

## The Verdict about Intoxicants in Islam

Although so many books and articles have been published already about intoxicants which have been analyzed and discussed from various points of view, as the subject is so important due to its dangerous consequences, it was considered appropriate to make an overall survey of it in a brief manner, so that service could be rendered to the society and young Muslims prevented from getting involved with such dangerous alcoholic drinks.

Interestingly enough there exists no difference of opinion among scholars concerning alcoholic beverages and their harmful effects. We have many convincing arguments at our disposal to prove this matter.

Probably until a few years ago, some ignorant people supposed that if intoxicants were consumed moderately, they would not only be harmless but would also be useful. But owing to the researches carried out recently by a number of American and European scientists it was proved that no matter how little the amount of the intoxicants consumed, they are still harmful.

We draw your attention to the following report which has been taken from an official source: Some time ago when a number of medical specialists had once more gathered at Washington from various parts of the world at an international congress of combat with alcohol and alcoholism, they sounded the alarm that alcohol was enemy number one of mankind.

Dr. Melvin Kanzeli, who has spent many years of research on alcoholism, said in the first session of this congress: "The consumption of alcohol can even cause extensive damage to brain. When a man gets some pleasure and enjoyment from a small dose of alcohol, he is unaware that he is aiding the destruction of his brain cells. "

Dr. Kanzeli who is the chief of the research organization of South Carolina Medical College, believes that excessive use of alcohol produces such changes in the blood and veins that the brain cells suffer a shortage of Oxygen and get destroyed, or they are damaged to such a degree that one gets involved with mental disorders.

Entry of alcohol into the blood sometimes intensely checks the flow of blood in the body, and it is often seen that it causes the clotting of the blood.

In his inaugural speech at the congress, Dr. Kanzeli said: "Unfortunately, the efforts made so far for fighting alcoholism, whose victims are increasing daily, have been in vain and the number of addicts to alcohol is constantly on the rise. At present, millions of people throughout the world are addicted to alcohol without finding a way of escape from it.

The question is that unfortunately most people think that consuming a small amount of alcohol is not only without any danger but may even seem necessary. Some people suppose that if they refresh themselves with a little drink in a party, they will not be addicted and will suffer no harm. But extensive research in this field has shown that intoxicants, howsoever little they may be consumed, produce disorder in the functioning of brain cells.

Dr. Raymond Pennington, too, in a 4-page report submitted to the Congress, said that alcohol is undoubtedly one of the most dangerous enemies of mankind, and those who claim that they resort to such drinks only occasionally, too, are exposed to the dangers caused by the evil consequences of this enemy.

In his opinion, the first result of addiction to alcohol is forgetfulness and loss of one's job. He says: "Our researches have shown that those addicted to alcohol very soon suffer from forgetfulness and lose the chance of progress. They become disinterested in their work and eventually lose their jobs with the result that they seek a deeper refuge in drinks."

This doctor says: "Unfortunately the consumption of intoxicants has become prevalent among young people who take refuge in alcohol as a way of escape from the boredom of life. In our researches we have reached the conclusion that nearly seventy percent of young people are today inclined to use intoxicants, and between twenty and thirty percent of them have become addicted to them. Constant increase in street crimes is an evidence of the growing increase in the consumption of alcoholic drinks. The files of security organizations show that most of the agents for committing street crimes are addicted to alcohol.

Dr. Herbert Moskov, who is another physician participating in the congress of combat with alcohol and alcoholism, says: "Alcohol weakens brain cells and destroys the power of comprehending problems. But a more important matter is its hereditary consequences. An alcoholic is generally tired, lazy and stupid. He has no readiness for studying, and is always wrathful. Moreover, it is sometimes noticed that offspring of such a person are defective at birth.

The conclusion, drawn from the proceedings of this congress and research of specialists may influence a few people, but undoubtedly this is by no means a decisive remedy. Alcohol has deep roots in human life today, and if no overall combat is initiated against it, its root will become firmer and wider, and it will drag many people into its fearful trap. [1](#)

It is the pursuit of these scientific researches that leads us involuntarily to bow to the legislator of Islam – the legislator who fourteen centuries ago, even before the appearance of laboratories, and establishment of universities and colleges, had forbidden the consumption of even one drop of alcohol.

During the life of the great Shi'a authority, the late Ayatollah Boroujerdi, Dr. Arshe Tung, secretary general of the international organization for combat with alcohol, travelled to Iran and wished to be received by the leader of world Shia 's in order to pose him some questions.

