

## CHAPTER THREE

# The Disease of Desires and Passionate Love

### [3.1 Between Jealousy and Desires]

Miserliness and jealousy are sicknesses that lead to the soul hating that which would benefit it, and its loving that which would harm it. This is why jealousy was mentioned alongside hatred and resentment in the preceding *abādīth*. As for the sickness of desire and passionate love then this is the soul loving that which would harm it and coupled with this is its hatred of that which would benefit it.

Passionate love is a psychological sickness, and when its effects become noticeable on the body, it becomes a sickness that afflicts the mind also. Either by afflicting the mind by the likes of melancholy, or afflicting the body through weakness and emaciation. But the purpose here is to discuss its affect on the heart, for passionate love is the fundament that makes the soul covet that which would harm it, similar is the one weak of body who covets that which harms it, and if he is not satiated by that then he is grieved, and if he is satiated then his sickness increases.

[3.2 The Reality of Passionate love (*ishk*)]

The same applies to the heart afflicted with this love, for it is harmed by its connection to the loved, either by seeing, touching, hearing, even think about it. And if he were to curb the love then the heart is hurt and grieved by this, and if he gives in to the desire then the sickness becomes stronger and becomes a means through which the grievance is increased.

In the *ḥādīth* there occurs,

Indeed Allāh shelters His believing servant from the world just as one of you shelter your sick ones from food and drink (that would harm them).<sup>1</sup>

In the *ḥādīth* concerning the saving of Mūsā reported by Wahb<sup>2</sup>, which is recorded by Imām Aḥmad in *aṣ-Ṣūḥb*,

Allāh says: 'Indeed I drive away My friends from the delights of this world and its opulence and comfort just as the compassionate shepherd drives away his camel from the dangerous grazing lands. And indeed I make them avoid its tranquility and livelihood, just as the compassionate shepherd makes his camel to avoid the resting-places wherein it would be easy prey. This is not because I consider them to be insignificant, but so that they may complete their portion of My Kindness in safety and abundance, the delights of the world will not attract him and neither would desires overcome him.'

<sup>1</sup> A similar *ḥādīth* to this reported by al-Bayhaqī and it is a *ḍa'īf ḥādīth*. (refer to *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*).

<sup>2</sup> Wahb ibn Munabbih is a noble *tābi'ī*, but this *ḥādīth* is reported from him directly to the Prophet (ﷺ) and is not authentic.

Therefore the only cure for the sick lies in his removing the sickness by removing this blameworthy love from his heart.

People are divided into two opinions concerning passionate love: One group says that it falls into the category of intentions and wishes, this being the famous opinion. Another groups says that it falls into the category of imagination and fantasies and that it is a corruption of the imagination since it causes one to depict the one who is loved in other than his true reality. This group went on to say:

And this is why Allāh has not been described with passionate love (*ishk*) and neither that He passionately loves (*ya'shik*) because He is far removed from this, and one cannot be praised who has these corrupt thoughts.

As for the first group, then from them are those who said:

'He is described with passionate love (*ishk*) because it is a complete and perfect love and Allāh loves (*yuhib*).'

And it is reported in the narration of 'Abdul Wāḥid bin Zayd that He said,

'The servant will always continue to draw closer to me, loving Me and I loving him (*A'shiquhu*).'

This is the saying of some of the Sūfis but the majority do not apply this word to Allāh, because passionate love is a love exceeding the proper bounds, as for the Love of Allāh then it has no end and cannot exceed the proper bounds. Passionate love is to be considered blameworthy without any exceptions, it is not

to be praised when it is directed towards the Creator or created because it is a love that exceeds the proper bounds.

This is also true because the word 'passionate love' is only employed with regards to a man loving a woman or child (or vice versa), it is not employed in things such as the love of one's family, property or status, just as it is not employed with regards to the love of the Prophets and the righteous. Commonly, you will find this word being mentioned alongside a forbidden action, such as loving the woman who is not lawful for him, or loving a child joined with the unlawful glance and touch and other such unlawful actions.

