

alcohol

A thought-provoking interview is related to have taken place sometime during the 1950s when the late Ayatollah Burujardi was alive and residing in Qum. He was one of the maraji (highest Shi'ite religious authority) and had a large number of followers throughout the world. A very impressive grand old man commanding enormous respect. A man of deep piety and knowledge.

By chance Dr. Arshe Tong, a member of U.N. Anti-alcoholism Committee, was on a mission to Iran. He expressed desire for an interview with the Ayatollah Burujardi. This was arranged by a member of Iran Anti-alcohol Committee in Tehran University. Hereunder is given the translation of his report as adapted from the book Sharab wa Qummar:

" At a given appointment, Dr. Arshe Tong and I, ~~we~~ had to remove our shoes before we were ushered inside a small chamber in a simple house where the Ayatollah Burujardi was present. His simple life style free of any pomp or show deeply impressed us. We went forward to greet him and he welcomed us warmly expressing pleasure to meet us. I conveyed to him our thanks for granting us the audience and introduced Dr. Arshe Tong as a Swiss national and representative of the U.N. Anti-alcohol Committee, having travelled a long way to Iran for the purpose of research into the problem of alcoholism. That he was very happy to meet the Ayatollah and wished to ask some questions. The Ayatollah in response expressed his willingness to answer and the following interview then took place:

Dr. Arshe Tong Why is the use of alcohol and consumption of intoxicants prohibited in Islam ?

Ayatollah Man is divinely endowed with power of reasoning due to which he is considered as most superior of all the creatures. The primary aim of man's creation is to pursue the path towards perfection and recognition of Allah. The Prophet of Islam has provided rules for the preservation of this divine endowment of reasoning and proper understanding. One of them is the prohibition of alcoholic drinks ^{ing} which is the cause of slackness and retarding of human ^{mind} ~~power~~ of reasoning. That man essentially needs maintenance of sound reasoning is an accepted fact.

Dr. Arshe Tong It is true that when alcohol consumption ^{reaches} when reaching a level of intoxication, then it is liable to retard man's ^{power} reasoning and understanding. But would you not accept that if it is consumed in small quantity then it does not cause mental slackness or any harm ?

Ayatollah When recognized that it is man's power of reasoning and comprehending that makes him superior over animals and when it is also acknowledged that man is duty-bound to preserve this divine endowment, then it calls for all efforts and steps to be taken to do so. Consequently anything that is liable to slacken and retard this human faculty of reasoning should not be made permissible. It is recognized that the consumption of alcohol in any quantity does affect and harm man's faculties. Besides Almighty Allah is fully aware of human nature of craving for more and more of a thing once he has tasted the pleasure of it. For this reason, if consumption of alcohol even in small measure were to be permitted, the limiting and restricting of its intake would not have been free of dispute.

As such to prevent him and guard man from the evil of alcoholism which is detrimental to his very existence, the consumption whether in large or small quantity is totally banned by Islam.

In reaction to the abovestated arguments by the Ayatollah, Dr. Arshe Tong^{John} declared that for nearly ten years he had been connected with the office of anti-alcoholism in the United Nations discussing the subject with various notable world experts but none could convince him with logic arguments on the need of total ban on alcohol consumption as was done by the Ayatollah Burujardi. His valued views would indeed beeste their efforts in the campaign of anti-alcoholism and truly the best path for this goal was to follow the rules as prescribed by Islam, he added.

Dr. Arshe Tong then took leave from the Ayatollah expressing his deep gratitude on behalf of himself and the U.N. Committee for Anti-alcoholism."

It is a recognized fact that ~~man's~~ human true/progress and welfare is dependent upon sound body and mind. A need of constant power of efficient understanding and reasoning. All those things fraught with risks of casting harmful effects on the path of human advancement towards perfection ought to be restricted. And this is the underlying philosophy behind Islamic des and dents, one of which is the total prohibition of alcoholic consumption.