believe! Approach not prayer when ye are intoxicated, until ye know (well) what ye say." (Al-Quran 4:43).

This command practically decided the attitude of Islam, and the believers began to expect the final

categorical word of prohibition, which came in due course, in the following strain,

"O ye who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance. (dedication of) stones (i.e., idols) and (divination by) arrows, are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork, so be ye away from it, so that ye may be successful (Al-Quran 5:93).

And with this final verdict alcohol and other specified evils vanished from the Muslim Society, as by a magic wand, The announcement of the ban effectively sealed the fate of the evil. And how did Islam achieve its unique civilisation?

This question baffles the modern social worker, who finds it hard to convince the victims to slow down to moderation in not only drinks but other obnoxious habits as well. It was a process of educating and gradually disciplining the minds of the votaries of Islam to generally submit to Divine dispensations unconditionally, without demur.

They were taught and trained to see that the evanescent pleasures of the moment were of no weight as compared with higher happiness that comes of absolute submission to the commands of the Almighty Allah. With this mental equipment they could stand any incitement of the devil, including the inviting pleasures of self-forgetfulness in drink.

They were disciplined in the fundamentals of healthful living, as directly flowing from obedience to Divine Laws, which to them were the source of pure good in this and the other life. This attitude on their part engendered a spirit of self control under all circumstances. They needed no persuasion or threats to refrain from or to undertake any activity demanded of them.

The simple command or prohibition issuing from Divine Authority was their motive for action. Of course consequences followed that yielded them unexampled bliss in the present and of perfect hope for the future. Reality was unfolded to them in all iridescent magnificence, with an inviolable message of everlasting good.

How could they then, be enamoured of the fleeting satisfaction of drink. They were freed of all worries and fears, from which the less fortunate seek an escape by flights from Reality into the Nirvana of self-forgetfulness. Even before the categorical command came round, the more sedate among them had taken to abstinence, taking their cue from the hints that were conveyed by revelation of verses, purporting to make them beware of the obnoxiousness of the evil.

The evil of drink is universally condemned by all sane religions of the world, and yet the votaries of Bacchus have been able to bribe the authorities in religion as well as in politics to manipulate the relevant commands of the scriptures to their own views.

They manage to get the terms used by the scriptures in this behalf to mean something other than the intoxicants in favour with them, which they cleverly in an oeuvre to get excluded from the operation of

the Divine commandments.

The relevant passages in the old as well as the New Testaments, are very explicit on the point of the evil of the intoxicants, despite whole-sale distortions in the text. Very severe penalties are prescribed for the use of liquors by the old scriptures. Western mind, however, in mad pursuit of carnal pleasures, has thrown over-board the directives in this behalf, and plunged the society into a vortex of untold misery and affliction.

In the short space here available, however, we cannot take stock of the Biblical views fully in the matter of alcoholic drinks. Suffice it to say, that every thing that is disturbing to the forceful relations of men, has been adequately provided against by Divine revelations, from the first day of the advent of man on this earth. Whether he would heed the exquisite guidance and reap supreme bliss of eternal life or not, is left to his free choice.

Here we may just refer to some of the amplifications of the Divine ban on the use of liquors, as made by the Holy Prophet (S. A.) and his own followers, reported in authentic books of (*Ahadith*) Traditions and the commentaries thereon.

Anything Comes Under the Heading

These pronouncements, may be classified as those that refer to the business of intoxicants in general – the manufacture, sale and handling, etc. of liquors – and those that relate to the physical, mental, moral spiritual harm that results to the person using them. The Holy Prophet (S.A.) is reported to have said to the effect: Anything that intoxicates a person, comes under the heading '*Khamr*' (alcohol) and its use is unlawful. In another narration he (S.A.) is reported to have said to the following effect: Dealing in intoxicants is unlawful.

