

Thirteenth Greater Sin: Drinking Liquor

The thirteenth among the Greater Sins is drinking liquor. Its seriousness is proved from the traditions that have been related from Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.), Imam Riḍā (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad al Taqi (a.s.).

The Holy Qur’an also states in unequivocal words that it is a Greater Sin.

“They ask you about intoxicants and the games of chance. Says: in both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:219)

It is explained in ‘Tafsir al-Mizan’ that ‘žanb’ and ‘Ithm’ are synonyms that denote a condition wherein the person involved is deprived of reason. He has no inclination for deeds of virtue nor can he maintain an amiable disposition. ‘Ithm’ is a type of sin, the evil effects of which become apparent in the person and he is absolutely doomed. The evils of drinking are known to all. The health of the alcoholic is affected in various ways. His digestion deteriorates. His intestines do not function well. His liver, lungs and all the five senses, are likewise affected.

Ancient and modern doctors have penned quite a few books on this topic. They have revealed astonishing statistics to show the far greater susceptibility of alcoholics to diseases as compared to others. The various ailments which are caused by alcoholism are also enumerated. They have termed wine as deadly poison.

The different kind of diseases that inflict the body of a liquor-drinkers are described in brief:

Effect of Liquor on the Brain

Liquor affects the central nervous system. It may cause a brain hemorrhage leading to paralysis or prolonged coma and eventual death.

Effect of Liquor on the Limbs

Ailments of the limbs are also caused by alcohol. The limbs become weak and the person loses control upon them. The body becomes absolutely broken-down. The five senses become despaired. Sleeplessness increases and even when the person gets to sleep he is haunted by nightmares.

Effect of Alcohol on the Stomach

Liquor affects the tongue and the taste buds which lose their ability to discern flavours. Secretion of saliva is impaired. Liquor ruins the digestive system. The stomach cannot produce the digestive juices or maintain the required acidity for digestion. There is frequent vomiting and nausea. Along with phelgm, there is blood discharge in the vomit. Numerous other diseases of the stomach are also caused by alcoholism. The belly begins to protrude. The intestines swell and are ulcerated. The large intestines malfunction, causing alternate constipation and loose motions.

Effect of Alcohol on the Liver

Wine and alcohol cause swelling and weakening of liver and slow down its function. The swelling increases and this gives rise to acute pain of the liver. The part of the liver that is nearer to the stomach is first affected. The kidneys become yellow and the effect becomes apparent in the eyes of that person.

Effect of Alcohol on the Blood Circulation

Alcohol does not have any benefit for the human body. It is for this reason that none of its constituent parts could be absorbed into the human body. As soon as it reaches the stomach, alcohol enters the blood stream, and as it enters the blood, it goes on destroying the white blood corpuscles. Due to this, blood pressure decreases. It may also cause fainting.

Effect of Alcohol on the Respiratory Organs

The worst effects of alcohol are to be seen in the respiratory system. As it enters the lungs through the blood stream, it causes breathlessness. The tissues are inflamed and functioning of the lungs becomes sluggish. Calcium is continually depleted from the body. The damaged lungs are now highly susceptible to tuberculosis that is the most prevalent disease among the poorer class of people.

Effect of Alcohol on Kidneys

Statistics show that ninety percent of the ailments of the kidneys are due to alcoholism. Alcohol is expelled through urine and causes numerous diseases involving the entire urinary system. It may also cause loss of bladder control.

Effect of Alcohol on the Heart

Since alcohol circulates through the blood stream it has a detrimental effect on the heart as well. Gradually, layers of fat get deposited on the heart and it increases in size and weight. The heartbeats of an alcoholic are faint or irregular.

Effect of Alcohol on Mental Faculties

The most destructive effect that alcohol can produce is on the overall psychology of the alcoholic. According to statistics available from mental hospitals the majority of the patients are those who have been long-time alcoholics.

The book 'Balaha al-Ijtemai' has quoted the magazine 'Health' which says:

According to medical research there are 2,00,000 lunatics in France who have become mad due to alcoholism. Also 80% of all mental patients have been drunkards. Further 40% of all the ailments that afflict the people are due to alcohol. According to British scientists, 90% of the lunatics are so, due to the effect of alcohol.

