

The concept of heart in Quran

Zahra Tahmasebi

Master's in sciences of Quran and Hadith Maaref Abshenasan, Robat Karim, Tehran Iran

Received: April 20, 2015

Accepted: June 15, 2015

ABSTRACT

In words, heart means alteration and variation and in terms of religion it is the rational soul containing reason of truth and reflection, and also possession of all matters that enter the other senses, hence heart is known as the source of all voluntary human actions.

From Quran's perspective, heart is a cognitive tool. Basically the addressee of much Quran's messages is the human heart. The message which is only heard from the heart and no other ears are able to hear that. Therefore Quran places great emphasis on the preservation and development of these tools, introduces faith, virtue and righteous act as the ways of heart to reach the true knowledge. In Quran the purpose of the heart is the divine fine, i.e. the soul, not the member responsible for blood circulation in the body. Health and illness of the physical heart are related to the area of medical knowledge, and has nothing to do with the health and illness of spiritual heart; Man may be in the condition of healthy physical heart but isn't able to restrain his look from the passers and therefore his spiritual heart gets sick.

Also the individual who has evil tendencies is heart patient, though from the point of view of the material medicine he might be healthy in heart.

KEYWORDS: *heart, soul, physical heart, spiritual heart.*

1. INTRODUCTION

I will begin the article by asking some questions: what is heart? Where is heart? What influences the heart? What does heart influence on? What word is mentioned in Quran for heart? And so on.

In this article I am trying to present new meanings of the heart and mention its importance for human.

I draw your attention to an interesting statement. "Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest¹". Everybody has heard this statement. But what is in our soul that sets at rest by God's remembrance?

The heart is only a piece of flesh which pumps blood around the body, so if our heart stops working we will die. When we read Quran, we come across some verses about heart saying: there are deviations in the heart of some people. We put veil on some hearts. Some are surrounded by heaviness and finally the sickness has got into some people's hearts. By studying the verses and Hadiths about heart, we find that the heart should at least be an immaterial state, so these verses and hadiths are being presented with a meaning. If our heart is not an immaterial state, how is it possible that a piece of flesh running blood in it sets in rest with God's remembrance? Or how God puts veil on it? Etc.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Different definitions of "heart"

"Ghalb" (heart) is an Arabic word and it has been mentioned in Quran, it is the equivalent word for "Del" in Persian. Ghalb means what has been turned, change and revolution, means transformative. Human's heart is in turn and it has no stability. Every moment abundant changes happen in the heart. The reason for these changes is that the heart is very gentle. The most gentle part of human soul and entity is his heart; either his spiritual heart or his pear-shaped heart.

"Heart" in physiology and in folkway has a clear meaning. It means one of the human's organs located in the left part of the chest.

Heart (Ghalb) is the synonym for "taghlob" and "enqel Ab" which means "change" and "revelation", and it is the interface between this sense and its morality term; because heart in morality and Qur'anic term has the sense of transitive and vicissitudinous meaning. Thus, this word is used as the meaning for revolution and change.

The author of "Atib -al- Bayan" says: heart literally means pear-shaped flesh which is located in the left side of the chest and is the source of stream soul in human and animal.

1) Sura Ra'd, verse 28

* **Corresponding Author:** Zahra Tahmasebi, Master's in sciences of Quran and Hadith Maaref Abshenasan, Robat Karim, Tehran, Iran. Email: tahma313@yahoo.com

However, in Qur'anic verses it refers to the divine essence differing from material and body, it is interpreted as wisdom, human spirit and rational soul.

"Heart" in Qur'anic usage is the existence capable of understanding and thinking, it is the center of emotions, makes decisions, makes friends and enemies and so on. It is safe to say that what is meant by heart is the human's soul and ego. A characteristic or work of a human soul cannot be found unless the heart is the cause of that to happen, so that it could be the origin of the fall and human vices and perhaps it can be claimed that no other dimensions of human soul or a characteristic or work of human can be found unless the heart is the cause of that to happen.

In Qur'anic term, heart is defined as human gentle soul which by possessing the bodily heart dominates in the human's body. So as this part of the body is the center of different emotional changes, it is called "heart".

