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## **RECTIFYING THE HEART**

### **By Shaykh Zulfikar Ahmad**

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that the heart is a piece of flesh within the human body that can rectify the deeds of the entire body if it itself is rectified. However, if it is spoiled, the actions of the body will only result in sin. Elsewhere, the Messenger ﷺ of Allah said:

*Indeed Allah does not look at your appearance and your wealth but He looks to your heart and your actions*

Hence, the state of the heart determines if actions will be righteous or sinful, and therefore determines a person's spiritual status. Allah ﷻ says in the Holy Quran:

*Allah has not made for any man two hearts in one body [33:4]*

Two hearts cannot coexist within the same body in such a manner that one heart is dedicated to Allah ﷻ and the other to Shaitan. There is only one heart that can only be devoted to one. Man should focus on keeping the heart fragrant with the remembrance of Allah ﷻ.

## **For the People of Paradise**

Allah ﷻ says:

*The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail; But only he (will prosper) who brings to Allah a sound heart [26:88-89]*

Only pure and rectified hearts will prove useful on the Day of Judgment and not family, nor the wealth that man relentlessly pursues. Allah ﷻ wants sole and complete devotion and obedience of heart from His people, in exchange for which He has promised Paradise. This warrants thought and reflection, because man is so selfish that he refuses to accept a rotten fruit for his money, but he expects Allah ﷻ to accept a rotten heart in exchange for Paradise.

*A sound heart* is one that is purified of all thoughts and influences other than that of Allah ﷻ. Such a heart shall prove useful on the Day of Judgment and shall be admitted into Paradise. Allah ﷻ says in the Holy Quran:

*And that which is (locked up) in (human) breasts is made manifest [100:10]*

Allah ﷻ will examine the condition of hearts on that Day to see if they are filled with the love of wealth or love for the Creator of all things.

## **How A Heart Hardens**

The heart is like the earth that has to be tilled and sweated over, in order to be cultivated and in order to yield a good harvest. If the ground is not cultivated in such a manner for

a long time, it becomes hard, barren, and unable to yield a crop because it was left unattended for so long.

The same holds true for the heart, in that one grows closer to Allah ﷻ the harder one works to rectify the heart. However, the same heart becomes ever harder the longer one ignores the need to purify it. Such a heart will eventually become harder than stone.

*Thenceforth were your hearts hardened and became like a rock and even worse in hardness [2:74]*

*For among rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth [2:74]*

In fact, stones feel ashamed at the hard heartedness of man. Stones can still become a source of streams, and stones do tremble in fear of Allah ﷻ, but when man's heart hardens, it neither weeps nor trembles in fear of its Creator. Man's only hope of success on the Day of Judgment is to toil hard to rectify his heart or else he will be doomed.

### **How a Heart Becomes Blind**

A person's heart becomes completely blind, so that he lives his life in utter heedlessness of Allah ﷻ so much so that his heart becomes unable to distinguish between lawful and unlawful. A person who is physically blind cannot distinguish between light and darkness, a friend or an enemy, and a great deal of other things because he is without sight.

In the same way, a person whose heart is blind may commit a grave sin but his heart will not even flinch because

it has become blind to right and wrong. Such a person also cannot differentiate between light and darkness, but of a different realm. Such a one prefers the company of evil to that of righteousness, because being blind the heart has also lost all respect and recognition of the righteous people.

The Holy Quran refers to entire communities as blind, not because the people were physically without sight but because they failed to recognize their prophet and hence, Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ further states in the Holy Quran:

*But those who were blind in this world will be blind in the Hereafter and most astray from the Path [17:72]*

This does not mean that those without physical sight will be without the same in the Hereafter. Rather it means that those who lived their life on earth in heedlessness and utter rebellion against Allah's ﷻ commands and thus were blind, will be raised blind in the Hereafter. Among other things, they cannot look upon Allah ﷻ. This scene is further illustrated in other places in the Holy Quran:

*He will say, "O my Lord! Why have You raised me up blind?  
[20:125]*

*While I had sight before? [20:125]*

*Thus did you disregard Our Signs when they came to you  
[20:126]*

*So will you this Day be disregarded [20:126]*

Since such people forgot Allah ﷻ in their daily lives, they too shall be forgotten in the Hereafter. Such people refuse to adhere to Allah's ﷻ Way and thence become enslaved to Shaitan and their own nafs. Allah ﷻ speaks about such people in His Book.

*Do they not travel through the land so that their hearts may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind but the hearts in their breasts*  
[22:46]

#### **How a Heart Becomes Sealed**

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that each sin a person commits leaves a dark spot on the heart, and if one sins persistently without repentance, then eventually, the entire heart will succumb to darkness. At such a time, Allah ﷻ seals this dark heart in His Anger and such a heart can never turn to righteousness.

