

## Ruling On Buying And Selling Insects Like Mealworms/Larvae

Ref: IEC.0045

Date:12-08-2023

### Question:

What do Islamic scholars and jurists say about the issue that there is an insect called the Darkling beetle, which develops in wheat bran due to moisture and lays eggs there? The larvae that emerge from these eggs are called mealworms. Mealworms are used as food for birds and fish. Additionally, because of their vitamins, bodybuilders also consume them to enhance their physical growth. As this business requires minimal investment, it is conducted on a large scale both in our country and internationally. I want answers of following questions regarding this business:

1. Is it permissible to trade mealworms as food for birds and fish?
2. Is it permissible to sell these insects to those bodybuilders who buy them for consumption?

### Answer:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الجواب بعون الملك الوهاب اللهم هداية الحق والصواب

Selling mealworms for use as food for birds and fish is permissible. However, it is impermissible to sell them to bodybuilders if one knows that they will consume these insects or their powder.

Islamic law requires that the item being sold must be from the category of Maal (wealth) and that too Mutaqawwim. It is not necessary for an item to be maal to be Halal for human consumption as well i.e. for something to qualify as Maal, it is sufficient that people are inclined towards it, they store it and have a desire to give and take it. As far the definition of Mutaqawwim (valuable) is concerned, it means that Shari'ah allows deriving benefit from it and it can be utilized in one way or other in a permissible way for humans or animals for example trade of mules and donkeys. Although they are not consumed by humans, they are used for carrying loads. Same is the case of trade of a guard dog; although it is not consumed, it can be used for protection. Islamic Jurists have clearly stated the permissibility of trading silkworms because they are used in the textile industry.

In the past, there use to be some other insects as well which were used for lawful purposes, such as dyeing clothes, and their trade was deemed permissible by jurists. So, according to the definition of Mutaqawwim as mentioned by Muslim Jurists, mealworms are also Mutaqawwim because they are stored and used for lawful purposes, such as bird and fish feed. Therefore, trading them in this context is permissible.

However, selling these mealworms to bodybuilders for consumption will remain impermissible because they are insects and consumption of insects is impermissible and sin.

Hence, selling them to bodybuilders with the knowledge that they will eat them or their powder, would be aiding in sin, which is impermissible.

**Multiple Juziyat (quotations) regarding mealworms being Maal Mutaqawwim and their trade is permissible for bird and fish feed:**

Allama Shami (رحمه الله تعالى) states under the conditions of sale:

“كونه موجودا مالا متقوما”

Translation: It is from the conditions of a sale that the subject of the sale must exist and must be from the category of Maal (Wealth) and that too Mutaqawwim.

(Radd-ul-Muhtar, Vol. 4, p. 505, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut)

He further explains:

“والمال ما من شأنه أن يدخل لانتفاع وقت الحاجة”

Translation: As far the definition of Maal (Wealth) is concerned, it is that which people tend to save to benefit from in times of need.

(Radd-ul-Muhtar, Vol. 4, p. 502, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut)

Allama Shami (رحمه الله تعالى) also writes about the meaning of Mutaqawwim (المتقوم):

“المتقوم هو المال المباح الانتفاع به شرعا”

Translation: Mutaqawwim is a Maal from which deriving benefit is permissible in Shari'ah.

(Radd-ul -Muhtar, Vol. 5, p. 50, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut)

Thus, mealworms are Maal and Mutaqawwim because a

thing enters into the category of Al-Maal Al-Mutaqawwim when people start trading that for lawful uses.

The book Radd-ul -Muhtar- while declaring the dyeing insect (Cochineal/Qirmiz) as Al-Maal Al-Mutaqawwim because it was used in lawful trades like dyeing clothes- mentions:

أنها من أعرال أموال اليوم ويصدق عليها تعريف المال المتقوم ويحتاج إليها الناس كثيرافي الصباغ وغيره

translation: These insects are now considered among the finest properties and fulfill the definition of maal mutaqawwam. People need them frequently for dyeing and other purposes.

(Radd-ul-Muhtar, vol. 5, p. 51, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut)

Feeding birds and fish is also a Halal use, and trade is permissible when its benefits are Halal. It is stated in Al-Muheet-ul-Burhani:

”ومحليته يعتمد جواز الانتفاع بها-- والحاصل: أن جواز البيع يدور مع حل الانتفاع-“

Translation: Something can become a subject of a sale only when benefiting from it is permissible. In nutshell, permissibility of trade is based on the lawfulness of its use.

(Al-Muhit-ul-Burhani fil-Fiqhin-Nu'mani, vol. 6, p. 347,  
Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut)

In Al-Ikhtiyar li-Ta'leel al-Mukhtar and Al-Durr al-Mukhtar Sharh Tanweer al-Absar, it is stated:

And in the poetic text of Al-Ikhtiyar:

”ويجوز بيع العلق لحاجة الناس إليه“

Translation: The sale of leeches is permissible due to people's need for them.

(Al-Ikhtiyar li-Ta'leel-il-Mukhtar, Volume 2,  
Page 10, Matba'ah Al-Halabi, Cairo)

In Radd-ul-Muhtar, it is stated:

أقول: العلق في زماننا يحتاج إليه للتداوي بمصه الدم، وحيث كان متمولا لمجرد ذلك دل على جواز بيع دودة القرمز فإن تمولها الآن أعظم إذ هي من أعز الأموال، ويباع منها في كل سنة قناطر بثمان عظيم--- وهو أولى من دود القز وبيضه فإنه ينتفع به في الحال ودود القز في المال

Translation: I say: In our time, leeches are needed for medical purposes to suck blood. When this minimal utility sufficed to consider them as wealth, it indicates the permissibility of selling cochineal insects, as their value nowadays is even greater, being among the most precious commodities. A quintal (a unit of measurement) of these insects is sold annually for a great price... Cochineal insects are superior to silkworms and their eggs because they provide immediate benefit, whereas silkworms yield benefit in the future.

