

Qaat Consumption: A Shariah-Based Evaluation

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Dedication: This work is dedicated to the cherished memory of my esteemed teacher, Al Ustad al-Shaikh Hasan al-Ghalib Ali al-Hiradhi. A man of profound knowledge, sincerity, and compassion, he migrated from Hiradh, Yemen, to India, and later to Pakistan. Throughout his life, he remained steadfastly devoted to the noble pursuit of Talim, serving with distinction at Al-Jamea tus-Safiyah. May Allah grant him Afdal Ajr, A'ameen.

Abstract: *This article aims to shed light on some confirmed hazards of using Qaat or Khat. Qaat use has significant health harms; some of them are physical while others are mental. Furthermore, using it wastes money, time, decreases libido, reduces moisture from the body, produces foul breath and stains the teeth. Moreover, those who are addicted to Qaat waste their time by engaging themselves into purposeless talk and backbiting rather than spending quality time nurturing their families. This eventually spoils relationships and social difficulties. Qaat, a stimulant, is native to the Horn of Africa. This curse then entered Arabian Peninsula. However, in Yemen, it's a full-fledged national addiction where 90 percent of males and 1 in 4 women are consuming it on daily basis, storing a wad in their cheek as the Qaat slowly breaks down into the saliva and enters the bloodstream. Qaat chewing is a widespread evil habit in Yemen and East African countries. Millions of people chew Qaat leaves habitually for its narcotic effects. Cathinone, the main active substance found in fresh Qaat leaves, has sympathomimetic effects which increase heart rate and blood pressure.*

Keywords: *Shariah; Fitrah; Halal; Haram; Khamar; Isr'af; extravagance; Khabith; evil substance; intoxication; wastefulness prohibition; Qaat; increased blood pressure; pulse; health risks; cancer risk; paralysis risk.*

One of the aims of this paper is to examine the hypothesis that Qaat chewing is a risk factor for Acute Myocardial infarction (AMI) or heart attack. The habit of chewing Qaat as a psychostimulant has prevailed for centuries among people of East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, including Yemen. Fresh leaves of Qaat (Catha edulis Forsk) are chewed as it gives people a sensation of increased energy. The common adverse effects of Qaat include insomnia, anorexia, hyperthermia, mydriasis, and endocrinological disturbances. The people of Arabia, especially Yemenites, have become addicted to chewing the green leaf of Qaat that

was used by the inhabitants of the jungles of Africa during the colonial era. The British, French and Portuguese supported the spread of this curse in their occupied territories. This allowed them to rule comfortably as the majority became addicts. The Qaat plant is extensively grown in Yemen. Its green leaf when chewed produces a juice that is intoxicating. Yemen was once famous for its coffee plantations; however, many farmers have replaced their coffee plantation with Qaat plantation in order to support their habit. It is highly profitable for them as Qaat is much more expensive than coffee. Qaat is banned in most countries but not in Yemen. Yemen has witnessed decline in its national income due to this.

Our religion Islam has ordained us to abstain from all substances which can be intoxicating as they erode piety. In order to save humanity from the evils of Shait'an, Allah has bestowed on them the shield of Shariah. The foundation of Shariah is upon the Fitrah. (Allah made all human beings swear upon His Unique Divinity and Lordship since when they were in their mother's womb. Hence, when a child is born, they naturally believe in Allah. This natural belief is known as "Fitrah" in Arabic. If a child was left alone, they would grow up aware of Allah in His Unity, but all children are affected by the pressures of their environment. A Hadith has quoted: Each child is born in a state of Fitrah. It is the child's parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or adhere to any other faith.) The Qur'an clarify the point of Halal and Har'am in these words: [1]

"O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship. He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful".

Objects or substances that are either physically or spiritually injurious, have been explicitly declared Har'am. Users of Qaat argue that there is no clear injunction in the Qur'an with respect to this. This excuse not only evinces about ignorance of the understanding of the Qur'an, but is also a declaration of revolt against this comprehensive code of life. Qur'an instructs: [2]

"Not a thing, fresh or withered, wet or dry, but it is in a Manifest Book".

How is it possible that while science explains the side effects and harms of Qaat, Shariah does not guide in this regard. The ignorant should know that the Creator has declared Har'am the use of everything which is injurious for the health. The Qur'an informs: [3]

"For them (people) pious things have been made Halal and impious things declared Har'am".