As for the love of a man for his wife or slave-girl which leads him out of the folds of justice such that he does unlawful things for her and leaves what is obligatory - as commonly happens - even to the extent that he may oppress his son born of his old wife due to this love of his new wife, or to the extent that he will do things to keep her happy that would harm his religion and worldly life. For example his singling her out for inheritance that she does not deserve, or that he gives her family authority and property that exceeds the limits set by Allāh, or he goes to excesses in spending on her, or he makes unlawful things possible for her which harms his religion and worldly life. This passionate love is forbidden with regards to one who is permissible for him, so how would it be with regards for one who has passionate love for someone who is unlawful or with regards to two men? For this contains a corruption the extent of which none can assess except the Lord of the servants; it is a sickness that corrupts the religion and objectives of the one who possesses it, then it corrupts his intelligence and then his body. Allāh, the Most High, says,

يَنْسَاءُ النَّبِيَّ  
 لَسْتُ نَكَّاحًا مِنْ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ  
 فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾

...Then do not be soft in speech, lest in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire, but speak in an honourable manner.

[*Sūrah Abzāb* (33) : 32]

There are some whose hearts contain the disease of desire and whose perceptions are only skin deep. When the object of the desire submits, the sickness is satiated, and this satiation strengthens the desire and pursuit of the object and hence strengthens the sickness. This is in contrast to the one whose objective is not met, for this failure results in removing the satiation that would strengthen the sickness and thereby the desire is weakened as is the love. This is because the person definitely intends that there be action accompanying his desire, for otherwise all his desire would be is just whisperings of the soul, unless there is some speech or looking accompanying this.

As for the one who is afflicted with this passionate love but holds back and is patient, then indeed Allāh will reward him for his *taqwā* as occurs in the *ḥadīth*:

That the one who passionately loves someone yet holds back, conceals this and is patient, then dies upon this, will be a martyr. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A *da'if ḥadīth*. Refer to the discussion concerning its inauthenticity in *al-Jawāb al-Kāfi* and *Rawḍah al-Muḥibbin* of Ibn al-Qayyim and *Silsilah aḍ-Ḍa'if* of al-Albānī.

This *ḥadīth* is known to be the report of Yaḥyā al-Qatāt from Mujāhid from Ibn ‘Abbās from the Prophet (ﷺ) but it is problematic and such a *ḥadīth* is not to be depended upon.

But it is known from the evidences of the *Shari‘ah* that if one were to hold back from performing that which is unlawful, be it looking, speaking or acting, and he conceals this and does not articulate it so as not to fall into that which is prohibited and he is patient in his obedience to Allāh and keeping away from disobedience to Allāh, despite the pain that his heart feels due to passionate love, (similar to the case of the one who is patient through a calamity), then indeed this person would gain the same reward as those who have feared Allāh and been patient.

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ  
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

**Verily, he who fears Allāh and is patient, then surely Allāh makes not the reward of the doers of good to be lost.**

[*Sūrah Yūsuf* (12) : 90]

This holds true for the disease of envy and all other sicknesses that afflict the heart. So when the soul pursues that which would anger Allāh, and the person prevents himself from this, fearing Allāh, then he is included in His saying,

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ  
﴿٤١﴾ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿٤٢﴾

**But as for him who feared the standing before His Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires, and lusts. Verily, Paradise will be**

**his abode.**

[*Sūrah Nāz'iat* (79) : 40-41]

When the soul loves something, it will do all that it can to attain it, so the one who does this out of having a blameworthy love or hatred then this action of his would be sinful. For example his hating a person due to envying him and thereby harming whosoever is linked to that person - either by preventing his rights or by showing them enmity, or his doing something that is commanded by Allāh but he does it due to his desires and not for the sake of Allāh.

