

Search of Truth, Series-21

# ADDICTION

## A Curse for Mankind



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# ADDICTION

## A Curse for Mankind

Man is the only species on earth who seeks to harm his own self. There is not a single other form of creation that consciously indulges in activities and cultivates habits that lead to its ruin. A major reason for this is the autonomy and free-will that has been granted to man. Animals do not have this liberty to think for themselves, analyse their situation and arrive at a conscious decision as much as man does. They go by their innate nature, and are thus leading their lives in complete submission to their Creator. But man, instead of harnessing his ability to think, reason and benefit himself, chooses to do things that he knows are bad for him, for his family and for the society as a whole, thus spoiling his life and his "after-life" in the bargain. Substance addiction is one of those habits that have plagued mankind since time immemorial.

### Forms of Addiction:

- **Alcoholism:** Addiction to alcohol tops the list of all forms of substance abuse. In various parts of the world, it has become a part of the culture and traditions, festivals and even religious rituals.
- **Drugs:** Drugs like cocaine, marijuana, ganja and the more recent methamphetamine are being used by people to enter into a state of hallucination and a sort of trance.
- **Tobacco:** Tobacco is either chewed directly or smoked in the form of bidis, cigarettes and pipes. Its usage is found across the world and its form of use depends upon the economic and social standing of the consumer.
- **Gutka:** Gutka is a mixture of tobacco, areca

nut (supari), catechu, paraffin wax, slaked lime (chuna) and various flavouring substances that is chewed by thousands of men and women in the Indian subcontinent.

## **What is Substance Addiction?**

Addiction is the dependence of a person on some substance for which the person craves and finds it difficult to live without. All forms of substance addiction can be grouped into two categories- psychological and physiological. It is important to understand the difference between them in order to arrive at a tangible solution.

**a. Psychological dependence:** This means that a person craves for the cigarette or the packet of gutka simply because he likes it. This is the first step of addiction and does not lead to withdrawal symptoms if the consumer is kept away from it. Strong will power and dedication can break this habit very easily.

**b. Physiological dependence:** This is the second stage of addiction wherein the body of the addicted person- and not just his mind- craves for the addictive substance. Our body has certain receptors that, when engaged, allow the nutrients to gain access to the cells. Now if a person is a chronic alcoholic, his receptors get adapted to the alcohol in his blood and function only when they get in contact with the amount of alcohol that they have got adapted to. If such a person were to stop drinking alcohol all of a sudden, his body receptors would cease to work and he would land up with withdrawal symptoms and medical emergencies. Such problems are more pronounced with those addicted to drugs. They are compelled to beg, borrow and steal to obtain these drugs and often resort to illegal and illicit means to do so. Physiological addiction can be cured only by medication and the victim has to usually seek the help of rehabilitation centres to bring him out of it.

## **Why is Addiction Bad For Us?**

Addiction opens up the doors to various economical, social, medical and spiritual problems. We shall discuss some of them here:

### **1. Economical problems:**

It is obvious that alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes and drugs do not come for free. One has to pay money for them. Although a single packet of cigarette or pouch of gutka might not be very expensive, one can just multiply the amount spent on a single such packet with the number of packets consumed every year by that person and the figures would run into tens of thousands of rupees. The money that should have been spent on the family, for children's education and other beneficial pursuits is siphoned off by the local pan-shop. This is a very serious issue if we consider the poorer sections of society, where illiteracy and unemployment join hands with addiction to devastate the finances of the household.

### **2. Social problems:**

There are umpteen cases where families have broken apart because of alcoholism. Domestic violence against the wife and kids in an inebriated state are so common that they are not even reported. A person gets involved in brawls, fights and utters many inappropriate things, the gravity of which he realizes only once he turns sober. Also, the time that is wasted in pubs and bars could have been used in more productive and creative endeavours.

### **3. Medical problems:**

The most common form of cancer in India is oral cancer which results from chewing tobacco and gutka. Smoking leads to serious respiratory diseases and lung cancer. Alcohol also increases the risk of cancer, causes cirrhosis of the liver, gastric problems and several cardiac complications. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy adversely affects the foetus and can

even prove fatal. The most common cause of road accidents is driving under the influence of alcohol. This apart, many psychological problems like anxiety, depression and ADHD are caused because of alcohol and drugs.

#### **4. Spiritual problems:**

A long-term addict loses touch with his spiritual self. His intoxicated state of mind does not allow him to concentrate on the higher meaning of life, keeps him away from prayers and makes him unmindful of God.

