

Use of Tobacco through the Lens of Shariah

By: Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed

Ph.D. (USA), NDI, Shahadat al-Aalamiyyah (Al Hawzah, Najaf, Iraq), M.A, LLM (Shariah)

Musheer: Fed. Shariat Court of Pakistan

Member: Ulama Council of Pakistan

Chairman: The Guardian Pakistan

The Writer is an Attorney at Law and a Religious Scholar

Website: www.durrenajaf.com

Academia: <https://durrenajaf.academia.edu/QaziBorhany>

Contact for spiritual help: najafspiritualcenter@gmail.com

Published in: Yemen Times, Sanaa, 13-08-2007; Jang, Weekly Mag, Pakistan Times, Daily News 1990

Revised: 2026

Abstract: *Tibb al-Nabavi (Tibb al-Islami) is grounded in a preventive ethos that treats health as a trust to be guarded through spiritually informed, emotionally balanced, and physically sound living. Classical texts consistently attribute the onset of illness to disturbance of one's health and therefore foreground moderation, cleanliness, wholesome intake, and restraint from harmful habits. Using this lens, this paper revisits key Tibb al-Nabavi sources and applies their preventive logic to tobacco, with particular attention to how Islamic norms address a modern, normalised harm. The paper situates tobacco within its historical trajectory. Spanish sailors encountered tobacco on the American shores around 1500 CE (c. 900 AH), after which its use spread swiftly across Europe. By the seventeenth century, several European states had begun to recognise smoking's dangers and responded through prohibitions and punitive measures. In later periods, Western jurisdictions combined deterrence with regulation, public awareness campaigns, restrictions on promotion, and limits on smoking in shared spaces contributing to reductions in use in certain settings. Tobacco entered many Muslim societies through European contact around 1000 AH; commercial incentives and media promotion then helped entrench it as an ordinary social practice. Against the claim that tobacco cannot be forbidden because it is not expressly named in the Qur'an, the study demonstrates how Shariah governs new phenomena through comprehensive principles, juristic maxims, and evaluation of effective causes and consequences. The Qur'an's distinction between wholesome, beneficial matters-Tayyibat and impure, harmful matters Khabaith, together with its condemnation of self-destruction and wasteful extravagance -israf, supplies a framework that captures tobacco where harm is established. The Sunnah reinforces these imperatives through prohibitions against causing harm and offence to others, and through the foundational maxim "La Darar wa La Dirar" (no harm and no reciprocating harm). The paper highlights communal dimensions of smoking, including offensive odour, pollution of shared air, and injury to non-smokers through passive exposure. Finally, it surveys representative Fatawa and reform initiatives classifying tobacco as Haram, situating these rulings within the Shariah, especially the preservation of life, intellect, wealth, and public welfare and concludes with a call to principled prevention as a sincere deed seeking Allah's pleasure.*

Keywords: Tobacco; Smoking; Shariah; Qur'an; Sunnah; Khabaith; Israf; Fatawa; Public harm; Har'am, Isr'af, extravagance, Waste, narcotics, suicide

1. Discovery and early uses of Tobacco:

Muhammad al-Jibaly has discussed in his Paper about how tobacco was introduced: [1]

"Tobacco was discovered by the Spanish sailors on the American shores, about 1500 CE (900 AH). Since its invention, the epidemic of smoking has continued to spread all over the world. In our times, one seldom finds a house not afflicted by it. As early as the 17th Century, the European countries realized the dangers of smoking and fought against it".

Laws were designed in England, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Austria and other countries prohibiting smoking and punishing violators. Western countries continue their attempts to protect their people from the sufferings of smoking. They have employed many strategies such as media campaigns, laws and regulations and other methods to discourage its use. This has led to the decline in users to a certain degree in those countries. Smoking was introduced to the Muslim countries by the Europeans around 1000 AH. Its spread among the Muslims was similar to that in the West. Unfortunately, in the Muslim countries, no similar measures were exerted to protect the people from it.

2. Injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunnah:

A damned substance like tobacco is being used blindly following the trends of western societies. Islam, the religion of peace, confers lasting benefits to its followers. To save humankind from the poison of Lucifer, Allah has bestowed the Shariah. The foundation of Shariah is based upon Fitr'ah. Shariah has clarified what is Halal and what is Har'am. Anything harmful or injurious, either physically or spiritually, has explicitly been declared Har'am. How is it then possible that there would not be a clear injunction for something like tobacco which is severely harmful to human health? Tobacco users justify its consumption by arguing that there is no clear injunction regarding it in the Qur'an. This excuse is not only an admission of ignorance with relation to the Qur'an but is also a declaration of revolt against this comprehensive code of life. Moreover, some of the teachers and preachers of religion are heavy smokers and justify it by arguing that it is not Har'am but Makruh (disliked). This is nothing but an argument void of sound logic and reasonable intellect.

The Qur'an guides us in this regard: [2]

"Each wet and dry thing is available in the Kit'ab."

How it is possible that while science explains the side effects and harms of tobacco, Shariah remains silent on the issue? The Creator has declared Har'am the use of everything that is harmful to our health. It is mentioned in the Qur'an: [3]

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

Therefore, according to Islam, no impious thing till the advent of Qiyamah can be treated Halal. Tobacco involves the consumption of Khabith, an evil substance. It has a foul smell, unpleasant taste and is harmful to the body. This is sufficient to forbid it because Rasulullah (S) informed: [4]

"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."

Rasulullah (S) bestowed the following principles on which we can examine what is Halal or Har'am: [5]

"Even a small quantity of what is Har'am can produce severe intoxication."

Another Hadith states: [6]

"Everything is Har'am which excess use causes intoxication, its use even in a small quantity is Har'am".

Another Hadith says: [7]

"All those things are Har'am which intoxicate."

According to the Hadith Literature, Rasulullah (S) clarified Khamar as Har'am. The word Khamar not only includes alcoholic drinks but also all intoxicating things. This clarification is enough for those who wish to comprehend. Mufti Abd al-Rahman Muhaddis Mubarakpuri says: [8]

"If anybody doubts that whether Tobacco is harmful or not, he may see what happens by eating Tobacco even equal to one fourth the quantity of a Dirham."

Air and water are the two most important sources of survival, which should be immune from every kind of impurity and filth. This Hadith clears the matter: [9]

"Which companion is better out of two? The one from whom you get anything good or the one who harms you anyway?"

A virtuous companion is one who is a source of benefit and he is reminiscent of a trader of fragrance from whom you can enjoy pleasant scents freely. The other companion is similar to a blacksmith. If you sit with him at his workplace, you will gain nothing except hot air, heat and soot. The example of a tobacco user is like the latter that provides you with nothing but foul odour, smoke and pollution in the air. Furthermore, the use of Tobacco is an act of open Isr'af against which the Qur'an warns: [10]

"And do not waste (your resources) extravagantly. Indeed the squanderers are the brethren of the devil".

Rasulullah (S) said: [11]

"Allah hates you for three things: gossip, begging and wasting money."

Smoking is veritably not only Isr'af, but it is Har'am and wastage of money, as per Hadith: [12]

"Allah dislikes three things in His creatures the most:

- (1) To talk about religious matters undeservedly.
- (2) Wastage of money and property.
- (3) Questioning frequently without any aim or objective".

The Qur'an educates: [13]

"Do not indulge in Isr'af. The Musrifeen (wasteful) are brothers of Shait'an".

In another Ayat, Qur'an guides: [14]

"Eat and drink but do not be extravagant because Allah does not like the extravagant."

Tobacco can also cause hardship to the family as it wastes resources depriving the family of the essential requirements of life. In Islam cleanliness and hygiene are emphasized to such an extent that it is considered as an integral part of our Im'an. It is obvious that the smoker's mouth is unclean and emits foul smell. Hence, it is essential to prevent its users from entering Masjid because its terrible odour is even worse than that of onion and garlic, whose users had been expelled from the Masjid on the command of Rasulullah (S).

A Hadith says: [15]

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

A Hadith says: [16]

"La Zararin Wa La Zirarin" - Do not harm anybody nor let anyone harm you.

By smoking not only the nearest and dearest are inconvenienced but all those who come in contact are discomforted. Unfortunately, non-smokers also inhale the smoke emitted by smokers. Is this not a cause of distress? Can those sitting beside a smoker remain safe from the toxicities of the fumes? Rasulullah (S) said: [17]

"Jahannam is the abode of one who harms others on account of his desires."

