

Hayaa

Social problems in varying degrees existed throughout the ages. Even in the early centuries of Islamic history one would find the odd case of a person being punished for drinking or the rare incident of somebody confessing to having committed adultery. Nevertheless, what is absolutely clear is that the society was overwhelmingly free of evils and obscenity. The respect and honour of every man and woman was upheld and chastity and purity was the order of the day.

Very much to the contrary, we are beset by a host of social problems that are tearing apart the fabric of society. While the ever-increasing problems are a result of a combination of various factors, the majority can be traced down to one aspect — the loss of *hayaa*. In some families and individuals the levels of *hayaa* may have decreased to a considerable extent compared to what it was a decade or two ago. In many other instances it appears that *hayaa* has almost completely disintegrated. Thus the problems that have engulfed our society continue to escalate.

WHAT IS HAYAA?

What then is this *hayaa* which is so vitally important? *Hayaa* could be interpreted as “morality,” “modesty” or “shyness.” It is a natural trait which is part of human nature. It serves to restrain a person from all indecent and immoral acts. In fact, in the terminology of the *Shariah* it is used in a much wider sense. It represents a feeling that is intolerant of all sin and makes a person react with disgust when confronted with the prospect of sinning.

However, if one continuously defies the dictates of *hayaa* and indulges in wrongful actions, this natural quality gradually withers away and eventually may even be totally lost. This is the point where a human being stoops to the level that the *Qur'an* describes in the words: “... *they are nothing but like animals, nay they are worse!*” (S7:V179).

The fundamental importance of *hayaa* in *Deen* can be clearly gauged from the *Ahadith* in this regard. *Hazrath Zaid bin Talha (R.A.)* reports that *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* said: “*Every creed has a distinguishing quality, and the distinctive quality of Islam is modesty*” (*Ibn Majah*). *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* has also declared *hayaa* as a branch of *Imaan*. In yet another *Hadith* it is reported that *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* said: “*Hayaa is a part of Imaan and Imaan leads to Jannah (paradise). But obscenity stems from the hardness of the heart and the hardness of the heart leads to Hell*” (*Tirmizi*). Furthermore, *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* has warned: “*Hayaa and Imaan exist together. When one of them is removed, the other is also removed*” (*Baihaqi*).

INVITING ALLAH TA'ALA'S WRATH

Thus the emphasis that *Deen* has laid on this vitally important natural trait is self-evident. The reason for such great emphasis is that when *hayaa* will be lost, the door is flung open for the departure of all *Imaani* values. Immorality then becomes the norm and the type of social problems that we are experiencing becomes the order of the day. Let alone social problems, abandoning *hayaa* is the recipe to draw down the wrath of *Allah Ta'ala*. *Hazrath Abdullah bin Abbas (R.A.)* reports that *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* said: “When *zina (illicit activity)* and the indulgence in interest become rife in a community, then they have drawn down the wrath of *Allah Ta'ala* upon themselves” (*Haakim*). When *Sayyidina Abu Bakr (R.A.)* was appointed as the *Khalifa*, he delivered a *khutba* wherein he also said: “... and immorality does not spread in a nation but that *Allah Ta'ala* engulfs them with calamities” (*Hayatus Sahaaba*). Thus the diagnosis of the problems that are engulfing us has already been made by *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)*. To protect ourselves and the *Ummah*, we will have to once again adopt *hayaa* in its true spirit.

