

THE ESSENCE OF PRAYER IN ISLAM

Compiled by Ebrahim Muhamed, Cape Town, South Africa

Ramadaan, 2012

*(Culled from the writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, as found in the compilation by Moulana Kalamazad Mohammed entitled, "The Soul of Salah and Du'a in Islam" Only some extracts were selected and re-arranged to facilitate a Friday sermon, speech or pamphlet on the topic of **Salah and Du'a**)*

While it is true that Islam gives minute details on how to perform **salah** (that is, the formal prayer in Islam), the emphasis in this compilation is placed on the state of mind or attitude of our soul when we pray.

For the sake of convenience, prayer in Islam is divided into **salah** (that is, the 'formal' prayer as stated above) and **du'a** (that is, 'informal prayer' or supplication), but we will discover, when we peruse the words of the Founder of the Ahmadiyyah Movement, the Mujaddid (Reformer) of the Age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, he enlightens us that **salah** is really **du'a** at the highest level.

He advises: "You should make supplication (**du'a**) during **salah** in your own language because to make petition (to Almighty Allah) in your own language produces genuine fervour and enthusiasm. **Surat-ul Fatiha** is the word of Allah. You must read it in the original Arabic language and the portion of the Holy Quran that is recited after it should also be recited in Arabic. After that, the prescribed **du'as** and the glorification of Allah (**tasbih**) must also be done in Arabic, but you must learn the translation of all of them and, in addition to this, you should then make supplication (**du'a**) in your own tongue in order to create deep concentration, for that **salah** in which there is no concentration cannot be called '**salah**'. Nowadays, it is the habit of people to perform **salah** perfunctorily (that is, in a quick way without interest). They rush down the prayer as if they are under compulsion, then they immediately begin to make very lengthy **du'as**. This is an innovation. Nowhere is it recorded in the Hadith that after making **salams** (greetings that closes the formal prayer – compiler) at the end of the **salah**, one should then make **du'a**. Foolish people make **salah** as a tax and make **du'a** separately from it. **Salah** itself is **du'a**. On account of any religious or secular misfortune and at the time of any calamity man should make **du'a** within the **salah**.

Du'a can be made in the **salah** at any point- in **ruku'** (The bowing down posture in prayer) after the **tasbih** (The Glorification of Allah), in **sajdah** (The prostration posture in prayer) after **tasbih**, after the **At-Tahiyyat** (The second sitting posture after prostration), in standing after **ruku'**. Make abundant supplications so that you may prosper. In **du'a**, it is necessary that the soul should flow like water. That kind of **du'a** cleanses and purifies the heart. If you can achieve that kind of **du'a** you may continue in it for hours. *(Because of the pleasure you experience- compiler)*. To be saved from the clutches of sin, one ought to make petition to Allah.

Du'a is a healing by means of which the poison of sin is expelled. Many ignorant people think that to make **du'a** in their own language makes prayer void. This is a wrong belief. Such people's own prayers are void." *(Malfuzat, vol. 9, pp 54-55)*

Bad thoughts during Salah should be avoided

He observes, “ What kind of **‘salah’** is it that the tongue says: Guide us on the right path but the heart is preoccupied with thoughts like, the business must done in this way; or, if this happens, then do it in such and such a way? This is only a waste of one’s time. Unless man gives preference to the Book of Allah and acts according to it, his **salah** is a mere waste of time.” (*Malfuzat, vol. 10, p.62*)

Allah does not stand in need of our prayers, prayers are for our sustenance and delight;

“What is **salah**? It is a unique **du’a**, but it is sad that people consider it a tax owed to a king. The foolish ones do not know that Allah has no need of these matters. Why should He, Who is Self-sufficient, want man to engage himself in supplicating, praising and glorifying Him? The truth is that it is to the benefit of man that he should achieve his goal in this manner.

I feel very unhappy when I see that nowadays people have no love for worship, piety and virtue. Ritualism is the cause of this pervasive poisonous influence, and so the love of Allah grows cold in us and we do not experience, in worship, the type of pleasure that we ought to.

