

Define the meaning of prayer and its different categories. Also describe the spiritual, moral and social importance of prayers.

I. Introduction:

إن الصلاة تنقي القلوب والبدن

Indeed Salah save from evil and vulgarity

"Indeed! Salah is a timed ordinance"
(Nisa 4:103)

Salah (prayer) is the second pillar of Islamic faith. To be recognised as a muslim, salah's performance is necessary to be done.

"Salah differentiate a muslim from non-muslim"

Salah is of three categories; fard, sunnah and Nawafil prayers. The spiritual, moral and social importance of prayer lies in that it is the prayer which has been ordained many times in Quran and Sunnah. As it not only purifies an individual from sins, his evil intentions, but also steadfast his belief on Allah, saves him from slavery, united him as a in the beads of Muslimhood. It is prayer which inculcates the principles of discipline, punctuality ordained his life in the way as desirable to be a muslim.

II. Meaning of prayer:

Salah is an anglicised word for Arabic word salaah (صلاة) which means 'bowing'. It means to recognise Allah as Lord and nobody is to be worshipped except Him. All prayers belong to Him. To demonstrate His superiority and thankfulness to Him, Muslims offer prayers five times a day.

III. Importance of Prayer in Quran and Hadith:

واقبوا الصلاة والزكاة
واركعوا مع الركع

(2:43)

Al-Baqara And Establish prayer and pay zakat and bow down with those who bow down.

“Seek God's help with prayer, patience and perseverance”
(Al-Quran)

يا ايها الذين امنوا استعينوا بالصبر
والصلاة ان الله مع الصابرين

“O you who believe! seek assistance through patience and prayer; Surely Allah is with the patient.”

(Al-Baqarah)
2:153

الصلاة معراج المؤمنين

"Prayer is miraj for the believers"

The Prophet said,
"He who deliberately neglects an obligatory prayer, Allah is absolved of him."

Hadrat Muhammad (S.A.W) said, Prayer is the key to Paradise

الصلاة مفتاح الجنة

IV. Required spirit for performance of prayer:

It must be performed in the way as it was taught and performed by prophet. It must be performed earnestly and humbly. Taharati wudu is pre-requisite for performance of salat rituals.

قد افلح المؤمنون

الذين هم في صلاتهم خاشعون

(Al-Mummoon
23:1-2)

خاشعون

"Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers"

V. Categories of salat:

Salat has been categorized into four types, however, their classification is not done in any Quran and sunnah, it is just made to make things easy in

to understand.

1. Fard (obligatory)
2. Sunnah
3. Wajib
4. Nawafil.

1- Fard (Fard)

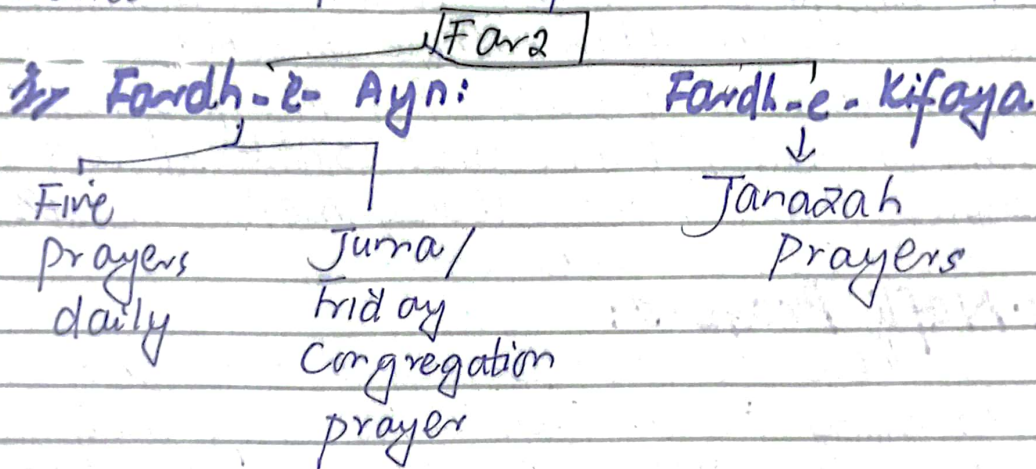
Fard are those prayers which are obligatory. Their performance is made compulsory otherwise punishment will be given in the hereafter. Fard are of two types i.e. Fard-Kifaya and Fard-e-ayn. Fard-e-ayn is the obligation of the self. Individual will be held accountable if the performance are neglected.

1^o He who deliberately neglects an obligatory prayer, Allah is absolved of him. (Musnad Ahmed)

Whereas, Fard-e-Kifaya are those prayers whose action is compulsory to be performed by whole on behalf of the individual. If few members offered it on behalf of others, it would be considered as performed. But if no one carries it out, all incur collective punishment.

Particulars of Five Prayers

Prayer	Sunnah before Fardh	Fardh	Sunnah after Fardh	Nawa fil	Total
Fajr	2	2	-	-	4
Zuhr	4	4	2	2	12
Asr	4	4	-	-	8
Maghrib	-	3	2	2	7
Isha	4	4	2	2+3wit+2	17



2. Klajib Prayers

Hanafi consider salat-al-witr and salat al-Eid as klajib prayers whereas other scholars and school of thoughts consider them as sunnah muakkadah.

