

Abu Hurayrah narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:



1 God does not look at either your bodies or forms.

2 He only looks at your hearts. He pointed with his fingers to his chest.<sup>(1)</sup>

#### From the Qur'an

- ﴿Let me not suffer disgrace on the Day when all shall be raised from the dead; (87) the Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit; (88) but only the one who comes to God with a sound heart [will be happy].﴾ (26: 87-89)
- ﴿Truly, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most genuinely God-fearing.﴾ (49: 13)
- ﴿When you see them, their outward appearance may please you; and when they speak, you listen to what they say.﴾ (63: 4)

#### The Narrator

According to the best reports, Abu Hurayrah's name was 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṣakhr al-Dawsī. He embraced Islam in the year in which the Battle of Khaybar took place, i.e. Year 7 of the Hijri calendar. He remained close to the Prophet and was keen to learn and memorize the Prophet's hadiths. He was the companion who narrated the largest number of the Prophet's hadiths. He died in Madinah in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

#### Summary

Neither body nor form nor appearance is of any importance. It is the heart that counts and whether it is full of faith or unbelief.

1 Related by Muslim, 4779.



# Message and Meaning

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) tells us that God does not consider a person's appearance, form or physical build. In His consideration, there is no distinction between white and black, rich and poor or strong and weak. A person may have a pleasant face, good physical shape, and he may be able to put forward a strong argument and express himself well, but nothing of this will be of any significance with God, as He states about the hypocrites: 'When you see them, their outward appearance may please you; and when they speak, you listen to what they say'. (63: 4)

2

What counts with God is a person's heart, because the heart is where faith and righteousness are settled. Real distinction between people is based on righteousness and good deeds. God says: 'Truly, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most genuinely God-fearing'. (49: 13) The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab; nor a non-Arab over an Arab; nor a white person over a black one; nor a black person over a white one; except through righteousness'.<sup>(1)</sup>

A person may look ugly but he may have high status with God. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'A person with dishevelled hair may be one who is pushed away from people's doors, yet were he to say an oath to God, God will honour it'.<sup>(2)</sup>

However, some people may cite this hadith in support of their claim that the fulfilment of religious obligations and good deeds are of little importance. They may claim that if one's heart is full of faith and certainty, this will be sufficient and deeds become unnecessary. This is a false claim. Good deeds are part of faith and serve as its manifestation. No one's faith is truly established unless confirmed by their right deeds.

1 Related by Ahmad, 23489.

2 Related by Muslim, 2622.



# Implementation

1

The hadith makes clear that shapes and forms are of no significance. Therefore, we should not judge people on the basis of their appearance. Appearances can be deceptive.

2

The hadith tells us that a person should not give undue importance to his own form and how he looks, while taking little attention of what is in his heart. On the contrary, he should attach moderate importance to his body and physical appearance, and focus most on what has the strongest bearing on the final scales, namely, one's heart. He should ensure that he keeps his heart on the right track.

3

The Prophet (peace be upon him) draws our attention to the need to purge our hearts of any wrong ideas and misunderstandings that may open the way to wrong beliefs and pursuit of worldly luxuries. We should remember that God looks only at our hearts.

4

Every Muslim should ensure to have only good intentions. It is intention that determines one's reward or punishment. Therefore, a Muslim should be diligent and make strenuous efforts to always have the right intention. This is not an easy task. Early Muslims used to learn the formulation of right intention in the same way as people normally learn to do other things.

5

Those who focused on earning God's pleasure attached their top priority to their hearts so that they could ensure that they were on the right track. Truly pious people looked primarily at the defects that crept into hearts and how to set them right. In relation to other organs, the heart is like an absolute king with his obedient soldiers. They do what the king bids them and the king uses them at will. Hence, the heart determines whether they follow the right path or swerve away from it. The heart issues the commands and the organs do as they are bidden.

6

It is one's intention that qualifies a person for a reward or makes him incur a punishment. A person may do something good but he does it to please someone other than God. He, thus, incurs a punishment. On the other hand, a person may intend to do something for God's sake, but then finds himself unable to carry out his intention. He will be given a reward for his mere intention. Therefore, it is important to ensure having the right intention behind whatever we do.

7

Advocates of Islam and educators should always draw people's attention to the need to give due importance to the heart and purge it of any defects or ills.

8

Every Muslim should adopt the standard acceptable to God, the Exalted. Thus, true merit is attached to faith and righteousness, not to form, appearance, fine talk, wealth or social standing.

9

A Muslim should base his judgement of any person on that person's faith and piety. It is the standard a Muslim man or woman should apply when looking for a spouse. The same applies if one is looking for an employee, partner, tenant, etc. He should always prefer a religious, God-fearing person.



10

The heart may become unwell, like the body, and its cure is repentance. It may become blurred of vision, and it regains its shine through God's glorification. Like the body, it may become naked, hungry or thirsty. Its fine attire is piety, and its food and drink is his knowledge of God, loving Him, relying on Him and turning to Him in repentance.

11

The hadith mentions that the Prophet pointed with his fingers to his chest. This is an example of using body language to make one's meaning clear and well understood. Hence, body language should be used, whenever possible, in education and Islamic advocacy.

12

Julaybīb was a companion of the Prophet. He was short and devoid of good looks. The Prophet (peace be upon him) suggested to him that he should get married. He said: 'Messenger of God, you will find that I am unsaleable'. The Prophet said: 'But you are not so in God's sight'. The Prophet sent him to an Anṣārī family with a proposal for their daughter. Her parents were displeased, but their daughter immediately accepted in compliance with the Prophet's request. Then Julaybīb joined a military expedition with the Prophet. After the battle, the Prophet missed him, and then found him among the casualties. He found around him seven idolaters he had killed before he himself was killed. The Prophet said of him: 'He belongs to me and I belong to him'. Because of what she received from her husband, Julaybīb's widow became one of the most sought-after women.