Tibrani has quoted a Hadith on the authority of Sayyiduna Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari: [18]

"He who causes inconvenience to any Muslim, he caused inconvenience to me and the one who inconveniences me, has inconvenienced Allah and Jahannam is his abode."

Who can deny the fact that Tobacco harmful to health and causes inconvenience to others? Even smokers are well aware of the detrimental effects of this damned thing.

3. Unlimited harms:

It is disclosed in the "New England Journal of Medicine" [19]

Tobacco users have a three times higher risk of paralysis. According to their report, doctors closely monitored seven thousand eight hundred and seventy-two people in person who did not use tobacco. This reduced the risk factor of paralysis by fifty percent. One should know how to control themselves by suppressing one's desires. The seekers of "peace" through tobacco in grief, worry, anxiety, fatigue and illness should instead turn to Allah and seek His help. Qur'an says:

Plan of Shait'an is to sow hatred and enmity amongst you with intoxicants and gambling, and to hamper you from the remembrance of Allah and from Salaat. Will you not give up? [20] (5:91)

This Aayah tells us how it is a detestable act of Shait'an, because intoxicants apart from sowing the seeds of enmity also stop you from the sole purpose of having been sent to the world, namely the remembrance of Allah. Bear in mind that when the term intoxicant is used it also encompasses narcotics, because they to among other things result in the loss of self-control. There are also many Ahadith in regards to intoxicants.

Consumption of Haram while thinking of Najaat does not go hand in hand and the Qur'an guides in this regard: [21]

"You will never find any change in Sunnat Allah (divine strategy)."

Smoking and eating tobacco is tempting death and leads to the burning fire of Jahannam.

The Qur'an says: [22]

"Do not destroy yourselves by your own hands."

Another Aayah says: [23]

"And do not kill yourselves; Allah is indeed Merciful to you."

4. Worsening of sins:

Those who do not consider smoking as a sin are a people of less understanding because if one keeps persisting in a minor sin then the minor sin transforms itself into a major one. Rasulullah (S) makes it clear by stating this: [24]

"There are five grounds for converting a minor sin into a major sin.

- (1) Persistence in sin.*
- (2) Minimization of its gravity.*
- (3) Shamelessness over committing it.*
- (4) Boasting of committing it in the public.*
- (5) If it is committed by a learned".*

Minimizing the gravity of a minor sin is a wicked act and not paying any heed to it is similar to burning straws used to ignite bigger piles of wood. Persistence in extravagance and evil acts and committing sins openly among people with fanfare and enthusiasm is a cause of divine punishment. To wage war against every evil is a Talim of Islam. And to do Jih'ad for this cause is the duty of every Muslim.

5. The Curse of Tobacco:

A smoker emits this poisonous smoke in close vicinity of their companions, wife, children, contaminating the environment. In addition to this, if the smoker has a contagious disease such as tuberculosis or influenza, his exhaled smoke and coughing place the non-smokers at a greater risk of catching the diseases. If somebody suffers from asthma or allergies, they are forced to move away from the smoker's vicinity. A Hadith says: [25]

"Anyone who believes in Allah and the Qiyamah should not hurt his neighbour."

The Qur'an guides: [26]

"Co-operate with one another in righteousness and piety, but not in sinning and transgression. And fear Allah; verily, Allah is severe in punishment."

6. Health problems; a cause of impotency:

Smoking is harmful to the human mind and its ability to reason. A clear demonstration of this is that those addicted to it pass through periods of severe craving, making it hard for them to think, concentrate, solve a problem, or undertake any critical task until they smoke. When one smokes, the muscles slacken and they pass through a brief period of delirium that curtains their thoughts. The digestive system is also affected, causing frequent nervousness and trembling of the hands. One passes through periods of excitability, irritation and insomnia. Thus, instead of being a slave of Allah, the smoker becomes a slave of tobacco. Their grip over their senses and desires ebb away while the Qur'an ordains: [27]

"Allah wants to let you into His mercy, whereas those who follow the desires want you to drift far away (from the right path)."

An Indian expert of Tibb medicines, Hakim Sharif Khan (d. 1807) said: [28]

"Tobacco damages the senses and physical power, and it weakens the mind."

As per the Ayurveda traditional system of health and medicine that originated in South Asia and is still widely practised today, it weakens the body, slows the pace of breathing and impairs digestion.

