

Supplication, Prayer and the Inner Peace They Afford

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ABSTRACT

This article emphasizes two important aspects of worship in Islam. It focuses, namely, on two different types of terms for prayer: supplication (*du'a*) and prayer (*salat*). In Islamic tradition supplication means giving one's whole self to God and presenting one's physical and spiritual needs to Him. *Salat* (prayer) is communication between the temporal and spiritual domains. In fact, prayers function as regulators and equaliser systems on personality and character. In the context of worship, if prayers are done consciously they improve people both internally and externally. If, while worshipping God consciously, one feels that he or she is before God, he or she will feel that way, i.e. in God's presence, all the time, and this will regulate his or her behaviours.

Key words: Salat (Prayer), Supplication, Worship, Presence, Serenity, Calmness

1.1 SUPPLICATION, PRAYER AND THE INNER PEACE THEY AFFORD

In the Arabic language, *salat* (worship) means supplication (*du'a*) (Al-Isfahani, n. d., p. 285; At-Tahanawi, 1998, 3: 76; Al-Qurtubi, 1988, 8: 159). For example, *Salaytu alayhi* means "I supplicated God for him" (Muslim, Siyam, 159; Adbu Dawud, Sawm, 74, 75 Ati'ma, 1; Timizi, Sawm, 63; Nasai, Siyam, 51, Ibn Maca, Siyam, 47; Darimi, Sawm, 31; Malik, Hacc, 137; Ahmad b. Hanbal, 3: 242, 477, 489, 507, 5: 29; Reshit Riza, n. D., 2: 25). In some verses, *salat* is used in the same sense as *du'a*. For example, "Invoke blessings (*salli*) upon them. Your blessing (*salat*) will surely bring them peace" (At-Tauba, 9:103). "God and His angels shower their blessings (*yusallune*) to the Prophet. O believers you should also send your blessings (*sallu*) on him" (33:56).

However, *salat* is generally used for worship. Raghil al-Isfahani says that calling *salat* arises because of its origin and supplication and calling it *salat* is simply a case of synecdoche, i.e., referring to the whole by one of its parts (Al-Isfahani, n.d., p. 285). This is why the term *salat* includes both supplication (*du'a*) and *salat* (prayer) together. These two elements correspond to different needs of the

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human soul.

1.1.1 *Supplication (Du'a)*

Dictionaries define *du'a* (supplication) in a sense of calling, wishing, and crying for help. Nevertheless, in Islamic tradition it means giving one's whole self to God and presenting one's physical and spiritual needs to Him.

Du'a is the personal expression of one's individual desires, needs and anxieties. "Take (O Muhammad), from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your prayers are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing" (Q 9:103). In fact, the main purpose of *du'a* (supplication) is to bring the needs of people before God and to make supplication to God. We can then say *du'a* (supplication) is a dialogue with God. The need for prayer is natural. "Psychologically speaking, prayer is instinctive in terms of its origin. Prayer as a means of spiritual illumination is a normal vital act by which the little island of our personality suddenly discovers its situation in a larger whole of life" (Iqbal, 1982, p. 85).

Generally, according to Muslim psychologists, prayers function as regulators and equaliser systems on personality and character. In the context of worship, if they (prayers) are done consciously they improve people both internally and externally. If, while worshipping God consciously, one feels that he or she is before God, one will feel that way, i.e., in God's presence, all the time, and this will regulate his or her behaviour. Here, in the context of worship, supplication helps people overcome their difficulties, and this psychological effect results in sincerity in worship (Koc, 2004, 10: 118-119; Najati, 1997, pp. 284-85).

Additionally, supplication especially has a very important effect on the soul. According to Thomas Hyslop of the great West Riding Asylum in England, the best sleep-producing agent is prayer, which his practice employs. He says that "I say this, purely as a medical man. The exercise of prayer, in those who habitually exert it, must be regarded by us doctors as the most adequate and normal of all the pacifiers of the mind and calmer of the nerves" (James, 1962, p. 235).

A worshiper takes refuge in God's shelter during his worship. This provides a support for our spiritual side. As Alexis Carrel states, there is a power in supplication. Even though we may not want it, this does occur. For this reason, we should leave children alone and give them the opportunity to listen themselves (Carrel, 1988, p. 111).

