

Prayers go up; blessings come down

you shall **not** receive. If you should enter into it to humble yourself you shall **not** be lifted. Or even if you should enter into it to beg for the good of others you shall **not** be heard. It is enough that you enter the temple invisible. God listens **not** to your words save when He Himself utters them through your lips.

Prayer in the Quranic sense can by **no** means be limited to a few rituals. It is **not** a sort of habit or custom. As the verse “Remember Allah standing, sitting and lying on your sides” (4:103) maintains, one can bring Allah to mind and pray to Him at any time & under all conditions, without necessarily performing any particular ritual /ceremony. That is because what matters is **not** the outward performance but one’s heartfelt sincerity & honesty. Like the case of Prophet Yaqub (p), who prayed “I make complaint about my grief/sorrow to Allah alone.” (12:86) Prayer does **not** represent a mere abstract spiritual relationship between the Muslim & his Creator; a relationship that is irrelevant to the individual & the society’s economic & social affairs. Prayer is **not** spiritless & **not** an unconscious uttering of formulas.

The real object of prayer, however, is better achieved when the act of prayer becomes congregational. The spirit of all true prayer is social. A congregation is an association of persons who, animated by the same aspiration, concentrate themselves on a single object & open up their inner selves to the working of a single impulse. It is a psychological truth that association multiplies the normal person’s power of perception & deepens their emotion. It dynamizes their will to a degree unknown to them in the privacy of their individuality. The Prophet’s words: “Prayer in congregation is 27 grades in excess of one’s prayer alone.” God emphasizes collective worship: “Establish prayer & pay your charity & bow with those that are bowing.” (2:43)

Regarded as a psychological phenomenon, prayer is still a mystery. Psychology has not yet discovered the laws relating to the enhancement of human sensibility in a state of association. With Islam, however, this socialization of spiritual illumination through associative prayer is a special point of interest. As we pass from the daily congregational prayer to the annual ceremony round the Kaaba, one notices how the institution of worship gradually enlarges the sphere of human association.

Prayer whether individual or associative, is an expression of people’s inner yearning for a response in the awful silence of the universe. It is a unique process of discovery whereby the searching ego affirms itself in the very moment of self-negation, and thus discovers its own worth and justification as a dynamic factor in the life of the universe. True to the psychology of mental attitude in prayer, the form of worship in Islam symbolizes both affirmation & negation.

Yet, in view of the fact borne out by the

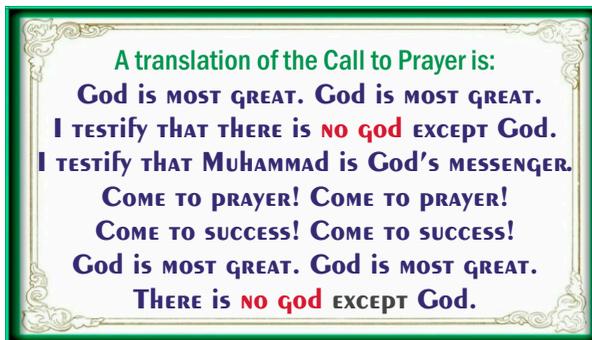
A lot of bowing will keep you in good standing

experience of the race that prayer, as an inner act, has found expression in a variety of forms, the Quran says: “To every people have We appointed ways of worship which they observe. Therefore let them **not** dispute this matter with you, but bid them to God for you are on the right way: but if they debate with you, then say: God best knows what you do! He will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection, as to the matters wherein you differ.” (22:67-69).

The form of prayer ought not to become a matter of dispute. Which side you turn your face is certainly not essential to the spirit of prayer. The Quran: “The East & West is God’s: therefore whichever way you turn, there is the Face of God.” (2:115).

“There is no piety in turning your faces towards the East/West, but the one is pious who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the scriptures, and the Prophets; who for the love of God disburses their wealth to kindred, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming; who observes prayer & pays the legal alms & who is of those who are faithful to their engagements when they have engaged in them; and patient under ills & hardships, in time of trouble: those are they who are just, and those are they who reverence their Lord.” (2:177).

