

## **What Is Hardness of the Heart? Why and How Does the Heart Become Hardened?**

### **Understanding Hardness of the Heart: Exploring Its Signs, Causes, and Remedies**

The heart is the core of human emotions and feelings, a place constantly shaped by both external influences and inner states. It is not only responsible for emotions like love, kindness, and peace but also serves as a gateway to spirituality and closeness to God. However, there are times when the heart, for various reasons, becomes hardened or callous—a condition referred to as “hardness of the heart.” Hardness of the heart refers to a state where the heart, instead of being soft and receptive, turns rigid and unyielding, like stone.

This condition prevents a person from perceiving spiritual beauty and values, leading to indifference or even opposition to divine truths and religious commandments. In essence, hardness of the heart causes the heart to flee from what brings peace and bliss, gravitating instead toward things that are ultimately harmful and destructive. This hard-heartedness acts like a thick, impenetrable layer that blocks the light of guidance, love, and divine mercy from affecting the soul. For this reason, religious and mystical texts describe hardness of the heart as a dangerous spiritual disease that can derail a person from the path of perfection and bliss.

Numerous Quranic verses and evidence emphasize that hardened hearts and cold-hearted individuals not only fail to grasp divine truths but also become indifferent to warnings and advice. Several factors contribute to this condition, including

neglecting the remembrance of God, accumulation of sins, attachment to worldly desires, and associating with misguided people. These factors gradually harden the heart to the extent that even sermons or reflection on divine words cannot soften it.

Given the significance of this issue and the destructive impact of the hardness of the heart on an individual's personal and social life, understanding its nature and finding effective ways to treat and soften a hardened heart is essential. This article aims to thoroughly explore the concept of the hardness of the heart, its primary causes, its signs, and the remedies to address it.

### **What Is Hardness of the Heart?**

Hardness of the heart is a spiritual disease that has received particular attention in religious sources. Simply put, hardness of the heart refers to a state where the heart becomes so rigid and heavy that it can no longer receive the light of divine guidance or messages. In this state, the heart no longer responds readily to religious truths and becomes indifferent or even resistant to spiritual warnings and sermons.

The Holy Quran frequently refers to the concept of the hardness of the heart. For example, God describes those with hardened hearts by saying, "Their hearts have become hard"<sup>1</sup>, indicating a distancing from divine mercy and guidance. Hardness of the heart renders a person incapable of understanding the truths and beauties

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<sup>1</sup>. Quran 2:74

of faith, trapping them instead in the pursuit of fleeting desires and worldly attachments.

A hardened heart is like barren, rocky soil where the seeds of faith and spirituality struggle to take root. This condition can arise from various factors, such as sin, heedlessness, arrogance, neglecting the remembrance of God, and following low desires. When a person falls into this state, they reject the truth and may even develop hostility toward prophets and divine figures.

From the perspective of self-knowledge, treating hardness of the heart requires mindfulness, repentance, remembrance of God, and nurturing divine love to soften the heart and allow it to be illuminated by the light of faith. In fact, hardness of the heart stands in direct opposition to the purity and radiance of the heart, serving as one of the greatest obstacles to spiritual growth.

### **Causes of the Hardness of the Heart**

#### **-Neglecting the Remembrance of God**

When a person removes the remembrance of God and His presence from their mind and heart, the divine light that brings peace and kindness gradually fades. This neglect plunges the heart into darkness and coldness, making it indifferent to spiritual truths. Conversely, remembering God keeps the soul alive and softens the heart.

#### **-Committing Sins and Avoiding Repentance**

Sin acts like rust on the heart, gradually covering it and preventing the perception of divine light. When a person fails to repent and turn away from wrongful actions,

this rust accumulates, hardening the heart further. Greater or repeated sins intensify hardness of the heart, causing indifference to the warnings of conscience.

#### **-Consuming Forbidden or Impure Sustenance**

Food or wealth obtained through forbidden or impure means not only has worldly consequences but also deeply affects the soul and heart. Forbidden gains act like poison, dimming the heart's light and making it dark and rigid. This leads to a loss of empathy, love, and generosity, drawing the person toward jealousy and fear.

#### **-Mixing with Impure People and Being in Toxic Environments**

Humans are social beings, heavily influenced by the behavior and morals of those around them. Spending time in groups marked by poor ethics, neglect of God, or wrongful behavior gradually hardens the heart. In contrast, keeping company with kind, God-fearing, and virtuous people softens the heart and enlivens the soul.