William James says that for most of us, a world with no such inner refuge when the outer social self failed and dropped from us would be the abyss of horror. I say "for most of us", because it is probable that individuals differ a good deal in the degree in which they are haunted by this sense of an ideal spectator. It is a much more essential part of the consciousness of some men than of others. Those who have the most of it are possibly the most religious men. However, I am sure that even those who say they are altogether without it deceive themselves, and really have it in some degree. (Iqbal, 1982, p. 85)

These explanations indicate that supplication has a great impact on the spirit.

1.1.2 Prayer (*Salat*)

The Islamic faith includes *salat* (prayer, *dhikr*), which is one aspect of the beautiful guidance Islam offers. *Salat* is considered the most important *dhikr* (remembrance of God) in Islamic tradition.

Prayer is communication between the temporal and spiritual domains. In its most exterior usage, the word implies the petition made by the individual to the Creator. Through *dhikr*, the human being cleanses his or her soul and purges his or her negative elements. This is why people gradually move away from their troubles and their souls' illnesses through *dhikr*.

That prayer has great power which a person makes with all his might. It makes a sour heart sweet, a sad heart merry, a poor heart rich, a foolish heart wise, a timid heart brave, a sick heart well, a blind heart full of sight, a cold heart ardent. It draws down the great God into the little heart, it drives the hungry soul up into the fullness of God, it brings together two lowers. God and the soul in a wondrous place where they speak much of love. (Perry, 1971, p. 521)

Dhikr especially is recognised by all Sufis as the most direct means of alleviating the illnesses of the soul.

God emphasises that fact in these verses: "Who have believed and whose hearts have rest in the remembrance of Allah. Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest! Those who believe and do right: Joy is for them, and bliss the journey's end" (Ar-Ra'd, 13:28-29). These verses prove to us that the remembrance of God gives people rest and calms the soul because through *dhikr* people approach divine existence and participate in the divine unity.

In any event, Islam itself is the religion of nature. God says in the Qur'an: "So

set your whole being upon the Religion as one of pure faith. This is the original pattern belonging to God upon which He has originated humankind" (Al-Rûm, 30:30). Nature shows an inclination towards behaviour that accords with it, and human nature has been patterned by God on *Fitratallah* (God's own nature). For this reason to perform *dhikr* is to act according to the nature; this calms people's souls.

The Qur'an calls Islam *Al-Din Al-Qayyim* (the right religion, natural religion), according to the above verse. Here, to be a Muslim is to act according to nature. Behaviour that goes contrary to Islam goes contrary to nature.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) says that the more moderate one's nature, the more one is able to attain the level of virtue intelligently and practically (Ibn Sina, 1952, p. 198). In this perspective, since Islam is the religion of nature, it makes human nature moderate by giving humans the best opportunity for their progress. In my opinion, this view makes sense in that past generations who assimilated faith progressed in a short time in virtue and knowledge because the religion of Islam brought what reinforces *fitrat*.

Ghazali says that all organs enjoy the acts that are consistent with their nature. The eye enjoys looking at the beautiful landscape; the ear enjoys hearing nice voices. Likewise, the heart has been created for Allah and enjoys Allah (Ghazali, n. d., p. 138).

According to Sufism (Islamic mysticism), when people engage in *dhikr* they attain peace, come to themselves, are at rest and return to the *fitratallah* in which trust is upheld and thus its covenant is fulfilled. It sees the true relation between the servant and his Lord by the light of the *dhikr* (Lumbard, p. 258).

The virtues of *dhikr* can be described in many different ways. For example, Said Nursi said:

Everyone wants a solace and seeks a pleasure in order to be saved a little from the upheavals of life and its heavy burdens, and to take a breather; everyone searches out something familiar and friendly to banish the loneliness. The social gatherings in civilized life afford a temporary, but heedless and drunken familiarity, intimacy, and solace for one or two out of ten people. However, eighty per cent live solitary lives in mountains or valleys, or are driven to distant places in search of a livelihood, or due to agencies like calamities and old age which make them think of the hereafter, they are deprived of the sociableness of man's groups and societies. The situation affords them no familiarity, friendliness, or consolation.

And so, the true solace and intimacy and sweet pleasure of such a person is, being turned to his heart in those distant places and desolate mountains and distressing

valleys, to work it by means of the remembrance of God and reflective thought. Saying: "Allah!", it is to become familiar with Him with his heart, and through that familiarity to think of the things around him, which were regarding him savagely, as smiling on him familiarly, and saying: "My Creator, Whom I am recollecting, has innumerable servants here in my place of solitude, just as He has everywhere. I am not alone; loneliness has no meaning." Through his belief, he receives pleasure from that familiarity. He understands the meaning of the happiness of life, and offers thanks to God". (Nursi, 2001, p. 519).