There is nothing in the world in which Allah, Most High, has placed, not only a pleasure, but a distinctive delight, as well. Just as a sick person can derive no enjoyment from the most delightfully palatable dish and considers it bitter or insipid, in the same way, those people who find no pleasure in their worship should ponder over their illness. For, as I have just said, there is nothing in this world in which Allah, Most High, has not placed some enjoyment or other. So, if Allah has created man to worship Him, then what reason is there to doubt that He has placed for him joy and ecstasy in this worship of His? Pleasure and delight there are indeed , but there must be someone to enjoy it. Allah, Most High, has said:

‘And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me.’ (51:56)

Now, since man was created in order to serve Allah, it is necessary that a high degree of pleasure and delight be also be vested in worship. This point we can very easily assimilate through our daily observation and experience. For example, look at the grain and all the things that have been created for man to eat and drink. Does he not derive pleasure and delight from them? Does he not have a tongue in his mouth to enable him to enjoy the feeling of their taste and relish? Does he not derive pleasure from seeing all those beautiful things, whether they may be vegetables or minerals, animals or humans? Is his ear not intoxicated by charming and melodious voices? Should we then seek any further evidence to support the fact that there is ecstasy in worship?

Thus, I wish to say that you should beseech Allah with great feeling and fervour, that, just as He has bestowed all kinds of delights in fruits and other things, in the same way He should make us taste even once, that sweetness that comes through salah and Divine service.” (*Malfuzat, vol. 9 pp. 3-7*)

True prayer brings about success and a good transformation

“It is clearly stated in the Glorious Quran:

Successful are the believers who are humble in their prayers (23:1-2)

That is, when man is deeply engrossed in frequent supplications his heart melts and flows like water at the threshold of the Holy One and he is so absorbed in Allah and all stray thoughts are extinguished and he seeks Allah’s help and grace, he achieves such a single-mindedness of purpose

that a kind of ecstasy and tenderness of heart arises, and the door of success is opened for him. Through this, the love of this world grows cold because two loves cannot occupy the same place simultaneously.

So, after, the above verses, Allah continues:

And those who shun what is vain (23:3)

That is, when man begins to acquire humility and submissiveness in salah, then one of the consequences is that the love of the world is extinguished from his heart. This does not mean that he then forsakes occupations like agriculture, trade and commerce, services etc., but he begins to turn away from those worldly pursuits which involve deceit and which makes a person heedless of Allah.

The weeping and lamentation, the humility and sincerity, and the subservience to Allah of such a person produce this result, that such an individual's love for the faith takes precedence over everything – the love of this world, desires, luxury and comfort etc., for it is a well-known truism that one good deed attracts another good deed just as one bad deed induces another.

When these people fall in humility and submissiveness in their salah, then the inevitable result is that they turn away naturally from vanity and they obtain deliverance from this impure world; the love of this world grows cold and the love of Allah is born in them. The result of all this is that: They spend in the way of Allah, and this is a natural part of shunning what is vain.

The philosophy underlying acceptance or rejection of du'a

"You must bear in mind that it is du'a that initiates the fervour of Allah. However, do not for one moment think du'a is mere verbal prattling for, indeed, du'a connotes the undergoing of a kind of a kind of death and only after this can one gain life.

Du'a possesses a magnetic property which attracts to itself grace or favour." (Malfuzat, vol. 10 p. 62)

"Behold a child, through hunger, becomes restless and anxious and begins to scream and cry for milk and automatically milk surges in the breasts of the mother. Although the child does not even know the name du'a, yet his screams are the means by which milk is attracted. This experience is a universal one. Many times it has been observed that mothers do not even feel the presence of milk in their breasts and often there is not any; yet, immediately upon the desperate scream of the child reaching their ears, milk instantly begins to flow as if there is a powerful connection between the cries and generation of milk.

