

VOICES THROUGH THE SMOKE – PART 2

The conclusion of a two-part article written for the World No Tobacco Day 2020 bringing you the perspectives of the various role players in the smoking chain. The first dealt with the role of the manufacturer and the government. This one talks about the smoker, crime and religion

Sunday, 31st May 2020 was the World Health Organisation's (WHO) annual No Tobacco Day.

“Tobacco is the only legally available consumer product which kills people when it is used entirely as intended.” (The Oxford Medical Companion – 1994)

Smoking is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death which kills more people every year than all drugs combined, alcohol and vehicle accidents. It has caused 100 million deaths in the 20th century and is expected to result in one billion deaths in the 21st century.

According to statistics by the end of today about 121 fellow South Africans will die from smoking. Who are the role players in this ongoing tragedy?

THE SMOKER

Since the introduction of smoking centuries ago, there is no shortage of customers. The world has 1,1 Billion smokers and South Africa 11 million.

Who is the smoker? Detailed studies are available on the demographic profile of smokers. For this discussion we regard smokers as everyone i.e. it could be your father, husband, brother, son, mother, wife, sister or daughter. It cuts across all ages and economic classes.

The reason for drawing the distinction is that anyone can become easily addicted to smoking. The pharmacologic and behavioral processes that determine tobacco addiction are similar to those that determine addiction to drugs such as heroin and cocaine. With the exception of a miniscule number of smokers who will be in denial,

generally most accept their addiction. They need empathy and help in giving up the addiction.

Coming on the back of high taxation the Government's total ban on the sale of tobacco products during the Covid-19 has created outrage and anger. They do not trust the authorities as they have witnessed no investigations and prosecutions against any officials linked with the illegal tobacco industry.

They are also contemptuous of the lack of effort by Government on meaningful and accessible programmes such as therapy, clinics, professional services and products to assist them in quitting the habit.

SMOKER VALUE PROPOSITION: We are compatriots paying a heavy price financially and physically for our addiction. We seek rehabilitation and support from our fellow citizens, not oppression from the State.

SANHA COMMENT: Hear! Hear!

THE CRIMINALS

South Africa already had a thriving illicit trade on cigarettes prior to the lockdown. It is estimated that it accounts for a third of all cigarettes sales and contributes to government loss of revenue of R7 billion a year.

The ill-advised blanket ban on the sale of cigarettes during the lockdown saw smokers turning to a thriving underground market for their nicotine fix.

The governments shutting down of legitimate outlets now in its ninth week with no prospects of it being reversed, handed the market on a platter to existing crime lords. Gang lords have added cigarettes and alcohol to their usual staple of hard drugs and have set up their distribution infrastructure.

Law abiding citizens have also been drawn into crime using WhatsApp groups to peddle cigarettes from urban and township homes. Some entrants are as young as 11 years old. Before you become judgemental on 11-year olds indulging in crime, review their story reported here:

<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/local-down-school-children-sell-cigarettes-to-make-ends-meet-20200520>

One thing is clear, the infrastructure on the illegal supply that springs up during the lockdown will certainly prevail after the lifting of restrictions. Why will the angry smoker denied his stock of nicotine by an unsympathetic authority will want to support the legitimate outlets when he can continue sourcing stock from his neighbourhood dealer who was there when he needed it. This will be at the expense of the legitimate outlets and a huge loss to the fiscus. Current losses estimated by SARS is in the region of R35 Million rand a day.

CRIMINAL VALUE PROPOSITION:

Government led us to the promised land and allowed us to expand our range and distribution network. We pledge to do our best to serve all the citizens that they could not.

SANHA COMMENT: How will anyone put the genie that has already been let out back into the bottle?

DIVINE LAW

Religion plays a very important part in upholding of morality in society. It is a group behaviour which has a significant and conspicuous influence on the society to behave morally

Most of the world's major religions regard smoking to be a sin and forbid it. Islam as the Final Revelation to mankind has condemned smoking. Muslim Jurists have ruled it to be either Makruh (detested and undesirable) or Haraam (forbidden). Further reading on this can be accessed from the link below.

Whereas all the role players in the smoking chain had requirements towards their vested interests the Islamic advice is purely altruistic. It does not ask for funds, looks for grants from activist foundations or seeks accolades. In keeping with the Islamic duty of enjoying good and

forbidding evil it offers advice on an Islamic lifestyle for the benefit of mankind.

Please find below links to our publications on smoking that will prove helpful, God Willing.

Some suggestions to quit:-

- Take a calm look at the facts below on smoking, the costs and its harmful effects on your body. Consult this regularly to reaffirm your determination to quit.

(Click below for articles and cost calculator):

- <http://www.sanha.org.za/flashnews/flashn37.htm>
 - <http://www.sanha.org.za/flashnews/flashn38.htm>
 - <http://www.sanha.org.za/flashnews/flashn41.htm>
 - <http://www.sanha.org.za/flashnews/2013/flashn75.htm>
 - [Cigarette calculator](#)
 - <http://www.sanha.co.za/flashnews/2015/flashn96.htm>
- If possible, rope in family and friends who also want to quit, so that you can support each other. Do not hesitate to seek help from your Doctor or Imam.
 - Change your lifestyle with exercise, a new hobby, a new interest.
 - Download your free copy of the booklet "*Kicking the Habit*" by the late Moulana Yunus Patel Saheb RA whose discourses helped thousands in improving their lives. <http://www.sanha.org.za/ebull/Kicking-the-Habit.pdf>

ISLAM VALUE PROPOSITION: The religion of Islam has been revealed as a blessing for Mankind.

SANHA COMMENT: For your love of God and for the sake of your own health, stop smoking.

DON'T GET SMOKE IN YOUR EYES - SEE THE REAL PICTURE

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