

## **Introduction to prayer**

All of us are able to exercise and develop our muscles. Some do so to keep fit, some to participate in a particular sport and others to shape and sculpt their bodies. Whatever our motive, success is only achieved by way of sustained application and effort. This applies equally to intellectual development, with academic qualifications being awarded after years of diligent study, and it follows, to the development of our innate spiritual capacities. While it is apparent that a body requires nourishment, care and protection to grow and flourish, precious few consider the soul's need for similar nourishment, care, protection and growth.

## **Why we pray**

O you who believe! Seek help through patience and prayer.....  
(Qur'an 2:153)

## **The significance of prayer**

Qur'anic ayat on the significance of prayer:

- 1- Maintain prayer at both ends of the day- and the early hours of night. For it is through good deeds that bad deeds are effaced. (Quran 11:114)
- 2- He is glorified in the morning and the evening by those-not distracted from remembrance of Allah by bargain or trade-who maintains prayer and gives zakah. For they fear a day in which hearts and sights are transformed. (Quran 24:37)
- 3- Certainly, it is the faithful who attain salvation-those who are humble in prayer and baulk at all conceit. (Quran 23:1-3)

## **The significance of prayer in our lives**

As Individuals:

Prayer is the most highly esteemed communication between human beings and the creator. It develops our \*greatest facilities\* capacity for concentration- an evidence the highest level of submission to Allah almighty.

It purifies the soul and provides a framework for lives, daily discipline in particular, prayers offered at their specified times.

Prayer affords the satisfaction of having fulfilled daily obligations, and affords spiritual taste of sweetness being in Allah's presence.

Recitation and remembrance maintain \*awareness of Allah\* and encourage perception of the – everywhere evident - \*signs\* of His mercy and wisdom.

As Families:

As Islam's first preference to be offered in a mosque, it's second is for prayer to be offered in congregation, while prayer within the family has lesser significance.

Nonetheless, parents have responsibility to encourage children to fulfil this most essential pillar of Islam. When toddlers watch parents perform Wodhu \*and offer daily prayer, the inevitably copy them and adopt these practices.

As a Community:

Prayer strengthens bonds between community members to share common experiences five times a day (or three times- when Dhohur

and 'Asr, or Maghrib and Isha - are contiguously offered; ref. Quran 17:78).

The community co-hears and is unified by being together at the mosque. As congregational prayers are often accompanied by discussions of Islamic rulings, lectures on the Quran and ahadith, the educational value and influence of community prayer is compounded.

Mosques are not merely places of worship, but also places in which social problems are often solved, fellow Muslims consulted about community affairs and crucial decisions apropos the community determent.

As an Ummah (nation):

Prayer increases awareness of the needs of the \*worldwide\* Ummah, for whose contentment Muslims pray.

All Muslims face one Qiblah (direction of prayers), communicate with the one divinity –Allah almighty- and are all united by common goals and objectives.

Historical aspects of faith:

The first prayer ever offered in Islam was when the prophet Muhamad (peace be upon him and his progeny) stood in the holy mosque of Makkah with Khadija (pbuh) and the young boy Ali (pbuh) behind him.

From this event the apparent strength of Islam encourage others to profess faith also. When the prophet migrated to Medina, his first action was to build a mosque. The mosque has remained the representative symbol of Islamic heritage throughout the centuries.

The Significance of prayer for Muslims today:

As secularism offers no solution to spiritual problems, all the hopes, aspiration and prosperity of human beings rest with faith and regular communication between human beings and the Creator.

Prayer plays a central role in uplifting the spiritual standing of humanity.

The ongoing relevance of discipline:

Consistency and regularity of daily prayer contribute to discipline and organisation –the secret of every success. For Muslims the discipline of prayer is as automatic as brushing the teeth – which similarly refreshes and contributes to feeling of \*well-being\*. As with the brushing of the teeth, rewards – although long – lasting – yield their benefits over time.

The ongoing relevance of unity:

Congregational prayers at central mosques- to which all must travel- are effective in establishing unity amongst those who attend. This serves to crumble the artificial barriers of society, professions, wealth, class and neighbourhood, and to re-establish the equality of all human being before Allah.

The ongoing relevance of identity:

Congregating with others strengthens the individual's identity as a component of a larger group- in the same way that supporters identify with their football team. In the western world in particular, congregational prayers re enforce bonds and relationships with the worldwide Muslims Ummah.