Effect of Alcohol on the Offsprings

The book also mentions that wine affects the sperm cells. A West German doctor has conducted research that indicates that the effect of alcohol lasts for at least Three future generations of the alcoholic; even though these future generations may abstain from intoxicants.

Excessive drinking causes sterility

According to an American doctor Dr. Nelson, if a teetotaler can father eleven healthy children the alcoholic is at the most capable of having Three normal children. Moreover these children may be plagued with fainting, migraine, hot temper, lunacy, mental disability or anemia. Such children are the victims of various mental and physical problems.

The effects of liquor are also mirrored in the character of the drunkard. The alcoholic is usually a person of low character and has a foul tongue. Being in a state of intoxication most of the time, his behaviour is not normal or rational. Not being in control of his senses due to the influence of intoxicants, he has no hesitation in committing evil acts like murder, plunder, adultery, sodomy, exposing other peoples secrets etc. In fact he will unhesitatingly break every law, be it of land or religion.

The Islamic code of life requires that a person should use whatever power of reasoning Allah (S.w.T.) has granted him to conduct himself with deliberation and discretion. In fact Islam expects every individual to try and improve his reasoning power by increasing his knowledge with study and by

associating with those more knowledgeable than himself. Even good actions, without thought and intent are of no avail.

Islam therefore prohibits all such actions that affect the reasoning capacity of man. The acts that top this list are alcoholism, gambling, deceit and lying. All of which deprive man of his capacity to reason. Carnal desires and falsehood are two things that are instrumental in the demotion of man from the high position of humanity to the lowliness of the beasts. Such a person is not capable of carrying any important responsibility. It is very difficult for an alcoholic to excel in any field. Even if he resolves to do something, his resolution is soon defeated. The more difficult, the more important a task is, the more difficult it would be for an alcoholic to accomplish it. Even if the wisdom behind every Islamic act had been unknown, it would have sufficed to accept it, as the same is advocated by intellect.

The Holy Qur'an has termed as 'Atham' (sins) such acts as murder, slander, and withholding testimony before a qualified Judge. Murder has not been termed as 'Ithm al-kabir' (the greatest sin) whereas sins like alcoholism and gambling have been specified as the 'Ithm al-kabir' (the greatest sin). The quote ("**and in alcohol and gambling there is even some profit for men**") imply the profit which arises from the manufacture and sale of alcohol etc. But this profit is not even a pittance when compared to the losses that accrue with the consumption of alcohol. The loss of character, the loss of mental & physical health and over and above all this, the loss of Allah (S.w.T.)'s Mercy and blessing in the hereafter.

The Qur'an says in Surah al-Ma'idah:

"O you who believe ! Surely intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (divining by) arrows are only an uncleanness, the Shaitan's works, shun it therefore that you may be successful." (Surah al-Ma'idah 5:90)

The prohibition regarding wine is of special significance in those two ayats for the following reasons:

- 1) The word 'innaama' in the first ayat denotes emphasis.
- 2) Drinking of liquor is mentioned along with idolatry. Therefore drinking liquor is as serious a sin as idolatry.
- 3) Drinking of liquor has been classified as a satanic act along with gambling.
- 4) The verse emphatically orders one to avoid alcohol.
- 5) Avoidance of alcohol has been clearly shown to be a way of salvation.
- 6) The consequences of drinking liquor have also been listed namely; enmity, hatred and loss of belief in Allah (S.w.T.).
- 7) Then it is asked whether you would now avoid this evil or not.

8) After the prohibition, Allah (S.w.T.) orders to obey Him and obey the Holy Prophet (S). To beware of disobeying Allah (S.w.T.) and to know that the duty of the Holy Prophet (S) is to convey the message and complete the proof.