It also gradually weakens the heart. Hakim Sharif Khan says: [29]

"One of the causes of impotency is smoking. Besides general physical weakness, it leads to a weak nervous system, cerebral debility, and problems of the liver and heart".

According to a report of the Royal College of Physicians, the most significant cause of death among people is cancer. The primary cause of death among women is breast cancer and secondly is lung cancer due to smoking. Smoking also brings menopause in women quite early. Furthermore, the chances of miscarriage are higher in women who smoke.

7. Fatawa (Shariah rulings) declaring the use of tobacco as Har'am.

1). Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani has waged war against tobacco and smoking. He referred the matter of Tobacco to Ayatullah al-Uzma, Mirza Buzurg, Mirza Hasan Sherazi, in Samarra, Iraq. He issued an explicit Fatwa against Tobacco: [30]

"From today the use of Tobacco in the form of Huqqah, Cigar, Cigarettes, (and every other kind) is a war against the Imam al-Zaman."

Ayatullah Mirza Hasan Shirazi did his best to save the Muslim Ummah from the Laanah of Tobacco. He clearly said: [31]

"Tobacco is not only injurious for health, but it is Har'am."

2). Fatwa of Imam of Kabah, Mufti Shaikh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz: [32]

"One who smokes or eats Tobacco commits Har'am because it is included in vices."

3). Fatwa of Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaikh Karamuddin Salafi: [33]

"Tobacco produces intoxication; it is of bad smell and damages senses and intellectual capability. Its use is Har'am proven by the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the research of physicians and common sense."

4). Fatwa of Mufti Shaikh Ahmad Sanhori of Misr: [34]

"(Consumption of) Tobacco is a Har'am practice".

5). Fatwa of Mufti Shaikh Mustafa Hamami of Misr: [35]

"(Consumption of) Tobacco is Har'am".

6). Fatwa of Al Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmad Maliki: [36]

"It is unlawful to perform Salaat behind an Imam who consumes Tobacco. Widespread use of Har'am item does not justify its use or make it Ha'lal according to Shariah. In today's society, profitable interest is very much common; every business is involved in it - does that make interest Halal?"

7). Mufti of the United Arab Emirates, Al Shaikh Saeed bin Khalifah al-Kharusi, issued a Fatwa on Jumuah, the 15th April 1991: [37]

"Smoking is Har'am in Islam."

8). This humble writer follows the Shariah ruling of Sayyidi Abd al-Qadir Hakimuddin (1665-1730), a prince among the Awliya of Allah, from Burhanpur, India. Some three centuries ago, he declared the usage of Tobacco Har'am: [38]

"Tobacco is an injurious plant of bad odour and bitter taste. Eating, chewing, smoking and smelling it is Har'am according to the principles of Shariah. Therefore, its use even as medicine is not Halal because by affecting the brain, it greatly injures the nervous system".

9). It would be unfair to ignore the great efforts of the 52nd Al Da'i al-Fatimi, Dr. Sayyiduna Mohammed Burhanuddin to eliminate the practice of the utilization of Tobacco. Due to his efforts, thousands have stopped its consumption. War with weapons is easy but through the pen is very difficult. It is the wish and will of the friends of Allah that they use every moment to bring people into the fold of Shariah. He further has drawn the attention of Muslims through his sermons in different countries. He said: [39]

"People who are addicted should realize that the place from where we pronounce the name of Allah and His Rasul (S), we place an un-pious thing like Tobacco in it. Smoking leads far away from the path of righteousness. Therefore, drawing attention towards this matter, all those who have been habituated to it should try to leave it as soon as possible. They should seek the help of Allah and pray for strength to abandon this habit".

10). In Hunza, situated in the northern region of Pakistan, smoking is banned in public spaces. On the explicit instruction of their spiritual head, His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan, the Nizari natives of Hunza strictly follow this practice. His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan has stated: [40]

"Do not think that by puffing smoke into the air you are behaving intelligently or in a healthy manner. I strongly advise my spiritual children to stay away from smoking, pipe smoking, cigar smoking, and all other types of smoking. It is in your own interest and betterment of your health...that this is a habit which can cause great unhappiness and great ill health not only to you but also to your families. This is a matter of importance..."