This meeting was arranged through a professor of Tehran University and secretary of the Iranian society for combat with alcohol. The summary of discussions in this meeting has been given by that professor and secretary as follows: "With a prior appointment, Arshe Tung, secretary-general of the international organization for combat with alcohol, accompanied by me, was received by Ayatollah Boroujerdi. We took off our shoes at the door of the room before going to his presence, and on entering the room we went forward to kiss his hand as a sign of reverence. His simple and candid conduct greatly attracted our attention. His attractive and cheerful features, and his soothing glance at us were a fine welcome combined with his warm greetings.

After I thanked the Ayatollah for giving us the honor of a visit, I introduced Mr. Arshe Tung as a citizen of Switzerland and secretary general of the international organization of combat with alcohol, and added: on his trip to Indonesia and Iran for the purpose of promoting his objective, he showed a great interest in meeting the Ayatollah, and now he wishes to ask certain questions, and requests answers for them."

Arshe Tung asked: "Why is the consumption of alcohol and intoxicating substances prohibited in Islam?"

He answered: "Man is considered the noblest of creatures because of his intelligence, and the purpose of his creation has been to make it possible for him to proceed in the way of perfection and godliness. He has been entrusted with intelligence and common sense by God, and certain orders have been issued, too, for the preservation of that intelligence. In this connection, the Holy Prophet of Islam has forbidden the consumption of alcoholic substances which cause intoxication and mental disorders, and this prohibition is absolutely necessary for the protection of common sense."

Arshe Tung asked again: "Excessive use of intoxicants which produce drunkenness naturally cause mental disorders, but what do you say about their reasonable use in a small amount which does not produce intoxication?"

He answered: "Once we know that man's superiority over animals is in his possession of intelligence and common sense, and when it is clear that man's duty is to endeavor to protect the divine gifts of intelligence and common sense in a perfect manner, then nothing that weakens these powers is permissible. Obviously the consumption of intoxicants, no matter in what quantity, affects the senses.

Moreover, another important point is that God Almighty is perfectly aware of man's nature and of His creature's love of excess. Therefore, if He considered it permissible for man to make use of a small

measure of it, fixing limits may have produced problems. So, in order to save man from the calamity of intoxication which is contrary to his existence, God has forbidden consumption of intoxicants both wholly and partly."

Arshe Tung said: "For more than ten years, management of the affairs of combat with alcohol in the world has been entrusted to me, and during this period I have had lengthy and varying discussions and interviews with many great personalities whether religious, political or social, of various countries.

But I must admit that none of them has resorted to such rational and comprehensive arguments as yours, and I think that your views are the best argument in our combat with intoxicants in the world, and in fact the most effective way of attaining our goal is to follow the injunctions of the lofty leaders of Islam. In my own name and in the name of all the international organizations for combat with alcohol, I thank your holiness, and hope that with your leadership we will succeed in this sacred combat."<sup>2</sup>

Bentham, an Englishman, writes in his book entitled "Principles of Ordinances": "One of the great advantages of the Muhammadan faith is its prohibition of all intoxicants."

Pierre Loti, a great French writer and traveler, says: "I am almost ready to join the ranks of Muslims since I have never touched wine and other intoxicants."

A group of the Quraish tribesmen were sitting in the holy mosque of Mecca, when Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (a.s.)<sup>3</sup>, the fifth Imam, entered. One of those present pointed to the Imam and said: "This man is the leader of Iraqi people." They said: "Let someone go and ask him a question."

A young man rose up and approaching the Imam, asked: "Which sin is the greatest of the great sins?"

The Imam said: "Drinking Wine."

The young man returned and informed his companions of what was said. They asked him to go once more and repeat his question. He did so, and the Imam answered cheerfully: "As I said, the greatest of the great sins is to drink wine."

The young man returned and related what had transpired. They insisted that he should go to the Imam for the third time and repeat his question. He did so, and again the Imam answered:

"It is to drink wine since wine drags a person to adultery, homicide and dualism, and the sins which are caused by wine, are the greatest sins."<sup>4</sup>

A man came to the presence of Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.), sixth Imam, and asked: "Why has God forbidden wine, although its delight is above all other pleasures?"

