

Preserving Spiritual Wellness

One of the major challenges facing Muslims today is the ability to maintain an Islamic identity and spiritual wellbeing in an environment given to merry-making, frivolity, and amusement. This challenge becomes even greater during festive seasons, such as the period that has just passed. It is inevitable that we Muslims find ourselves sucked into this vortex of amusement and entertainment. This is almost like a whirlwind that spins through our environment, snapping up all who happen to be in its path. In such a harsh spiritual environment, we run the risk of serious damage to our iemaan.

ISLAM PERMITS ENJOYMENT

Islam allows a certain degree of play, amusement, and celebration. Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam joked with his wives and the Sahaaba; he laughed (without noise) at their humour; he allowed Hazrat Aeysha radhiyallahu anhaa) to watch (from behind a screen) a group of Abyssinians display their skills in spearfighting; he raced with his wives; he expressed emotions of joy when the occasion demanded, such as his joyous outburst when Hazrat Ja'far (radhiyallahu anhu) returned from Abyssinia, he spurred on one team that was challenging another in archery. So within limits our Shariah permits enjoyment and celebration. The problem is that in the festivities of the West there are no holds barred. These merry-makers know no limits, since these poor individuals have no guidance nor any guides in life. Their celebration is a carefree, futile indulgence punctuated by wine, music, dancing, and fornication.

ADVICE OF HAZRAT MASEEHUL-UMMAT

To remain steadfast on Deen is one of the greater challenges we Muslims face. Hazrat Moulana Maseehullah (rahmatullahi alayhi), arguably the Imam of Tasowwuf of this century, gave some precious advice on how to combat the fitnah and evil around us. In keeping with his genius, the great Imam says that no Muslim should be awed and overwhelmed by the environment or the society he lives in. Instead of being affected by the environs, the Mu'min (Believer) himself should influence the environment. We as Muslims, through our deeds, should effect change in our surroundings. Indeed, Hazrat advocates the positive approach that a Mu'min should adopt. In support of his advice, Hazrat quotes the following verse from the Quran-e-Kareem: O Believers! Discipline yourselves! Those who are gone astray cannot harm you when you have attained guidance. (Surah Maaida)

The Shaikh emphasises the importance of self-discipline and moral rectitude as a safeguard against surrounding evils, and a means of asserting one's morality in an immoral atmosphere. This requires much effort and dedication. We offer some rules from the Holy Quran and Hadith on Nabi Muhammad sallallahu alaihi wa sallam in this regard. Insha Allah, with commitment and sincerity from our side, practicing on these rules will ensure our spiritual well-being amidst all the fitnah and wrong-doing.

RULE 1

Associate with pious company. The Quran-e-Kareem states: O Believers! Fear Allah and be with the truthful ones. (Surah Taubah). The hadith of Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam states: "Solitude is better than an evil companion, and a Saalih (pious) companion is better than solitude." Rather than being alone or in evil company, seek out a pious person or persons, and associate with them. Joining the company of such people, will safeguard one's iemaan amidst the mayhem of kufr.

RULE 2:

Our Rasool sallallahu alaihi wa sallam said: "Cling fast to the Muslim jamaat and their Imam." It was said: "O Messenger of Allah! If the Muslims don't have a jamaat and an Imam, then what do we do?" Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam replied: "Then break away from all those groups (and adopt solitude). This hadith provides two very significant guidelines. One, that joining the mainstream Muslim jamaat in one's locality, and their Imam is a buffer against the forces of sin and vice. Another hadith states that the wolf of man, Shaytaan attacks the one who drifts away from the big flock. Where would one find the main jamaat of Muslims and their Imam? The obvious answer is the Masjid. Hence, it can safely be said that the Masjid of your locality, provided it has an Imam and a regular jamaat, form the basis of one's protection against environmental sin. Frequenting the masjid and participating in its programs will go a long way in preserving our Islamic morality and identity. Our young friends should take particular note of this. It has been observed that those who tend to break away from the masaajid, or attend there irregularly, are easily influenced and affected by spiritually diverse surroundings. Remember, the sheep that stays aloof from the rest of the flock shall be whisked away by the bad wolf (shaytaan). It is, therefore, vital for our spiritual or roohani survival that we align ourselves with the general body of Muslims and their Imam. The second point highlighted by this hadith is that in the absence of a jamaat and Imam, a Muslim is required to distance himself from all groups that are not aligned to mainstream Islam and to adopt solitude. In such a situation, solitude is definitely the formula for lemaani survival.

RULE 3

Once Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam mentioned a few of the Fitnahs (trials and evils) that are to befall this Ummat. He spoke of fitnahs that would creep across the Ummat like the darkest hour of the night. The Companions asked: "When that happens, what do you instruct us to do?" Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam replied: "Become glued to the inside of your homes." While this is also a form of solitude, it extols the importance of remaining indoors and not venturing towards avenues of fitnah.

RULE 4

The Holy Quran praises the Believers in the following terms: And they are people who do not attend (gatherings of) falsehood, and when they pass by (places of futility) they do so with dignity. (Surah Furqaan) "Falsehood" in this verse refers to music and dancing, whilst "futility" means any act or statement that has no valid worldly benefit nor any benefit to Deen. Music and dancing are found everywhere during festive seasons, and so are futile indulgences like circuses, play-lands, firework displays, to mention a few. If Almighty

Allah desired that we abstain from such areas, then the spiritual harm therein is unquestionable. From the above verse we also learn that avoiding gatherings of sin and vice are crucial for attainment of Proximity with Allah Ta'ala.

RULE 5

Hazrat Uqbah bin Aamir asked the Messenger of Allah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam for a means of salvation: He responded: "Control your tongue, let your home be spacious for you, and cry over your sins" "The home being spacious" is an idiom used to denote man's affinity for the home. People who like to be on the streets and in public places, appear not to be comfortable inside their homes. However, the hadith clearly tells us that the inside of the home during times of fitnah is better than the outside. This was also referred to under rule number 3. This rule (5) emphasizes guarding the tongue and crying over one's sins, which is actually repentance. In another narration it appears that during times of fitnah the lash of the tongue will be equivalent to the strike of a sword. It is, therefore, essential that we use the tongue very carefully. FITNAH OR FUN?

People speak of "innocent fun", and our youth in particular are given to this type of mentality. "So what's wrong if we indulge in a bit of fun"; "We are just letting off some steam"; "I am letting my hair down"; are some of the statements being bandied around to justify our participation in the partying times of the kuffar. Sadly, though, the biggest "let down" during these periods is damage to our iemaan. Sometimes this damage is irreparable. The great Hazrat Umar radhiallahu anhu says that he faced enemies as huge as mountains, but never feared them. His greatest fear, he says, is the mountain of sin. We have heard of several youths who became hooked onto drugs, sex, and alcohol during moments of holidaying and enjoyment. Is this what we term "innocent fun"? In most cases, addiction comes on through bad company. The above three vices (drugs, sex and alcohol) which are integrally linked, form the axis of today's merry-making. When youth frequent gatherings where these vices are being perpetrated, it is only a matter of time before they become trapped. May Allah Ta'ala protect us all from the fitnahs of our environment, aameen.