Conclusion:

The absence of tobacco's name in the Qur'an does not create a legal vacuum; rather, Shariah supplies general standards by which harmful substances are judged. Where a substance is demonstrably injurious, impure in effect, wasteful in cost, and a source of discomfort and harm to others, its permissibility cannot be sustained by mere social prevalence or personal habit. The Qur'ani prohibitions on self-harm and extravagance, coupled with the Prophetic injunctions against nuisance and injury-crystallised in the maxim "La Darar wa la Dirar"-collectively establish a coherent basis for prohibition. The paper further underscores that smoking's harms are not confined to the user: passive inhalation, contamination of shared spaces, and diversion of household resources create direct rights-based concerns for families and communities. The surveyed Fatawa, spanning multiple regions and scholarly authorities, consistently treat tobacco as Haram on account of harm, impurity, and the violation of Shariah's protective aims. Accordingly, the most defensible conclusion, both doctrinally and policy-wise is that tobacco consumption conflicts with the Shariah and should be treated as prohibited, with emphasis placed on prevention, cessation, and communal safeguards.

Bibliography:

- [1] *Smoking: A Social Poison*, Muhammad al-Jibaly, by Al Qur'an wal-Sunnah Society of North America
- [2] Qur'an
- [3] Surah 7, al-Ar'af, Ayah 157
- [4] *Hadith, Smoking: A Social Poison*, Muhammad al-Jibaly, by Al Qur'an wal-Sunnah Society of North America
- [5] Quote; Masnad, Ahmad bin Hanbal
- [6] Quote; Durr'e Mukht'ar, vol. 5, Kitab al-Mashrabah, narrated by Umm al-Mumineen Umm'e Salama (ra).
- [7] Hadith
- [8] Mufti Abd al-Rahman Muhaddis Mubarakpuri, "Tahfat al-Ahwazi", vol. 3, pg. 44,
- [9] Hadith
- [10] Qur'an
- [11] Hadith
- [12] Hadith
- [13] Qur'an
- [14] Quote; *Smoking: A Social Poison*, Quote; Muhammad al-Jibaly, by Al Qur'an wal-Sunnah Society of North America
- [15] Hadith
- [16] Hadith
- [17] Hadith
- [18] Hadith
- [19] Hadith
- [20] Qur'an
- [21] Qur'an
- [22] Surah al-Baqarah
- [23] Surah 4-al-Nisa: Ayah 29
- [24] Hadith
- [25] Narrated by al-Bukhari
- [26] Surah al-Maedah-5, Ayah 2
- [27] Qur'an,
- [28] Hakim Sharif Khan, "Bahar'e Shabab"
- [29] The French researchers have reported and published in the famous British Medical Journal 39; Lancet 39; in 1986

- [30] *Ayatullah al-Uzma, Mirza Buzurg, Hasan Shirazi, Samarra, Iraq*
- [31] *ibid*
- [32] *Fatwa of Late Imam of Kabah, Mufti Shaikh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz; Majallat al-Jami'at al-Islamiyah', Madinah, p. 109, March 1971*
- [33] *Fatwa of Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaikh Karamuddin Salafi*
- [34] *Fatwa of Mufti Shaikh Ahmad Sanhori of Misr*
- [35] *Fatwa of Mufti Shaikh Mustafa Hamami of Misr, Nahzat al-Islahiyah*
- [36] *Fatwa of Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmad al-Maliki*
- [37] *Mufti of the United Arab Emirates, Shaikh Saeed bin Khalifah al-Kharusi*
- [38] *"Sirat Sayyidi Abd al-Qadir Hakimuddin", By Sayyidi Luqmanji bin Habibullah, manuscript*
- [39] *Dr. Sayyiduna Mohammed Burhanuddin, the 52nd spiritual head of the Ismaili Tayyibi Dawoodi Bohras*
- [40] *His Highness, Prince Karim Aga Khan, the Late Spiritual Head of the Ismaili Nizaris, Mumbai, India -23 Feb.1969*

Note: Effort has been made to trace all the copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked, we will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity. This document may be used, only with this copyright notice included. Permission is granted to circulate among private individuals and groups, to post on internet forums, and add in not-for-profit publications subject to the following conditions: (1) Material used must be produced faithfully in full, without alteration or omission. (2) The author's subject title must remain unchanged, in whole or in part. (3) Material must be attributed to the author. Contact the author for all other rights, which are reserved. **Copyright © 2026 Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed.**