Tafsir al-Mizan quotes the dictionary meaning of wine as any liquid intoxicant. In the beginning the Arabs used to prepare it from grapes, barley and dates. But gradually new types of wines began to be produced. Nowadays there are many chemically manufactured alcoholic drinks. All these can produce varying degrees of intoxication. But however slight the intoxication a drink may produce, it is considered Harām. The word 'rijs' (indecent) implies everything that is evil.

The Qur'anic verses equate liquor with indecency. Human nature of its own accord is not inclined towards liquor. It is the insinuation of Shaitan that persuades man to consume such filth. Shaitan creates the illusion in the human mind that by consuming liquor one can obtain bliss and a feeling of exhilaration. The Qur'anic verses declare that it is the Shaitan's plan to entice people towards wine, gambling and idol-worship so he can create enmity, hatred and avarice amongst them and succeed in diverting their thoughts away from Allah (S.w.T.) and their duty towards the Almighty. Due to loss of reason and self control they stoop to the lowest depths of inhuman behaviour.

Under the influence of an intoxicant every thing vile and vicious appeals to their fancy. They get pleasure in destroying other people's wealth, honour and dignity ignoring all norms of civil behaviour. They may even speak insolently about their own religion and beliefs. They sink to the lowest depths of degradation when their own sisters and daughters appear to them as objects of gratification. When intoxicated a person will easily divulge the most confidential information in his possession.

The 33rd ayat of Surah al-Ar'af is as follows:

“Say, my Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you say against Allah what do you not know.”

'Fawahish' (indecent) is the plural of 'fahsha' (indecent). In Arabic it implies an extremely evil act. The other sins that are described by this word in Qur'an are adultery, sodomy and falsely associating someone with adultery and sodomy. 'Ithm' implies 'sin', and the Holy Qur'an clearly indicates that drinking and gambling are 'Ithm'.

There is a tradition narrated by 'Ali ibn Yaqtin in the book al-Kafi, wherein the Abbasid despot Mahdi asked Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.) regarding wine, "Is wine Harām according to the Qur'an?" (Because) people know that it is prohibited but not aware that it is Harām." Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.) replied:

"Wine is Harām according to the Divine book."

“At what place in the Qur’an is wine shown to be Harām?”

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.) said,

“In the following statement of Allah (S.w.T.),

‘Say, my Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed.’ (Surah al-Ar’af 7:33)

Imam (a.s.) further said,

“As far as the apparent indecencies are concerned, they imply open adultery and ensigns that were hung outside the houses of prostitutes in the days of ignorance. ‘The concealed sin’ implies the sin of marrying the step mother after the death of the father as the people of the days of ignorance used to do. Allah has also ordered this act to be Harām. As far as sin is concerned, it is but “wine drinking”. At another point, Allah says,

‘They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: in both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profits.’ (Surah al-Baqarah 2:219)

In the above tradition Imam (a.s.) first quotes the ayat where ‘sin’ is labelled as Harām. Then he mentions that verse where wine is ordained to be a ‘sin’. Hence when it is shown that ‘sin’ is Harām and wine is sin, then wine (and all alcoholic drinks) must necessarily be Harām.

Alcoholism According to the Traditions of Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.)

Traditions that denounce alcohol are numerous. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

“On the day of Qiyāma the drunkard would come with a black face, a protruding tongue and the saliva dripping upon his chest.”¹

In another narration Imam (a.s.) informed:

“He will scream, ‘Thirst! Thirst!’ And Allah would have the right to make him drink from the well that contains the pollutants of the adulterers.”²

In a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), he says:

“One who is careless of Salāt will be deprived of my intercession, and will not be able to reach me at the pool of Kawthar³. And by Allah, my intercession will also not reach the one who consumes intoxicants, and he would not be able to reach me at the pool of Kawthar.”

One more tradition says, that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) cursed ten types of people in connection with wine:

- 1) One who plants a sapling with the intention of producing wine.
- 2) One who cultivates this sapling so that wine may be manufactured.
- 3) One who crushes the grapes.
- 4) One who drinks wine.
- 5) One who serves the wine.
- 6) One who transports wine.
- 7) One who takes delivery from the supplier.
- 8) One who sells wine.
- 9) One who buys it.
- 10) One who uses the income that is earned by (making or selling) wine.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

“One who is addicted to wine (liquor) will meet the Lord (on the appointed day) like an idol worshipper.”