#### **Cleansing the Heart**

Allah ﷻ cleanses the heart of all darkness and illness when a person humbles himself and repents sincerely from his sins. Once Hadrat Ibrahim ؑ was commanded by Allah ﷻ to wash his heart. Hadrat Ibrahim ؑ was perplexed at this command and asked how this would be possible since water could not reach there. Then Allah ﷻ said that the heart is not cleansed by water, but through weeping in repentance in front of Allah ﷻ.

The heart can only be cleansed if the repentance is sincere with a clear determination to amend. If one weeps

sincerely in front of Allah ﷻ to be forgiven of his sins, then surely his heart will be cleansed.

### **Sustenance of the Heart**

The heart, like the physical body, requires sustenance, and if the body is not nourished with the specific sustenance that Allah ﷻ has provided, then it will grow weak and unable to function.

Similarly, the sustenance of the heart is righteousness and righteous deeds. These incorporate acts of righteousness such as sitting in good company, remembering Allah ﷻ, and adhering to the laws of the *shariah*.

### **The Heart's Polish**

Everything has a polish that causes it to shine when applied on it. For example, when shoe polish is applied on shoes, it makes them shine, and clothes become bright and clean when cleaned with their particular polish of soap. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said:

*For everything, there is a polish and the polish of the hearts is the remembrance of Allah*

The polish of the heart is the remembrance of Allah ﷻ, and the heart engaged in the remembrance of Allah will remain free from sin and darkness.

### **Blessings (*Barakah*) of Righteous Gatherings**

The gatherings of the *People of Allah* ﷻ are so miraculous that the sins of all those who attend shed like leaves in autumn. Dark hearts are cleansed by the remembrance of

Allah ﷻ that is practiced in such gatherings and dead hearts are awakened once again.

### **Another Fascinating Event**

A man came to Hadrat Hasan al-Basri's (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) gathering and said to him, "Hadrat, what has happened to us? It seems that our hearts are asleep because your insightful words have no effect on us."

Hadrat Hasan al-Basri replied, "Even the sleeping awake when shaken. If you are still unaffected by rightful guidance and not moved to repentance when entering the gatherings of the righteous, then your hearts are not asleep but dead."

So many people go through the motions of a human being from the outside, but indeed, the person on the inside has the face and habits of a monster. They eat, drink and sleep, but the person inside is asleep and oblivious. Having a true human face on the inside is a special blessing only granted to a few.

*Look deep inside and see what lies therein,  
If not true to Me, at least be true to yourself.*

Everyone should develop the habit of self-evaluation, because one only sees his true picture when he looks into his own heart. Only then will the person realize what he should be and what he currently is.

### **Hakim Ansari**

Eyesight has one status and insight of the heart another altogether. Hakim Ansari (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) was a famous doctor from Delhi whom Allah ﷻ had

granted great understanding and insight. Although he was physically blind, and therefore, unable to see the person's face and hands, Allah ﷻ had given him such insight and wisdom that he could diagnose a patient's problem by just feeling the pulse. He was so famous and respected that other doctors used to bring cases to him that were beyond their expertise.

Hadrat Abdul Malik Siddiqui (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) was a very renowned *shaykh* of the Naqshbandiah Order who once decided to visit Hakim Ansari for himself. He went to Hakim Ansari's office unannounced so that the doctor would be unaware of his arrival. Here, he started directing spiritual attention (*tawajjuh*) onto Hakim Ansari's heart and after sometime decided to shift focus to his *ruh* (spirit). As soon as Hadrat shifted his attention, Hakim Ansari cried out, "Hadrat, please don't move your focus from my heart because everything depends on the heart's rectification."

Hadrat Abdul Malik Siddiqui was amazed that Hakim Ansari's heart was so clean that it could sense his *tawajjuh* even though Hadrat had come unannounced. Such a one cannot be termed blind.

*Beseech Allah ﷻ for an insightful heart,  
Eyesight is not the same as sight of heart.*

### **Cataract Over the Heart and its Cure**

Just as cataracts impair a perfectly functional eye from proper sight, a comparable cataract of sin descends on the heart that prevents it from distinguishing right from wrong. A person with such a screen over his heart misses prayers



and commits other serious sins without an afterthought. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that angels run far from the stench of a lie, yet such a person lies with impunity and neither senses any wrongdoing nor the stench that the angels run from.

Absorbed in themselves and their life of sin, such people wander aimlessly increasing their sin, oblivious to the fact that the earth is screaming to Allah ﷻ for permission to swallow them for their naked and brash rebellion.

People with cataracts over their eyes go to surgeons to have the impairment removed so they can see properly. In the same way, those with similarly hardened hearts should retreat to gatherings of the *mashaikh* for spiritual treatment. In such glorious company, the hardness of the heart melts away and the heart again begins to see properly. In the majority of cases, the rebellious and astray who come into the company of the *People of Allah* ﷺ find their entire lives revolutionized and changed in one instant or after a mere glance from the beloved of Allah ﷻ. Destinies are thus changed in mere moments.

