

QUESTION # 01

Define the meaning of prayer and its different categories. Also describe the spiritual, moral and social impacts of prayer? (2016)

ANSWER :

MEANING OF PRAYER :

The prayer is an act of devotion, invocation or expression of thanks to God. In Islam, it is expressed as "Salah" which relates to "Namaz", "Dua" and "Zikr". Prayer or Salah in Islam is not merely showing devotion through actions, but it is expressing gratification through intentions, actions and spirituality. Salah is the second pillar of Islam, which shows the importance of remembering Allah in religion. The thought of God is not enough for muslims, yet they are obliged to show their love and affection to Almighty Allah through his actions after accepting Islam or maintaining the unity of Allah ("Tawheed"). Prayer is the reciprocal act of gratitude for all beautiful things Almighty God has blessed upon His servant.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER:

The philosophy of Deen-e-Islam lies in awareness of being or "Muawifat-e-Zaat", which is achieved by his remembrance "Zikr", resulting in man showing devotion or thanking divine lord "Shukar". When a man enters in this world, he entitles his existence to search of his master. He thinks about everything around his life, its origin, existence and sustenance. Then he reaches the level of remembrance or Zikr and get to know that there is one master who is lord of all universe. However, he then faces three issues which can be addressed through Salah are mentioned below:

1. VARIFICATION OF RECOLLECTION:

The person indulging in thought of God, faces difficulting difficulty in its varification. He gets confused in either his recollection is right or ~~his~~ he is distracted from main focus. This issue can be resolved through combined approach of remembrance "Zikr" or thought "fikr".

(al: Quran:

Whoever remembers Allah while standing, sitting and lying [~~saying~~] on their sides and give thought to creation of heavens and the earth [~~saying~~] "Our lord, you have not created this aimlessly; Exalted are you; then protect us from punishment of fire").

As Allah mentioned in Quran, those who remembers Allah give thought (combined approach of "Zikr" and "Fikr") to this world and His blessings- so that they could seek protection and show devotion. Because the concept behind all this wisdom is gratitude Allah says in Quran:

ولقد آتينا لقمان الحكمة ان شكر الله
"And we have given Iqman wisdom and said be grateful to Allah."

In this context, national poet of Pakistan (Allama Iqbal) said in one of his poetry:

جز بہ قرآن فہمی رو باری است
فکر قرآن اصل شہنشاہی است
فکر قرآن؟ اختلاط فکر و فکر
فکر را کامل نہ دیدم جز بہ ذکر

"The Quran is profound reflection on the essence of life Thought of Quran? It is the blending of remembrance and contemplation. I have found contemplation to be completed only through remembrance."

RELATION WITH SALAH :-

The combined approach of zikr and Fikr is seen in Salah in their highest levels. The two types of Zikr or remembrance are seen in Namaz.

1. Zikr-e- Ghayabi (remembrance in third person).
2. Zikr-e- Khitabi (remembrance in conversation).

When a person recites "Surah Fatiha", its first three verses show zikr in third person, expressing the praise of Allah. While last four verses address conversation between his lord and him, seeking His help to show him right path.

Allah says in Quran:

”انى انا الله لا اله الا الله فاعبدنى واقم الصلاة لذكركى”
"I am Allah, there is no deity except me, so worship me and establish prayer for my remembrance"

This shows that Allah himself is ordering his people to establish salah, so that they could remember him through contemplation. Human will recollect his observance about the world and remember his God, ~~so~~ in order to seek his favour and show his servitude.

2.

EVALUATION OF ACTIONS:

The second issue faced by man reaching to level of identifying his God is whether his actions are maintained or not. This problem can be addressed by doing "Sabr" or patience.

Sabr or patience is not holding on in difficulties or from evil action, but it also maintaining one's good deeds. ~~Maintaining~~ Keeping check on ablution, praying five times regularly, purification is "Sabar".

This will build strong relation with Allah also called "Taateeq-al-Allah". Thus, holding on self-discipline will establish a good relation with God.

RELATION WITH SALAH:

The continuous struggle in keeping up Namaz or prayer establishes a close link between human and Allah. He prepares himself for before prayer by purifying himself, intending to offer on time an "khusbu" or gratitude". The third type of zikr is "Zikr-e-Amali" or remembrance through actions, which is also seen in Salah (Namaz). The action of bowing down and prostration brings close to his Allah.

3. EXPLORING SPIRITUAL GROWTH:

After passing first two stages in identifying man's lord, his third level lies in spiritual connection with Allah. Once his soul explores spiritual growth, he attains highest level of existence and achieve goal of his life. This will bring love, affection and attention of God to his servant.