Another tradition says that,

“On the day of meeting of the Lord, the drunkard will be counted among the disbelievers.”⁴

Liquor is the root of all evils

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) has said,

“Disobedience to the order of Allah is mostly due to alcoholism. The alcoholic abandons Salah. He even commits incest under the influence of alcohol. He loses his senses.”⁵

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“Certainly even if a person swallows only a mouthful of wine, at that very moment, the angels, the Prophets and the righteous believers send their curses upon him.”

“And when he drinks enough to make him intoxicated, the spirit of belief leaves his body, it is replaced by the dirty, accursed, devilish spirit. When the person neglects prayers, he spreads corruption in society.”

It is related from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“One who drinks wine considering it Halāl will remain forever in Hell. One who drinks wine, knowing it is Harām will still taste the punishment of Hell.”⁶

Imam ‘Ali ar-Riḍā (a.s.) has informed,

“Allah knows better that every Prophet who has been sent by Him did not have his religion completed till wine was prohibited. Wine has always been Harām.”⁷

In the present Old and New testaments, even after so many interpolations and alterations, there is considerable criticism of alcoholism.

*“Don’t associate with people who drink too much wine...”*⁸

Also:

“Show me someone who drinks too much, who has to try out some new drink, and I will show you someone miserable and sorry for himself, always causing trouble and always complaining. His eyes are bloodshot, and he has bruises that could have been avoided.”

*“Don’t let wine tempt you, even though it is rich red, though it sparkles in the cup, and it goes down smoothly. The next morning you will feel as if you had been bitten by a poisonous snake. Weird sights will appear before your eyes and you will not be able to think or speak clearly.”*⁹

The punishment for drinking wine is mentioned in the following words:

*“Inform the elders of the town, this son of ours is a rebel and a sinner. He does not obey us, he is a glutton and drinks too much wine? Then all the people of the town will stone him till he dies.”*¹⁰

Also we find:

*“Do not get drunk with wine, which will only ruin you...”*¹¹

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“Alcoholism is the mother of all sins. Liquor invites the drunkard to all sorts of indecencies. It destroys his intellect. So much so that under its influence he even fails to recognize his Lord. Whatever sin he encounters, he commits it. The alcoholics do not refrain from any such acts, which are against morality.”

Thus drinking liquor is Harām not merely in the light of the Qur’an and traditions, but it is a Greater Sin. One of the necessities of religion is to consider liquor Harām and if a Muslim considers it to be Halāl he becomes a Kafir.

Liquor is Absolutely Harām

It makes no difference if the quantity consumed is less or more; liquor is absolutely Harām; whether pure or mixed. Thus even if a person licks a single drop it is Harām whether he gets intoxicated or not. In the same way if liquor is consumed by mixing it with other things, it is still Harām.

Allama Hilli (r.a.) has quoted an authentic tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), that he said:

“If more of it intoxicates, then to consume even a bit of it is Harām.”

A person enquired from Imam (a.s.), “but I dilute it with water?”

Imam (a.s.) told him,

“A Harām thing does not become Halāl by mixing it with water. Fear Allah, refrain from partaking of it.”¹²

Umar Ibn Hanzala says that he enquired from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“Does it matter if as much water is mixed in wine so that it is no more intoxicating?”

Imam (a.s.) replied:

“No! By Allah it is not. Even if a drop of wine falls into a well full of water it does not become Halāl. Rather the whole well has to be emptied.”¹³

Ibn Wahab has narrated this tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“Every intoxicant is Harām. Something that intoxicates only when consumed in large quantities, is also not allowed to be taken even in a lesser quantity.”

The narrator says, “I asked, ‘Then if a Harām thing is mixed in a huge quantity of water, does it become permissible?’”