### **The Glance of the Prophet ﷺ**

Before being liberated by the glorious light of Islam, the Companions had been lost souls drowning in every imaginable sin just like the rest of Arabia. However, the remarkable gaze of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah was so potent that once they came into his company, a mere glance washed their souls clean and made them shining examples for all humanity.

*Themselves nothing, but later, guidance for humanity,  
What was that look that turned the dead to living?*

### **Shades of Allah's ﷻ Love**

In the fabric business, there are those who make the color for the fabric, those who apply the color to it, and finally those who sell or distribute the fabric. The Holy Quran and the Sunnah are different shades of the same color made by Allah ﷻ; the *mashaikh* apply it, whilst the scholars (*'ulama*) distribute it. The *mashaikh* apply the color of the Holy Quran to the hearts of those who seek to rectify themselves.

### **The Heart and the Shades of Allah ﷻ**

*(We take our) color from Allah, and who is better than Allah  
at coloring. [2:138]*

We should seek out the gatherings of the *mashaikh* and strive hard in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ. We have to struggle to rectify our hearts until the time of death, because if we are successful in this anytime before death, then life's goal has been achieved.

### **Man's Life Span**

We delude ourselves into thinking that they will repent for sins at a later time, and then delay repentance thinking that they have plenty of time. Unfortunately, we fail to realize that our lives are short and can end anytime.

Hadrat Imam Ghazali (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) used to say, "O Friend, the cloth from which your

burial shroud will be cut may have already reached the market and you remain unaware.”

*Value what you have seen already,  
You may never see these sights again.*

*Value the gatherings of friends and family  
For the time of separation is ever drawing near.*

*Value life's fresh breeze  
For you may never come this way again.*

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah once asked a Companion his approach towards life. He answered, “I wake up each morning not knowing if I will live to see the night.” Another Companion said, “When I prepare myself and make intention for prayer I do not know if I will live to complete it.” The Messenger ﷺ of Allah then told them his attitude towards life and thus what everyone’s attitude toward life should be and said, “When I end my prayer by sending the *salam* to my right, I do not know if I will live to complete the *salam* to my left.”

People who commit sins with the intention that they will repent later and then delay repentance thinking their life is long, are to be pitied because they are lost in a deadly delusion.

#### **Acts Liked by Allah ﷻ**

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said:

*Indeed Allah does not look to your appearance and wealth but  
rather your hearts and actions*

Hadrat Bilal رضي الله عنه was a Negro with thick lips and long teeth but nevertheless was the beloved of Allah ﷻ despite his appearance. While as a guest on the Ascension (*Miraj*) to Allah's ﷻ Throne, the Messenger ﷺ of Allah heard footsteps in Paradise and asked Hadrat Jibril عليه السلام whose they were. Hadrat Jibril عليه السلام replied, "They are the footsteps of your follower Bilal that echo in the heavens."

Man will be the loser in both this life and the Hereafter if he does not rectify his heart and life according to the Will and Pleasure of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ wants to enter the hearts of humankind but only if they are purified. Ruining one's heart is very easy but rectifying it is extremely difficult. Only the person who struggles hard to improve his condition truly knows what a hard task this is.

Only the person who struggles hard to improve his condition truly knows and appreciates what a hard task it is and what a difficult road he is on. Such a person notices the smallest pebbles on this road since he is striving hard on it, whereas the person heedless of all cannot even see the mountains of such a path since he is not even glancing toward this road.

### **The True Muslim**

It is unfortunate that most Muslims today assume that Islam and being a Muslim are easy just because they have been blessed with reciting the affirmation of faith (*shahadah*). On the contrary, entering the domain of this affirmation is the start of a long and arduous journey, but the sad truth is that whereas Muslims recite the affirmation of faith by tongue,

they behave as if they are the supreme masters of their destiny.

If people call themselves Muslims, they need to seriously evaluate what they have accomplished in the years of life they have already completed. However old they may be, they need to ask themselves if their eyes, their ears, and other bodily parts have become Muslim in the many years they have already lived. May Allah ﷻ make everyone Muslim.

*So what if the tongue says La Ila?  
All is naught if the heart and eyes are Muslim not.*

### **Community of the Heart**

Building thriving communities such as towns and villages takes generations but deserting them and leaving them to ruin is a much easier road. In the same way, rectifying a heart is a much harder task than destroying it.

*Deserts I have seen as well as thriving towns.  
The uprooted cannot settle and remain as heartless vessels.  
Wasting of a heart is easy but building back not a game  
Building this town is not a game,  
For this town is home forever.*

The issue of the heart is not a matter of play, for it can be ruined in an instant but take a lifetime to revive and rectify just like the making or rebuilding of a town. We should all strive our hardest to rectify our hearts and make them thriving communities.

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