Imam Hazrat Ja'far-as-Sadiq (A.S.) says of the one who drinks as one who worships idols, and he comes to suffer from involuntary jerking's, and to sing all night, manliness and magnanimity he takes to vice, bloodiness and unlawful actions like fornication and every kind of villainy under the influence of drink.

Drinking is more Heinous Sin than Adultery

The Holy Prophet (S.A.) is reported to have said to the following effect: according to another narration; after the divine ban on liquor through my word, it is not permissible to enter into matrimonial relations with one, who drinks liquor. Or to credit his statement, or to accept any testimony of him, or to entrust him with any charge under an impression of his integrity, for then Allah (SWT) will not guarantee his faith, nor recompense any one for it.

Hazrat Amirul Mominin Ali (A.S.) was asked if he (A.S.) regarded drinking as a more heinous sin than

adultery. To this he (A.S.) replied that he (A.S.) did, because the vice of adultery did not incite the sinner to any other sin, while a drinker is led off to adultery, to thieving, to man slaughter as also to forsake prayers.

Hazrat Imam Baqir (A.S.) has said the drinker will rise black-faced on the Doomsday, with his tongue protruded from his mouth, dripping saliva on his chest – a state which the Almighty Allah is perfectly justified to place him in on the Day of Judgement.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.) is reported to have said to the following effect The Almighty Allah has sent me to be a Mercy to the worlds, to ban the musical instruments, indecencies and the symbols of Ignorance. The Almighty Allah, on oath says that He will make a person drink of the Hellish liquor, if he drinks wine in this world, whether he be of the condemned or the forgiven.

It was because of such stern views of Islam on drink, coupled with the fundamental teachings on discipline and moral training, that a problem which baffles modern man for a solution, was solved so effectively and finely.

Islam discountenances all intoxicants and the severest penalties are provided for those who transgress the limits in this behalf. Flogging is prescribed for the first offender and if the delinquent persists in his perverted taste, he is liable to the penalty of death even according to Islamic Laws.

It must, however, be emphasised in all matters of obligations and prohibitions that every commandment is enforced in the interests of the Society and the individuals composing it – to close all those avenues that lead to disorder and disintegration and to establish an orderly society on earth, working for the good of every one of its citizens.

The Western countries, infatuated with the powerful gadgets supplied by their technology and science proceeded to ignore the fundamental laws laid down by Benign Providence for man's good in the matter of alcohol and other allied misdemeanours.

The recent events of their history have amply demonstrated the folly of such a course. They are now trying to retrieve their losses by recourse to half-hearted measures of propaganda and legislation, which, however, are leading them nowhere. Their helplessness is evidenced by the waves of crimes which sweep the body politic like night mares.

Had these people listened to the voice of reason. given by their religious scriptures, they would have avoided much of the unnecessary national and individual losses they have undergone. As Imam Baqir (A. S.) has declared, "Allah never raised any prophet, but with the knowledge that he would forbid the use of alcohol in the perfection of his faith, which has been in all ages forbidden."

The Bible, though it has undergone whole-sale mutations and alterations, yet it is very clear in its verdict on the unlawfulness of alcohol as a drink. In verse No. 20 of the Amthal Sulaiman (A.S.) we find a

condemnation of the drunkards and the people are warned against keeping company with them. In verse 39, this condemnation is further amplified by using words which mean: For whom is stressful strife? For whom is rage as well as ill-luck? For whom is bodily injury? And for whom is redness of eyes? (Who through warped reason, and emotional instability is a source of bodily injury, even death to others and himself by his evil disposition).

All such misdemeanours are the portions of the person who is habituated to drink. In the same context, Verses Nos. 31, 32, are to the effect, "Wine is rose-red in colour, which it displays in the bubbling goblet. It is clear and fine in appearance. Do not, however, cast a look at it, for it bites as a snake in the end and lashes like a viper". In verse 20 is laid down the penalty for the drunkard which is no less severe than the stoning to death of the offender.