Imam (a.s.) flailed his arms twice, indicating emphatically that it does not.¹⁴

Liquor is harmful irrespective of the quantity consumed. Even if a drop of the poison enters the body it has harmful effects on it, whether apparent immediately or not. If you mix a few buckets of red dye in a pond of water, the whole pond water turns red. But on the other hand if you throw a glassful of ink in a pond of clear water it would not bring about any appreciable change in its appearance, yet, could you say that the ink has not affected the water at all? Certainly not! If the water is subjected to the process of distillation the glassful of ink could be recovered. If it enters the body it will cause harm.

A person who tastes liquor, one drop at a time, soon gets addicted to it till he needs to drink more and more of it. Consequently a stage is reached when he is unable to rid himself of this habit howsoever

hard he may try. A stone is eroded when water drips upon it over a period of time. Similarly alcohol erodes the liver and other cells of the body. Grapes, raisins and dates, when unfermented have medicinal properties and are wholesome and beneficial to the body. But as soon as fermentation sets in these fruits and wine is produced they turn harmful and prohibited.

Intoxicant Liquids

If an intoxicant is a liquid in its natural state, in addition to its being Harām, it is also najis (impure). But if an intoxicating substance is solid in its natural form and it is available as a solution, like opium or hemp for consumption, it is not najis, but its consumption is Harām like that of wine.

Giving Liquor to Children

Offering liquor to others is also Harām even if it is to a young, naive child. The book, ‘Mustanad ush.– Shia’ contains Three traditions regarding this topic. The gist of these traditions is that one who is responsible for serving liquor to young children will have to drink an equal quantity of the boiling water of Hell, on the day of Qiyāma, by Allah (S.w.T.)’s command.

Liquor at the Dinner Table

If liquor is served on a table, it is Harām to sit there and eat even if one does not touch the wine. Imam Ja’far as–Sadiq (a.s.) informs that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Accursed, accursed is the one who sits at a table where wine is being served.”¹⁵

The Holy Prophet (S) also says:

“One who believes in Allah and the last day, must not even sit at the table where wine is kept.”¹⁶

Imam Ja’far as–Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Do not sit with drunkards because when the curse descends it engulfs all the people in the company of the drunkards.”¹⁷

Some scholars have stated that it is not permitted to be in the company of people where anything Harām is being done. For example, backbiting about a Muslim. It is then obligatory on a person to leave immediately if possible and be free of the sin of just being in this company. Also, if by his leaving, the others will discontinue their sinful action, it is obligatory on him to do so.

Wine and Medicine

According to the traditions of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.) to take wine as medicine is also Harām. Rather, the Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.) have prohibited the consumption of any intoxicant as medicine. The jurists unanimously agree that one should refrain from consuming any intoxicant to cure a disease or to ward off pain. Allah (S.w.T.) has not reposed any curative effect in any intoxicant.

Three Exceptions

Certain Mujtahids have stated that there are Three exceptions where an intoxicant could be taken as medicine.

First of all the person should know that his malady is curable.

Secondly it must be that if this treatment is not taken it would result in death or extreme pain. Thirdly, there should be no other cure for this ailment.

If these conditions are fulfilled, the patient can be given an intoxicant as medicine but only just enough to cure his disease.

But as we have stated, Allah (S.w.T.) has not bestowed any cure in a Harām thing. Hence the above conditions are mentioned just for the sake of an obligation. Such a situation can hardly arise.

Wine Contains No Cure

Ibn abi Yazīr told Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.): "I am suffering from a disease. When the pain intensifies I drink some wine of grapes and the pain subsides". Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "Do not drink. It is Harām; it is nothing but Shaitan who is preying upon you to involve you in sins. When he loses all hope of making you drink he will leave you."

Ibn abi Yazīr returned to his native place, Kufa. He was in intense pain and his people brought for him wine of grapes and persuaded him to drink it. Ibn abi Yazīr said, "By Allah! I will not taste a drop of it."

He bore the pain for some days. At last his pain receded and he never suffered from it for the rest of his life.