The Imam answered: "God has forbidden wine because it is the mother of all villainies, and the source of all evils and wickedness. A wine drinker loses all his intellect under the effect of alcohol, does not know his God, commits every possible sin, insults people, breaks off the ties of relationship, and is

contaminated with all the impurities and debaucheries. A drunken person is under Satan's control, and if Satan orders him to prostrate before an idol, he does so, and Satan can drag him to any direction he desires.”[5](#)

Before the advent of Islam and at the beginning of the prophet's ordainment, the production and transaction of wine were among the major occupations of the Arabs, so that the word “trade” was used only for transactions in wine, and the word "merchant" meant a dealer of wine.[6](#)

After the advent of Islam and spread of its liberating injunctions, the people were informed of these teachings one after another and drinking wine, which had caused so much misery and damage, was forbidden.

The prohibition of intoxicants by Islam was so serious and decisive that within a short time, this destructive evil was uprooted from the Muslim society. Islam has forbidden not only drinking alcoholics, but also producing and selling it, and all other occupations related to it.

The prophet of Islam cursed several guilds which were engaged in the intoxicant-related tasks, namely:

1. A person who plants a vine tree for the purpose of producing wine.
2. A person who crushes grapes for making wine
3. A seller of wine
4. A buyer of wine
5. A drinker of wine
6. A cup-bearer of wine
7. Anyone who obtains a profit in some way or other from wine deals. [7](#)

The sixth Imam says: “Do not associate with wine bidders, for if a curse befalls them, all those present in the gathering will be involved.”

The legislator of Islam, who was aware of all the evil consequences of intoxicants for the people, their children and society, has forbidden, apart from the consumption of wine, its production, distribution, and transaction for Muslims, because the wine-drinking on the part of parents affects their embryo and makes their offspring weak, and defective, and eventually corrupt and wicked.

On the question of marriage, Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) says: "He who gives his daughter in marriage to a wine drinker is, in fact, to break his ties with his daughter.”[8](#)

The Holy Prophet of Islam has said: "Henceforth that God has, through me, forbidden drinking wine,

whoever drinks it, if he makes a proposal for marriage, would not be given one's daughter and if he intercedes for someone, it should not be accepted, and if he quotes a report, his words should not be confirmed. No one should consider him trustworthy or give anything in trust to him. If someone, knowing of his habit of wine drinking, entrusts him with something, God will not guarantee that trust, and if the object given in trust is lost, he receives no compensation from God, nor will God make up for it.”[9](#)

There are many narrations quoted about this matter from the prophet of Islam and chaste Imams, and in these narrations, special attention has been paid to the formation of the embryo in the state of intoxication, since it results in a great danger.

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) says: “A woman who surrenders to her drunken husband, is committing as many sins as the number of the stars in heaven, and the offspring of such a man is unclean and foul. God will not accept any repentance or ransom from that woman unless her husband dies or she frees herself from the bond of marriage with him.”

Contemporary scholars have shown no doubt about the evil effects of alcohol on the embryo, and scientific research has proved this point, since children, born under these conditions, mostly suffer from nervous or incurable mental ailments.

In addition to the scientific researches carried out by eastern and western scientists, experience, too, has proved that the offspring of alcoholics are weaker and more retarded than other children.

Undoubtedly, being entangled with madness, stupidity and wine drinking have a serious effect in the constitution of children, and the children, produced by the parents who suffer from the above defects, are in their turn, defective and miserable. For this reason, Islam makes necessary recommendations, in its injunctions, to its followers, and warns them against bad and impure bonds.

Today much attention is paid by scholars to this matter, and emphasis is laid on avoiding such marriages. In some American countries, even special laws have been enacted in order to keep the present generation clean, and according to these laws, those boys and girls who are driven to dipsomania through excessive use of intoxicants, are made sterile so as to prevent their having children.”[10](#)

Another damage done to individuals through intoxicants is that their brain and nerve cells are exposed to feebleness and all kinds of diseases.

A Professor of Tehran University says: "Alcohol is a kind of drug which affects the nerves. It affects the brain cells and causes mental disorders.”[11](#)

In the commentary of Al-Manar with regard to the verse ‘They ask you about intoxicants...’ it is quoted from a German doctor addressing the government and saying: "Close the doors of half of the pubs and then I will guarantee that the country will have no need of half of the hospitals, lunatic asylums and prisons.”[12](#)

In Islamic narrations, reference is made to the damage caused by wine, namely its adverse effect on man's intellect and spirit, and the reason for its prohibition.