Yet we cannot ignore the important consideration that the posture of the body is a real factor in determining the attitude of the mind. The choice of one particular direction in Islamic worship is meant to secure the unity of feeling in the congregation, and its form in general creates & fosters the sense of social equality inasmuch as it tends to destroy the feeling of rank or race superiority in the worshippers. What a tremendous spiritual revolution will take place, practically in no time, if the proud & aristocratic is daily made to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the poor! From the unity of the all-inclusive Ego who creates and sustains all egos follows the essential unity of all mankind. The division of mankind into races, nations & tribes, according to the Quran, is for purposes of identification only. The Islamic form of association in prayer, therefore, besides its cognitive value, is further indicative of the aspiration to realize this essential unity of mankind as a fact in life by demolishing all barriers which stand between man & man.



Prayer is the key to Heaven; faith unlocks the door

So there you are, in line, focusing your attention, about to embark on a journey, unlike any other. Prayer makes you into a traveler & a navigator. Every day, each & every time, five times or more, you discover a new region within your soul. The most sublime of landscapes. Breathtaking vistas. After “viewing” such divine wonders during the moments of prayer, you return (back to earth) blessed with inner strength, spiritual light & ineffable peace. We recognize that worship should **not** cease when we leave the mosque. That what happened in the mosque is designed to sensitize us to God’s Presence in our everyday world. We realise that the whole of life is sacramental. Prayer liberates the inner force which is the spirit of every one of us, that we can, through enlightened action, draw to us whatever we may need out of the boundless treasury of infinite & eternal opulence.

God appreciates our worship. If we do not worship often God will not waste away, but we will forget who we are – spiritual beings living a temporary life on this temporary earth. We become withered spirits.

“Prayer restrains from indecency & evil.” (29:45)
Our communications, live & digital, is littered with verbal bombs. Weaponized discourse. Defuse the words in your arsenal; the explosive rhetoric: verbal terrorist. Life is in exchanging ideas & ideas require more than a fistful of ugly four-letter words. In the absence of such ugly words our harshness, our acidic/caustic phrases are also indecent & evil.

Guide us along the straight path is a supplication for perfection in conduct. The Prophet (p): “Prayer is the faithful’s ladder to sublimity.” A Miraj...wherein we see many signs & wonders. **We Pray. We are Perfected. It’s Rapture! Was your prayer just a mirage? It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.**

In the silence of receptive prayer, the prayer of the quiet, we may hear words of help & guidance. Or our innermost may speak to us in dreams, when words carry an energy that we know does not belong to our psyche. Sometimes we open a book & the words that we read are a message from our Lord. In so many ways, some known, some hidden, God speaks to us, answers our prayers.

For some prayer takes place in the dark hours of the night, when we lie awake & our need is most pressing. Some find it easiest to pray as they walk, finding the presence of nature a way to access this inner communion. Others pray in their garden, feeling the presence of the divine among their flowers. Some pray when they see suffering, while others find their heart opens when they experience beauty. In many cathedrals, temples & mosques there is the tangible presence of prayer, of so many souls looking towards God. Prayer is something essential to a human being & it belongs to the heart’s relationship to the Divine.

Prayer is the sweetest of duties! The means to loftier attainment than would have been possible without it. A soul not inoculated with daily prayer is a soul open to any “(ir)religious infection”.

Worship renews us spiritually & gives definition & dimension to our lives

The Prayer

Of all spiritual & material duties, Prayer certainly is the sweetest

The urge to worship is an innate yearning of the spirit that rises spontaneously from a sense of gratitude. Prayer moves us inward into personal transformation, upward toward intimacy with God, and outward to care for others. It’s the place where the veil opens completely between the visible & the Invisible. It’s the arch connecting heaven & earth. It touches you in your soul...which unfolds like a lotus of countless, dazzling petals. It’s an amazing journey with huge transformations possible...if you truly understood. The quintessence of the world is man. The quintessence of man is religion. The quintessence of religion is prayer. The quintessence of prayer is invocation. Here lies the meaning of the Quranic verse: The invocation of God is greater than anything else. If you had no more than a few instants to live, you would no longer be able to do anything but invoke God. You would thereby fulfill all the demands of prayer, of religion, of the human state. Prayer feeds your spiritual hunger...the deeper longings of the soul. It’s an anaesthetic that calms down the stresses of the mind. Prayer allows you to withdraw into that inner sanctuary where you find calm vs. chaos; stillness vs. desperation; peace vs. lonesomeness. Prayer stills your primal restlessness. Imagine yourself praying to God: lips sealed by holy mysteries, eyes closed in visionary rapture. Prayer certainly brings great visions to realization. Your face is enraptured in your faith.

SELFISH CLINGINGS DEBAR YOU FROM THE POSSESSION OF THE STAINLESS REALITIES FOR WHICH YOU PRAY.

