

Islamic ruling on smoking

It has become universally known that smoking is extremely dangerous to one's health. This fact has been proven beyond any shadow of doubt. Hence, it is no wonder to say that the juristic disagreement that has arisen among Muslim scholars since the initial appearance of smoking is not based on legal proofs, but it is based on the certainty of the harm it causes, which is decided by physicians, not juristic scholars.

Scientists have proven the harm of smoking. Thus, the legal ruling on smoking rises from detestability to the degree of prohibition. In other words, due to the certainty that smoking is a health hazard, **it is deemed prohibited** for Muslim scholars state that whatever is proved to be harmful is prohibited. The eminent Muslim scholar **Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi**, states: The reported juristic disagreement among Muslim scholars on the ruling concerning smoking, since its appearance and spread, is not usually based on differences between legal proofs, but on the difference in the verification of the cause on which the ruling is based. They all agree that whatever is proved to be harmful to the body and mind is prohibited, yet they differ whether this ruling applies to smoking. Some of them claimed that smoking has some benefits, others assured that it had few disadvantages compared to its benefits, whereas a third group maintained that it had neither benefits nor bad effects. This means that if scholars had been certain about the harmfulness of smoking, then they would undoubtedly have considered it prohibited.

Accordingly, we would like to say that juristic scholars are not in a position to prove or disprove the health dangers of smoking. This responsibility belongs to medical scientists and analysts because of their expertise in this field. Almighty Allah says: **(Ask any one informed concerning Him.)** (Al-Furqan 25: 59) Allah also says: **(None can inform you like Him who is aware.)** (Fatir 35: 14)

Medical scientists and analysts have pointed out the harmful effects of smoking on the body in general and on the lungs and the respiratory system in particular, stating that smoking causes lung cancer. This is why the whole world has recently maintained the necessity of warning against smoking. Moreover, there are dangers of smoking that need neither a specialized physician nor a

permissible to be eaten except for what is filthy, though legally pure, like semen and mucus, which are prohibited to be ingested according to the authentic opinion in this regard.” An-Nawawi added: “It is permissible to have medicine containing a little poison if it is most likely to result in recovery and so it is vitally needed.”

There are some people who adhere to the juristic principle that states: “The original ruling on all things is that they are permissible unless there is a legal text stating the prohibition of something.” In reply to those we say that there are some scholars of Islamic Jurisprudence who maintain that the original ruling on all things is that they are prohibited unless there is a legal text stating the permissibility of something. The preponderant opinion of the two depends on the details of the specific case in hand. That is to say, the original ruling on useful things is that they are permissible, for Almighty Allah mentions what He bestows upon His servants saying: **(He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth.)** ([Al-Baqarah](#) 2: 29) And it is taken for granted that Allah never bestows upon His servants what He has prohibited for them. However, the original ruling on harmful things that harm the body, the soul or both, is that they are prohibited. In addition, smoking has a certain kind of harmfulness that cannot be disregarded, namely financial harm.

In fact, smoking is a kind of financial wastefulness which is by no means useful neither on the worldly level nor on the religious one, especially since it has become so expensive that some heavy smokers may spend the whole family budget to buy their cigarettes.

as for those who find some psychological relief in smoking, we say that it has nothing to do with the usefulness of smoking. Rather, such a relief is related to satisfying the addiction, just like those who are addicted to certain drugs, regardless of how harmful they are. Imam Ibn Hzam said: “Wastefulness is unlawful.” Wastefulness refers to:

1. Spending one’s money on what Almighty Allah has prohibited, be it little or much, even if it is equal to a little piece of a mosquito’s wing.
2. Spending so wastefully on something that is unnecessary in a way that turns the spender into a bankrupt.
3. Wasting one’s money in vain, even if it is only a little money.

Moreover, Almighty Allah says: **(But be not prodigal. Lo! He loveth not the prodigals)** ([Al-A`raf](#)

7: 31). It goes without saying that spending one's money on smoking is a kind of wastefulness. actually, I liked the statement of the scholar who I previously quoted as saying: "If someone admits that smoking does not have any benefit in any aspect, then smoking is prohibited for him. This is because smoking is a kind of wastefulness, as there is no difference in the prohibition of wasting one's money between throwing it into the sea, burning it, or doing any similar wasteful act." In addition, smoking is financially wasteful, and contains certain or probable harm for it is unanimously agreed that smoking is considered wasteful of one's money as well as one's body. I wonder how smokers can willingly buy something harmful for their bodies with their own money! there is another harmful effect of smoking that is disregarded by those who have tackled the issue of smoking, namely the negative psychological effect. To clarify, getting accustomed to smoking enslaves one's will and makes it a prisoner of that foolish habit that one can hardly give up even if one decides to do so one day for a certain reason, such as noticing its obvious negative effect on one's health or concerns about upbringing one's children, or discovering one's need to spend one's money on useful and beneficial matters, or for any other similar reason. Due to such psychological enslavement, some smokers neglect to meet the needs of their children and families in order to satisfy their own desires, namely smoking, from which they have become unable to free themselves. In addition, if a smoker cannot afford it for a single day, due to an internal or external reason, he becomes afflicted with a state of disorder, imbalance, irritation and anger for the slightest reason. This is undoubtedly one of the negative effects that should be taken into consideration when issuing the ruling on smoking.

