

SUMMER IMMERSION

CERTAINTY IN TRANSMISSION



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The Concept of Ḥayā' (Modesty/Shyness)

Linguistic and Islamic Meaning

- **Root:** The word Ḥayā' (حياء) shares its root with ḥayāt (حياة), meaning "life." The root letters are ح-ي-أ (h-y-y).
- **Linguistically:** Ḥayā' refers to a hesitation or restraint that a person experiences because they want to avoid something that would cause blame or criticism, or compromise their integrity or reputation.
- **Islamically:** Ḥayā' is an inner characteristic of a person that keeps them away from inappropriate actions and prevents shortcomings in fulfilling the rights (ḥuqūq) of others, whether people or Allah.

Translation Challenges

- **No exact English equivalent:** Words like "shyness" and "modesty" are used, but both are incomplete:
- *Shyness* can be negative (e.g., too shy to speak up in front of an audience, which is not necessarily good).
- *Modesty* can mean humility or refer only to dress, which can be misleading.
- Better alternatives: "Moral conscience" or "reverent shame" (not embarrassment, but a respectful tendency to move away from wrong).

Hadīth References

- Prophet ﷺ said:

الإيمان بضع وسبعون، أو بضع وستون شعبة: فأفضلها قول لا إله إلا الله، وأدنىها إماتة الأذى عن الطريق، والحياء شعبة من الإيمان

Iman has over seventy branches - or over sixty branches - the uppermost of which is the declaration: 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah'; and the least of which is the removal of harmful object from the road, and modesty is a branch of Iman. (Sahih Bukhari & Muslim)

- Another narration:

دَعْهُ فَإِنَّ الْحَيَاءَ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ

Leave him. Modesty is part of iman.

- (When an Ansari was told not to be so shy; Alama Suyuti Rahmahullah mentioned this wording is closer to the one seen here). The Prophet ﷺ corrected the notion that one could have "too much haya."

- Prophet ﷺ also said:

إِذَا لَمْ تَسْتَحِي فَاصْنَعْ مَا شِئْتَ

If you do not feel ashamed, then do whatever you like. (Sahih Bukhari)

- This indicates that without ḥayā', a person lacks the barrier or conscience to prevent them from crossing limits.

Types of ḥayā'

- ḥayā' with Allah (حَيَاءُ اللَّهِ):

- Being aware that Allah sees and hears everything and will judge based on actions.
- Avoiding sin even in private, as Allah is always watching. This is the quality that keeps a person from sinning in private.
- Embodiment of taqwā (God-consciousness).
- Example: A story of a pious person advising someone struggling with sin to commit it where Allah cannot see them, leading the person to realize Allah sees everywhere, thus abstaining from sin.

- Example: Covering awrah even when alone, as Allah has commanded it and is watching.
- ḥayā' with People (حياء مع الناس):
 - Respectful behavior, especially with elders and parents, which curbs outspokenness and promotes speaking with respect.
 - Avoiding inappropriate actions in public.
 - Not hypocrisy, but a sign of conscience.
 - Observing social etiquette in formal gatherings is a manifestation of ḥayā'.
- ḥayā' with Oneself:
 - Maintaining self-respect and dignity, which stems from the awareness that Allah is always watching, even when alone.

Developing ḥayā'

- Through Salāh:

...إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ...
...Indeed, prayer keeps one away from indecency and wrongdoing... (29:45)

- Increasing awareness of Allah in and outside of prayer.
- **Personal stories:** Example of a sister who started wearing hijab after realizing Allah sees her both in and outside of salāh, not just during prayer.

ḥayā' is Not Cowardice

- Not an excuse to avoid good deeds (e.g., teaching Qur'an, demonstrating Salat, telling the truth).
- True ḥayā' is not being too shy to do what is right; rather, such avoidance is a lack of courage or bravery.
- **Examples from the Companions**
- **Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:** Had more ḥayā' than an unmarried young girl in her chamber.

- **Uthman (رضي الله عنه):** Known for his extreme *hayā'*. The Prophet ﷺ even adjusted his posture (covering his legs completely) in Uthman's presence out of respect for his modesty, despite Uthman being his companion and son-in-law.

The Hadith of Jibril: The Foundations of Islam

Background

- The most famous narration of this hadith is from Umar (رضي الله عنه) and is found in Sahih Muslim.
- Its background involves two men from Iraq who came to Abdullah ibn Umar (رضي الله عنه) seeking clarification on predestination (qadr) due to confusion caused by Ma'bad al-Juhani, who was denouncing the concept of predestiny.
- Abdullah ibn Umar (رضي الله عنه) then narrated the famous hadith from his father, Umar ibn al-Khattab (رضي الله عنه).