Therefore, according to Islam, no impious thing can be treated Halal till the Qiyamah. Qaat involves the consumption of Khabith, an evil substance. It has a foul smell, unpleasant taste and is harmful to the body. The statement by Rasulullah (S) justifies its forbidding: [4]

"Who will enjoin upon them the doing of what is right, forbid the doing of what is wrong, make lawful to them the good things of life, prohibit for them the evil things, and lift from them their burdens and the shackles that were (previously) upon them".

Rasulullah (S) bestowed a principle on which we can evaluate each and everything: [5]
"Even consumption of a small quantity of that thing is also Har'am when its excess produces intoxication."

Another Hadith says: [6]

"All those things are forbidden which intoxicate".

According to the Hadith Literature, the term "Khamar" includes not only alcoholic drinks but everything that intoxicates. This Hadith provides enough justification for those who wish to comprehend. If some are still doubtful whether it really intoxicates, laboratory examination is always possible. People using Qaat get habituated to it as the substance is believed to create a physical addiction and hence they continue to make gradual increases in its consumption. Eventually they become so dependent on Qaat that they find it difficult to perform any task without its consumption. The use of a cursed thing like Qaat is *Isr'af* in the language of Qur'an and can be termed as foolishness, extravagance and ignorance. The consumer of Qaat misuses his wealth which leads to financial crises, suffering and ill-being. As mentioned in the Hadith, we will be questioned about how we spent our wealth and health. Wealth belongs to Allah, hence, one shouldn't dare waste it by disobeying Him. Qur'an says: [7]

"And do not entrust to the imprudent ones the possessions that Allah has placed in your charge. And do not waste (your resources) extravagantly. Indeed the Musarrifeen [squanderers] are the brothers of Shait'an".

Rasulullah (S) says: [8]

"Allah hates three things:

Gossip,

Begging,

And

Wasting money".

It is essential to prevent Qaat users from entering the Masjid as its smell is even worse than that of an onion or garlic. Rasulullah (S) expelled those who had come to the Masjid after eating onion and garlic, even though these are Halal. This was because their smell was unbearable to the nearby devotees. As per Hadith: [9]

"One who believes in Allah and Qiyamah should not cause any discomfort to those around him".

The Talim of Islam is based on the following principle: [10]

"Do not cause discomfort to anybody nor allow anybody to discomfort you".

Who can deny that Qaat isn't harmful for health? Rasulullah (S) says: [11]

"Allah dislikes three things in His creatures the most:

i). To talk undeservedly on religious issues

ii). Wasting one's money and belongings

iii). Questioning frequently without any aim or objective".

Using Qaat and wasting money on it is Isr'af and to justify its use is tantamount to irrelevant talk. In another Ayah, it has been clarified: [12]

"...and eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant."

Rasulullah (S) further informs: [13]

"When you indulge in sins, conceal them".

Openly using Qaat is an act of sin. Following the practices of the elite in evil acts is a sin that brings nothing but adversity. Qur'an guides us in this matter: [14]

"You have indeed in Rasulullah a quintessential example for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of Allah."

Rasulullah (S) is the pivot of Ta'at and Taqlid and an ideal personality for Hidayah. Qaat users say that they have become so habituated to chewing it that they cannot live without it. However, if they can refrain from it during Ramadan for long intervals, they can surely overcome this addiction. While nobody will die without chewing Qaat, one may die by its use as it is a confirmed cause of paralysis.

The seekers of Sakun (mental comfort) in their time of grief, worry, anxiety, fatigue and illness should turn to Allah and offer Dua and seek His help and not turn towards Qaat; In sha Allah, they would be blessed with Tawfiq. The principles of Islam are not confined to time or location, community or vicinity, but its benefits are for all who wish to seek it. The principles of Shariah cannot be changed neither can they be reformed which the agents of Shait'an demand time and again. Qur'an guides on this point: [15]

"You would never find any change in Sunnatullah (the policy of Allah)".

The chewing of Qaat is disastrous because it kills slowly and surely and gives rise to cancer.

Chewing Qaat is similar to attempting suicide which in itself is also Har'am. Qur'an educated in this regard: [16]

"Do not destroy yourselves by your own hands".

Another Ayah ordain: [17]

"Do not kill yourselves!"

Research by the World Health Organization (WHO) has established: [18]

There are two substances present in the fresh leaves which are responsible for the stimulating effect: cathine and cathinone. Both substances are closely related chemically to amphetamines and have almost identical effects. Just like amphetamines, cathine and cathinone are both responsible for the release of adrenaline. Consequently, the body temperature and blood pressure rises, the pulse rate increases, and the emotional state of the person turns into excitement. The after-effects of taking Qaat, which could be described as a sort of "hangover", are the loss of appetite and sleep, nervousness and even depression. The intensity of the hangover, however, depends on the type of Qaat used. The very expensive kinds are supposed to have no after-effects, while the cheaper and probably poorer ones produce ill effects. This repugnant habit engulfs a considerable portion of the monthly income, especially for those belonging to low-income families. In some families, the purchase of Qaat is carried out at the expense of buying food and other necessities. This causes adverse effects on familial ties.