As stated above, *salat* (prayer) is the greatest *dhikr*. For this reason, Islam bestows on one a beautiful psychological state through its prayer ritual. If a person engages in prayer (*salat*), he will feel beauty in his soul. His soul cannot take shelter in his boundary after prayer. This *âyath* explains this reality: "Those who believe and find peace in their hearts from the contemplation of God; surely there is peace of heart in the contemplation of God" (Ra'd, 13:28). The hearts of those who believe are described in this verse as finding a calm, sweet rest in remembrance of God. Hearts obtain peace, become calm and, break out of their sorrow through God because the beginning and the end is in God and all causes are found in God. The chain of existence leads to God. There is no one above Him and nothing further from Him, because Allah is who, far from the end and the quantity both in existence and in conscience, has nothing forward from him that the heartily movement can be further than Him.

Since the greatest *dhikr* is prayer (*salat*), it – as we pointed out in our article ("Islam: The Religion of Peace," in *Sime*) – quiets one's soul. Owing to this peculiarity of prayer, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said to Bilal when it was time for the canonical call to prayer Azan "(O Bilal) stand up and quiet us by azan" (Abu Davud, Adab, 4985, 4986; Ahmad b. Hanbal, 5: 364)

Prayer calms people's souls because (a) prayer brings the person into the divine world, when he or she comes to the divine presence and experiences his ascent (*miraj*), which is given the same name as the ascent (*miraj*) of the believer (*mumin*); (b) in prayer one comes into contact with the God and participates in His divine unity. For example, when a person engages in prayer it is as if he speaks with the God in *Al-Fatihah*:

All praise be to Allah, Lord of all the worlds. Most beneficent, ever-merciful. King of the Day of Judgement. You alone we worship, and to you alone turn for help. Guide us (O Lord) to the path that is straight, The path of those You have blessed, not of those who have earned Your anger, nor those who have gone astray. (Q 1:1-7)

Ibn Atâ'illâh says that prayer is a cleansing of the heart from the stain of iniquities and an opening to the mysteries. Prayer is the place of confidence and the wellspring of intimacies. It opens one up to the scope of the mysteries and to the rays of the luminaries. Night prayer especially, is very effective: "Surely in the watches of the night the soul is most receptive and words more telling" (Q 73:6). The eighth *âyath* of the Al-Muzzammil sura says: "Recite the name of your Trainer..." (Q 73:8) The word "trainer" here means educator, which shows that night prayer raises the human being to spiritual planes, and thus God's training will be grand.

According to Fahkr al-Din Al-Razi, when the human heart observes the physical world, one feels sorrow and grief and in hard tendency about getting it. But when he thinks of God he feels a great calmness because of the light given by God (Ar-Razi, n.d., 7: 40). But psychiatrists and psychoanalysts cannot understand this spiritual position. Because they are interested only in clinical circumstances they do not see the spiritual depth that can be captured in worship.

Night prayer especially has a powerful effect on the human soul. According to Fahkr al-Din Al-Razi, the human being receives some mysterious insights when waking up at night. He says that when one worships at night in the dark at home and says *dhikr* he is surely not preoccupied with anything. Then the heart inclines towards mental thoughts and divine ideas, sometimes bright and spiritual conquests, sometimes happiness and shudders that arise from contact with the divine world or luminous ideas (Ar-Razi, Undated, 10: 685).

Similarly, Al-Kindi says that the human soul is like the substance of God in power. When one isolates oneself from lust and the taste of the word, the soul pierces through to the truth of things. If after this, it looks for the truth of things and searches for it, this transmits to the soul's clean and it's polished; then emerge the truth of things as image of things appear in mirror (Najati, 1993, p. 30).

