

علمی تحقیقی مجلہ فقہ اسلامی ۹۲ رجب الثانی ۱۴۲۷ھ ☆ مئی - جون ۲۰۰۶

This is indeed a strict training for conforming one's practice to one's ideals. Obviously if a man's consciousness of his duties towards his Creator is so acute that he prizes it above all worldly gains and keeps refreshing it through Prayers, he would certainly not be inviting the displeasure of God that he all along has striven to avoid. He will abide by the law of God in the entire gamut of life in the same way as he follows it in the five Prayers every day.

Then again you must say your Prayers in congregation and especially so the Friday Prayer. This creates among the Muslims a bond of love and mutual understanding. This arouses in them the sense of their collective unity and fosters among them national fraternity. All of them say their Prayers in one congregation and this inculcates in them a deep feeling of brotherhood. Prayers are also a symbol of equality, for the poor and the rich, the low and the high, the rulers and the ruled, the educated and the unlettered, the black and the white all stand in one row and prostrate before their Lord. Prayers also inculcate in Muslims a strong sense of discipline and obedience to the elected leader. In short, Prayers train them in all those virtues that make possible the development of a rich individual and collective life.

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Now see how this is achieved: You perform ablution in the way prescribed by the Prophet (peace be upon him). You also say your Prayers according to the instructions of the Prophet. Why do you do so? Simply because you believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and deem it your bounden duty to follow him ungrudgingly. Why do not you intentionally misrecite the Qur'an? Isn't it so because you regard the Book as the Word of God and deem it a sin to deviate from its letter? In the Prayers you recite many things quietly and if you do not recite them or make any deviation from them, there is no one to check you.

What makes you say your Prayers at places where there is no one to ask you to offer them or even to see you offering them? Isn't it so because of your belief that God is ever looking at you? What makes you leave your important business and other occupations and rush towards the mosque for Prayers? What makes you terminate your sweet sleep in the early hours of the morning, to go to the mosque in the heat of the noon, and to leave your evening entertainments for the sake of Prayers? Is it anything other than sense of duty-your realization that you must fulfill your responsibility to the Lord, come what may? And why are you afraid of any mistake in Prayer? Because your heart is filled with the fear of God and you know that you have to appear before Him on the Day of Judgment and give an account of your entire life.

Now look! Can there be a better course of moral and spiritual training than Prayer? It is this training which makes a man a perfect Muslim. It reminds him of his covenant with God, refreshes his faith in Him, and keeps the belief in the Day of Judgment alive and ever-present before his mind's eye. It makes him follow the Prophet and trains him in the observance of his duties.

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You read out from the Book of the Lord and express witness to the truth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and also refresh your belief in the Day of Judgment and enliven in your memory the fact that you have to appear before your Lord and give an account of your entire life. This is how your day starts.

Then, after a few hours the muezzin calls you to Prayer, and you again submit to your God and renew your covenant with Him. You dissociate yourself from your worldly engagements for a few moments and seek audience with God. This once again brings to the fore of your mind your real role in life. After this rededication you revert to your occupations and again present yourself to the Lord after a few hours. This again acts as a reminder to you, and you once more refocus your attention on the stipulations of your faith. When the sun sets and the darkness of the night begins to shroud you, you again submit yourself to God in Prayer so that you may not forget your duties and obligations in the midst of the approaching shadows of the night. And then after a few hours you again appear before your Lord, and this is your last Prayer of the day. Thus before going to bed you once again renew your faith and prostrate before your God. And this is how you complete your day. The frequency and timings of the Prayers never let the object and mission of life be lost sight of in the maze of worldly activities.

It is but easy to understand how the daily Prayer's strengthen the foundations of your faith, prepare you for the observance of a life of virtue and obedience to God, and refresh that belief from which spring courage, sincerity, purposefulness, purity of heart, advancement of the soul, and enrichment of morals.

## The Spirit of Prayer in Islam

Ibadah (act of worship) is an Arabic word derived from 'abd (a slave) and it means submission. It portrays that God is your Master and you are His slave and whatever a slave does in obedience to and for the pleasure of his Master is 'ibadah. The Islamic concept of 'ibadah is very wide.

If you free your speech from filth, falsehood, malice, and abuse and speak the truth and talk goodly things and do all these only because God has so ordained to do, they constitute 'ibadah, however secular they may look in semblance. If you obey the law of God in letter and spirit in your commercial and economic affairs and abide by it in your dealings with your parents, relatives, friends, and all those who come in contact with you, verily all these activities of yours are 'ibadah. If you help the poor and the destitute, give food to the hungry, and serve the ailing and the afflicted persons, and do all this not for any personal gain of yours but only to seek the pleasure of God, they are nothing short of 'ibadah.

Salah (Prayer) is the most primary and the most important of these obligations. And what is salah? It is the prescribed daily Prayers which consist in repeating and refreshing five times a day the belief in which you repose your faith. You get up early in the morning, cleanse yourself and present yourself before your Lord for Prayer. The various poses that you assume during your Prayers are the very embodiment of the spirit of submission: the various recitals remind you of your commitments to your God. You seek His guidance and ask Him again and again to enable you to avoid His wrath and follow His chosen path.