

Chapter 1: The Steps

[Step 1: The Meaning Of The Sighting Of The Exalted Creator](#)

In the tradition sighted at the end of the previous chapter there has been stress on the sighting of the Exalted Creator. We must know that the sighting is of two types, namely, 1) sighting with the eyes and 2) sighting with the heart. In the view of the devout persons sighting through the heart is more important than sighting with the eyes. It must be your experience that many a time the eye can make a mistake about the object sighted. For example from a fast moving carriage one gets the illusion that the trees are fast running in the opposite direction. This, as you know, is contrary to the fact. But, in the case of sighting through the heart there will not be any element of error.

Someone asked Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) if he has sighted Allah whom he worshipped. He replied, "If I had not seen Him, I would never have worshipped Him. But I have not seen Allah with these eyes because they have no such faculty. I have witnessed Allah with the eyes of my heart and the firmness of my Faith in Him."

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) was asked by someone, "O son of the Prophet! How to create *khudu wa khushu* (humility and fear of Allah) in prayer?"

The Imam (as) replied, "During prayer keep your eyes focused on the point where you prostrate with your forehead."

Again someone asked the Imam (as) the same question and he told him that during the prayer he should have the thought in his mind that he might die immediately after the prayer.

After some more days another person asked the Imam the same question. The Imam said that during the prayer the person should concentrate on the thought that he is witnessing Allah; but since Allah does not have any physical appearance, He cannot be seen with the eyes. The thought must be there during the prayer that Allah is looking at the worshipper.

A thought comes to the mind that the Holy Imam (as), instead of giving three different replies, could have given only one reply, which he thought was the best. But this thinking is wrong. As a matter of fact, the Imam was replying to every individual keeping his capability in mind. The reply given to the third and the last person is for the knowledgeable, and the most knowledgeable are the Infallible members of the Prophet's progeny. They are on record praying to Allah thus, "We have not been able to justify Your Mystic knowledge.

[Step 2: The Reason For Creation Of The Universe](#step-2-reason-creation-universe)

There are numerous verses of the Holy Qur'an and several traditions of the Prophet (S) and the Imams that illustrate that the purpose of the creation of the universe, and all the creatures living in it, is for the sole purpose of worshipping the Creator, Allah. We should know that prayer and knowledge of Allah have to be compulsorily together. Without knowledge of Allah prayer is futile and without prayer any claims of knowledge of Allah are not of any use.

There are certain conditions that are the very spirit of prayer, for example humility, fear of Allah and dedication of the heart. If these things are not there then the prayer is not of much use. These things prevent the worshipper from undesirable acts. If the prayer is not implicitly in accordance with the established norms, then it can, at best, be termed as praying just out of habit.

For the acceptance of our prayers we have to consider whether it is preventing us from the undesirable acts of the daily life. If this is not the case, we are not fulfilling the very purpose of the Creator prescribing prayer for the human kind. The prayer of such persons will be hypocritical, tantamount to going through the ritual for making a show in the social environment.

[Step 3: The Conditions For Prayer](#step-3-conditions-prayer)

Going into the details of the steps of prayer is not in the purpose of this book. But briefly, the most important aspect of prayer is the intent of the worshipper who offers prayer. The Prophet (S) has said,

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ.
"The actions of a person depend on his intentions."

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) has said, "the intent of a pious person is better than his actions." The intent in which there is no desire for nearness is useless and the nearness without intent too is not of much use. Here the nearness is not meant to be the physical nearness but the nearness of spirit. One should know that physical nearness with Allah is impossible because He is devoid of any physical existence. However pure the intent for prayer there is no other intent in the act than the nearness to the Creator. For example the people in the community start considering a pretender very pious because a rich person got impressed with his prayers and gave him material benefits.

The translator here recalls the story of a thief who planned to burgle the palace of the king. He climbed

the roof of the palace and sat looking for a chance to get into the boudoir of the queen. He was waiting for the king and the queen to fall asleep. During this time he heard the queen and the king converse. The queen said to the king that Allah has granted to them a pretty daughter who has now reached the age of the marriage.

The king said that he too was looking for a pious person to be the consort for his daughter. The queen said it might not be a difficult task to find such a person. She suggested that the vizier should go to the mosque early morning and the first young person who arrived there should be the best choice. She said that they should get their daughter married to that person because they didn't need to search a person with riches. The king liked this idea very much and issued suitable instructions to the vizier.

