

## Types or Kinds of Prayer

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Prayer is a great mystery of servanthood to God, the very essence of it. There are three kinds of prayer.

### Types or kinds of prayer

The first kind of prayer is that which is made by the tongue of innate disposition. All seeds and seed-stones pray to the All- Wise Creator through their disposition, their nature, to grow and flourish into an elaborate plant or a huge tree, so that they may make fully manifest the inscriptions of His Names.

### Prayer through natural disposition

The existence of all the circumstances necessary for a particular effect to come about is also a prayer through natural disposition, a plea that that effect be realized. That is, the arrangement of necessary circumstances may be likened to a tongue of disposition praying to the All-Powerful and Majestic One to create the desired effect. For example, water, heat, soil and light come together for a seed to grow into a tree to the effect that they pray God, 'O Creator, make this seed grow into a tree!' It is inconceivable that those unconscious, inanimate, individual material existences, like water, soil, heat and light, could of themselves create a tree, which is, in essence, a miracle of Divine Power, so the assemblage of causes that lead to a certain result is a sort of prayer done by the tongue of disposition.

### Prayer made with the tongue of natural, vital needs

The second kind of prayer is that which is made with the tongue of natural neediness. All living beings pray to the All-Compassionate Creator through their neediness, to satisfy their needs, which they are unable to meet by themselves. For we see that God always sends them, just on time, the provision that is impossible for themselves to supply. In this sense, their neediness is a kind of prayer.

In short, what reaches the Court of God from the whole universe is a kind of prayer. Causes are petitions to God to create the desired result.

### Prayer of conscious living beings

The third kind of prayer is that which is made by conscious living beings for their special needs to be satisfied. This kind of prayer falls into two categories.

#### Active prayer

For example, to act in accordance with causes is an active prayer. Man, by complying with causes, tries to gain God's approval for his request, for causes alone are not sufficient for the result to be produced, and it is God alone Who produces the result. To plough the earth, for example, is another active prayer, which is actually to knock at the door of the treasury of God's Compassion. This type of prayer is in most cases acceptable since it is an application to the Divine Name, the All-Generous

#### Prayer made in desperation or to have natural, vital needs met

The first category consists of the supplications made in desperation or in connection with natural needs or by the tongue of disposition or with sincerity and pure intention. Most of such supplications are accepted. The great majority of scientific discoveries and technological innovations (regarded as a means of pride by supporters of modern civilization) are the results of the petitions made in the tongue of needs and potential or natural capacity; they are therefore normally acceptable unless some obstacle intervenes.

#### Prayers that we say every day

The second category consists of those prayers that we say every day. These also are of two types: one is active and by disposition, and the other verbal and from the heart. To plough the earth, for example, is an active prayer and means to knock at the door of the treasury of God's Mercy and Munificence, not to beg provision from the earth.

Omitting the details of other kinds, we will explain some mysteries of the verbal prayer in the following point.

#### Some mysteries of the verbal prayer

Prayer has a very great effect; it yields a result in most, even in all, cases, especially when what is asked for is expressed in a universal form. It may even be argued that one of the reasons for the creation of the universe is prayer. That is, since the Creator knew before the creation of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, that the Prophet would desire in the future, on behalf of mankind, or indeed of the whole creation, eternal happiness, and that he would desire to be favored with the manifestations of the Divine Names, He accepted the future prayers of Muhammad and created the universe. If, then, prayer is so significant and comprehensive, is it conceivable that the prayers uttered consistently for fourteen centuries by hundreds of millions of Muslims and innumerable blessed ones among mankind, by the jinn, by the angels and other spiritual beings, for the Prophet Muhammad to receive the greatest Divine Mercy, to gain eternal happiness and to achieve all his aims, is it conceivable that those prayers should not be accepted?

Since the prayers made on behalf of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, have such permanence, comprehensiveness and universality that they have reached the level of the prayers done in the tongue of potential and natural needs, then the Prophet Muhammad has acquired, by virtue of those prayers, in addition to his Prophethood and personal merits, such a great rank that if the whole of mankind were to unite their intelligence into a single one, they could not comprehend it.

So, O Muslim, consider how great an intercessor you may have on the Day of Judgment. In order to deserve his intercession, follow his Sunna!

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The voluntary verbal prayer is accepted in two ways:

- either what is requested is given to the one who prays

- or his prayer is returned with a better reward.

For example, someone prays for a son but God Almighty grants him a daughter like the Virgin Mary. In that case, we should not say, 'His prayer has not been accepted', rather we should say, 'His prayer has been accepted in a better way'. Likewise, another one prays for worldly happiness but his prayer is returned with eternal happiness. In this case, we should rather say, 'His prayer has been accepted in a more beneficial way', than say, 'His prayer has not been accepted', and so on.

Since God Almighty is All-Wise, we beg from Him, and He returns our request in accordance with His Wisdom. A patient, for instance, may ask for honey, and the doctor gives him quinine sulphate for his fever. In this case, the patient should not criticize the doctor, saying, 'He has not heeded my request': the doctor diagnosed the illness very well and did what was better for the patient.