Qalb means heart and the plural of that is aqlab and qolu:b. Some believe the reason that the heart is called Qalb is that it is due to the change and alteration happens in it. In verse 110 Al-Anām it means the same :

Some philologists have differentiated between Fo'aad (meaning heart in plural) and heart. According to them Fo'aad is used in a particular way. Some others believe that Qolu:b and af'adeh(meaning hearts) are the same and the only difference is the pronunciation. Some others make another distinction between Fo'aad and heart, they define it as "soft" and heart is defined as delicate. The reason is that Fo'aad is the curtain of the heart, when it is delicate and soft, the speech affects in it and when it is thick and firm it is hard to enter. When the heart has the adjective of softness, at the time of coming across to something will have belonging and dependency... however in one narration from the prophet, Gholu:b is described by using "delicate" and hearts by using "softness":

"The "Yemen" that have hearts soften and more full of love than the others come onto you "

Another meaning of heart is wisdom. Often philologists define the heart as wisdom. Some other philologists use heart and wisdom as synonyms, in their dictions we come across "heart of wisdoms" which shows the relationship between heart and wisdom. In the interpretation of the verse "Most surely there is a reminder in this for him who has a heart" ,Far'a has interpreted the heart as the wisdom.¹ He allows the other interpretations as:

"The owner of the heart" ,

It means "where his heart gone ? " . Some other define heart as reason and wisdom.

On the whole some affairs as heart, wisdom, conscience ,temperament and emotions cannot be materialistic . On the other hand it is possible that these need a materialistic tool ,such that the power of wisdom need brain's cells but this doesn't mean that the brain and cells are thinking.

But one of the best ways of recognizing the meaning of heart in Quran is referring to Quran and examining the signs attributed to the heart.

Understanding the truth

One of the things attributed to the heart is "realization" which include Propositional Knowledge and intuitive knowledge ,in which comprehending and understanding are the main affairs of "heart" ,meaning that the affair of the heart is to understand ,so if it doesn't, it can be concluded that it is due to its unsoundness ,in fact it is damaged. On this ground we can refer to some verses including:

And certainly we have created for hell many of the jinn and the men; they

Have hearts with which they do not understand²

Indeed the believers are those whose hearts quake at the mention of Allah.

And in other verse says:

Those who give what they give [in alms] while their hearts are full of fear that to their Lord they must return³

In other verses "terror" is attributed to the heart but with more intensity used in negative terrors such as

We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve⁴

We will throw terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve

Other emotions, "anxiety", "cruelty", "regret" and "indignation" in the Holy Qur'an are presented as heart. In contrast to the above mentioned states such as "humility", "delicateness", "compassion", "mercy", "reverence" in the Holy Quran was attributed to heart.

The center of emotion is in the heart which is pear- shaped located in the left part of the chest and emotional tensions in the first place influence this part, the first strike begins from the heart, but by encountering calamity, we immediately feel the pain in this pear- shaped heart. At the same time by encountering pleasurable matters we feel cheer and tickle in this center.

1 Al-anaam sura, verse 110

2 Al-Araf sura, verse 179

3 Al-momenoon 60

4 Al-Imran, verse 151

It is true that the main center of “perception and emotions” are the human spirit but the physical protests and reactions are different. For the first time the understanding and comprehension’s reaction begins at the brain. However, the reaction of emotional issues such as love, hatred, fear, peace, joy and sorrow appears in the human’s heart, such that when they are created we can feel their effects on our heart.

In conclusion: If in Quran, the emotional issues are attributed to the heart (the special member) and intellectual issues are attributed to heart (meaning wisdom, brain), is due to the aforementioned facts. After all, heart as a special member has an important role in life and survival of human being, since a moment of pause will lead to the destruction. So what would be wrong if the intellectual and emotional activities be attributed to that?!

Characteristics of heart

According to Quran, heart is a cognitive tool. Basically the addressee of the main messages of Quran is the human’s heart. The message which is only heard from the heart and no other ears are able to hear that. Accordingly Quran has a great emphasis on the preservation and the development of this tool.

Quran repeatedly talks about issues such as the purification of the heart, the light of the heart and ingenuity of the heart.

I swear by the sun and its brilliance¹

What they used to do has become like rust upon their hearts

And about the light of the heart says:

If you are careful of [your duty to] Allah, He will grant you a distinction

Or in other verse says:

Those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways

Alternatively, Quran many times has discussed that the wrong deeds will darken the human’s soul and removes the allurements and attraction from the human.