The thief heard all this and saw a wonderful opportunity for himself. He quietly descended from the roof of the palace and reached the mosque carefully to be the first person entering there. The vizier brought him to the court. The king ordered the young man to be given a shower and robed in royal finery. The king also declared that the princess will be married to him and he would get half the kingdom as a dowry. The king asked the young man if he was willing to accept the proposal.

At this juncture the young man got the idea that for falsely assuming piety he was getting half of the kingdom. If he became a true worshipper of Allah the bounties could be unimaginable. Therefore the young man refused the offer of the king. He told him that Allah, who has given him half the kingdom, might give him much more. The king hugged the young man and said, "Alright! I have given you the entire kingdom"

Therefore, it is imperative that there has to be honesty of purpose in prayer. Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) has said, "The people who pray with the desire of entering the Heaven, their devotion is commercial; and those who offer prayers with the fear of going to Hell, their attitude is slavish. The third category is of persons, who offer prayers to Allah with the awareness that they owe devotion to Him and are the selfless worshippers. I too offer prayers to Allah because He is the true Lord deserving of worship. His blessings and gifts are of such magnitude that offering Him thanks would not be possible even if every cell gets a tongue."

Prophet Musa (as) was told by Allah, "O Musa! Create My love in the hearts of your people!"

Prophet Musa (as) replied, "O Creator! I love you profoundly, but how can I create Your love in others' hearts?"

The reply was, "Mention to them the Blessings showered by Me on them. They will automatically develop love for Me!"

The Holy Prophet (S) said, "O people! Love Allah for His countless bounties, Love me because of Allah and because of me, love my Ahl-ul-Bayt!"

The purpose of *Innamal aamaal bil niyaat* (Actions are in accordance to the intents) is that the actions should purely be for the sake of Allah. The 'intent' which is from the depth of the heart is better than the action. Some people wrongly assume that when they utter their desire to perform ablution or the bath of purification, they have expressed their intent to do so.

What is important is the sincerity in the action. The following example shall illustrate the point. There is a person who habitually misses his mandatory prayers. But an occasion comes when he accompanies a rich person, from whom he expects a favor, to a mosque. To please the rich man he performs ablution and joins the congregation. Although his intent was to pray, his prayer is not right, because his intention was to receive the largesse and not to get Allah's Pleasure!

There are two distinct types of intents. The one is an easy intent and the other is difficult.

The first easy intent is one which comes to mind but the person does not perform the act purposely. For example, a person enters the washroom with the intent of performing the ritual purification bath, forgets about it and takes a shower without going through the steps of the ritual bath. The person thus would not have purified himself, although the intent was there.

The difficult intent is one where a person is fully aware of the purpose and need for the action. He knows the dictates of the wisdom and religious norms for the act. For example, a person is first asked as to where he is going. He says that he intends to go to the bazaar. This will be his first intention. Then he is asked as to why he is going to the bazaar. He mentions about the things he intends to buy. That will be his second intention.

There are a few stages of intent:

In this world every individual has certain wishes and desires. Some are after hoarding wealth under the influence of the Satan, others face any amount of hardship to get their beloved. These hardships are pleasurable for them. Even if they are told that prayer would bring to them Bounties in the Hereafter, they would not pay any heed. For the person who is running after acquiring wealth, his deity is the wealth. Similarly a person who wants to have name and fame, limits his prayers to craving for these things.

During the time of the Prophet there was a good mix of godliness and worldliness in the people. But soon after the Prophet, a clear demarcation came about between the godly and the worldly-wise people. The worldly-wise joined hands with the rulers of the day and the pious were few and far between.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) narrates that the Prophet (S) said, "abstain from hypocrisy, because hypocrisy is like polytheism (*Shirk*). The hypocrite will be addressed with four names on the Day of Reckoning: unbeliever, characterless, deceit, adulterer. He will be told that his actions will earn him retribution and all his prayers would have gone in vain. He will be asked to seek the wages and return for his efforts from the one he was working for (*the Satan*)"

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as) narrates that the Prophet of Islam (S) said that on the Day of Reckoning Allah would order consigning of one group of people to the Hell. The Keeper of the Hell will instruct the Hell Fire not to burn the feet of the people because they used to enter the Mosque using them. He will caution the fire not to scorch their faces that they used to do the ablution of their faces for the prayers. He would also ask the fire to spare their hands that they used to raise them in supplication to Allah. He would not have their tongues burnt that they used to recite the Holy Book with their help!.