RELATION WITH SALAH:-

"Salah" offers a chance for man to attain spiritual growth and progress. When person worships with full attention and care, his spirit build connection with his God. which As Allah mentioned in Quran:

"ونحن اقرب اليه من حبل الوريد"

[And we are closer to him than [his] jugular vein]

Thus, Salah or prayer is the only way to solve problems faced by human in achieving highest level of existence and express his devotion and praise.

TYPES OF PRAYER:

These are types of prayer are mentioned below with some explanation.

* "FARZ" OR OBLIGATORY PRAYERS:

Farz Namaz are those prayers which are obligatory to every muslims to perform. This can be further divided into "Farz-al-aayn" (Obligation of self), which includes five prayers a day and Jummah prayers for muslim man and "Farz-al-kifayah" (Obligation of sufficiency) which includes Janazah prayers.

* "SUNNAT" OR PRACTICE OF PROPHET:

This type of prayer includes those namaz which holy prophet offered by himself and ordered muslims too. It is further divided into two category:

Sunnat-e-Muaqjidah: this is compulsory prayer and every muslim must offer it. e.g. Salat-e-Taraweeh.

Sunnat-e-Ghair Muajjidah: this prayer is voluntary act and depend on man himself, if he want offer or not. Eitherway, there is no compulsion on him.

* WAJIB OR COMPULSARY PRAYER:

Those prayers include Salat-al-Witr. (performed after Isha in odd numbers), and Salat-al-Eid (performed on the morning of Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha).

* NAFL OR SUPEREROGATOR PRAYER:

These prayers are voluntary and one may perform almost anytime except sunrise, true noon or sunset. These include Ishraq, Chasht, Tahajud etc.

SPIRITUAL IMPACTS:

→ Fear Of God:

The essence of prayer in Islam is that man gets to involve his soul in sensing the existence of God all the time. This creates sense of accountability and fear of Allah, which will help him to prevent from evil deeds.

As Quran mentions:

“ان الصلاة تنهى عن الفحشاء والمنكر”
“Salah prevents man from evil and lewdness obscenity”

→ Success of Both Worlds:

The objective of muslim is not just success of hereafter, after Allah asks his servant to seek success of both worlds. Salah is prime way to success, which is demonstrated by call to prayer: ("Come to Success") "حَيَّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ"

This verse is called after calling to salah, reminding muslims that all success lies in establishing prayer.

→ Patience and Preservance:

Namaz guides man in having patience or sabar, contentment and preservance. The maintenance of good deeds will let man get love of his lord. As Allah mentions in Quran:

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ . وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْفَاحِشِينَ
"Seek help with patience and prayer, this is indeed an exacting discipline, but not to the humble"

→ Purification:

The main principle of performing prayer is to purify body and soul. Namaz will help person in cleaning his physical and mental dirt, thus with highest level of "taharat" or purification is attained. The order of doing ablution of "Wuzu / Ghusul" and full focused intention toward Allah is given to establish before Salah.

MORAL IMPACTS:

→ Self discipline:

Regular struggle to establish prayer five times a day on particular time with grace or khushu will bring self-discipline and structured life in muslims life. This will help him in achieving his goals of this world and permanent world (hereafter).

→ Humility:

When a person bow down in front of Almighty Allah and do prostration or Sujud, he considers his servant and non-existential identity in front of divine lord. This brings humility and humbleness in his personality.

→ ~~Intension~~ Intension and Focus:

The intension and concentration is the guiding principle of Salah to get gratitude and focus in life. This will help muslim to stay strong holded to or their believes and maintain religious sustainability. Man cuts off all strings of this world and completely focus to praise his lord and seek his help to getting true path.

SOCIAL IMPACTS:

→ Social Strength:

Prayering five times collectively in masjid or holy place brings strength and cooperation in muslim ummah. People will feel peace and social strength will be enhanced. Regular meet ups with muslim brothers many times a day provides a way to discuss religious and spiritual thoughts along with solutions to social issues according to teachings of Islam.

→ Mutual Cooperation:

Establishing Salah collectively leverage mutual respect and co-operation. In Islam, every human being is equal to one another, so standing in equal row in front of Almighty Allah establish sense of equality in society. This will help in collaboration of people of different class, race or culture. As Allah mentions in Quran:

“واقموا الصلاة و اتوا الزكاة واركعوا مع الراكعين”
“And establish prayer and give Zakah and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience]”