Some modern Western scholars think like al-Kindi. For example, Carl Jung, in his famous theory of types, classified sensation and intuition as ways of gathering information, in distinction from ways of making decisions. Sensation refers to a focus on direct sense experience, the perception of details, and concrete facts: what one can see, touch, and smell. Sensing types tend to respond to the immediate situation and deal effectively with all sorts of crises and emergencies. Intuition is a way of comprehending sensory information in terms of possibilities, past experience, future goals, and unconscious process. Strongly intuitive people add meaning to their perceptions so rapidly that they often cannot separate their interpretations

from the raw sensory data. Intuitives integrate new information quickly, automatically relating past experience and relevant information to immediate experience. Because it often includes unconscious material, intuitive thinking appears to proceed by leaps and bounds. Jung has called the least developed function in each individual the inferior function. It is the least conscious and the most primitive or undifferentiated. For some people, it can represent a seemingly demonic influence because they have so little understanding of or control over it. Since it is less consciously developed, the inferior function may also serve as a way into the unconscious. Jung has said that it is through our inferior function, that is least developed in us, that we see God. By struggling with and confronting inner obstacles, we can come closer to the divine (www.itp.edu/about/carl_Jung; Frager, 2003, p. 65).

As we have seen, Jung's thought is like Al-Kindi's on this subject. Even though psychologists do not agree on this kind of information, I believe as Al-Kindi too. I used to remove myself from badness etc. For a long time I saw hundreds of true dreams in the night. This fact shows that psychologists perhaps cannot recognize the soul sufficiently because the soul is a very mysterious and intangible entity. No one can tell if people who see the future events in their dreams gain this ability through working at it, but it is certainly Allah's pleasure. They are some senses; depend on some senses, perceived from the divine world.

Believers accept that humans can build up a connection with the other world and the cosmos. The Qur'an says: "I have breathed into him (Adam) of My spirit" (Al-Hicr, 15:29; Sâd, 38:72). But unfortunately we lost our souls as Jung points out: "The marvellous development of science and techniques is counterbalanced by an appalling lack of wisdom and introspection" (Jung, n.d., p. 17).

Even though as those rituals convey some wind of celestial religion, in my opinion, those are some destroyed rituals, suits to the characteristic of Far East countries. In almost every culture, there are prayers, but they differ from each other. In terms of this subject, as meditation and Yoga rituals do not reach the hillside of prayer (salat), they can not connect the man to the cosmos and the other world, and can not convey the man to a horizon. But the prayer raises the man to divine world.

The human soul is a transparent essence and is directed to transcendence. This fact has been emphasized by psychologists, as in Abraham Maslow's *Transpersonal Psychology* and Ken Wilber (Boorstein, n.d., X-XI; Frager, n.d., p. 464).

Muhammad Iqbal says about the subject:

The "Heart" is a kind of inner intuition or insight which, in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of Reality other than those open to sense-perception. The total – Reality, which enters our awareness and appears on interpretation as an empirical fact, has other ways of invading our consciousness and offers further opportunities of interpretation. The revealed and mystic literature of mankind bears ample testimony to the fact that religious experience has been too enduring and dominant in the history of mankind to be rejected as mere illusion. The facts of religious experience one facts among other fact of human experience and, in the capacity of yielding knowledge by interpretation one fact is as good as another (Iqbal, 1982, pp. 37-38, 40).

We are not yet in possession of a really effective scientific method to analyse the contents of non-rational modes of consciousness. (Iqbal, 1982, p. 17)

The purification of the outer organs is accompanied by inner purification. When we think of lemons, our mouths become watery. Thus, there is a correlation between body and soul. For this reason, those who seek the nearness of God always try to remain pure both outwardly and inwardly. The Qur'an says: "Prayer prevents the transgression of passions and grave sins" (29:45). A person who stands before God five times every day consciously will not have the courage to do wrong. Praying deepens the intimate God-human relationship and makes the human a person who is spiritually strengthened. Therefore, it would appear that one of the important roles of Islamic prayer is to act as a protection against the defilement and contamination that affects a person's life. When a man lives his life with the awareness of his link with the Lord, he acquires an inward disposition to absorb God's attributes and obtains the capacity to resist evil (Allahbakhsh, n.d., p. 134). Since prayer is the means of progress towards God, it is also a means of making us obey God's commands and preventing us from doing what God has prohibited and forbidden. When a person performs ablution, thinking of all the sins he or she has committed through his or her different organs and goes on praying to God as a penitent asking for forgiveness and mercy, his or her sins are forgiven, and his or her hands and face are illuminated (Ashraf, n.d., pp. 112, 118).

1.2 Conclusion

According to the Qur'an, the remembrance of God gives humans rest and peace soul presence. Since *salat* is considered the most important *dhikr* (remembrance of God) in Islamic tradition the human individual comes closer to divine existence by the supplication (*du'a*) and prayer (*salat*) and participate in the divine unity. This enables him or her to have great psychological serenity and peace of mind.

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