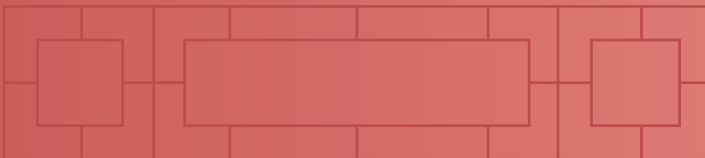


**ANSWERS TO COMMON
QUESTIONS ON ISLAM**



THE ISLAMIC VIEW ON THE PROHIBITION OF ALCOHOL



HOW BIG A PROBLEM IS ALCOHOL

Everybody would admit that there are problem with alcohol. Drink driving for example. Or violent crimes in which alcohol abuse plays a part. Yet most agree that the moderate consumption of alcohol as is customary in our society does not do much harm. Lets take a hard look at the facts:

THE FACTS

Alcohol is a bigger problem that we tend to admit, and it starts at an early stage. According to government publications on the state of public health (1993) 20% of 915- years olds have had their first alcoholic drink by the age of 8, and 89% by the age of 15. 12% (more than one tenth!) of 11 to 15 years olds are regular drinkers. And according to «social Trends» (HMSO 1994), almost a third of the male living in Britain consume alcohol above sensible limits (consumption above sensible limits is lower in women with 11% of the total). Besides clear connections for drunkenness or drink driving, courts are kept busy with numerous offenses committed under the influence of alcohol, from domestic violence (including child battering) to serious vandalism or grievous bodily harm. The government's health and safety executive jointly with the health departments and departments of employment had to publish policies on the «problem drinker at work», and the National Health Service spends large amounts of scarce resources on illnesses caused or exacerbated by alcohol. Every Christmas there is a nation-wide campaign against drink-driving. Governmental representatives lament the state of the nation's health and drinking habits, but they don't do much more. There is a great deal of tax revenue in the sale of alcohol beverages.

THE ISLAMIC VIEW

Islam take a different view. It values the moral and spiritual health of a nation as much as its physical well-being. It considers anything that interferes with the normal working of the mind, numbs our senses, thereby reducing our level of shame or responsibility, or clouds our perception as harmful (this includes alcohol as well



as other drugs altering the mind). And recognizing that different people react quite differently to the same stimulant, it does not leave the judgment, as how much is acceptable to them. Too many people thought they had control over their drinking habits, yet ended up having «one glass too many». Islam categorically states that if a substance can destroy the clarity of the mind in large quantities, it is harmful even in minute quantities. Islam, therefore, advocates total prohibition of narcotic drugs, including alcohol. It forbids the use, not just the abuse of these substances.

ANOTHER PROHIBITION

Many would by now point to the prohibition period in America and how it utterly failed by driving the habit underground. As God is aware of human nature, Islam acknowledges how entrenched such habits can be in people and that they cannot be changed overnight. The gradual prohibition of alcohol has to go hand in hand with an educational campaign to build a moral awareness and spiritual identity in our society. When Islam was first established over fourteen centuries ago in Arabia, continuing the Judeo-Christian tradition of prophet from Abraham over Moses, Jesus to Muhammad – peace be upon them all-, the harm that alcohol caused was well recognized but it was not immediately eradicated. In a first revelation the Qur'an, the Holy Book of Muslims, acknowledged the benefits of alcohol (for example its medical applications), but pointed out that its harm out weighed those benefits by far. Next, it forbade believers from praying whilst under the influence of alcohol, thus making it clear that spirituality and drunkenness don't mix. Finally, many years later, was altogether prohibited as the handiwork of the devil. By then the early Muslims who had lived through the spiritual and moral teachings of the prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – had realised the harms of the drugs as well as the benefits of the Islamic system of values as the foundation of a strong and caring society. They happily spilled whatever alcoholic beverage was left in their possession, and the streets of Medinah were reported as having been awash with the stuff.



SAVING SOCIETY

Modern society has come a long way since those days. We pride ourselves of great technical achievements. Yet we have also fallen back into the evils of drunkenness and the harm it does to so many people, because we have lost our moral conscience and sense of direction.

We forgot that there is more to human civilization than material advancement. Drained of true humanity, many seek escape and consolation in drink and drugs. However, this situation is not irreversible. Whilst the hypocritical approach of the American prohibition, where law enforcement agencies collided with gangster syndicates, was bound to fail, Islam shows the way how a pure and content society can be built which need not be ashamed of its darker side and need not numb its senses in guilt and desperation. Next time, before you tend to drown in your worries in another glass, to be followed by another, and yet another, put it down and find out about the Islamic alternative.



For any further queries, information and tours, please feel free to contact

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