(Radd-ul-Muhtar, Volume 5, Page 68,  
Dar al-Fikr, Beirut)

In Bahar-e-Shariat, it is stated:

”ریشم کے کیڑے اور ان کے انڈوں کی بیج جائز ہے۔“

Translation: The sale of silkworms and their eggs is permissible.

(Bahar-e-Shariat, Volume 2, Page 706,  
Published by Maktaba-tul-Madina, Karachi)

Also in Bahar-e-Shariat, it is stated:

”مال وہ چیز ہے جس کی طرف طبیعت کا میلان ہو، جس کو دیا لیا جاتا ہو، جس سے دوسروں کو روکتے ہوں، جسے وقت ضرورت کے لیے جمع رکھتے ہوں۔“



Translation: Wealth is that towards which human nature inclines, which is exchanged, from which others are kept away, and which is stored for times of need.

(Bahar-e-Shariat, Volume 2, Page 696,  
Published by Maktaba-tul-Madina, Karachi)

### **Juziyat (quotations) on the impermissibility of Selling Mealworms to Bodybuilders for Consumption:**

Eating insects is not halal. In Durr-ul-Mukhtar, it is stated:

“لا يحل -- الحشرات”

Translation: It is not permissible to eat insects.

(Radd-ul-Muhtar, vol. 6, p. 304, Dar-ul-Fikr, Beirut)

Selling mealworms to bodybuilders for consumption would fall under aiding in sin, which is forbidden. Jurists have even prohibited selling weapons to rebels because of their misuse. It is stated in Takmila-Tul-Bahrir-Raiq Sharah Kanz-id-dqaiq:

”بخلاف بيع السلاح من أهل الفتنة لأن المعصية تقوم بعينه فيكون إعانة لهم وتسببا وقد نهينا عن التعاون على العدوان والمعصية.“

Translation: Selling weapons to rebels is not permissible because sin is attached to their very use, therefore anyone selling them weapons is considered a means of assistance and rebellion for them which is contrary to Islamic teaching as we are prohibited to assist in transgression and sin.

(Takmila-Tul-Bahrir-Raiq, vol. 8, p. 230,  
Dar al-Kitab al-Islami)

Ala Hazrat Imam-e-Ahle-Sunnat Molana Ash-Sha Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (رحمة الله عليه) writes in Fatawa Razawiyya:

وگر برائے معصیت میخوابد روانیست قال تعالی ولا تعاونوا علی الاثم والعدوان

Translation: If the sale is made for committing sin, it is not permissible, as Allah says, 'Do not help each other in sinning and transgression.

(Fatawa Razawiyya, vol. 17, p. 170,  
Raza Foundation, Lahore)

He further states:

”افیون نشہ کی حد تک کھانا حرام ہے اور اسے بیرونی علاج مثلاً ضماد و طلاء میں استعمال کرنا یا خوردنی معجونوں میں اتنا قلیل حصہ داخل کرنا کہ روز کی قدر شربت نشہ کی حد تک نہ پہنچے تو جائز ہے اور جب وہ معصیت کے لئے متعین نہیں تو اس کے بیچے میں حرج نہیں مگر اس کے ہاتھ جس کی نسبت معلوم ہو کہ نشہ کی غرض سے کھانے یا پینے کو لیتا ہے، لان المعصية تقوم بعينها فکان کبیع السلاح من اهل الفتنة۔ اس لئے کہ اس صورت میں گناہ عین شے کے ساتھ قائم ہے، لہذا یہ فتنہ پروروں کو ہتھیار بیچنے کی مانند ہو گیا۔“

Translation: Consuming opium is haram when the consumed amount reaches to the extent of intoxication but applying it as an ointment or coating on the skin for treatment or adding a very small amount of it in eatable pastes is permissible provided the daily dosage does not reach to the extent of intoxication. So, when it is not solely for sinful purposes, it is permissible to sell it to anybody except a person about whom one knows that buys only for intoxication purposes because in this case sinning is directly attached with it and selling in this case will be equal to selling arms to people of Fitnah (i.e. those who create turmoil in society)

(Fatawa Razawiyya, Vol. 23, Page 574,  
Raza Foundation, Lahore)

In Bahar-e-Shariat, it is stated:

”اسی طرح افیون وغیرہ جس کا کھانا ناجائز ہے، ایسوں کے ہاتھ فروخت کرنا جو کھاتے ہوں ناجائز ہے کہ اس

میں گناہ پر اعانت ہے۔“

Translation: Similarly, selling any item whose consumption is impermissible like opium etc. to those who consume that item is impermissible as it is assistance in sin.

(Bahar-e-Shariat, Volume 3, Page 481,  
Published by Maktaba-tul-Madina, Karachi)

واللہ اعلم عزوجل ورسولہ اعلم صلی اللہ تعالیٰ علیہ وآلہ وسلم

Written by

Abu Muhammad Mufti Ali Asghar Attari Madani

24th Muharram-ul-Haram 1445 / 12th August 2023

Translated By Maulana Abdul Wajid Madani