1. Salat al-witr:

It is performed after the salah al-isha. Witr is commonly offered in three raka'ah.

ii. Salah al-Eid:

Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha are performed on celebration after Ramadan fasting and Pilgrimage performance. The Eid Salah is offered b/w between sunrise and true noon, i.e. between the time periods for Fajr and zuhr.

3. Sunnah Prayers

are of two types Sunnah Muakkadah and sunnah Ghair-Muakkadah. Sunnah Muakkadah should be practised on a regular basis, which if abandoned cause the abandoner to be regarded as sinful by the Hanafi school and the sunnah Ghair Muakkadah, those practised on a semi-regular practice by the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) about which all are agreed that their abandonment does not render one sinful.

4. Nafli Prayers:

These are voluntary and may perform as many as one likes. However, they cannot be offered at sunrise, true noon, or sunset. The prohibition against salah at these times is to prevent the practice of sun worship. Other examples of Nafli prayers are: Ishraq, Chasht, Tahajjud, Tasbeeh, sahar, Istikhara, Hayat, Tauba, Khawf, Kusuf, Khusuf and Istisqa.

VI. Impacts of Prayer on Human life and Society:

A. Spiritual Impacts:

i. Psychological stability and peace of mind:

Korshippers seek psychological stability and peace of mind on performing their salah. As reaching out to Lord, calms their hearts and inculcates peace and remove anxiety.

Prophet was heard by the Ali (r.a) saying that Get up Bilal, call people to prayer and make us feel relaxed.

ii. Greater reward for congregational prayers in hereafter:

Those who perform prayers in jamaat (congregation), their rewards are twenty-seven times higher than those who perform salah alone at home.

iii. Spiritual purification:

As physical cleanliness removes all dirt from the body, similarly offering salah removes sins from them and Allah loves purification of His man.

ان الله يحب التوابين و يحب المتطهرين
(2:222) Allah surely loves those who seek forgiveness from Him and He

Loves those who purify them"

iv. Chew against evil and

independence;

Prayer inculcates the fear of God which is necessary to be kept alive in the heart of Mumin so that he keeps himself away from all temptations and evils.

As Quran says;

ان الصلاة تنهى عن الفحشاء
والمنكر (Al-Ankaboot 29:45)

"Salah prevents man from evil and lewdness."

B. Moral impacts:

i. Prayer and sensitivity to value of time.

ان الصلوة كانت على المؤمنين
كثاباً موقوتاً - (Al-Nisaa 4:109)

"Surely prayer is a timed ordinance for the believers"

This ayah clearly shows that salat inculcates in Muslims the sensitivity of to time and makes their biological clock finely.

ii. Prayer and sense of honour and independence:

"Worshipping God is total freedom"

iii. Patience and perseverance:

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا
لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

"And seek help through patience and prayers. Indeed, it is a burden except for the humble." (Al-Baqarah 2:45)

Prayers develop in man such qualities as patience, endurance, contentment and perseverance, which are source of strength in the face of the hardships and sufferings of life.

iv. Character-Building:

The practical success of an individual depends on his hardwork and his persistent efforts and consistent performance of a duty. This habit is build through the prayers. Daily prayer is a duty which is performed with strict regularity five times a day. This consistent effort is liked in the eyes of Allah, as Prophet (S.A.W) said;

أحب الأعمال إلى الله أدومها وإن قل

"The dearest act in the eyes of Allah is that which is done constantly, even though it be small."

iii. Patience and perseverance:

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ
لِكَيْرَةِ الْإِلَهِ عَلَى الْغَافِلِينَ

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"The dearest act in the ^{قل} eyes of Allah is that which is done constantly, even though it be small."

C. Social Impacts:

i. Increased social strength, mutual cooperation and Consultation. Congregating in the mosque is beneficial for the community as it strengthens muslimhood among muslims. As Hadith declares,

"The Muslims constitute a single structure with each supporting the other"
Consultation at mosque can solve many issues which the community is suffering in its daily life. This consultation platform is provided by mosque.

ii.

Political training and Muslim Unity
The consciousness for political structure; how it works, how to select ruler, how it must be accountable, all is provided in the structure of mosque. The alignment of people in lines irrespective of caste, color, creed, shows equality of all. The ruler standing in front of the all jamaat is the one who is most responsible in his deeds, thus the political leadership should be elected in the same manner the person should be same responsible in his acts as imam is responsible towards his performance of prayer and should lead likewise.

iv. Social unity:

واطيعوا الله واطيعوا رسوله ولا تنازعوا
فدنه وادعوا الله مع الصابرين

(Anfaal 8:46) And obey Allah and His Messenger, and fall into no disputes, lest you lose heart and you power depart and be patient and preserving"

iv. Greater social responsibility

The Quran emphasized that the spiritual fruits of devotional worship must appear in the form of greater social responsibility. Those who do not offer prayer and do not give needy the asked things indeed they are regretful person in the eyes of Allah.

فويل للمصلين - الذين هم عن صلاتهم
ساهون - الذين هم ليرؤون - ويكفون

الماعون. (Al Maun 107: 4-7)

And also to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayers, who do good to be seen, and withhold the necessaries of life"

VII. Conclusion:

Thus, Salah is the binding knot of Muslim Ummah. It is the prayer that makes a man close to his creator and lead him to steadfastness and ultimately to piety. It develops high moral characteristics of perseverance, honesty and truthfulness. It also makes people God fearing and pious. Socially, it teaches equality, fraternity and tolerance among Ummah. Hence, Salah is the builder and distinguisher of Muslim Ummah.