DECAY IN SOCIETY

In order to get a glimpse of the decay in society due to the loss of *hayaa*, consider for a moment the following stark realities:

- * Social organisations are receiving an ever-increasing number of complaints from husbands and wives about the infidelity of their spouse.
- * Illicit activity among *Muslim* teens has become rife. Many incidents of intimate contact between school children on the school premises have also come to light. In some cases the level of obscenity was utterly mind-boggling. A pupil caught out even attempted to shrug-off the matter by saying that she was not the only one involved in such illicit liaisons. Rather it was a very common thing!!
- * Reports of youth and adults becoming addicted to porn are on the increase.
- * The increasingly immodest style of dressing of *Muslim* men — and especially women. The type of garments that many a grandmother had regarded as unimaginable and utterly disgraceful for her to wear is being worn by her granddaughter without a second thought. *Muslim* girls don figure-hugging garments that clearly reveal the outline of the body and shamelessly appear in front of their fathers, brothers, sons and all and sundry. The fathers and brothers also shamelessly accept it as O.K.!
- * Open and casual intermingling between non-mahrams in offices, the work place, classrooms, at family functions, etc. Such intermingling very often leads to illicit relations.

As already mentioned, this is just a slight glimpse into the prevailing conditions. To those who have abandoned *hayaa* entirely, the above aspects, or at least some of them, will be regarded as nothing to even frown upon. This is a sure sign of the disintegration of *hayaa*.

SPARK OF IMAAN

Any person with a spark of *Imaan* will surely be concerned about reversing the current state of affairs — in his home, community, and the entire *Ummah*. Such a person would want to know whether anything can be done to save each individual, family and the entire *Ummah* from slipping into the abyss of immorality? Indeed many things can be done — on a personal and collective level.

CANCEROUS TUMOUR

Firstly, cut off the avenues that propagate and spread immorality. When a person is suffering from a cancerous tumour, the first step is to operate and remove the tumour. The medication and other treatment will then hopefully restore the health. Otherwise the cancer will overwhelm the body. There are many avenues in our society that propagate immorality and that have significantly contributed to the destruction of *hayaa*. Some of the most significant in this regard are the following:

* **Television:** The television, together with the other members of its evil family (videos, satellite channels, DVD's, etc) have dished out more filth than can be imagined and have made many present ten-year-olds more aware of such intimate aspects which their parents did not know until they were almost twice that age. What else can be expected if the child is going to be continuously exposed to lurid scenes. Mr. Baehr, the ex-director of The Television Centre at City University of New York, states: "*By the time he's 17, the average child sees 200 000 to 400 000 sex acts on T.V.*" What *hayaa* can remain when mother, son, father and daughter all jointly watch the filth and obscenity spewed onto the screen??

CENSOR

* **Newspapers:** Many articles and pictures in the general newspapers would have been regarded as shameless and obscene even by most of the Western world a few decades ago. To view, read or even bring into the home such obscenity can only result in the destruction of *hayaa*. It will be a great favour to oneself and one's family if the subscription of immorality is cancelled. One will only miss the propaganda and obscenity and a fraction of news which will reach one in any case. If for any rare need the newspaper has to be brought into the home — censor it before it comes in. Rip off the filth and obscenity before it rips off the *hayaa* of the family. The same applies to magazines, novels and other such material. Under the pretext of recipes, patterns and other "skills" a host of *hayaa* destroying pictures and articles are thrust onto the reader. These magazines, etc. should be forsaken entirely and replaced with good Islamic literature.

* The internet, the use of the cell phone especially by the youth and other technology have to be carefully controlled if its use is at all necessary.

* The “going-out” and “eating-out” culture has to be changed. Often even an outing to merely “eat ice-cream” becomes an outing of involvement in *fitna*. Due to the things that happen at many such places, even the environment is charged with shamelessness. It is bound to affect the person going there.

Secondly, the true spirit of *Imaan* has to be rejuvenated in our lives. An effort has to be made on strengthening one’s *Imaan* and purifying one’s *nafs* (spiritual inner-self). For this, the company of the pious is necessary. The correct environments and pious company will boost our *Imaan* and *hayaa*.

Thirdly, the home environment must be made conducive to *Deen*. *Salaah*, recitation of *Qur’an*, *zikr* and learning and teaching of *Deen* must become the normal daily feature of every home.

In short, we will have to adopt the lifestyle of the *Qur’an Shareef* and *Sunnah* in its true spirit in order to be successful in this world and the Hereafter.