

It is unlikely that mankind has ever faced an epidemic as dangerous as the one we have come to call as Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or AIDS. Certainly, humanity has never shown so much of fear as it does with this terminal disease. Infection is predominantly through sexual intercourse - under certain circumstances, and intake of drugs, especially those taken by intravenous injection, using contaminated needles.

Scientific sources concerned with monitoring the spread of AIDS point out that by the year 2000, the number of cases is likely to reach 40 million people, of which 30 million will be among adult and the rest among children. This, if continued unchecked, is likely to reach uncontrollable proportions.

The control and prevention can be achieved through religious and ethical values. It is aptly stated:

"Since the modes of transmission of the AIDS infection and other sexually transmitted diseases mostly revolve around human pleasures and the types of behavior within which man seeks pleasures, it is important to study the effect of religions observance and the adherence to the behavioral values instituted by religion and the moral values it recommends on man's attitude to sensual pleasure and how they are to be gratified. Such a study can be of immense value for the programmes devoted to the control of AIDS epidemic and other sexually transmitted diseases. It requires first of all the identification of which sensual pleasures are permissible and which are not, in order to ensure that by following religious teachings, people would effectively

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Such a strong mind is supposed to be controlled by the practice of Yoga. This method, however, is very difficult for people to perform, especially in this age - an age characterized by ignorance and chaos. The difficulty is neatly expressed - one cannot capture the blowing wind, and it is even more difficult to capture and agitating mind. The Vedic civilization exist only in theory and practice on vanishing point. In the Vedic times, boys as 'bramcharis - no sex life was allowed at all upto the age of 25. Where is that education now? A 'bramhachari' is a student who lives a life of complete celibacy and obeys the commands of his 'guru' or teacher. These days, schools and colleges are openly teaching sex and 12, 13 year old boys and girls are having sex. How can they have a spiritual and physical well being and achieve on equilibrium?

Invariably religions prohibit adultery which is one of the most effective methods of avoiding the risk of infections with AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Islam does not simply forbid adultery, but considers it a crime in all pervasive sense Quran. The Holy Quran emphasizes well:

As for adulterer and adultress, flog each one of them one hundred lashes; do not have pity on them with regard to God's injunctions, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day; and let their punishment be witnessed by a number of believers.

Adultery is strictly forbidden by Christianity as well. Both the Old and New Testaments make this absolutely clear. The Seventh Commandment given to Moses very well states that "You shall not commit adultery", while the Old Testament says, "He who commits adultery, has not sense".

Again, adultery is not accepted in Hindu religion and philosophy. The Vedic literature gives directions regarding how men and women should unite

and beget children, i.e. thorough marriage. But chance sex life is not accepted. If by chance, one is sexually attracted and there are children, they are called 'vamasankara' in the Vedic literature or 'unwanted population'. The Bhagavad Gita clearly says - 'that is the way of the lower animals; it is not acceptable for humans'.

Thus, we see that all religions reveal a ring of protection for individuals and society against the adverse effects of unrestrained sexual freedom. All religions allow a certain kind of enjoyment that are known in religious languages as permissible and censor other as forbidden. Total prohibition is contrary to human nature.

Nevertheless, religion encourages moral values in sex relations and advocates marriage and prohibits all other alternatives for sexual enjoyment in the orderly growth of society and its people at large. They also urge public cleanliness and promote public health to degree that protects human beings from risks of infection by destructive diseases, the most dangerous of which in this day and age are the sexually transmitted diseases, and AIDS is coming in forefront in the last decade of the century.

Adherence to religious and moral injunctions in avoiding immoral and sinful practices is not simply meant for leading happiness but for fostering peace, equity and just relations between various segments of society. Thus, it promotes physical and moral purification in human relations which is the base of spiritual thinking and advancement. The Holy Quran encourages certain actions as they are more 'wholesome' and 'purer' and praises those who obey as being 'goodly men and women'. These distinctions are made on the basis that the former have respected and observed God's messages and acted accordingly, while the latter have succumbed to their desires, and strayed away. In trying to satisfy their natural desires, they have not been content with what is permissible and acceptable. They have let loose their desires and

indulged in what is sinful and forbidden. it is sufficient as a motivation to abide by the religious commandment that earns one the quality of being 'goodly' and 'wicked' which provides the incentive to steer away from sin. Such descriptions in religious books provide the right motivation for people with conscience and sincerity to bring their conduct in line with their beliefs. In any society where religious influence is diminished than life seems to revert back to the jungle and stone age.