The Hadith (Summary and Key Arabic Phrases)

- A man (Jibril in human form) came to the Prophet ﷺ:

إذ ظلَّعَ عَلَيْنَا رَجُلٌ شَدِيدٌ بَيَاضِ الثِّيَابِ شَدِيدٌ سَوَادُ الشَّعْرِ، لَا يُرَى عَلَيْهِ أَثْرُ السَّفَرِ وَلَا يَعْرِفُهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ

"A man appeared with extremely white clothes and jet black hair, no sign of travel, and none of us knew him."

- He sat close to the Prophet ﷺ, with his knees touching the Prophet's knees, and placed his hands on his lap like a student, and asked:

1. What is *Imān* (Faith)?

أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْوَمٌ أَخْرَى وَالشَّرُّهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى وَالْبَغْثُ بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ

"To believe in Allah, His angels, His messengers, the Last Day, predestination (its good and bad), and resurrection after death."

2. What is Islām (Submission)?

إِسْلَامٌ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَتُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ وَتَحْجُجَ الْبَيْتَ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا

"To testify there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger, establish prayer, give zakah, fast Ramadan, and perform hajj if able."

3. What is Iḥsān (Excellence)?

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَمَا كَانَكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَكَ

"To worship Allah as if you see Him; if you do not see Him, (know that) He sees you."

4. When is the Hour (Day of Judgment)?

"The one being asked knows no more than the one asking." (Only Allah knows.)

3. What is Iḥsān (Excellence)?

أَنْ تَلِدَ الْأُمَّةُ رَبَّتَهَا

"That a slave woman will give birth to her own mistress."

- Meaning a daughter will act like the boss of her mother.

وَأَنْ تَرَى الْحُفَّةَ الْعَرَاءَ الشَّاءِ يَتَطَاوَلُونَ فِي الْبُنْيَانِ

"And you will see barefoot, bare in their bodies (or not properly covered), destitute shepherds competing in constructing tall buildings."

- Referring to people from extreme poverty suddenly gaining immense wealth and squandering it on extravagant buildings.
- After the man left, the Prophet ﷺ explained:
- "That was Jibril. He came to teach you your religion."

Explanation of Concepts

Imān (Faith)

- Belief in the heart in the six pillars: Allah, angels, messengers, revealed books, the Last Day, and qadr (predestination).
- **Arkan al-Iman (Pillars of Faith):** These are the key things that if you don't believe in any of them, your faith is invalid. This covers the inner aspect of being a Muslim.

Islām (Submission)

- **Outward actions:** The five pillars (shahāda, salāh, zakāh, ḥawām, ḥajj).
- Shahāda is the entry point into Islam.
- Salāh is the greatest and most important obligation, and the main distinguishing act between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Iḥsān (Excellence)

- **Doing everything with excellence and awareness of Allah.** It means to excel in something or do it to the best of one's ability.
- **Worship as if seeing Allah, or at least knowing He sees you.** This involves a high degree of awareness of Allah's presence.
- **Iḥsān applies to all actions, not just worship.** It means bringing excellence into every aspect of life, from wudu to dhikr and recitation of Qur'an. An example is a Sheikh reflecting on sins being washed away during wudu, bringing deep thought and intention to the act.
- **Related to tasawwuf (spiritual purification):** As one scholar stated, tasawwuf begins with sincerity of intention (innama al-a'malu binniyat) and ends with full awareness of Allah (an ta'budallaha ka'annaka taraah fa'il nam takuntaraahu fa'innahu yaraak). It is the process of correcting intentions and actions to achieve excellence.
- **Signs of the Day of Judgment**
- **Reversal of natural order:** All signs mentioned in hadith generally indicate a reversal of the natural order of things.
- **Children bossing parents:** Children will act as masters over their parents, pushing them around and demanding obedience, leading parents to feel coerced into listening to avoid losing their children. A real-life example was shared of a child disrespectfully yelling at and jabbing his mother during Sa'i.

- **The poor suddenly becoming wealthy and competing in extravagance:** People who previously had no wealth will suddenly acquire it and squander it on building the highest structures, competing with one another, instead of using resources for practical needs or helping the poor.
- **Loss of respect and proper roles in society.**

Practical Lessons

- ḥayā' is a core part of faith and should be cultivated.
- True ḥayā' is not cowardice or avoidance of good deeds.
- Salāh is a means to develop ḥayā' and awareness of Allah.
- Respect for elders, parents, and social etiquette are manifestations of ḥayā'.
- Iḥsān means striving for excellence in all acts, especially worship.
- Awareness of Allah's presence should guide all actions, public and private.
- The hadith of Jibril summarizes the essentials of Islam: beliefs, actions, and spiritual excellence.