

47) Inward Piety

One of the other cases in relation to which man should observe Taqwa in order to keep away from deviation and pollution is the heart which is sometimes defined as passion, desire, self, soul and even wits. Some of the scholars reject the heart as being sometimes synonymous to the soul, spirit or intellect. Allamah Majlisi believes that it is very difficult to get to know the heart and its essence. Even our Imams (AS) have spoken of it implicitly. Sometimes the heart has been described as “the book of thoughts”¹, “the book of vision”,² the “the treasurer of the tongue”³, or as the “fountain of wisdom and its ear or source”.⁴

It is also said: “The position of the heart to the body is as the position of an Imam to people”,⁵ or “the heart is a king that has an army. If the king is pious, the army will be pious and if the king is corrupt, the army will be corrupt too.”⁶

There are other definitions for “the heart” by the Imams (AS), but what we have said so far will suffice.

Scholars of ethics and researchers have likened the heart to a pond into which water flows from every direction. At other times, they have likened the heart to a target towards which arrows are thrown. They have also likened it to a mirror which is installed in a place and people pass by it, or a building which different people enter through different gates. I personally liken the heart to a market with different shops and shopkeepers who treat people differently according to what their minds and hearts say to them. Hence, it is necessary for us to get to know this heart into which everything enters through five senses as well as imagination, passion and anger.

What occurs to the heart is sometimes divine and at other times Satanic. Obviously, what is beneficial for us in this world and the hereafter is divine, and what is harmful is Satanic against which man should have Taqwa. There are many Quranic verses about Satanic temptations;

“Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men, the King of men, the God of men, from the whisperings of the slinking Satan, who whispers into the hearts of men, from among the jinn and the men.”⁷

Some of the interpreters of the Holy Quran have said that the reason why God begins this life-giving

Book with the letter ‘B’ and ends it with the letter ‘S’ which forms the word ‘Bas’ meaning “sufficient” is: O people! This Holy book is sufficient for you. This book of light is life-giving, peace-giving as well as healing and guiding.

Truly, man is always exposed to Satanic temptations. Hence, he should always be on guard against Satan. Satan’s enmity against human beings is not hidden to anyone. For further details and Satanic temptations, kindly refer to the book I have written under the title of “Satan and Passions”.

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported by Abu Baseer as saying: “There are two ears for every heart. Whenever a man intends to commit a sin, the spirit of faith says to him: ‘Do not do!', but Satan says to him: ‘Do it!' When he is (sleeping) on her (adulteress) abdomen, the spirit of faith is taken away from him.”⁸

From this narration, it is inferred that a human being is always subject to Satanic temptations and he has to choose between truth and falsehood, between good and evil. The spirit of faith invites him to the path of truth and good, but Satan pushes him to falsehood and evil. It is up to man to choose between these two.

When the atmosphere of a house is warm and bright, it means there is light in the house, and when it is cold, it means that there is no sign of light in it. The same is true with the heart. When Satan tempts man to commit sin, the heart becomes dark, and when an angel persuades man to obey God's command, the man's heart becomes illuminated.

In this relation, the Messenger of Allah (SAW) has said: “There is no believer except that there two ears to his heart in his chest; one ear into which an angel blows and another ear into which the slinking Satan blows. God helps the believer with the angel, for Allah the Glorified has said: “And He assisted them with a spirit from Him.”⁹

Imam Sadiq (AS) has said the same thing: “There is no believer except that in his heart there are two inward ears.”¹⁰

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “In man there is a piece of flesh. If it is healthy, the other parts of the body are healthy too and when it gets sick, the other parts of the body get sick too. That piece of flesh is the heart.”¹¹

The Holy Prophet (SAW) has also said: “When the man's heart is clean, his body shall be clean too, and whenever his heart is wicked, his whole body shall be wicked too.”¹²

The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: “The worst kind of blindness is the blindness of the heart.”¹³

An advice of Ameerul Mo'minin (AS) to his son is as follows: “O my son! One of the calamities is destitution. Worse than that is the disease of the heart. Surely, wealth is a blessing. Better than wealth is health and better than health is the Taqwa of the heart.”¹⁴

In a sermon, Imam Ali (AS) says: “Therefore, whoever makes his heart habituated to fear Allah achieves a forward position and his action is successful.”[15](#)

Imam Baqir (AS) has been reported by Abu Hamzah ath-Thumali as saying: “The hearts are of three kinds; there is a heart which is inverted; it does not enjoy any good. It is the heart of an unbeliever. There is a heart with a black point in it; good and evil are fighting each other in it; whichever is stronger it shall overcome the other. Finally, there is an open heart in which there is a lantern giving light and its light is not extinguished until the Day of Judgment. This is the heart of a believer.”[16](#)

This is an advice by the Holy Prophet (SAW) to Imam Ali (AS): “O Ali! There are four features which denote wretchedness; dryness of the eye, hardheartedness, endless wishing, and the love for survival.”[17](#)

Imam Sajjad (AS) has been reported as saying: “Be aware! There are four eyes for man; two eyes with which he sees the affair of his faith and the world, and two eyes with which he sees the affair of his hereafter. When God intends a good for His servant, He will open his eyes of the heart with which he will see the invisible and the affair of his hereafter. When God intends no good for him, He will leave his heart in what it is.”[18](#)

