

Muslim Attitudes to Alcohol and Intoxicants: The effect upon societies and individuals: (Islam 4.4)

Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid Alam



In Islam, all intoxicants are forbidden by God because the harm they cause greatly outweighs any short-term happiness/high that one feels!

Objectives: Consider and understand Muslim attitudes to alcohol and other intoxicants.

Allah stated: *"O you who believe, indeed, intoxicants (khamr), gambling, sacrificing on stone alters to other than Allah, and divining arrows are but from the*

works of Satan, so avoid them that you may be successful. The Devil wants to cause anger and hatred among you through intoxicants and gambling, and to distract you from remembering God, and from observing the prayers. " (Qur'an 5:90).

Muslims take from this verse of the Qur'an to mean that God has forbidden alcohol and any intoxicant that can confuse and cloud the mind by removing one's normal faculty of reason and discernment, that leave people with little or no control over their actions. It is God who has given this command, and like the rest of the commands, it is for the benefit of human beings. Being a Muslim means always being in control of what you think, say and do. Alcohol and all other intoxicants prevent this. Drunks and drug-users can be a danger to themselves and others – and Islam forbids self-harm and harm to others. This, according to Muslim scholars, is why Allah has forbidden alcohol and other intoxicants. There is clear evidence that people do damage their health through drinking alcohol. There is also evidence that drinking alcohol leads many people to do things that they regret afterwards. These can include violence, drink-driving, sex before marriage or with other than one's wife and many other things that not only break Islamic law but the damage the moral fabric of societies leading to the breakup of families and hatred between people. Drinking can also lead to loss of self-esteem, dignity and to terrible arguments. Not drinking helps people avoid these sins.

Muslims living in the West do not always find it easy to avoid alcohol. This is partly because so many people do drink alcohol -- that it is simply the way of life in the West, and it is easy to find it in supermarkets and shops. Also it is apparently something that gives pleasure to many people. Every celebration in the Western countries seems to involve alcohol. Weddings, passing exams, family gatherings, religious festivals such as

Christmas or simply spending time with friends; all of these occasions are usually celebrated by the consumption of alcohol. Even at times of grief and stress, people resort to alcohol and other intoxicants that cloud the mind and one's feelings. Certain foods have intoxicating levels of alcohol. An important point to note is that alcohol is not considered to be impure as the jurist and scholar, Shaikh Ibn Uthaimeen has stated, rather drinking it is forbidden. Alcohol has been permitted by scholars to use to clean wounds, but not for consumption by swallowing. Also alcohol in perfumes and colognes is permitted because, of course, it is not drunk.



All forms of intoxicants are forbidden in Islam. There is no government in the world that denies the misery caused by these drugs.

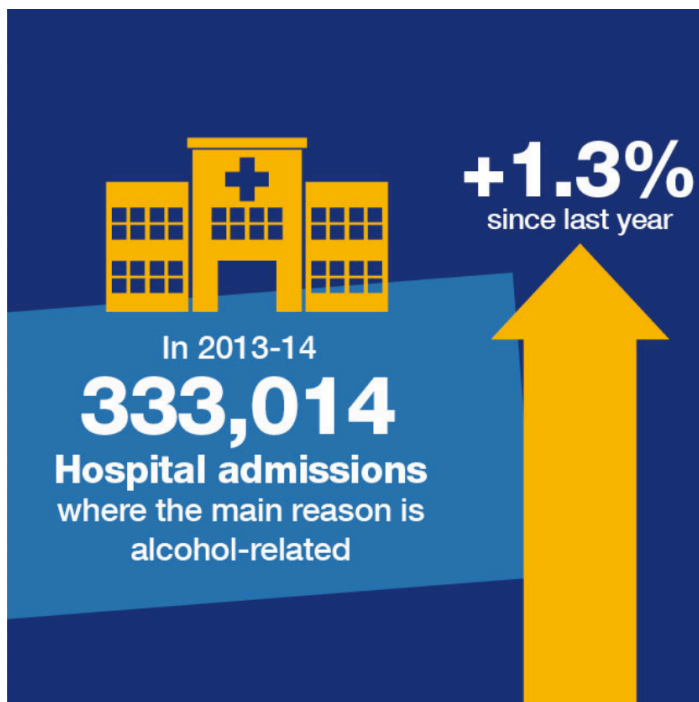
Muslim beliefs teach that Allah has forbidden the handling, production, serving and selling of alcohol. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said: *"Allah has cursed alcoholic drinks and:*

1. *the one who drinks it,*
2. *the one who serves it,*
3. *the one who sells it,*
4. *the one who purchases it,*
5. *the one who squeezes [the fruit to produce it],*
6. *the one for whom it is squeezed (the brewer),*
7. *the one who carries it*
8. *and the one to whom it is carried."* (Reported by Abu Dawūd 3674)

And in a narration: *"Cursed is the one who sits at a table where it is served."* Additionally, any amount of alcohol or intoxicant that is used in food, or drink or in medicine (that is swallowed), that leads to intoxication if a person was to take a large quantity of it, then it is forbidden even in small amounts due to the saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): *"That which intoxicates in large amounts is forbidden to consume in small amounts."* (Collected by Abu Dawūd 3681).

