

## **The Characteristics of Four Types of Hearts According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)**

### **The Importance of the Heart and the Basis for Classifying Types of Hearts According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)**

The heart is one of the blessings that God has given to all of us. However, people's hearts differ. So, there are various classifications of them. While hearts are generally classified as sick or sound, other classifications exist, based on religious teachings and the opinions of religious leaders. For instance, there are four types of hearts according to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), categorized by their level of faith and connection to the Quran.

The type and quality of our relationship with the Quran significantly impact the soundness of our hearts. God has established and introduced a true and human hierarchy of love in the Quran. But how much do we pay attention to it? Are we merely reciters of the Quran or do we recognize it as a guide for acquiring a sound heart? Do we believe that the Quran is sent by our Creator, containing the most important strategies for attaining eternal happiness?

The heart is the king of our existence. It is our true wealth, while other assets serve as a prerequisite for this dimension to be shaped. Knowing the true assets of the heart leads us to rely on our true wealth rather than imaginary, estimative, inanimate, vegetative, or animal wealth. Spiritual sicknesses of the heart, like physical heart disease, affects all our existential dimensions, too.

The importance of the heart is so great that having a sound heart is a prerequisite for a healthy birth into the eternal world; in fact, the heart is the only asset we take with us to the hereafter, and the quality of our life in the four stages of death, *Barzakh*, the Day of Judgment as long as fifty thousand years, and eternal life thereafter depends on the state of our hearts and inner wealth. The stronger and wealthier our heart and soul are, the happier, more peaceful and closer to God we will be in this world and the hereafter.

Shaping a strong heart and soul requires specific strategies and tools. We will discuss these and examine the characteristics of the four types of hearts according to Prophet (Peace be upon him).

### **The Importance of Nourishing and Regulating the Heart's Hierarchy of Love**

The heart is a part of our being that is not in a stable state; we constantly have change of heart. As Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) says, the heart is like a leaf hanging from a tree branch in the desert, swayed by the wind [1]. This means that all our actions, thoughts, behaviors, and words affect our heart soundness or make it sick. Therefore, the way we nourish our heart is important. Neglecting the heart is the source of all troubles in this world and the hereafter, leading to misfortunes, anxieties, bad behaviors, and stress. This is because the heart is the center of power and peace. The better we nourish it, the more peace and happiness we will find in this world and the hereafter.

One of the main principles of nourishing the heart is to regulate its hierarchy of love. It means that we must prioritize the beloveds of the heart correctly and in a special way. Just as we nourish our body according to the food pyramid, where

various foods are placed according to their importance and the body's needs; if we do not follow the food pyramid, our bodies may suffer from nutrient deficiencies or excesses, both of which lead to harm or illness. The same principle applies to nourishing the soul or heart; if the heart is not nourished according to the structure God has ordained [2], it will become sick. A sick heart cannot lead us to the destination in a sound state. In this section, we discussed the soundness and sickness of the heart, but does the heart have other characteristics? How many types of hearts are there?

### **Types of Heart Classification**

There are various classifications for the heart. The broadest classification is based on the soundness or sickness of heart. Any other classification can fall under these two main branches. The most well-known term for a healthy heart in our spiritual dimension is sound heart. The primary asset and the most important condition for salvation in this world and in the hereafter is having this type of heart [3].

An example of a classification of heart based on the hierarchy of love and the prioritizing different perfections includes: the stone-like, harder than stone, vegetative, animal, satanic, and human hearts! By understanding the characteristics of the sound and sick hearts and examining each of these six types, we can determine which heart is considered an asset and perfection and which leads to downfall.

God has given us all the potential and capacity to achieve perfection. He also created us free to fall into vices or not. It is up to us to choose to have a sound or sick heart. In verse 37 of Surah *Qaf*, God refers to those who have hearts [4]. The

question is, has God not given all of us hearts? If it refers to the physical heart, we all have one. The heart that is the same as the soul, is given to everyone; so, what does the heart in this verse refer to? Allameh Tabataba'i in his book, Tafsir al-Mizan, says: "The word heart refers to the power by which a person reasons, distinguishes truth from falsehood, separates good from evil, and differentiates between beneficial and harmful things. If the heart does not reason, it does not have the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood or separate good from evil, its existence is equivalent to non-existence, as something that has no effect is equal in existence and non-existence." If we accept this definition for a sound heart, it means that a true and sound heart is life-giving and prevents destruction. To have a sound heart, we must know its characteristics so that we try to achieve it.

