

Muhammad's Smoking Ban an Act of Divine Wisdom

By Abdul Basit Naeem

A couple of weeks ago, the world's newspapers carried an interesting little story concerning the San Francisco monastery of the Capuchin (Roman Catholic) Order. The monastery is located near Albano, 15 miles south of Rome, a short distance from the official summer residence of Pope Paul.

A truck too wide to pass through the monastery gate had attempted to force its way in, smashing a part of the wall in the process. The accident resulted in severe cuts and bruises to one of the truck's occupants and fatal injuries to another. The impact also hurled down a number of large packing cases the truck carried and scattered them all around the monastery yard.

Then, a short while after the police had arrived at the scene, the "real news" came to light: The dead man in the accident was no other than Pierino Scall, a notorious Italian racketeer and smuggler. The large packing cases contained contraband merchandise that would have fetched "at least \$64,000 in U.S. money" in Rome's flourishing black market. The valuable commodity was later identified to be "American-made cigarettes." (Tobacco is a government monopoly in Italy and trading in contraband cigarettes is known to be a "large-scale operation" in the country.)

Thorough police investigations further revealed that Scall had used the monastery as a central base of his illegal activities and that he apparently operated with the full approval and "blessings" of at least one of the monks, Friar Corsi. The police eventually arrested Friar Corsi and hauled him off to jail.

'Evil Substance'

In narrating this episode, it is not by any means my intention to suggest that the Capuchin Monk Corsi, by virtue of his involvement in Scall's illegal doings, lacked the true characteristics of a "man of God." I do imply, however, that the "root cause" of it all—tobacco—is obviously and undeniably an evil substance.

That is why the Honorable Elijah Muhammad strictly forbids its use "in any form, shape or manner" by his followers.

In fact, now that numerous U.S. scientific experts on this subject have also established "beyond the shadow of a doubt" that smoking often causes cancer and thus constitutes a major hazard to health, Messenger Muhammad's edict further proves the divine nature of

his wisdom. His injunction against smoking is no less "serious, strict and final" than against other elements "considered by A L L A H (God) Himself as injurious and harmful to our body as well as mind, such as hog meat, alcoholic beverages and habit-forming drugs..."

Tobacco in the East

In contrast to the "Nation of Islam in North America," the Muslim peoples of the East (with the solitary exception of Saudi Arabia) are not quite so strict on the question of tobacco consumption. From Africa's western shores to the Archipelago of Indonesia, smoking today comprises a common affliction of millions of our people, especially in the large urban centers.

Under influence of "Madison Avenue-type" (high-pressure) advertising, countless Asians and Africans in recent years, have taken to this senseless pastime. True, a vast majority of them—especially in the Middle and Near East—do not smoke cigarettes but "narghile" or "hukkah" (a water-based outfit that "purifies" or fil-

ters the smoke before it is inhaled, thus reducing its nicotine content). I, for one, still do not see where the habit can be justified. Even apart from our religious convictions, I just do not see where there is any good in smoking.

Furthermore, isn't smoking, in addition to being a wasteful expenditure and a potential menace to our health, also a major fire hazard? Doesn't it cause countless incidents of fire (in the home, factories, places of business, etc.) every year? It is thus indirectly responsible for an incalculable loss of life and property as well.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad's rigid and uncompromising stand on this subject is but one of many reasons why I sincerely admire the Muslim leader and, in my own humble and insignificant manner, endeavor to assist him in his great work among the "most oppressed of Allah's people" (the so-called "Negroes"). As for my own people in the East, I can only hope that someday they will turn their hearts to the Messenger and seek to benefit from his unique wisdom.

Toll of Smoking Habit: 1 Dead Every 4 Minutes

"Every four minutes someone in the United States dies prematurely because of his cigaret smoking. This is the real American tragedy because most of these deaths could have been prevented."

The statement was made by U.S. Surgeon General Luther L. Terry of the Public Health Service. Dr. Terry addressed the 61st annual meeting of the National Tuberculosis Association held recently in Chicago.

Discussing the anti-smoking activities of the Federal government, Dr. Terry said the PHS estimated that at least 125,000 premature deaths — and perhaps as many as 300,000 are due to that:

"Additionally, these studies indicate that 240,000 men will succumb prematurely from diseases associated with cigaret smoking," said Dr. Terry.

Of these excessive deaths, Dr. Terry indicated that 138,000 would be caused by "diseases clearly and definitely associated with smoking, such as cancer of the lung, larynx, oral cavity, esophagus and bladder; and bronchitis, emphysema and coronary heart disease."

Adding another link in the

chain of evidence highlighting smoking hazards, Dr. Terry declared that "another 102,000 excess, or premature, deaths will result from diseases where the relationship to cigaret smoking, while not obvious, is indicated."

The surgeon general pointed out that the total of 240,000 premature deaths applies only to men, since data collected for women are inadequate to make precise estimates. Where available, however, the death ratios of women appear somewhat lower than those for men.

Citing the "apathy of human beings to accept and act on new information" and such "major obstacles" as the pressure of cigaret advertising and continuing efforts to discredit the evidence or confuse the relationship between cigarets and disease, Dr. Terry noted,



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