For example: chunks of chocolate liqueur contain alcohol, however if a person was to eat one piece, it would not make him drunk – but if he was to eat ten pieces, he may well become intoxicated. In this case, eating even one would be *harām* (forbidden). Under the heading of intoxicants (or *khamr*) come all the intoxicants and narcotics, whether inhaled, smoked, injected or snorted. Prisons are filled with people who have committed crimes

under the influence of drugs or drink. Hundreds and thousands of people every year die from illnesses brought about from alcohol and drug abuse. Many thousands die or cause themselves injury due to accidents that occur during drunken stupors or drug induced accidents. Drink and drugs drive people to do acts that they would otherwise never consider. It causes them to forget their duty to Allah, the Most High. It leads to mental illnesses and suicides. Whilst addicted to drinks and drugs a person does not take seriously his responsibilities. He neglects his wife, his children, his parents, and even his Lord.



Prohibition in the United States was a nationwide ban on the sale, production, importation, and transportation of alcoholic beverages that remained in place from 1920 to 1933. Muslims argue that any society where alcohol and drugs are forbidden has less crime rates, less domestic violence, less prostitution, less mental health issues, reduced incidents of suicide and less street violence. Islam sternly admonishes the wrongdoers from introducing the youth to drugs and drink. Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) said: *"Everything that clouds the mind is Khamr (an intoxicant).. and the one who gives it*

to a young person to drink, who does not know what is lawful from what is unlawful, then it is a right upon Allah that he will punish him with a horrid drink of hell." (Reported by Abu Dawūd 3680)

Shaikhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah over seven hundred years ago mentioned the evils of *hashish* and *Marijuana*. He considered it to be even worse than wine. And the one who smokes it or consumes it, is deserving of the Anger of Allah. Such a person he has placed himself before the punishment of Allah. He said it corrupts the Religion of a person, his intellect and mind - and it is known to lead to insanity and mental illnesses. So it is worse than wine and the evil effects of it are more grievous, so the Religion requires that its forbiddance is even greater than that of wine. (See *Al-Fatāwā*, 34/213). The following are statistics and information gathered from the USA regarding alcohol:

FACT-DRUG ARRESTS: According to the Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCRP) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), there were almost 1.7 million state and local arrests for drug abuse violations in 2009.

FACT—ALCOHOL AND JAIL: According to the Department of Justice (DOJ), 37% of almost 2 million convicted offenders currently in jail, report that they were drinking at the time of their arrest.

Millions of people each year are victims of alcohol or drug related crime, including millions of young people.

- Each year, more than 600,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.
- 95% of all violent crime on college campuses involves the use of alcohol by the assailant, victim or both.
- 90% of acquaintance rape and sexual assault on college campuses involves the use of alcohol by the assailant, victim or both.
- Every day, 36 people die, and approximately 700 are injured, in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver. Drinking and drugged driving is the number one cause of death, injury and disability of young people under the age of 21.
- 80% of offenders abuse drugs or alcohol.
- Nearly 50% of jail and prison inmates are clinically addicted.

CASE STUDY: Jessica's Story:



"Jessica, a 20 year old college student, admitted to smoking marijuana and drinking with friends before she ran over and killed a jogger, a 46 year-old father of three, happily married with a successful career and good standing in his community as a volunteer at a local food bank. Jessica was convicted of vehicular manslaughter and negligent homicide. The judge sentenced Jessica to prison for 20 years." Her parents and many of her classmates wept in the courtroom.

Early use of alcohol can draw young people into a host of problems and aggravate existing ones. Each year, approximately **5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking**. This includes about 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 as a result of homicides, 300 from suicide, and hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings, etc.

Questions:

1. What does Allah command regarding alcohol?
2. Why does Allah command this from what you have read?
3. What uses of alcohol does Islam allow?
4. Should a Muslim work in shop selling alcohol or in a restaurant that serves it? Why?
5. A small amount of alcohol is found to be present in a cake, however, even if a person was to eat 5kg (or more!) of that cake he would not get intoxicated. Is that cake lawful or forbidden for him? Why?
6. A Muslim finds that there is small amounts of alcohol in a biscuit; if he eats two he wouldn't get drunk, but if he eat 15, he'll get drunk. Is this allowed or not? Explain your reasons.

NOTE:

I initially compiled these worksheets for my students at the **Redstone Academy** (aged between 13 and 16 years), Moseley Road, Birmingham, UK who were working towards their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). I felt that others who do not attend the school could also benefit from these topics since they are presented in simple bitesize chapters. I have relied upon GCSE text books and adapted them (quite a lot) for my classes.