In the gospel of Lukes, Chapter I, verse 15, we find, "He is dignified in the eyes of his Lord. He touches not drink or any other intoxicant He is overflowing with the light of pure spirit". In the book of Yule's , Chapter V, Verse 18, the words are to the effect. "Do not get the intoxication of wine, for there is nothing but mischief therein. Rather betake yourself to the joys of the soul".

From the few references given above it will be seen that the revealed religions always looked with abhorrence on the evil of drink. They never allowed their followers to touch the unnatural substance to satisfy an unnatural craving.

This has been the outlook of all sane persons throughout the ages, whether they belonged to any of the great religions, or they received the requisite guidance from their sturdy common sense, and powers of far-sighted observation. In countries where the evils of drink are being recognised in respect of its bearing on the bodily and mental health of the individuals and the moral and special implications of the same, great efforts are being made to control the evil.

Prohibition, wherever tried, has resulted in intensifying the evil. Legislation is powerless as a preventive. The right approach is that adumbrated by Islam, which insists on the fundamental principle of all-reform –the reform of the soul– as pithily expressed by a great thinker, the soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul.

Punishment for Drinking in Islam (The Holy Month of Ramadan)

From Judgements of Hazrat Ali (A.S.), it has been reported by Kulaini on the authority of Jabir that once the poet Najjashi was brought to Hazrat Ali (A.S.) with the accusation that he was found drunk during the holy month of Ramadan.

The accusation when proved, Hazrat Ali (A.S.) ordered for whipping the poet by eighty lashes which was carried out. The next morning the poet was ordered for another twenty lashes. When Najjashi asked Hazrat Ali (A.S.) the cause of the extra twenty lashes, as the order of the Holy Quran in such cases was

only eighty, the holy Imam (Hazrat Ali A.S.) replied: "Twenty for discarding the chastity of the holy month of Ramadan.

The First Case After the Demise of Holy Prophet (S.A.)

It has been reported by Kulaini on the authority of Hazrat Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (A.S.) that a case was decided by Hazrat Ali (A.S.) in such a way that it was never decided before and that it was the first case after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S.A.). "During the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr, a man was found drunk and brought before the caliph, Hazrat Abu Bakr. The Caliph asked him as to whether he had drunk wine.

In reply the man admitted to have drunk. The Caliph asked him "Why did you drink when it has been prohibited in Islam?" The man replied: "I am residing in the neighbourhood of some people who are habitual drinkers. Although I am a Muslim, but I have never heard that wine has been prohibited in Islam".

Hearing this Hazrat Abu Bakr looked at Hazrat Omar with a question mark in his eyes. Hazrat Omar said "This is just one of the cases that no one else than Ali could decide". When the case was referred to Hazrat Ali (A.S.), he sent the man round in the city with some persons to ask the people as to whether any one had recited to him the verse of the holy Quran whereby wine was totally prohibited. And when it was proved that none had done so, the man was released with a warning never to drink in future". (also carried by Nasikhul Tawarikh: Vol. 2, p-731; Buharij : Vol. 9, p-483, Manaqib, Vol. 2, p-178)

A case of Penalty with Regard to Drunkards

Four persons drank wine, quarrelled among themselves and stabbed one another with the result that two of them died on the spot and two others who survived were wounded in the brawl. Hazrat Ali (AS) ordered for eighty whips each to the wounded and also ordered them to pay the penalty to the inheritors of the deceased after deducting the penalty for their wounds. He also added that in case any of the wounded persons or both of them died then inheritors had nothing to pay to the inheritors of the murdered.

According to another report he said that the penalty was due from all the four tribes of the persons concerned. The amount of penalty which had to be paid to the wounded would however, be deducted from the total amount of penalty to be paid to the inheritors of the murdered because it was quite possible that they might have murdered each other, Manaqib Shahr Aashob: No. 2, (p-200 through Abu Turab : p-227).