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The most beautiful and pleasurable, and the quickest, result of prayer is that the one who prays knows that there is One, Who has Absolute Power over everything, Who hears him, has pity on him, and provides a remedy for his pains. He is not alone in this guesthouse of the world, rather there is an All-Munificent One Who looks after him and provides him with companionship. He imagines himself to be in the actual presence of a Being Who is able to satisfy all his needs and overcome all his enemies, and, feeling relief as if a heavy burden were removed from him, he says, 'All praise be to the Lord of the Worlds'.

Prayer is the very essence of being a slave of God and an indicator of sincere belief

Prayer is the very essence of being a slave of God and an indicator of sincere belief. The one who prays demonstrates, through prayer, that there is One Who rules over the whole universe and is aware of all his affairs down to the most insignificant ones, and Who hears him and enables him to achieve his aims. Since he witnesses that that Being does everything down to the smallest, he hopes that He will fulfil his expectations. Consider, then, the comprehensiveness of the conception of Divine Unity formed by prayer, and the pleasure and purity of the light of belief it exhibits. Then, ponder the meaning of the verse, Say: 'My Lord would not concern Himself with you but for your prayer', (25:77) and heed the Divine decree, Your Lord said, 'Pray to me and I will answer you' (40:60).

If He did not want to give, He would not give the desire to want.

Glory be to You! We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. Surely You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. O God, grant blessings to our master Muhammad from past eternity to future eternity, to the number of what is contained in God's Knowledge, and to his family and Companions, and grant them peace. Also, grant us peace and make us and our religion safe from every danger! All praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds.

Why should we pray for the Prophet, upon him peace and blessings?

That blessed person, upon him be peace and blessings, concerns himself with the happiness of his whole umma both individually and collectively, and he is anxious about whatever may befall them. Although he has, for himself, infinite degrees of eternal happiness and levels of perfection, yet he wishes ardently for the happiness in all times and degrees of each member of his nation and is grieved about each of their misfortunes, and so he needs and most certainly deserves countless blessings and prayers.

Why is it that sometimes we pray for things sure to happen - like the prayer made when the sun or moon is eclipsed and sometimes for things which cannot possibly happen?

Prayer is a kind of worship. A servant proclaims through prayer his helplessness and poverty before God. The apparent purposes for prayer are rather causes for doing the worship of prayer. The reward for worship is principally given in the Hereafter. If the intended worldly aims are not achieved through prayer, one should not say, 'My prayer has not been accepted', rather one should say, 'The time for prayer is not yet over'.

Besides, is it conceivable that the people of belief will not be given the eternal happiness for which they ask continually with great zeal and utmost sincerity, that the absolutely Benevolent and Compassionate One, to Whose infinite Mercy all the universe testifies, will not accept their prayer to establish the World of Eternal Happiness?

Is every prayer answered by God? What does answering prayer mean?

If someone objects: "We pray many times, but we are not given what we pray for, although the verse cited says that every prayer will be accepted inclusively," the answer would be as follows:

The prayer being answered does not necessarily mean its "acceptance" in all circumstances. There is an answer for every prayer; but to accept the prayer, and to give what is prayed for depends upon the Wisdom of the All-Mighty.

Suppose that a sick child is asking a doctor to give him a certain kind of medicine. The doctor either will give him that certain kind of medicine or he will give him a better one for the benefit of the child. Or he will give him no medicine at all, if he judges that any kind of medicine may be bad for the health of that child.

Similarly, the All-Mighty, Who is the All-Hearing and All- Seeing, certainly answers the prayer of His servant, and He changes the depression of loneliness into the pleasure of His company. But His answer does not depend on the fancies of man, rather it depends on the Divine Wisdom. According to His Wisdom, He either gives what is requested or what is better or He gives nothing at all.

Moreover, prayer is a form of worship and the reward for worship is principally given in the Hereafter. Prayer, in essence, is not done for worldly purposes; worldly purposes are rather causes for saying the prayer. For example, prayer for rain is a kind of worship and the lack of rain is its occasion not its purpose. If rain is to be held as the only aim of prayer, then this prayer will not be acceptable since it will not be sincere, not intended to obtain the pleasure of God.

Sunset likewise determines the time for evening prayer, and the solar and lunar eclipses are two special occasions for

two particular kinds of worship. Since the eclipses of those luminous signs, the sun and the moon, are two means of the manifestation of Divine Majesty, the All-Mighty calls His servants to a sort of worship peculiar to those occasions. But such prayer is not done to cause an eclipse to pass away-the duration and the end of such events are already known through astronomical calculations. The same argument applies to drought and also to other calamities or perils. They are all occasions for certain kinds of prayer. Man, at such times, best realizes his impotence and, accordingly, feels the need to take refuge in the high Presence of the Absolutely Powerful One through prayer and supplication. If, therefore, a calamity is not lifted despite many prayers, one should not say, "My prayer has not been accepted" but should say, "The time for prayer is not yet over." If, on the other hand, God removes the calamity, then this is because of His endless Grace and Munificence, and that moment marks the disappearance of that special occasion for prayer. Man must pursue God's pleasure through his worship. He must affirm his own poverty and weakness in his prayer, and seek refuge with Him through prayer; he must not interfere in His Lordship. He should leave the taking of measures to Him and rely on His Wisdom. He should not accuse His Mercy.