Quran by quoting the believers mentions:

Make not our hearts to deviate after Thou hast guided us aright, and grant us from Thee mercy

Or in describing the wrong-doers says:

What they used to do has become like rust upon their hearts

No indeed their darkness of oppression and wrong-doings prevailed over their hearts.

When they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside

But when they swerved away Allah caused their hearts to swerve

Or it mentions locked up and sealed, brutal hearts:

Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great punishment for them

And we have placed coverings on their hearts and a heaviness in their ears

Lest they understand it²

Thus does Allah set a seal over the hearts of the unbelievers?

O you who believe! Answer [the call of] Allah and His Messenger when he

Calls you to that which gives you life; and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered³

With the little attention in verses of Quran it would be clear that the heart mentioned in this verse is different from the physical heart, but the purpose of heart here means the human’s soul by which the human can comprehend, feel, he does well, he donates, he fears, he recognizes.

Definition of heart and the effects of that on view of verses

Mota’hari believes that “the meaning of heart is not the piece of flesh in the chest. As the roughly synonymous word for that, Sadr, defined as (chest) does not refer to the bony chest .otherwise what aspect should be discussed on this matter that the introduction of human guidance is that his chest has been expanded to the guidance, since the introduction of his misconduct is narrowness of the chest”.

Heart in 132 verses, Sadr in 44 verses and Fo’aad(plural of hearts) in 16 verses have been used. According to the mentioned cases in Quran and different meaning in different situations, we can mention all these common aspects in the chest, and according to Quran heart is considered as the cognition tool for the vice and virtue, which man with the correct use of this cognition can improve his capacity and adds luster to his heart, and it gets easier for him to recognize divine teachings and on the contrary ,by stepping into the realm of sins and vices and filth loses the divine teachings and narrowness of the chest and heart blocks the biggest source of receiving the facts.

1 Al-Shams(9)

2 Al-Asraa (46)

3 Al-Anfaal (24)

Usage of heart in Quran

The usage of heart can be categorized as follow:

1. A member along the other members of the body

A member along the other members (such as ear used for hearing, eye used for seeing and mouth used for expressing), is used as a means of understanding. Sometimes it is hindered and other times it is used for reasoning. "Have they not traveled in the land, so that they have hearts with which to understand?"

2. Wisdom and reasoning

It means wisdom and reasoning; as we read in verse 37 Qaaf sura :

Most surely there is a reminder in this for him who has a heart¹ :

3. Human's life

It means human's life; as read in Al-Ahzaab sura verse 10:

When the eyes turned dull, and the hearts rose up to the throats²

4. Human's ego

It means human's ego possessing power and freedom of choice. Sometimes he is a believer, other times he refuses to worship and servitude becomes sinner. The heart which presents by faith and good deeds before God is called "common heart" and "penitent heart".

Heart as the establishment of faith and infidelity

Heart is a container in which human's view and his belief is established within it. It can be either a corrupted and deviant belief or a correct belief directing towards servitude. In fact heart is the main location for setting faith and infidelity.

5. The place of revelation

It is a place of revelation; as he (Gabriel), according to God's command has revealed Qur'an to thy heart.

6. The center of emotion

It means the center of emotions; where illness, cruelty, ignorance, hatred, doubt, peace, submission and humbleness and so on are attributed to that. In Al-E-Imran verse 159 we read that:

And had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you³

7. Verdict and opinion

In a verse in Al-Hashr it means verdict and opinion:

Thou wouldst think they were united, but their hearts are divided⁴

8. Human's soul

In verse 10 Al-Ahzaab sura, heart is something which reaches to the throat and says:

The hearts gaped up to the throats⁵

9. The cause of sin and reward

In the verse 283 Al-Baqara is what is described as sin and reward .and says:

His heart is tainted with sin⁶

As it is clear Quran gives special importance to the heart. In addition to that the holy prophet (one whom be peace) says in a hadith: your heart shall be the sanctuary of God and you shall not give it to someone else.

How many times does Quran mention heart and what are the meanings?

Heart is mentioned more than 100 times in Quran. In conceptualization of the word heart it got clear that heart in lexicon and in Arabic language used with both the meaning of pear-shaped heart, wisdom (perceptive faculty) and soul. In any case this is a concept familiar to Arabic speakers, even when Quran was revealed. There is no error in the application of this concept.