Drunkard on the Death-bed

Abu Basir says that Umm Khalid Abadiya presented herself before Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) when Abu Basir was also present. Umm Khalid said,

"May I be sacrificed for you, on the day of Qiyaama. I will tell Allah that I have done as commanded by

Ja'far ibn Muhammad (a.s.). Physicians have told me to knead the flour with grape wine and eat the bread. This will cure the terrible pain of my heart. I ask you, shall I do this?"

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) replied to Umm Khalid,

"No! By Allah I will not permit you even a drop of wine. Don't taste even a drop of it. Otherwise when your soul reaches here (Imam pointed towards his throat) you will only regret." Then Imam (a.s.) asked Umm Khalid thrice.

"Have you understood?"

"Yes", replied Umm Khalid.

A student of Fuzail Ibn Ayaz was on his deathbed. Fuzail came to him and sitting near his head began to recite Surah Yasin (al-Qur'an, chapter 36). The disciple told his teacher, "Do not recite the Qur'an!" Fuzail became silent. Then he began to urge his disciple to repeat "La ilaha illallah". The student said:

"I will not repeat this formula because I am disgusted with it!" and he died in the same condition.

Fuzail Ibn Ayaz was extremely perturbed. He returned home after completing his duties and went to sleep. He saw his student undergoing punishment. He asked him, "What is the reason of your being deprived of faith (Imān) at the time of your death? You were one of my best students."

The student replied: "There are three reasons, firstly, I used to backbite too much, secondly, I used to be jealous, thirdly, a physician had prescribed for my malady a cup of wine every year. He told me that if I do not drink, the disease would never be cured. Every year I drank one cup of wine."¹⁸

Numerous traditional reports mention that "Harām" things do not contain any cure. In the same way one must refrain from taking any medicine that contains even a drop of najis alcohol.

It is stated on page no 380 of the Journal of Anjuman Tablighate Islami:

"There is not a single doctor today who considers liquor to have any cure. No doctor permits even a small quantity of the same. If a physician prescribes liquor as a medicine for some cure, it must be understood that his medical knowledge is deficient."

A hundred years ago some of the doctors and physicians believed that wine had some curative effects. But recent researches show that wine not only lacks any beneficial value but is in fact harmful. The molecules of alcohol on entering the blood stream affect the white blood corpuscles. These corpuscles perform the function of protecting the human body against infectious disease.

The white blood cells engulf the disease causing germs and exterminate them. Anything that impairs the functioning of these blood cells exposes a person to numerous diseases because his body is unable to protect itself. Some people think that wine helps in digestion. This is just a false notion. The reality is just

the opposite. Actually wine causes indigestion. The food hardens in the stomach and becomes indigestible. You can experiment by pouring wine upon a piece of cooked soft meat. It will become tough like leather, and absolutely unchewable. Wine also destroys the digestive juices secreted by the stomach and leads to flatulence and indigestion. Wine destroys appetite. Besides, alcohol causes addiction and wine taken for medicinal purpose soon becomes an addiction that is difficult to get rid of. We may observe that some alcoholics appear perfectly healthy even after years of addiction. But what is apparent may be different from reality. If a medical check up is carried out, it will reveal the deteriorating condition of the internal organs and the digestive system of these addicts. Besides, often the maladies are not associated with alcohol and are attributed to other factors. It should be also noted that alcohol affects some people more than others. Some have a hereditary capacity to withstand the rouging effects of alcohol. They should thank Providence for it and refrain from drinking so that they can protect their future generation from developing a weakness for it.

Punishment for Drinking Liquor

If a sane adult person, knowing that liquor is *Harām*, consumes even a drop of it of his own accord and later confesses to it or is seen in the act of drinking by two just witnesses who testify, the Judge is obliged to award punishment to him.

However punishment cannot be awarded under the following conditions: If the individual who drinks it is a child, or an insane person, or one who is unaware of its prohibition, or one drinks it by mistake being under the impression that it is not liquor and realizes the truth afterwards, or one who drinks it under coercion and force, or one who is compelled to drink due to extreme thirst there being no other way of quenching it.

