

Candies made of gelatine and cheese containing rennet

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question: What is the ruling on candies imported from England and other European countries, taking into consideration that the candies in question contain gelatine, the substance that exists in the meat and bones of swine and cows? And what is the ruling on cheese containing rennet: a substance extracted from the bellies of young goats and lambs? Note that people in these countries, as many other countries, do not generally slaughter animals.

Shaykh Aboo `Abd-al-Mu`iz `Alee Farkous al-Qoobee (May Allaah the Most High preserve him): All praise is due to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing be upon whom Allaah sent as a mercy to the Worlds, upon his Family, his Companions and his Brothers till the Day of Resurrection.

There is no objection over the permissibility of imported candies and cheese containing gelatine and rennet if they are extracted from animals whose meat is eatable (halaal) or from other permissible substances belonging to slaughtered animals of the people of the Scripture that are a part of their practices and industry. It is pure as Allaah (*Mighty and Majestic is He*) said:

﴿وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَلْلٌ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حَلْلٌ لَهُمْ﴾

The meaning of the verse:

“The food of the people of the scripture (Jews and Christians) is lawful to you and yours is lawful to them” [Al-Maa'idah (The Table Spread With Food): 5]

But if candies and other processed foods that are mixed with gelatine extracted from forbidden animals (not eatable) because of their impurity, their evilness and damage [that they cause] like the skin and bones of the swine and other forbidden animals and substances; in such a case, it is religiously not permissible to consume, sell, use in food or buy these candies and processed foods as many religious texts state the prohibition of the swine, dead animals and all other impurities. It is well known according to the Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh) that **“Prohibition is related to impurity and damage.”**

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If these consumables are mixed with gelatine in a way that makes them doubtful and ambiguous, it will be compulsory to abandon these foods, prevailing the prohibition side and acting according to the precaution stated by the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him and his family*) when He says: “Whosoever avoids doubtful matters; he preserves his religion and honour. And whosoever falls into doubtful matters; he certainly falls into that which is unlawful.”¹

The Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him and his family*) said: “**Let what makes you doubt for what makes you not doubt.**”²

As for cheese containing rennet extracted from young goat or lamb’s bellies whose meat is eatable (halaal), there is no objection over its permissibility since they have been slaughtered according to the Islamic method.

There could be a problem if these animals were dead or not slaughtered according to the Islamic method, as it is done in most Western Europe countries among people of the Scripture, or if the animals were slaughtered by the Zoroastrians. This has caused a divergence among the scholars over the permissibility or prohibition.

This divergence is due to their disagreement whether the milk and rennet of the dead animal are pure or impure. Those who say they are impure judged that everything made of this rennet is prohibited: be it cheese or candies, according to the doctrine of Maalik and Ash-Shaafi’ee and one of two narrations in the doctrine of Ahmad. Those who say they are pure judged that they are permissible, which goes along with the doctrine of Aboo Haneefah³ and the other narration according to the doctrine of Imaam Ahmad which was approved by Ibn Taymeeyah⁴ - (*May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him*) - when he said:

“The most valid [opinion] is that their- i.e. the Mazdeans (Majoos) - cheese is permissible. In addition, rennet and milk of the dead animal are pure”⁵. Of the two views, this is the most valid as it goes along with what the Companions of the Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allaah*

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree, chapter of “Faith”, concerning the merit of the one who preserves his religion (1/19) and Muslim in “Sharecropping” (2/750) (hadeeth 1599), according to the hadeeth reported by An-Nu'maan Ibn Basheer (May Allaah the Most High be pleased with them).

² Reported by At-Tirmidhee, chapter of “The description of the Day of Resurrection, softening the hearts and piety” (hadeeth 2517), by An-Nasaa'ee, chapter of “Drinks”, about inciting to abandon doubtful matters (hadeeth 5711) and Ahmad in his “Musnad” (1/200), according to the hadeeth reported by Al-Hassan Ibn `Ali (May Allaah the Most High be pleased with them). This hadeeth is judged authentic by Ahmad Shaakir in his recension of “Musnad Ahmad” (3/169), Al-Albaanee in “Al-Irwaa” (1/44) and Al-Waadi'ee in “As-Saheeh Al-Musnad” (hadeeth 318).

³ Solid and bloodless parts of a dead animal like horns, teeth, the hoof and feet as well as solid rennet are pure according the Ahnaaf (followers of Hanafee doctrine) because these parts are not subject to death since life doesn't exist in them. The term “dead” denotes the dead parts from the animal. So, it is agreed upon the purity of solid rennet. Whereas, liquid rennet and milk in the dead animal's teat are considered pure. See: “Al-Badaa'ee” (1/63).

⁴ See: “Majmoo Al-Fataawa” by Ibn Taymeeyah (21/60).

⁵ See: “Majmoo` Al-Fataawa” by Ibn Taymeeyah (21/103).

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be upon him and his family) did when they conquered the Iraqi land: they ate the Mazdeans' cheese and this was widely spread among them without any repudiation.

Besides, milk and rennet cannot be subject to death. The ruling on their impurity -according to the supporters of this view- is only due to the fact that they are extracted from a dead animal which is an impure container. Nevertheless, we cannot assume that a liquid becomes impure when it comes into contact with impurity because of the generality of Abee Sa'eed Al-Khudree's hadeeth in which the Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him and his family*) said: **"Water is pure, nothing can make it impure"**⁶. Accordingly, all the liquids have the same ruling as water, be it a small or a large quantity of liquids. On this basis is founded the ruling of selling candies and cheese which is: authorisation and permissibility. Thus, if we do not know that they contain any forbidden substance such as the swine's fat or any part of a dead animal -if this part is subject to life-. If they contain any of these substances then they are definitely forbidden if the original substances have not changed completely.

If this basis has been established in both questions; the ruling on each particular case depends on whether or not the prohibition aspect is present in each question.

The perfect knowledge belongs to Allaah. Our last prayer is all praise is due to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing be upon our Prophet, his Family, his Companions and Brothers till the Day of Resurrection.

Algiers, Rabee` Ath-Thaane 13th, 1431 H

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⁶ Reported by Aboo Daawood, chapter of "The purification" concerning what is reported about Budaa'a's well (hadeeth 66), by At-Tirmidhee, chapter of "Purification", concerning what is reported about the fact that nothing can make water impure (hadeeth 66) and by Ahmad in his "Musnad" (3/13,14) according to Aboo Sa'eed Al-Khudree. Considering its ways and witnesses, this hadeeth is judged authentic. See: "At-talkhees Al-Habeer" by Ibn Hajar (1/13, 14) and "Irwaa' Al-Ghaleel" by Al-Albaanee (1/45).