Drinking (Alcohol)

According to an order of Hazrat Ali (A.S.) if some one drinks once, twice or thrice he will be punished by eighty whips each time, but if he repeats the crime for the fourth time he will be beheaded. (Qaza and Teha ; p-162)

Deriving Wrong Meaning from the Verses of the Holy Quran

During the Caliphate of Flazrat Omar, Qudama bin Mazoom drank wine. The Caliph (Hazrat Omar) wanted to punish him by whipping, but the accused Qudama recited the following verse from the Holy Quran "There is no harm if the believers and those who do good deeds eat and drink according to their own choice, provided they continue fearing Allah and doing good deeds". Having heard of the above verse beautifully pronounced by Qudama as an argument in his favour Hazrat Omar forgave him and acquitted him of the charge of drinking.

When Hazrat Ali (A.S.) heard of it, he said to Hazrat Omar "Qudama does not come under the definition of those who have been mentioned in the verse in question and therefore certainly not under declaration made therein as the very first words of the verse refers to those who do not lead a prohibited way of life and abstain from what has been forbidden by Allah.

Proceeding further Hazrat Ali (A.S.) asked Hazrat Omar as to how a person who does not care for the commandments of Allah could come under this declaration by Allah in the Holy Quran, Therefore, Qudama must offer penitence, otherwise, he does not remain a Muslim and has to be beheaded.

When Qudama heard of this he came at once and offered penitence. Hazrat Omar hearing this well argued point from Hazrat Ali (A.S.) wanted to punish Qudama for drinking as he had already offered penitence for deriving wrong meaning from a verse of the Holy Quran, but he did not know the number of blows of whip to be struck on the body of a person accused of drinking.

He, therefore consulted Hazrat Ali (A.S.) in the matter. Hazrat Ali (A.S.) explained it as under: "After drinking one becomes intoxicated and under intoxication one is addicted to slandering, As the punishment for slandering is eighty strokes of a whip, the punishment for drinking if calculated in this way amounts to the same number of strokes by a whip i.e. eighty strokes." Hazrat Omar punished Qudama accordingly. (Behar : Vol. 9, p-483).

From the Holy Quran

(i) ***They ask thee (O' Prophet Muhammad) concerning wine and lots (gambling and games of chance); Say, in both these is great sin and also (some) profits for man; but their sin is greater than their profit, (2: 219)***

(ii) ***O' ye who believe: intoxicants and game of chance, dedication of stones (i.e. idols) and divination by arrows, are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork, so be ye away from it so that ye may be successful. (5: 90)***

(iii) ***The Satan only desireth to cause enmity and hatred in your midst through intoxicants and gambling and keeps you away from remembering Allah and from prayer; will ye then abstain (from them)? (5: 91)***

(iv) ***O' ye who believe! approach not prayer when ye are intoxicated, until ye know (well) what ye say, nor when ye are polluted, unless ye be passing through, until ye wash yourself and if ye be sick, or on a journey, or one of you come from the privy or ye have touched the women and ye find not water then betake yourself to clean (pure) earth and wipe (with it) a part of your face and your hands i.e. make Tayammum; Verily Allah is pardoning: Forgiving (4: 43)***

(v) ***Say: Verily did prohibit my Lord only shameful deeds, those apparent of them and those concealed and sin and rebellion without (any) right, and that ye associate with Allah for which hath not been sent down any authority, and that ye say against Allah what ye know not. (7: 33)***

From the Holy Prophet (S. A.) (Wine – Root of all Evils)

(i) Anything that intoxicates a person, comes under the heading *Khamr* (Alcohol) and its use is unlawful.

(ii) Dealing in intoxicants is unlawful.

(iii) Anas bin Malek has reported that the Holy Prophet (S.A.), cursed ten persons in connection with intoxicants:

1. One who distils liquor
2. The distillate itself
3. The one who drinks
4. The one who offers the liquor to others
5. The one who carries liquor
6. The one for whom liquor is carried
7. The one who sells liquor
8. The one who buys liquor
9. The broker in the business of liquor
10. The one who makes use of the sale proceeds of liquor

(iv) After the Divine ban on liquor through my words, it is not permissible to enter into matrimonial relations with one, who drinks liquor, or to credit his statement, or to accept any testimony of him, or to entrust him with any charge under an impression of his integrity, for then Allah will not guarantee his faith, nor recompense anyone for it.