I say with all sincerity that if we display a similar helplessness before Allah, then it will stimulate and draw His grace and mercy; and I affirm on the basis of my own experience that Allah's grace and mercy, which come through the acceptance of du'a, I have felt being drawn towards me, and even more, I have seen it also. It is true that modern-day obscure-minded philosophers can neither feel nor see this; but this truth cannot be abolished from the world, especially as I am always ready to demonstrate the certainty of the acceptance of du'a. (*Malfuzat, vol. 1 p. 198*)

So why are prayers rejected sometimes?

“... Look how much a mother loves her child and does not wish any kind of afflictions to befall him. But if the child should foolishly persist and obstinately cry for a sharp knife or a burning piece of charcoal in his hand, do you think that the mother, in spite of her true love and genuine tenderness, will ever allow her child to burn his hand with the lighted coal or to cut his hand by passing it over the sharp edge of the knife? Certainly not! From this point, one can appreciate the fundamental principle of the acceptance of du’a. It is my experience in this matter that if a du’a contains something harmful, it is never granted” **(Malfuzat vol. 1 p 107)**

The secret underlying the acceptance of du’a

This is the secret behind the acceptance of **du’a** – unless a man forsakes his own wishes, desires and knowledge and annihilates himself in Allah, and unless he has complete trust and perfect confidence in the total and absolute power of Allah, that Allah is the Hearer and Acceptor of supplications, then his **du’a** is without substance. The reason why philosophers do not believe in the acceptance of prayer is that they do not fully believe in Allah’s All-encompassing power and His being the Originator of the minutest of provisions, and they consider His power to be limited, and they rely on their own experience and knowledge.

As compared to their own experiences, the idea never crosses their minds that God exists and that He has power to act. That is why, when some very deadly disease attacks a person, those people pronounce with certainty and finality that the afflicted one cannot be saved, or that he will die after a certain period of time, or will die in such and such a way. But I, myself, have witnessed a score of examples and many others I know about, in which, notwithstanding their conclusive and decisive verdict, Allah has created for the well-being of those afflicted ones such conditions, that in the end they were finally rescued.

Many a time, too, it so happens that many of those on whom those people had passed an irrevocable sentence of death remained alive and got well, and on meeting them on some other occasion the doctors were embarrassed, and their knowledge and claims were put to shame.

The Hadith tells us, “There is no illness but there is a remedy for it.” I remember the words of a famous doctor who said that there is no illness that is not susceptible to healing, but it is because of a deficiency in our understanding, intellect and learning that our knowledge has not yet advanced to that point.

It is possible that Allah, Most High, may create for this disease such conditions by means of which that persons, whom we consider beyond cure, will respond to treatment and regain his health and strength. So we should never give a final decision, but if we have to express an opinion, we should say that we suspect this, but it is possible that Allah may bring about such conditions through which this impediment may be removed and the patient may become well again.

Du’a is such a potent weapon which Allah has created that a seemingly impossible matter which man considers impossible can actually take place because nothing is impossible with Allah.” **(Malfuzat, vol.10, pp 195-197)**

The True Du'a

There are two kinds of **du'a**. Firstly, the habitual kind, and secondly, the one which man takes to the utmost limit, and this is what is called **du'a** in the true sense of the word.

Man ought to be constantly engaged in making **du'a** even when he is not beset by difficulty, for what knowledge does he have of the intentions of Allah or what may happen on the morrow? He should make **du'a** in advance in order to be saved. Many a time a calamity strikes so suddenly that man has no time to supplicate, so that if he were making **du'a** before hand, it would return to his benefit when this awry time descends. (*Malfuzat, vol.10, p 122.*)

Whose du'a is not accepted

“Unless your heart is clean, your **du'a** will not be accepted. If in some worldly affair you harbour malice in your heart against another person, your **du'a** cannot be answered. You ought to impress this in your mind that you must never bear ill-will against anyone ever in a secular matter. What is the value of this world and its provisions that for its sake you should entertain hostility against another? (*Malfuzat, vol. 9 pp. 217 – 218*)