#### **Why do people fall for this trap?**

People do not indulge in intoxicants because they are unaware of these consequences. The reasons why a person picks up the cigarette or the glass of wine can vary from the innocuous to the sinister. A few are listed below:

##### **1. Peer pressure:**

Addiction usually starts during teenage years under bad influence. Students in high school and college who are themselves addicts urge their friends to follow suit. The false idea that smoking or chewing gutka is a sign of having grown up and 'being a man' and the fear of being bullied and being teased for not being 'brave enough' has deceived many youngsters to fall into this abyss.

##### **2. Social obligations:**

If smoking or consuming alcohol is part of the community or work culture surrounding a particular person, it becomes easier for him to shed his inhibitions and start getting addicted to seek acceptability among his colleagues and social circles. A deep-rooted inferiority complex and weakness of resolve drive him to blend with his environment and the fear of being 'left out' or being considered a pariah weigh heavily upon him.

##### **3. Stress:**

Many people end up with a glass in their hands ostensibly seeking solace from the mental stress they experience in the workplace. Students are known to take refuge in stimulants during their

exams and are forced to continue with it if they get addicted to the drug.

#### **4. Deception:**

At times, the person is fooled into taking the drug. Fitness-conscious women are given a powder by their 'well-wisher' telling them it would reduce their weight. Teenage boys are duped into taking a tablet that would increase their confidence among girls. Deceived, they take these drugs and indeed find their problems are indeed getting solved because of the inherent effects of these drugs on the central nervous system. But then, before they can realize that it is a trap, they begin craving for that drug. The peddler charges them a fortune for a single dose, which they are compelled to pay to stay alive. However, this increases the dose in the body and eventually leads to their death.

#### **How can it be prevented?**

The steps taken to curb addiction include legislating laws against its production, distribution and sale and making the people aware of its disastrous consequences. Although such laws do exist in many parts of the world to varying extents, the powerful drug mafia and alcohol and tobacco lobbies have always made sure that their product reaches the market and is purchased by the target customer.

#### **The solution provided by Islam:**

Islam tells us that our body and our money do not belong to us. Rather, they are a trust and we would be questioned about them in the divine court of law. We have absolutely no right to cause damage to our bodies and waste our money on harmful things. God has reminded man that although these intoxicants might have some short-term benefit, their hazards are much greater:

They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, "In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit."

[Surah alBaqarah ayat 219]

God has also cautioned man that intoxicants are

the handiworks of Satan and we should protect ourselves from falling into his trap:

O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants... are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist? [Surah alMaidah ayaat 90-91]

Man has been asked to shun these harmful things and opt for good and pure food instead:

O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy. [Surah alBaqarah ayat 168]

God has also taken note of the fact that it is bad company that spoils man. He has thus been advised to surround himself with righteous people:

O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true. [Surah atTaubah ayat 119]

As for those people who claim that they veer towards intoxication so as to comfort themselves, God informs us that true comfort and solace can only be found in the remembrance of God. Instead of leaning towards intoxicants, man should lean towards Him:

(God guides) those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God; for without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction. [Surah arRa'ad ayat 28]

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has called alcohol the mother of all evils. He has said that God has cursed intoxicants, the one who drinks it, the one who pours it for others, the one who sells it, the one who buys it, the one who makes it, the one who it is made for, the one who carries it, the one who it is carried to and the one who consumes the money from its sale."

Prayers are compulsory on every follower of Islam five times a day. However, alcohol is considered to be so abominable in the sight of God that He has warned us not to stand before Him in an inebriated state:

O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated.

[Surah anNisa' ayat 43]

The Prophet ﷺ has also cautioned us that the prayers of a person who consumes alcohol would not be accepted for forty days.

Man's life on earth is just a small part of his never-ending life. Once he dies on earth, he would be raised back on the Day of Judgment and held accountable before God. The Prophet ﷺ has informed us that if an alcoholic dies without repenting in this world, he would be thrown into hellfire and would be punished there for eternity. It is a result of these teachings and admonitions that hardly any person who believes in God and the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ ever consumes alcohol or subjects himself to any other form of intoxication.

### **Conclusion:**

The demerits of alcohol, smoking, tobacco, gutka, drugs and all other forms of intoxicants cannot be overstated. Their hazards are too many and too severe from all aspects to warrant their use. Indulging in them is not only against the chaste nature in which God has created man, but it is also extremely foolish and imprudent of man to damage his career, his family, his health, his integrity, his life and his hereafter by getting addicted to such ignominious things. We should turn towards God and seek His guidance and follow the teachings of our benefactor, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who has been sent as a mercy to all mankind in order to lead a meaningful life in this world and be eligible for the eternal delights of Paradise.



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