(v) The Almighty Allah has sent me (Holy Prophet) to be a Mercy to the universe, to ban the musical instruments, indecencies and the symbols of Ignorance. The Almighty Allah, on oath says, that He will make a person drink of the Hellish liquor, if he drinks wine in this world, whether he be of the condemned or the forgiven.

(vi) Three kinds of persons will not be able to enter Heaven:

1. Those who always drink wine.
2. Those who are always busy with magic.
3. Those who are accustomed to break relations with relatives.

(vii) When somebody had the first sip of alcoholic drink Allah thereby put him on a series of five trials, firstly: hard heartedness, secondly Gabriel, Michael and Israfil and the whole lot of angels will forthwith disown him, thirdly the entire group of Prophets (A.S.) will repudiate him, fourthly Allah Himself will disown him and fifthly he will enter headlong into the hell fire.

(viii) Never drink wine for it is a root of all Evils.

(ix) Whoever drinks liquor, Allah will not accept his prayer.

From Hazrat Ali (A.S.)

(i) The drunkenness of overweening conceit and pride passes off more slowly than that of wine.

(ii) Hazrat Ali (A.S.) was asked if he regarded drinking as a more heinous sin than adultery. To this he replied that he did, because the vice of adultery did not incite the sinner to any other sin, while a drinker is led of to adultery, to thieving, to man slaughter as also to forsake prayers. The drinker will rise black-faced on the Doomsday, with his tongue protruded from his mouth, dripping saliva on his chest – a state which Almighty Allah is perfectly justified to place him in on the Day of Judgement.

From Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (A.S.)

One who drinks is as one who worships idols, and he comes to suffer from involuntary jerking's, and losing all light manliness and magnanimity, he takes to vice, bloodiness and unlawful actions like fornications and every kind of villainy under the influence of drink. Allah has fixed some locks to evil and the key to those locks is wine; and worse than wine is lying.

Liberation from Alcohol by Islam

Gospel Advocate says: Statistics show that ten thousand people are killed by liquor and only one is killed by a mad dog; yet we shoot the dog—and license the liquor. What sense is there in this?

The Course of Intoxication

Drunkenness takes away the man, and leaves only the brute; it dethrones reason from its seat, stupefies conscience; ruins health wastes property, covers the wretch with rags; reduces wife and children to want and beggary, and gives such power to appetite that physically as well as morally, it is next to impossible to cure it. Mr. W. Jay.

Alcohol poisons the vital cells of the body, acts directly upon the nervous and the brain, impairing one's higher faculties, judgement, conception and control long before the last symptoms of drunkenness appear. Sir William Wileox, M.D.

The combined harm of the three great scourges– war, famine and pestilence is not as terrible as that of wine drinking. Gladstone

Alcohol lessens man's power of physical endurance, delays recovery from fatigue, increases the ill-effect of great heat or cold, blunts the senses, retards nerve response, diminishes self-control, blurs the judgement. Sir Alfred Pearce Could, K.C.V.O.,M.S, F.R.C.S.

This spirit (of Islam) may be expected to manifest itself in many practical ways and one of these manifestations might be liberation from alcohol which was in spited by religious conviction and which was therefore able to accomplish what– could never be enforced by external sanction of an alien law. Prof. A. Toynbee.

Notable Achievement by Islam

The success of Islam in persuading its adherents to abstain from the use of wine is a notable achievement. David M. Kay.

Islam has Set an Example

Bishop Carpenter said: It (Islam) has set an example of sobriety to the world and has shielded its followers from the drink plague which destroys the strength of the nations.

The End

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