Unfortunate are those for whom prayers are said three times in their entire lives: when they hatch (born), match (marry) & are dispatched (are buried)

PROSPEROUS

QURAN: 87:14-15

are those who purify themselves & remember their Lord & PRAYS

Prayer is not idle amusement (like cricket/movies/music/daydreaming). If properly understood & applied, it is the most potent instrument of action. At the heart of most religions is prayer: a way to communicate with God. It's inner communion. Prayer is a passionate pleasure of the soul. Not a rote exercise in moving our mouths. Not in the confused mingling of sounds at a game. Prayer is pure peace.

Need is the beginning of prayer. We feel alone & in need. And only the divine can answer this. Calling out from the depths of our being, we make known our need to our self & to God. We pray according to the need of the moment. At different times our needs are different. We pray for forgiveness, understanding, kindness. We pray that our relationships not be clouded in mistrust or that our children not suffer. We pray for our self & for others. All of the myriad difficulties that we encounter in our daily life we can embrace in our prayer, the difficulties of our own self & the troubles of the world. We hope to bring God's attention to these problems, so that infinite love and grace can reach into the world & help with the pain of being human.

However, our cravings do not become a prayer just because we ask God to attend to them.

Prayer is infinitely powerful because it connects us with God's infinite power. In praying, we offer up the difficulties of living in a world in which the divine often appears to be absent, in the deepest knowledge that only the divine can really help us. We who are so small & alone look to God, and so turn our attention from the many back to the One. Sometimes people think, "Why should I bother God? How can my difficulties be of concern to this Great Being?" But this is arrogance, because it places the individual before God. We are a part of God's world, and if we are in need we should turn toward God.

Prayer helps one to focus on perfecting the mastery of human nature & life in three critical areas: **individual well-being, social harmony & an accelerated evolution of consciousness**. These three bases form the foundation of overall human development, the guiding lights of the arts/sciences. Through generations of applying these three basic domains of life, extraordinary accomplishments in the maintenance of physical vitality, fostering of sensitive & effective relations between people & development of latent mental powers, including spontaneous insight & foreknowledge, are recognized as **by-products of praying properly**. These developments, once realized, are not to be

Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?

guarded possessively but put to the service of humanity. The beneficial results of its application by individuals are **not** to be paraded proudly before others but to be diffused in an inconspicuous yet effective manner.

Other Religions: Prayer need **not** be formal. It is the natural way to begin and end the day. Some pray every morning when they get up and every evening before they go to bed. Some may pray more often than that, others less. Some people pray on their knees; others use a prayer book. Some speak; some do not use words at all. Some are known to open their window each evening in order to say good night to God. Prayer must be genuine and not just an empty rite. The important thing is to make room for it, somewhere.

In the turmoil of life without & black despair within, it is always possible to turn aside & wait on God. Just as at the center of a hurricane there is stillness, and above the clouds a clear sky, so it is possible to make a little clearing in the jungle of our human will for a rendezvous with God. He will always turn up, though in what guise & in what circumstances cannot be foreseen; perhaps trailing clouds of glory, perhaps as a beggar. Perhaps in the tears of a hungry little child.

In a book entitled "To Pray as a Jew" there is a lengthy explanation of the Prayers as done by the ancient Jews and **few** of the contemporary Jews. In this book the author put diagrams showing the movement and positions during the prayer. One look at these illustrations is enough for the Muslims to realize the similarity of the prayers of the Jews then and Prayer as practiced by the Muslims.

In his comment about these positions, the author wrote: "In most contemporary congregations very few people keep to the tradition of **falling prostrate**. Sometimes it is only the prayer leader and the rabbi who does so. In more traditional congregations, however, some worshippers, men and women, will join the prayer leader and rabbi in the act of prostrating themselves. In Israeli synagogues, the practice is more widespread than in synagogues elsewhere. Since this is a position that we are **unaccustomed** to, one who has never done this before might very well demur. But once accomplished, the experience provides such a spiritual uplift that one looks forward to repeating it. Those willing to try this ancient ritual form on the rare occasions that call for it might welcome the following diagrams of the correct procedure." Stunningly...The diagrams are exactly as the Muslim prayer. Isn't it amazing that prostration is referred to as an "**ancient ritual form**" and to be done on "**rare occasions**"? **Unaccustomed to prostration?**

Muslims prostrate **daily** not rarely. **Ancient?** The earth witnesses every single day to billions of prostrations to the Most Exalted Lord. Do the math...500 million Muslims

It's impossible to live one way & pray another

(leave out the babies) * 5 times per day prayers (includes minimum 20 prostrations). Glory be to God! Billions of prostrations are more meaningful & valuable than billions of financial transactions.