Most of the kids who get raised by Qaat addicts are liable to fall prey to this habit. Moreover, these individuals are often absent from their kids' lives and this affects the next generation mentally and emotionally. The same is applicable for married couples. When a spouse spends more time with his or her addicted friends, the marital relationship deteriorates. How can a

healthy family be nurtured under such circumstances? These are some reasons as to why one should refrain from using Qaat as it is as destructive other drugs. Thus, Qaat is an intoxicant and inevitably is Haram regardless of how much it is consumed. Islam has forbidden consumption of wine and intoxicants. Daily consumers of Qaat are vulnerable to financial trouble, among others, especially when they have limited income. One should concentrate on one's well-being and refrain from all the things mentioned in Qur'an as Haram.

A Fatwa was issued by 52nd Al Da'i al-Fatimi, Dr Sayyiduna Mohammed Burhanuddin that treated Qaat as a drug akin to alcohol and framed it as destructive to health, psychology, and family finances. Field accounts record that many farmers complied "out of Walayah and deep Taat" for the Sayyiduna Mohammed Burhanuddin, even when it meant giving up their main cash crop. During the annual Ziyarat in Hiradh (around al-Huṭayb), Sayyiduna called openly for implementation-not just "don't chew," but end Qaat farming. The programme is documented as launching in 1999 as a structured "crop/drug substitution" campaign in the Hiradh Mountains. Reports note compensation/assistance linked to uprooting, and that community structures bore costs (e.g., paying labour for uprooting, tracking trees, and providing support). Contemporary Yemeni press coverage described the initiative as proceeding on the directive of the "Sultan of Bohra," with earmarked funds, cost-bearing for uprooting, and provision of replacement plants of coffee and banana. The replacement model emphasised coffee and fruit, with additional income streams such as beekeeping and animal husbandry, plus sustainability mechanisms (e.g., stable purchase arrangements for coffee in the transition period). Academic documentation describes a wider package: new crops, credit schemes, education initiatives, and women's livelihood activities-i.e., an ecosystem to prevent relapse into Qaat dependence. Implementation was channelled through local representatives/deputies supervising the work and disbursing assistance, rather than relying on state coercion. Later community accounts describe Sayyiduna Mufaddal Saifuddin continuing/expanding Yemen's socio-economic development programme, with Qaat uprooting as a "foremost" initiative alongside infrastructure and education. Important nuance: this does not mean Qaat was "stopped in all of Yemen." The evidence supports that Sayyiduna's directive and programme substantially reduced/ended Qaat cultivation and chewing within the Ismaili Tayyibis areas of Hiradh, and in some nearby communities influenced by that example.

Bibliography:

[1] Qur'an, 2:172-173

[2] Qur'an: Surah al-An'am 6, Ayah 59. According to one interpretation, everything, wet or dry, is found in Qur'an. Yes, everything is found in it, but these cannot be understood by everyone as the things are found at different levels. The Qur'an contains all things, either in the form of seeds, nuclei, summaries, principles, signs and they are found either explicitly or implicitly, allusively or vaguely or suggestively.

[3] Qur'an: Surah al-Airaf, Ayah 157

[4] Hadith= "Who will enjoin upon them the doing of what is right, forbid them the doing of what is wrong, make lawful to them the good things of life, prohibit for them the evil things, and lift from them their burdens and the shackles that were (previously) upon them".

[5] "Masnad", Ahmad bin Hanbal, Qahirah

[6] "Durre Mukht'ar", vol. 5, Kitab al-Mashrabah, by Umm al-Mumineen Umm'e Salama, Qahirah

[7] Qur'an: Surah al-Isra, Ayah 26-27

[8] Hadith.

[9] Hadith

[10] Hadith

[11] Hadith

[12] Qur'an: Surah al-Air'af, Ayah 31

[13] Hadith

[14] Qur'an: Surah al-Ahz'ab, Ayah 21

[15] Qur'an: Surah al-Ahz'ab, Ayah 62

[16] Qur'an: Surah al-Baqarah Ayah 195

[17] Qur'an: Surah al-Nisa 4, Ayah 29

[18] Qaat: chemical research by the World Health Organization, U.S.A.

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