The Islamic penalty for drinking is eighty lashes. Eighty lashes are given when the person drinks it for the first time. If he repeats the act after receiving 80 lashes he is lashed 160 times. If he repeats the sin again and confesses, or two just witnesses testify before a Qazi (religious Judge) the punishment is tripled; i.e. 240 lashes. The fourth instance of the crime entails capital punishment. Some Mujtahids are of the opinion that capital punishment should be given when the sin is repeated the third time.

If a person confesses and repents before the testimony of two just witnesses, he is condoned. However after the testimony he cannot escape punishment. The drunkard cannot be punished while still intoxicated. He is punished only when he gets sober. If it is a man he is stripped above the waist and lashed from the shoulders and below. It is not allowed to hit the face or the private parts of the accused. If the accused is a woman she is lashed with her clothes on. If her dress is loose, it is made to stick to the body by tying it up. She is lashed in a sitting position.

If a person drinks wine at a sacred place, for example the Holy *Kāba* or in a sacred period, like the month of Ramadhan, he is lashed and also given a preventive punishment that is, he is beaten so much that he may not dare to repeat the crime.

Ibn Abil al-Hadid records the following incident in Sharh al-Nahjul Balagha:

“Najashi was a famous poet of Kufa. He was originally from Yemen. He was among the army of Amir ul-Mu'minin (a.s.) at the Battle of Siffin. It was the first day of Ramadhan when his friend, Abu Sammak instigated him to drink wine at the tavern. Under its intoxication he created such a bedlam that his neighbour was compelled to complain to Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.). Hazrat summoned both of them. Abu Sammak fled but Najashi was arrested and brought by the people. By the order of the Imam (a.s.) he was detained for the night. The next day, before the congregation of Muslims he was stripped to the waist and lashed eighty times for drinking wine. After this he was given twenty more lashes. Najashi said, “Eighty lashes were for drinking wine, but why twenty more?” Imam (a.s.) replied,

“This is because you dared to drink during the month of Ramadhan and did not respect its sanctity.”¹⁹

The relatives of Najashi were present in large numbers in the camp of 'Ali (a.s.). They were perturbed at the extra punishment. One of them, Tarikh Ibn Abdullah said:

“We Yemenis are among your loyal friends and Shias. We expected you to consider us differently from your enemies. Najashi is our respected kinsman. By lashing him publicly you have degraded us in the eyes of our friends and enemies. We have begun to doubt if the path that we tread leads to Heaven.” Amir ul-Mu'minin (a.s.) said,

“Strict adherence to justice and commands of Allah hurts the sinners. What have I done? Najashi dared to disobey the Divine command. I have only punished him according to the laws. Allah says:

‘... And let not hatred of a people invite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, be careful of (your duty to) Allah...’ (Surah al-M'ida 5: 8)

Ibn Abil al-Hadid writes, “Najashi and Tarikh were unable to assert their opinion. They left Kufa and went to Syria to join the group of Muawiya.” Their meeting with Muawiya is not described here. Its details can be studied in Ibn Abil al-Hadid's Sharh al-Nahjul Balagha, Vol. I part iv page no. 366.

Aloofness from the Drunkard

In order to discourage the evil habit of drinking, Allah (S.w.T.) and the Holy Prophet (S) has commanded that people should not associate with a drunkard and remain totally aloof from him. It is a method by which the drunkard will feel self-conscious about the lack of respect with which his community members view him. Being strictly excluded from company, he will not be able to influence tender or immature minds to develop this obnoxious habit. We can thus restrict the evils of alcoholism that destroy the foundation of individual and social life.

Do not Give your Daughter in Marriage to a Drunkard

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) quotes the Holy Prophet (S),

“Allah has made me to pronounce wine as *Harām*, after this pronouncement if someone still drinks wine, he is not fit to have his proposal for marriage accepted, when he proposes. If he seeks recommendation, he should not be recommended. If he says something he must not be believed. His testimony must not be accepted. Nothing should be kept in his trust. Allah is not responsible for something kept with a drunkard, with the knowledge (of his vice). He will not receive any compensation. If the thing is lost, nothing could be taken in exchange and neither its cost.”²⁰

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“One who marries his well-behaved daughter to a drunkard does *Qat'a ar-Rahm*.”²¹

Imam (a.s.) has also said,

“One who marries his well-behaved daughter to a drunkard; it is as if he has given her to adultery.”²²

Imam (a.s.) has also stated in a tradition,

“If a drunkard falls ill do not go to visit him. If he dies, do not attend his funeral.”