Due to the abovementioned analysis, it is unreasonable and baseless to maintain that smoking is absolutely permissible; rather, such an opinion shows an evident misunderstanding and unawareness of the various aspects of the issue. It is enough to deem it prohibited that it wastes a portion of one's money, it has a disgusting odour, and it is harmful and has negative effects, part of which is certain and others which are probable. Even though the permissibility of smoking had its justification in the past, in the year 1000 A.H when it first appeared and its bad effects had not yet been discovered, there is no reason for deeming it permissible in our modern age, when scientific medical institutions have elaborated on the harmfulness of smoking and pointed out, statistically, its negative effects to the point that they are well-known.

Putting aside the opinion that smoking is permissible, we have now two opinions, namely its detestability and its prohibition. According to what has been mentioned above, the opinion that smoking is prohibited is more preponderant and well-founded, and this is my own opinion. This is because of the undoubtedly negative effects of smoking on the physical, financial and psychological levels.

as for those who maintain that smoking is only detestable, we ask them whether this detestability is based on avoidance or prohibition. Obviously it is the latter due to the strong considerations and legal proofs supporting the prohibition of smoking. At any rate, it is stated that persisting to commit minor sins makes them extremely close to major sins. Likewise, I fear that persisting to commit what is detestable may make it extremely close to what is prohibited. On the other hand, there are some other considerations related to certain people that confirm the prohibition of smoking and increase the degree of its detestability. For example, smoking may be harmful to a certain person's health according to a trustworthy physician or that person's own experience or the experience of some people who are in the same physical state as that person. Another example is that a smoker may be in need of the money he spends on smoking to cater for the needs of his children, family, or those he is legally responsible to support (bearing in mind that there are millions of Muslims who die of starvation everyday whereas millions of dollars are being spent on the habit of smoking). A third example is that one may smoke a kind of cigarette that is exported from a non-Muslim country, and so the money he pays is used to produce weapons against Muslims. Among these examples is that the legal guardian of a smoker may prevent him from smoking, and so the latter MUST obey him as it is obligatory to obey one's legal guardian as long as it does not involve committing a sin. Also, a smoker may have a religious or scientific background and may be in a position of being an example for others to follow. In the above examples, smoking is absolutely prohibited.

In this connection, there are some considerations that should be taken into account in order to reach a comprehensive, objective and just point of view while issuing the ruling on smoking.

First: There are some smokers who sincerely wish to give it up but they do so in vain because they have become controlled by this habit to the point that they are unable to free themselves from it and they are afflicted with a great deal of harm and many disorders when they try to give it up. Such smokers are legally excused for smoking as long as they sincerely try as 'every man is

rewarded according to his intention.’

Second: Our inclination to consider smoking prohibited does not mean that it is as grave as major sins like [adultery](#), drinking alcohol or theft. In fact, prohibited matters in Islam are relative; some of them are minor prohibitions whereas others are major, and each has its own ruling. The major sins, for example, have no expiation other than sincere repentance. However, the minor sins can be expiated by the Five Prayers, the [Friday Prayer](#), the Fasting of Ramadan, the Night Vigil Prayer in Ramadan, and other acts of worship. They can also be expiated by avoiding the major sins.

Third: Controversial prohibited matters are not as grave as those that are unanimously prohibited. This is why smokers cannot be considered dissolute people because of smoking, nor should their testimony be legally rejected, or anything of the kind, especially since smoking has become a wide-spread social affliction.

In view of the above, making the ruling on smoking dependent on the financial ability of the smoker is unreasonable as well as baseless. Some scholars, as the questioner has stated, view that if the smoker cannot afford to smoke, then smoking is prohibited for him. Yet they maintain that it is only detestable if the smoker can afford it. This is a baseless opinion, for the physical and psychological negative effects of smoking should be taken into consideration too, not only the financial effect.

Some smokers argue that some Muslim scholars also smoke. In reply to this we would like to point out that Muslim scholars who smoke have never claimed that they are sinless. A lot of them began smoking in their youth, then they were too weak-willed to give it up. In addition, some of them maintain that smoking is prohibited, even though they themselves smoke.

Similarly, we see many physicians who are fully aware of the harmfulness of smoking and may even have written books on its physical dangers, but they cannot stop it. In this regard, I would like to add that not only is smoking bad for one’s health but it also stains one’s teeth and makes one have bad breath – this is equally disgusting for men and women. Muslims, both males and females, are supposed to beautify themselves for their spouses.

My advice to every smoker is to give it up with great resolution in one stroke, for gradual quitting or mere cutting down is useless. As for a smoker who is not strong-willed enough, he should at least reduce its evil by never praising it or offering cigarettes to anyone. Rather, he should point out to others the financial, physical, and psychological bad effects of smoking, the first of which is

that it has enslaved him so that he is unable to give it up. Such a smoker should also pray to Almighty Allah to help him to get rid of it and its dangers.

My advice to the youth in particular is that they should refrain from being trapped by the epidemic called smoking which destroys their health and weakens their power and energy. They should never be a prey to the illusion that smoking is a sign of manhood or independence. We also say to those youth who have already begun smoking that they can easily give it up as they are in the early stage. So, they should stop it all at once before it is too late and before they find themselves overcome and enslaved by smoking.

On the other hand, the mass media should, in turn, wage anti-smoking campaigns pointing out its dangers and bad effects.

Moreover, movie directors and producers should stop promoting smoking by unnecessarily showing a cigarette in every shot. The government should also do its best to fight this plague and free the Muslim Ummah from its evils. Even if the government's treasury may lose millions, the people's safety and good physical and psychological states are much more important than the millions or even the billions of dollars in revenue.