This serves a meticulous attention that in verses and narratives in which heart and chest are juxtapose, at first the meaning of heart with the help of symmetries should be recognized and then according to the meaning of heart, chest should be translated.

The usage of heart in narratives

We use the same way in narratives, the heart introduced as contemplation statues is used as soul; moreover, some narratives clearly consider heart as wisdom (perceptive faculty):

1 Ghaaf(37)

2 Al-Ahzab(10)

3 AAl-E-Imarn(159)

4 Al-Hashr (14)

5 Al-Ahzaab (10)

6 Al-Baqara (283)

❖ **A narrative by Imam Kazem**

In Hadith-Al-Kafi, in book “Wisdom and Ignorance” (Al-aql and Al-jahl) quoted from Iman Mosaf-ibn-Jafar (peace be upon him):

“O Hesham God truly says in Quran that: “Quran is indeed a reminder for anyone who has a heart, meaning the reason”.

❖ **A narrative by Imam Baqer**

Imam Baqer (peace be upon him) says: “ surely Allah created us from the highest heaven, and created the heart of our Shiites from what had created ours and created their bodies from lower degree; therefore Shiites’ hearts are attracted to us, because they were created from the same as what he’d been created. In this narrative hearts are in contrast to the human body. Many other similar hadiths have differentiated infidels’ hearts from believers and feudist’s, thus divided it into different categories.

❖ **Narrative by Imam Ali**

They asked Imam Ali: Do you see God? He answered: do we question about what we cannot see? Then this steady statement flowed over his blessed tongue:

Eyes cannot see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief.¹

Eyes cannot see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous. However, man can reach God other ways, which are through heart and true faith.

Imam Ali says about heart, the center of man’s life: “to the artery of this man there is a torn flesh hanging which are the most wonderful and inner members; and it is nothing but the heart which is the source of wisdom.²

❖ In a beautiful speech the holy prophet peace be upon him says:

The heart of man has two ears, when he decides to do a sin the faith soul says: Don’t and the evil says: Do”

Conclusion

By examine the concept of “heart” in Qur’anic verses it can be concluded that “heart” is equivalent to the part of human soul which is the center of comprehending and also the emotions and senses. This means that in one way human recognition and understanding happen through the heart and in other way attitudes, motivations and inner feelings also enter in the heart. This should be pointed out that as the mystics claimed and as human understandings are extensive and include propositional and intuitive knowledge, all the intuitions by mystics and their paranormal comprehensions happen through the “heart”. Although individuals are different in the extent of benefits receiving from divine teachings and depends on the level of their purity of heart in which some factors like much piety , degrees of faith and degrees of devotion play role in it.

REFERNCES

1. Holy Quran
2. Al-Rad,verse 28
3. Al-Ahzaab,verse 10,32
4. Al-Maedeh,verse 52,54
5. Al-Anaam,verse 25,110
6. Ghaaf,verse 35
7. Al-Araaf,verse 101,179
8. Al-Haj,verse 46
9. Al-Enfaal,verse 2,24,29
10. Al-Mumenoon,verse 60
11. Al-shams,verse 9
12. Al-Motaffain,verse 14
13. Al-Ankaboot,verse 69
14. Al-e-Imran,verse 8,159
15. Ass-saf,verse 5
16. Al-Baqarah,verse 7,283
17. Al-anaam, verse 25
18. Qaaf, verse 37

¹ Nahjul Balaqah, sermon 179

² Nahjul Balaqah, page 425,sermon105,Al-Kaafi, page 31,Tahaf-al-oql page 95

19. Al-Hashr, verse 14
20. Al-mizan, volume 16,p 274
21. Kaafi,V2,P420
22. Nahjul-Balaqah, P425,S 105; Al-Kaafi, P 31; Tahaf-Al-oqul, P95,S178
23. Bahar-Al-Anvaar,V70
24. The research about words in Quran,V9
25. Introduction to Quran volume 1,Motahari,Morteza
26. Atib-al-bayan fi tafsir ah-Quran,V1,P276
27. Rahnama, Hadi; (2009), articles in international Quran competitions, Osveh (Endowments and charity organization).
28. Collecting from: Tafseer nemooneh (the ideal commentary), Makarem Shirazi, Darol-Kotob-al-islam