### **Characteristics of a Sound and Sick Heart**

Our most important duty is to acquire a sound heart. A sound heart always strives to achieve perfection. Believing in the truth of existence and having a right perspective on oneself helps us acquire a sound heart. Lack of self-knowledge and a distorted self-image are among the factors that lead to heart sickness.

A sound heart has signs, some of which include: love for Allah, awareness and consciousness, being *fitrah*-oriented, being open-faced, optimism, strength, joy, peace, maturity and reasoning, intuition, piety, repentance, power, patience, having pure effects on phenomena around them, controlling anger, being firm, tenderness, mercy, having authority, interaction with those who act in accordance with *fitrah*, regulating the hierarchy of love, submission and acceptance, receptiveness to advice, generating joy, good manners, wishing the best for others,

adherence to commandments of the religion, having a big heart, purity, and forgiveness.

Just when someone suffers from arrhythmia, his heart may beat too fast, too slow or irregular, if the spiritual heart becomes sick, it will experience symptoms including disbelief, hypocrisy, interaction with the materialistic people, anger, irritability, obsession, suspicion, bad language, strictness, grudges, envy, disputes, arrogance, oppression, negligence, being a hard person, not accepting the truth, doubt, being blind to something, being tempted, inclination towards falsehood, and regret.

### **Types of Hearts According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)**

Faith and the Quran are among the criteria based on which classifications of hearts are created. These classifications are based on a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), in which he introduces four types of hearts. The types of hearts mentioned in the Hadith are: a faithful heart unfamiliar with the Quran, a faithful heart familiar with the Quran, a faithless heart familiar with the Quran, and a faithless heart familiar with the Quran.

### **The First Category in the Classification of Hearts According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): A Faithful Heart Unfamiliar with the Quran**

The first category in the classification of hearts according to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) refers to good and faithful people who, for various reasons, have not had the opportunity to learn and understand the Quran. Of course, it is

not due to negligence or disinterest in learning the Quran. These are faithful people who usually accept God's words. They also submit to God. So, these qualities help them learn religious studies through scholars. Then, by acting on what they have learned, avoiding sin and doing good deeds, they increase their faith and achieve self-development.

For example, there are illiterate elderly people who cannot recite Quran, yet they are pious people with an illuminated heart. *Karbala'i Kazem Saruqi* is one such person who, miraculously, memorized the entire Quran in an instant.

Among non-Muslims, there are also individuals who belong to the first group, meaning they have a faithful heart unfamiliar with the Quran. For example, some Jews, Christians, or followers of other religions do not differ much from Muslims. In other words, there are commonalities between their beliefs, ethics and acts of worships with Muslims'. They also love God like Muslims; they just are not called Muslims. God also pays compliment to some of the People of the Book in the Quran.

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) likens a faithful heart unfamiliar with the Quran to a delicious date that has no pleasant aroma.

### **The Second Category in the Classification of Hearts According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): A Faithful Heart Familiar with the Quran**

The second group in the classification of hearts according to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) refers to individuals who are both believers and have a connection with and are close friends with the Quran. They recite, memorize,

understand, and teach the Quran. Having intimacy with the Quran causes one become attractive and lovely. So, these individuals, as their souls and hearts are adorned with the Quran, have charming and lovable personalities, bringing life to gatherings they take part in. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) describes the heart of this group as a bag of musk that gives off a pleasant scent whether it is open or closed.

### **The Third Category in the Classification of Hearts According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): A Faithless Heart Familiar with the Quran**

The third group in the classification of hearts according to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) refers to individuals who recite the Quran but lack faith. Islamic Scholars and mystics consider the Quran to be the wine of the believer. Wine gets one intoxicated, but does reciting the Quran and connecting with it create such a feeling in us? If we only focus on recitation, pronunciation, and memorization of the Quran, we certainly do not get extremely enthusiastic about it. There are many memorizers and reciters of the Quran for whom the Quran is not considered as the wine; until the Quran does not effects on our hearts, or in other words does not change our hearts, it cannot make us enthusiastic. The change of heart is very important. According to Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him), approaching God is more efficient through the heart than the body [5].