Imam Sadiq (AS) has reported his father as saying: “There is no corruption worse than sin is for the heart. The heart gets involved in sin until sin overcomes it. In that case, the bottom will come to the top and the top will go down to bottom.”[19](#)

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “If Satan did not approach the hearts of the children of Adam, they could see the Kingdom of God with their own eyes.”[20](#)

An advice by Imam Musa ibn Ja’far al-Kadhim (AS) to Hisham is this: “Jesus (AS) admonished the children of Israel as follows: ‘Make your hearts as the house of Taqwa. Do not make your hearts as the abode of Satan. O Bani Israel! Question the scholars even though you stand on your toes or sitting on your knees, for God enlivens the dead hearts with the light of wisdom in the same way that He enlivens a dead land with rain.’[21](#)

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “If it was not for exaggerations in your sayings and corruption in your hearts, you could certainly see what I can see and could hear what I can hear.”[22](#)

The heart is one of the wonders created by God. It is beyond the understanding of the human beings. The heart of a wise man is quite different from that of a fool. A peaceful heart is very distant from a diseased heart.

A burnished heart is like a mirror; it is filled with insight and easily breaks. It is quite different from a tarnished heart which is harder than stone is.

It is through the heart that man approaches God and reaches a sublime station: "***So he was the measure of two bows or even closer.***"²³

It is through the very heart that man takes distance from God. It is through this heart that man has seen the Kingdom of heavens and the earth. It is through this heart that man will not only be unable to see the Kingdom, but he will not see himself either. It is through this heart that man traverses the sublime stations of the angels and it is through the same heart that man cannot move an inch forward.

It is in this heart that wisdom, mercy, courage, power, faith, consciousness, virtue, devotion, obedience and piety abide. It is in the very heart that darkness, cruelty, ignorance, atrocity, murder, looting, fear, sluggishness, intoxication, rebellion, idolatry, xenophilism, oppression, and crimes abide.

It is in the heart that the belief in One God, the belief in prophethood and the Imams, the Day of Judgment, Sirat, Balance, Reckoning, Paradise, Hell and the reward of deed are observed.

It is in the very heart that the denial of God, blasphemy, disbelief, hypocrisy, and atheism can be seen.

It is in the heart that confidence, vision, hearing, contemplation, purification, and good will can be seen and it is in the same heart that blindness, deafness, turning away from the truth, polytheism, blindness of the heart, disease and veils of ignorance are seen.

It is in the heart that such virtues as modesty, humbleness, good temper, generosity, benevolence, pity, love, zeal, and chastity. And to sum it up, all the spiritual merits are seen, and it is in the very heart that arrogance, bad temper, avarice, greed, cruelty, suspicion, rancor, jealousy, and all vices can be seen in it.

The heart is the sanctum of God. In the words of Imam Sadiq (AS): "The heart is the sanctum of God! Therefore, do not give place to anyone but God to be in it."²⁴

The heart is the pasture of Satan, the dustbin of vices and the love of worldly pleasures. The heart is the best receptacle of truths and knowledge and the best divine treasury. The heart, too, is the worst receptacle and the worst store. Therefore, it is incumbent on all human beings to take care to purify it from all diseases and keep it safe from blindness, deafness, diseases, passions, and other vices, and to purify it with the light of the Quran, and the love of the Ahlul Bayt, and piety.

Human beings should keep their hearts lively and humble before God and always observe moderation. God says: "***The day on which property will not avail, nor sons, except him who comes to Allah with a heart free from evil.***"²⁵

Human beings should know that: "...***they whose hearts Allah has proved for guarding (against evil); they shall have righteousness and a great reward.***"²⁶ and they are those who are courteous before the Messenger of Allah (SAW).

This is the heart which man asks God in his supplications: “And try my heart with the piety of hearts!”

And it is the very heart that we ask God to purify in another supplication: “O Allah, purify my heart from hypocrisy and my deed from pretension. O Lord! Purify my heart from all illusions.” At other times, we say: “O Lord! Enlighten my heart with the light of the month of Ramadhan, O You the Enlightener of the hearts of mystics!”

In these supplications, both the positive and negative aspects have been observed. It means that man should purify his heart from all vices and adorn it with the light of knowledge, Gnosticism, faith and piety. In one of the daybreak supplications of Ramadhan, we say: “O Allah, fill my heart with love for You, fear of You, acknowledgment of You, belief in You, awe of You and willingness towards You, O Lord of Majesty and Honor.”

- [1.](#) Ghurar al-Hikam.
- [2.](#) Mizan al-Hikmah.
- [3.](#) Ghurar al-Hikam.
- [4.](#) Mizan al-Hikmah.
- [5.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 53.
- [6.](#) Mizan al-Hikmah.
- [7.](#) Qur'an, 114:1-6.
- [8.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 44
- [9.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 48
- [10.](#) Wafi, vol. 3, p. 169
- [11.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 50.
- [12.](#) Ibid.
- [13.](#) Ibid., p. 51.
- [14.](#) Ibid.
- [15.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 132.
- [16.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 51.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 52.
- [18.](#) Khisal.
- [19.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 54.
- [20.](#) Ibid., p. 59.
- [21.](#) Ibid., vol. 75, p. 308.
- [22.](#) Ten Discourses quoted from al-Mizan.
- [23.](#) Qur'an, 53:9.
- [24.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 25
- [25.](#) Qur'an, 26:88-89.
- [26.](#) Qur'an, 49:3.

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