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.), the Eighth Imam, says: "God has forbidden intoxicants because of the evils caused by them, and because they destroy intellect and wisdom, and remove modesty and decency." [13](#)

Imam Zeinal Abedin (a.s.), the fourth Imam says: "The sins that destroy the power of self-restraint against sinning (namely the faculty of intellect and purity) and break away the bonds that preserve them, lie in drinking intoxicants and gambling." [14](#)

A prominent psychologist says: "Alcohol removes modesty and decency, tears down the veil of purity, frees a person from all the social, religious and moral bounds and limitations, and strangles the call of conscience, changing an angel into a monster. The first step taken beyond chastity is mostly during intoxication, since with the advent of drunkenness, intellect and conscience depart, and in the absence of intellect and conscience, chastity loses its meaning .

The boys, girls and women who are led astray, are those who were at first deceived: by the product of the vine (wine), were diverted from the path of probity in its companionship, have eventually wandered in the fearful desert of life, and have at last been submerged in the cesspool of misery and abomination" [15](#)

Tolstoy says: "the people are well aware of this property of alcohol that it strangles the call of conscience, and that is why they consume it." [16](#)

Many a person is normally unwilling to perform a wicked act, utter indecent words, or behave in an unmanly manner, but under the effect of intoxication he has no dread of committing any wickedness or crime.

Dr. Alexis Karl says: "General decrease in intelligence and power of common sense is due to the alcohol of wine and to all kinds of over indulgence as well as disorder in habits. Without a doubt, there is a connection between the amount of consumed alcohol and the mental feebleness of a society. Among the nations that welcome scientific activities, the French drink more wine, and win fewer Nobel prizes." [17](#)

The following figures clarify, to a great extent, the evil effects of alcohol. Andre Minu, secretary of the International Congress of Combat Against Alcohol, stated: "Eighty percent of lunatics and forty percent of those who suffer from sexual diseases owe their illness to the consumption of alcohol. Among children, sixty percent of the stupid and forty percent of the offenders have come from alcoholic families." [18](#)

The damage caused to human societies through drinking alcohol is much greater than all the casualties and losses brought about by the most dangerous diseases.

According to competent scientists, alcoholic beverages produce the cancer of digestive system and liver, gastritis, pneumonia, tuberculosis, mental diseases, neurastinia, undesirable effects on the generation and thousands of other fearful consequences.

Another serious social damage caused by wine is related to driving accidents as a result of collisions with various obstacles. Medical discussions and experiments have proven that as a result of drinking wine the faculties of sight and hearing are weakened, and the power of concentration and sensing danger is retarded with the result that the ability to deal with an unexpected situation is lost.

A person, in such a condition, is dominated by a false pride, and all these factors produce tragic events.

As admitted by the Security Council of United State, one-fourth of all the deaths caused due to automobile driving, result on account of drunkenness of drivers.[19](#)

Leograin says: "Out of 761 addicts to alcohol, 322 are born corrupt, 155 crazy and 131 are liable to apoplexy." Thirty to forty percent of those mental cases lodged in lunatic asylums are habitual drunkards.[20](#) The number of those poisoned through alcohol in Iran in 1965 was 1875.[21](#) Alcohol is the main factor causing crimes. The causes of 75 percent of murders, 38 percent of cases of violence and offence, and 82 percent of cases of arson are due to alcoholism.[22](#)

In view of such calamities and mishaps, Islam has blocked the very source of such offenses, and thus taken precaution against them. Islam says: "Do not sit at a table where others drink alcohol. Do not attend a drinking party even if you do not drink yourself, do not associate with bibers, lest you adopt their habit. "

An officer of the army of Mansoor, the Abassid caliph, had arranged a party on the occasion of his son's circumcision in Heyra to which he had invited a number of dignitaries and distinguished figures as well as Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.), the sixth Imam. When the guests were engaged in eating at the table, one of them asked for water. The attendant offered him a cup of wine instead of water. As soon as wine was brought to the table, Imam As-Sadiq rose and left the room.

The host ran forward and asked the reason for the Imam's action. He answered: "The prophet has said, he who sits at a table where others drink intoxicants, is cursed."[23](#)

In addition to what was said, a brief perusal of history shows that wine has often annihilated a nation or caused the extinction of a dynasty. History says that the Barmak family, with all its glory and power, became victim of drinking alcohol and intoxication. If Jafar Barmaki had not been drunk, and if he had not lost his discernment as a result of drinking wine, the affair of Abassa, daughter of Rashid, would surely not have happened, and the Barmakis would not have been massacred. Though the Barmakis met a terrible fate as a result of some crimes such as acting as accomplices in the martyrdom of the seventh Imam, this fate began to befall from the moment of Jafar's intoxication.

