

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

A human has two aspects to his life: physical and spiritual. The physical aspect is related to the body and the spiritual aspect is related to the soul. Both aspects are vulnerable to illnesses. Just as the body can suffer from physical ailments such as cancer, TB, fever, headache, etc., the soul can also suffer from spiritual illnesses, such as riyā (ostentation), takabbur (pride and arrogance), ḥasad (jealousy), lack of ṣabr (patience), lack of shukr (gratitude), love for fame and wealth, etc. Both aspects are very important for us because just as physical health is important in order to ensure an enjoyable life, similarly, spiritual health is also vital to secure a peaceful mind and a heart full of contentment. In fact, spiritual health is far more important because the everlasting success in the Hereafter depends solely upon it. However, the concern shown towards the two are very different.

When we are afflicted with a physical illness we have great concern, but when it comes to spiritual illnesses, no concern whatsoever is shown; whereas, in reality, more concern should be shown for our spiritual health for the following reasons:

1. To treat a physical illness is sunnah; whereas, to treat a spiritual illness is necessary.
2. If a person bears a physical illness with patience it becomes a means of expiation for his sins; whereas, spiritual illnesses lead to good deeds being washed away.
3. The detrimental consequences of a physical illness will come to an end upon death; whereas, the evil result of a spiritual illness may manifest during the lifetime and certainly begin upon death.
4. If a person dies with certain physical illnesses, then he will be granted shahādah; whereas, spiritual illnesses will jeopardise one's life in the Hereafter.

Despite such grave consequences we do not give due concern. This is in stark contrast to physical illnesses, when we will not even tolerate a slight headache or cold without resorting to remedies like medication!

Now that we have understood the severity of spiritual illnesses, let us exert every effort to keep ourselves spiritually healthy. In order to achieve this, the following guidelines will be of immense benefit inshā'allāh:

1. Find a qualified Shaykh and associate yourself to him. Continually inform him of your spiritual condition, referring to

him your spiritual illnesses, and follow his instruction to the best of your ability.

2. Make constant du'ā to Allāh ﷻ that he eradicates spiritual illnesses from the heart, for in reality He is the real healer of all illnesses. The Prophet ﷺ would supplicate with this du'ā:

رَبِّ اعْطِنَا نَفْسِي تَقْوَاهَا وَزَكِّهَا أَنْتَ خَيْرُ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا أَنْتَ وَلِيِّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا

“O my Rabb, grant taqwā to my nafs and purify it; You are the Best Purifier and You are its Guardian and Master.”
(Aḥmad)

3. Monitor yourself constantly, assessing the condition of the heart throughout the day. If time is set aside daily for an assessment of how the day was spent, it will go a long way to help you recognise spiritual illnesses.
4. Once a particular spiritual illness is recognised, read up on the evil consequences and punishments of the illness, so that concern is created which will then serve as a barrier from continuing to suffer from it. It will also encourage contacting the Shaykh and following his guidance.

5. Adopt pious company, especially that of your Shaykh; and refrain from wrong company.
6. Stay in a pious environment, refraining from an evil one.
7. Perform excessive dhikr. This can be in the form of:
 - Adhkār prescribed by your Shaykh.
 - Recitation of the Glorious Qur’ān, preferably one juz per day.
 - Supplications of the Prophet ﷺ for prescribed actions and situations. For example, the du‘ās before entering and at the time of leaving the masjid, before and after eating, etc.

- Adhkār encouraged by the Prophet ﷺ. For example, the Prophet ﷺ says in a ḥadīth:

“Two words which are loved by Ar-Raḥmān, light on the tongue and weighty on the scales are:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَ
اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ

*Subḥānallāhi wa bi ḥamdiḥī
Subḥānallāhil ‘Azīm.*” (Al-Bukhārī)

Similarly, in another ḥadīth, the Prophet ﷺ says, “Whoever recites (the

following) a hundred times in a day, will get the reward for emancipating a hundred slaves, a hundred virtues will be written in his account, a hundred sins will be forgiven, and it shall be protection for him from Shayṭān for that day until evening. None shall surpass him in virtue on that day other than he who recites this more than him:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ
الْمَلِكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

*Lā ilāha illa llāhu waḥdahū lā sharika
lahū lahul mulku wa lahul ḥamdu
wa huwa ‘alā kulli shay’in qadīr.*”
(Al-Bukhārī)

If we understand the severity of spiritual illnesses and make a concerted effort to seek cures from them by following the guidelines above, we will inshā’allāh see ourselves become spiritually healthy. May Allāh grant us the tawfīq.

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