#### **-Being Enslaved by Worldly Desires and Material Attachments**

When a person's focus is solely on accumulating wealth, fame, or power, neglecting the hereafter, their heart grows heavy and hardened. Attachment to worldly things distances a person from spiritual and human values, filling their life with worry, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. When the human soul is starved of spiritual nourishment, it weakens and becomes ineffective over time.

#### **-Failing to Control the Soul and Tongue**

An uncontrolled soul can lead to harmful behaviors like aggression, lying, gossip, or selfishness. These actions gradually harden the heart and make it less compassionate. Controlling the tongue and emotions is a key way to maintain a soft, compassionate heart.

### **-Lack of Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness**

To maintain a sound heart and soul, a person needs repentance and a return to God. Without turning away from sin or seeking forgiveness, the heart becomes dry and rigid, growing distant from God. Repentance is like water that washes away the rust from the heart, softening and renewing it.

### **-Holding Grudges and Arrogance**

Harboring resentment or seeking revenge is like thorns that wound and harden the heart. Arrogance and self-conceit prevent the acceptance of truth and love. These two factors intensify the hardness of the heart, distancing a person from love for others and God.

### **Signs of the Hardness of the Heart**

God hardens the heart of someone steeped in sin or disbelief, making it impervious to faith. This indifference to religious truths is a clear sign of the hardness of the heart. A person with a hardened heart no longer follows their moral conscience and becomes apathetic to injustice, oppression, or harm caused to others. For instance, someone who lies or betrays others easily may have a heart inclined toward hardness.

Religious narrations state that hardness of the heart leads to verbal or behavioral cruelty, even toward loved ones. A clear example is those who resort to physical or psychological violence in moments of anger. When the heart becomes hardened, kindness and compassion vanish, and the person becomes indifferent to others' suffering.

Those with hardened hearts are drawn to sin and avoid repentance. Hardness of the heart acts like a thick wall, preventing a return to God. It makes a person resistant to advice and warnings, hindering change.

Hardness of the heart leads to distance and disinterest in human relationships. A person with a hardened heart struggles to understand genuine love, leaving their relationships shallow and distant. This emotional detachment can sometimes lead to loneliness and isolation.

### **Ways to Treat Hardness of the Heart**

The first and most crucial step in treating hardness of the heart is sincere repentance from sins and a heartfelt return to God. The Quran states: “Say, ‘O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed, God forgives all sins. He is the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful’”<sup>2</sup>. This divine promise serves as a powerful incentive to abandon sin and soften the heart. The Quran, as the book of guidance, is a remedy for hardness of the heart. In Surah Muhammad, verse 24, it is said: “Do they not reflect upon the Quran, or are there locks upon their hearts?” Reflecting on the Quran and acting upon its teachings unlocks the heart and allows divine love to flow within. Consistent remembrance of God and engaging in regular supplication calm and soften the heart.

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<sup>2</sup>. Quran, 39:53

We must continually examine our actions and thoughts, seeking the root causes of the hardness of our hearts. Identifying the factors contributing to this condition paves the way for healing. Qualities such as patience, gratitude, trust in God, and kindness help soften the heart. These traits can be cultivated through learning, practice, and emulating virtuous role models. Sometimes, a heart becomes so hardened that it requires spiritual guidance and support. Engaging in conversations with wise and expert individuals, listening to their advice, and drawing on their experiences can facilitate the healing process.

Hardness of the heart is a profound and dangerous spiritual disease that can lead a person's life toward darkness and distance from God's mercy. This condition not only causes emotional coldness, indifference to others, and an inability to grasp spiritual truths but can also be a primary cause of behavioral deviations and estrangement from God. However, as the Quran and narrations remind us, no heart is ever entirely cut off from God's mercy. Whenever we choose, we can soften our hearts and return to the light of faith and love through repentance, reflection on divine words, and righteous deeds.

Recognizing the causes and signs of the hardness of the heart aids us in the journey of improvement of the soul and spiritual growth. Moreover, there are numerous ways to treat this spiritual disease, which can be applied with effort and determination. The most important point is to never lose hope in softening the heart, for God's mercy is greater than any hardness. Ultimately, treating hardness of the heart is an ongoing, lifelong process that requires care, practice, and reliance on God.