Boycott of the Drunkard

By adopting this attitude we fulfill our duty of *Nahy Anil Munkar*. No one should trust or believe a drunkard, and no one should have any dealings with him whatsoever. As clearly ordered by our Holy Prophet (S) and our Imam (a.s.) no one should give his daughter in marriage to a drunkard. When the drunkard finds himself so totally cut off from the society in which he lives, he will be compelled to give up his sinful habit.

Jihad Against Intoxicants

The book *Burhan al-Qur'an* writes against intoxicants:

“The evil of intoxicants can be easily proved by the fact that in a country like France a woman legislator urged the parliament to abolish intoxicants completely. She was so disgusted by the ill-effects of alcohol that she protested against it vehemently. Obviously, until the powerful governments put an end to such evils they cannot be eradicated. Mere crusades of individuals, or social boycott will not have much effect.”

It is true that life can be very difficult for some individuals. They face hardships and frustrations till they

are driven to despair. Even so, drinking liquor to forget their troubles is not a solution. The physical, economic and social repercussions of this evil will only magnify their problems and engulf them in a vicious circle from which it will be almost impossible to extricate themselves. It is an evil that must be fought by individuals, by society and by the governments. Individual effort and social boycott will certainly help to a great extent. But the authority that the government can exercise in enforcing strict measures will go a long way in eradicating this evil. The American government in the year 1930 had made a serious effort to discourage the use of intoxicants. The propaganda was carried out through newspapers, magazines, radio, television, films and all modes of communication. The total expenses incurred by the government were eight million dollars. Ten billion pages of books and magazines were printed. Within a span of 14 years 250 million dollars were spent. 300 people were hanged, 532000 people were sent to prison, penalties were collected from 1,60,00,000 people and property worth \$ 41,50,00,000 was confiscated. All this did not yield the desired result and the number of alcoholics, in fact, increased. In 1933 all these restrictions were withdrawn and complete freedom was given to the public to consume liquor.²³

This only goes to show that government restriction alone will not cure this malady. What is needed are the co-ordinated efforts of strict government rules and the boycott of the alcoholics by society.

When Islam prohibited liquor, it considered all these aspects. Islam first strived to remove the causes of alcoholism. After this, it promulgated that liquor is *Harām*. One of the causes that promotes this habit are the people who themselves give a free rein to this vice. They do not adopt strict methods of prevention. Our society does not view the drunkards unfavourably and does not boycott them so that they may be compelled to give up their habits. According to Islam, dangerous diseases and ailments that befall the soul must be eradicated by all means. The drunkards and alcoholics must also be boycotted economically. People should not transact any business with them and they must also be socially boycotted. Proposals for their marriage must be rejected and none should keep company with them. An ideological war must be carried out against them. They must also be a spiritually cured. Along with heavy penal punishment they must be informed of the ill effects of liquor and other intoxicants.

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1. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 2. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 3. See Glossary.
 4. Wasa'il ul-Shia, chapter of prohibited drinks
 5. Wasa'il ul-Shia: chapter of prohibited drinks
 6. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 7. Furu al-K̄fi
 8. Proverbs 23:30
 9. Proverbs 23: 29-33
 10. Proverb: 21
 11. Ephesians 5:18
 12. Mustanad ush-Shia

13. Furu' al-Kifī
14. Furu al-Kifī
15. Wasa'il ul-Shia
16. Mas'lik of Shahīd Thani
17. Wasa'il ul-Shia, Chapter 33
18. Safinat'ul-Bihar Vol. I page 428
19. Furu al-Kifī, Chapter on Penal Code
20. al-Kifī
21. al-Kifī
22. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il
23. From Tankihat of Abul Ala Maududi

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