It was abhorrent for the proud Arabs to "grovel" on the ground. The prostration countered their hard arrogance. The postures of their bodies would re-educate them; teaching them to lay aside their pride/selfishness. To recall that before God they were nothing. Many converts say that the prostration is the hardest thing for them to do. That's the awesome danger of pride. Putting one's face to the ground, in prayer, is the greatest act of submission. We are pressing our faces, not against the ground, but against the window of eternity. It's a proven destroyer of arrogance; of softening the heart.

Islam: Prayers are a direct link between the worshipper & God. There is no hierarchical authority in Islam, and no priests. The prayers are led by a learned person who knows the Quran. These five prayers contain verses from the Quran, and are said in Arabic, the language of the Revelation. Personal supplication can be offered in one's own language. Prayer is your conversation with Allah. It should, nay, **must**, flood you with hope, energy & passion to carry on your life to the best of your ability. Prayer is the best form of life insurance. They are said at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and nightfall, and thus determine the rhythm of the entire day. Although it is preferable to worship together in a mosque, a Muslim may pray almost anywhere, such as in fields, offices, factories & universities. Visitors to the Muslim world are struck by the centrality of prayers in daily life.

The discipline of prayer is crucial to maintaining a sense of peace & order in our lives. More than anything else prayer (or the absence of it) can decide the outcome of our day. Time we waste, temptations we yield to, laziness or lethargy in our work, any lack of discipline in our thoughts or in our interaction with others frequently have their root in our **neglect** of prayer. Although we have prayed ever since we can remember, it was only when we begin to understand prayer as a way of life as a constant attitude rather than a repetitive action that we understand the idea of truly praying. It is not merely a group of words. It is an attitude to life.

Prayer must be only for the LOVE of God. Not for the fear of Hell. Not for the joy of Heaven. It was said about the Prophet's companion Suhaib that had there been no fire or paradise he still would have worshipped God. **Is this our stance?** "O God! If I worship You in fear of Hell, burn me in it; and if I worship you in hope of Paradise, exclude me from it; but if I worship You for Your own being, do not withhold from me Your everlasting beauty." *Dua of Rabia Al-Adawiya*

Prayer is a lifeline, the only help in the face of the

SUCCESSFUL

QURAN: 23:1-2

indeed are the believers; who are reverent during their Prayers

inevitable failures, temptations, discouragements, or periods of depression that each of us goes through. It is not always a matter of words. Part of it is a quiet turning toward God throughout the day, an upward glance, a moment or two of silence remembering someone who is sick or suffering or struggling. Part of it might be considering various concerns & questions of the day. Part of it is asking for light to see our wrongs, to recognize where we might have hurt others. Prayer helps us strengthen our commitment to God & to humanity. In all of this there is peace **not** as the world gives, but the peace of God.

To raise one's hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world. Our prayer life cannot exist in a separate sphere. Our prayers must consist of more than longings/intentions. Just as faith without deeds means **spiritual deadness**, so prayer without work is hypocrisy. Even without deeds, our prayers must be more than self-centered pleas for personal happiness if they are to have any effect on the rest of the world.

We must include others in our prayers. That's easy for the ones we care about. But the radical; **the difficult part is to include those who hurt us...whether through backbiting, slander, insults**. If we claim to love our enemies but then fail to pray for them, we deceive ourselves. We see only our own point of view; our own "righteousness" & ignore their perspective. Prayer breaks down the distinctions between *us* & *them*. To do violence to others, you must make them enemies. Intelligent Prayer makes enemies into friends.

Gibran puts this action of prayer into a beautiful perspective. You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance.

For what is prayer but the expansion of yourself into the living ether? And if it is for your comfort to pour your darkness into space, it is also for your delight to pour forth the dawning of your heart. And if you **cannot** but weep when your soul summons you to prayer, she should spur you again and yet again, though weeping, until you shall come laughing. When you pray you rise to meet in the air those who are praying at that very hour, and whom save in prayer you may **not** meet.

Let your visit to that temple invisible be for **naught** but ecstasy & sweet communion. For if you should enter the temple for no other purpose than asking

Call on your Lord **humbly** & **secretly** Quran: 7:55

Seek help in steadfastness & prayer. But that is a very hard thing, except for the humble

Quran 2:45

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