These types of sicknesses are commonly found in the heart. The person can hate something and due to this hate, love a great many things due to mere whims and fancies. As one poet affected by this said,

*For the sake of a Sudanese girl he loved Sudan  
to the point  
that he loved the black dogs due to  
his love of her.*

So he loved a black girl, and therefore loved all types of black even the blackness of dogs! All of this is a sickness in the heart with regards to its imagination, fantasies and desires. We ask Allāh that He eliminate all of the illnesses from our hearts, and we seek refuge with Allāh from evil manners, desires and sicknesses.

### [3.3 The Natural Inclination of the Heart is to love of Allāh]

The heart has only been created for the worship of Allāh, and this is the natural disposition (*fiṭrah*) upon which Allāh created His servants as the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

Every new-born child is born upon the natural disposition and it is his parents that make him a Jew, Christian or a Magian, as an animal produces a perfect young animal, do you see any part of its body amputated?

Then Abū Hurayrah, (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*), said, recite if you wish the saying of Allāh,

فَطَرَتِ اللَّهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا

**The *Fiṭrah* of Allāh with which He has created mankind. No change is there in the creation of Allāh.**

[*Sūrah Rūm* (30) : 30]<sup>4</sup>

So Allāh has made the natural disposition of His servants to love Him and worship Him Alone, so if the natural disposition was to be left as it is without corrupting it, then it would be cognizant of Allāh, loving Him Alone; but the natural disposition does become corrupted due to the sickness of the heart - such as the parents making it a Jew or a Christian - even though this be by the Will and Predecree of Allāh, just like the body is altered by amputation. But even after this it is possible for the heart to return to the natural disposition if Allāh makes this

<sup>4</sup> Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.



easy for the one who does his utmost to return it to the natural disposition.

The Messengers were sent to affirm and re-establish the natural disposition and to perfect it, not to alter it. So when the heart loves Allāh Alone, making the religion sincerely for Him, it will not be tried by the love of anyone else, not to mention be tried with passionate love because were it to be afflicted with passionate love then this would diminish its loving Allāh alone. This is why when Yūsuf was tried with this passionate love (directed to him) his love of Allāh Alone, making the religion sincerely for him, did not allow him to be overcome by this, rather Allāh said,

لَوْلَا أَن رَّءَا بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ ۚ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ  
وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

**Thus it was, that We might turn away from him evil and illegal sexual intercourse. Surely he was one of Our chosen, guided slaves.**

[Sūrah Yūsuf (12) : 24]

As for the wife of al-'Azīz, it was because she was and her nation were polytheists that she was afflicted with passionate love. No one, is afflicted with passionate love except that this diminishes his singling out Allāh Alone for worship and his faith. The heart that repents to Allāh, fearing Him, has two routes by which it can remove this passionate love:

### [3.4 Preventative Measures from Passionate Love]

1) Repenting to Allāh and loving Him, for indeed this is more satisfying and purer than anything else, and nothing will be left to love along side Allāh.

2) Fearing Allāh, for indeed fear is the opposite of passionate love and removes it.

So everyone who loves something, with passion or otherwise, then this love can be removed by loving that which is more beloved to compete with it.<sup>5</sup>

This love can also be removed by fearing the occurrence of a harm that is more hateful to one than leaving this love. So when Allāh is more beloved to the servant than anything else, and more feared by him than anything else, then he will not fall into passionate love or find any love that would compete with his love of Allāh, except in the case of negligence or at a time when this love and fear has become weak by his leaving some of the obligatory duties and by performing some of the prohibited actions. For indeed faith increases with obedience and decreases with disobedience, so each time a servant obeys Allāh out of love and fear, and leaves a prohibited action out of love and fear, his love and fear becomes stronger, and any love or fear of anything else besides Allāh will disappear from his heart.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to *Rawḍah al-Mubībbīn* of Ibn al-Qayyim for he has a beautiful discussion concerning this.