Sometimes, a person may be a memorizer, teacher, reciter, or *Mufassir* (interpreter) but lacks piety and does not adhere to the commandments of the religion. Such a person may have memorized the Quran but he lacks faith, belief,

and certainty. As a result, he constantly has doubts and hesitation, is emotionally unstable and anxious person.

There have been many such individuals throughout history, and we have often heard of them. Shimr, who beheaded Imam Hussain (Peace be upon him), was a Quran teacher. Many of those who joined the army of Umar bin Sa'ad, were memorizers of Quran. Twelve thousands of Khawarij who fought against Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) were all Quran reciters, but they lacked faith.

In the present era, there are individuals with faithless hearts who are familiar with the Quran. An example is the Wahhabis in Mecca and Medina, who constantly recite the Quran but have no reverence for religion, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), or his Household (Peace be upon them). Such individuals, who have not internalized the faith, can easily go against religion and God's commands; for instance, they unjustly kill others, as the Wahhabis do in support of Israel. They kill the oppressed Shia in Yemen and seek to destroy all people in Gaza and Lebanon.

The Quran revives the dead heart. This is a good criterion to determine whether the recitation of the Quran has an effect on us or others or we just read Arabic words and sentences. How can we consider a heart that is blind to humanity and oppresses others and do others an injustice to be alive? The Prophet (Peace be upon him) likens a faithless heart familiar with the Quran to lime, which has a pleasant smell but a very bad taste.

**The Fourth Category in the Classification of the Heart According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): The Faithless Heart Unfamiliar with the Quran**

The fourth group in the classification of hearts according to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) refers to a faithless heart unfamiliar with the Quran. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) describes such a heart as being like the colocynth or the Abu Jahl watermelon, which smells bad and tastes bitter. This statement is not just a metaphor; it teaches us that faith and the Quran make our heart smells good.

All cooks know that spices enhance flavor and aroma of food. Spices also have medical properties. So, they can be used as medicine. Based on this and the definition of the fourth type of heart according to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), we understand that faith and the Quran not only give fragrance to our heart but also have healing properties for the heart. Hearts that are deprived of these two elixirs will always be in a state of loss.

By considering the signs of a sound and sick heart, we can determine whether the four types of hearts mentioned in the hadith of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) are sound or sick. The first and second types of hearts, i.e., the faithful heart unfamiliar with the Quran and the faithful heart familiar with the Quran, fall into the category of sound hearts. However, we must note that the soundness of heart has different levels. So, certainly, a faithful heart familiar with the Quran is at a higher level of soundness than a faithful heart unfamiliar with the Quran.

Faithless hearts familiar with the Quran and faithless hearts unfamiliar with the Quran are considered as sick hearts. However, the level of their sickness differs.

In this lesson, we first discussed the heart and its importance. The heart is our most valuable asset. When we leave the world behind and enter the hereafter. The happiest people in both this world and the hereafter are those with a sound heart.

We mentioned that according to a hadith of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), there are four types of hearts. This classification is based on faith and the Quran. Faithful hearts familiar with the Quran and faithful hearts unfamiliar with the Quran, are considered sound hearts, while faithless hearts familiar with the Quran and faithless hearts unfamiliar with the Quran are categorized as sick hearts.

Another classification of the heart is based on heart's hierarchy of love. The sound heart is spiritually nourished and is regulated according to God's hierarchy of love. According to this organized system, there are six types of hearts: the stone-like heart, the harder-than-stone heart, the vegetative, the animal, the satanic, and the human heart. We will discuss this classification in future lessons.

#### References

- [1]. Ibn Majah, Muhammad bin Yazid. *Sunan Ibn Majah* 88. 36990.
- [2]. "Say, 'If your parents, and your children, and your siblings, and your spouses, and your relatives, and the wealth you have acquired, and a business you worry about, and homes you love, are more dear to you than God, and His Messenger, and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God executes His judgment.'" God does not guide the sinful people." The Quran, 9:24
- [3]. The Quran, 26:88-89
- [4]. "In that is a reminder for whoever possesses a heart,"

[5]. Al-Tabrisi, Al-Fadl b. al-Hasan. *Mishkat ul-Anwar Fi Ghurar il-Akhbar: The Lamp Niche for the Best Traditions*. 1517.

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