History says the reign of Jalaledin Kharazmshah came to an end owing to his addiction to intoxicants and debauchery and he lost his head as well as crown for the sake of wine. That powerful and courageous king who has fought the bloodthirsty Mongols for so many years and harassed Chengiz and his warlike army, eventually became the victim of wine.

In those nights when the king was occupied with drinking and debauchery, and spent hours in drunkenness and oblivion, Nuredin Zeydari, his personal secretary, recited this poem for him: "O king' what will strong wine produce? The king is drunk, the realm ruined, and the enemy is here and there."

It is clear what this situation will produce but neither the king nor his courtiers paid any attention to these words of warning, since they were all drunk. In the middle of the night, the Mongols made a surprise assault like a calamity from heaven, and besieged the king and his tent-enclosure.

One of his associates who had learnt of this assault hastily came to the royal chamber, and with a great deal of effort woke him up from his drunken slumber and informed him of what was happening. The king felt so weak due to intoxication that he could not even ride his horse. To get rid of his inebriety, he splashed some cold water on his head, but it was too late and he had no alternative but to take to his heels. He ran away from the Mongols in that same condition, but was killed by an unknown man, who coveted his horse and baggage, in the mountains of Kurdistan.[24](#)

History says that the Safavid dynasty declined because of Shah Tahmaseb's habit of drinking.

What has so far been discussed was related to the damage caused by wine, including physical and mental losses to individuals and society, financial dangers and losses etc, in the world.

But for us who are monotheists and believe in an origin and in the hereafter, the issue of intoxicants has another aspect, too, namely the effect of wine on the hereafter.

Perfect attention should definitely be paid to this aspect, too, since a person may indulge in drinking wine and tolerate all of its damaging effects for the sake of a short period of oblivion and a moment of enjoyment, but a Muslim is never prepared to lose the happiness of the eternal world.

The fifth Imam (a.s.) says: "A wine drinker like an idolater will not be allowed to attend the presence of God's justice."[25](#)

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) says: "God Almighty has forbidden heaven for three groups and the first are wine drinkers."

The Prophet of God (S) says: "I swear to God that he who takes his daily prayer lightly, and he who drinks wine, will not benefit from my intercession with God."

In conclusion, we cite, as an example, a poem composed by the Iranian poet Sana'i concerning the damage caused by intoxicants:

*"A wise man avoids inebriety and abstains from drinking wine;*

*Nor does he step towards what is not fine;*

*Why drink something that makes you mistake a pine for a reed, or a reed for a pine?*

*If you show generosity, it is accredited to the wine, not to you,*

*But if you brawl, it is attributed to you, not to the wine.”*

- [1.](#) Keyhan Paper, No. 7568.
- [2.](#) Symposium on Alcohol, Medical College of Isfahan.
- [3.](#) The abbreviation (a.s.) stands for the phrase “peace be upon him.” This phrase is used as a sign of reverence after the names of the prophets and Imams.
- [4.](#) Wasa’el, Vol. 17; Forou al-Kafi, Vol. 6.
- [5.](#) Ehtejaj of Tabarsi, Wasa’el-e-Shi’a, Vol. 17.
- [6.](#) El-Monjad, Tajr.
- [7.](#) Wasa’el, Vol. 17; Khessal, Eghabel- A’emaal.
- [8.](#) Wasa’el, Vol. 5.
- [9.](#) Naghali-el-Akhbar.
- [10.](#) A Child from the Viewpoint of Heredity and Education, Vol. I.
- [11.](#) Psychology for Living, P. 100.
- [12.](#) The Evils of Wine.
- [13.](#) Mostadrak, Vol. 3.
- [14.](#) Bahar-el-Anwar, Vol. 16.
- [15.](#) Miracle of Psycho-analysis.
- [16.](#) The Youth and Sexual Instinct, 65.
- [17.](#) The Way of Living, Dr. Karl.
- [18.](#) Journal Tandorost, No. 12, P. 5.
- [19.](#) The Evils of Wine.
- [20.](#) Getting to Know Alcohol
- [21.](#) Daily Keyhan, No. 6811 (Getting to Know Alcohol).
- [22.](#) Criminology, P. 837.
- [23.](#) Behar-el-Anwar, Vol. 11.
- [24.](#) Complete History of Iran, P. 316.
- [25.](#) Wasa’el, Vol. 17, P. 256; Eghabel- A’emaal, P. 25.

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