Then the Keeper of the Hell would ask the sinners, "O cruel ones! What sins you have committed that despite everything you have been judged deserving of punishment in the Hell?"

The group would respond saying, "All our actions were to please others than Allah. This is the reason that we are asked today to seek succor from those in whose service we spent our lives."

Luqman (as) advised his son that hypocrites can be recognized with three characteristics: while alone, they are tardy about prayers: when in congregation they pretend to be ardently keen on offering prayers and in every activity they seek more and more approbation from others.

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) narrates from the Prophet (S) He said, "The person who offers prayers to show-off to others is a polytheist (*mushrik*). The person who performs Hajj to impress others is a *mushrik* and one who fasts to attract others' attention too is a *mushrik*. One who pays the tithe (the Zakat) to impress others and pretends to follow all the Commandments of Allah hypocritically too is a *mushrik*. Allah doesn't accept any acts of the hypocrites."

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) said, "Every hypocrisy is polytheism. Whatever deed is done with the purpose of showing to others is hypocrisy. The wages for the deeds too will be disbursed by the one for whom the deed was performed."

The Imam (as) further said, "The good deed done by a pious person, however small, Allah will manifest it to others in greater measure. However much the perpetrator of evil tries to hide his deed from others, Allah will disclose it to others sooner or later."

The cure for hypocrisy and cunning is the banishing of evil thoughts from the mind and controlling the desires for undue worldly benefits. The person should think that this world is transitory and nothing is permanent here. He has only to pray for and seek the goodwill and nearness of the Immortal and Infallible Allah.

It is said that a person was squatting near a tree remembering Allah. He wished to do his meditation with complete peace of mind when a group of birds perched on the tree and started chirping. The peace of mind of the person was disturbed and he scared the birds away. After a while of peace the birds again gathered on the canopy of the tree and started making noise. He scared them away once again.

But the birds were coming back again and again. Another person was passing by and he observed the

activity of the first person. He said, "Brother! As long as the tree is there, the birds would perch on it and chirp! Why don't you cut away the tree?" The man did accordingly. He got rid of the chirping birds.

Similarly, as long as there are present in the hearts of humans the trees of the love of worldly gains, the birds of desire will be there to chirp and there will not be peace of mind for prayer and supplication.

Therefore, one should shun the worldly desires, concentrate on the bounties that Allah has given him.

The bounties of Allah are uncountable and there won't be an end thanking Him for His Grace.

The biggest Divine Blessing is the existence of the human being. Allah has blessed man with limbs, sense and strength. He has created the land, the skies, the sun, the moon, the stars, the animals and birds for the benefit of man. He has created different climates, flora and fauna for the good of man. Allah has not deprived even the unbelievers from the benefits of His bounties in this world. But man continues to give the proof of his ungratefulness. He bows down shamelessly and thoughtlessly to his own self-created gods.

Imam Ar-Ridha' (as) says, "If Allah had not promised Heaven and had not created the fear of the Hell, even then prayer would have been obligatory on humankind. Because Allah is the provider of all the Bounties before and after the creation of man in this world."

There are stages of prayer: In the grade of sincere worshippers there is a group of people who offer prayer in their modesty. These are the people whose hearts are shining with the light of Faith. They believe that Allah is Omniscient and keeps track of all our actions. Therefore, they never commit any act contrary to His Dictates. They are shy of committing the smallest act tantamount to His Disobedience. They firmly believe that Allah is Omnipresent.

Luqman told to his son, "If you wish to be disobedient to Allah, search a place where He isn't there!"

The Prophet of Allah (S) said, "Have fear of Allah the best you could!"

Some of the companions asked, "How could we have the fear of Allah?"

The Prophet (S) replied, "If you wish to have fear of Allah, always keep your death in mind and keep all your senses free of sins against Allah. Take care to eat legitimate (Halal) food and tell the truth. Also you must remember that your destiny is to go to the grave and the dust."

The people who have comprehended the pleasure of prayer, their minds and consciences will be pure and bright and all the worldly desires would have vanished from the mirror of their hearts. They don't give priority to any desires over their duties of obedience and worship of Allah. For them there is no pain more than the pain of committing sin against Allah.

They have totally comprehended the harm accompanying sin. They associate Heaven with prayer and supplication and Hell with sin. They get so much pleasure from prayers that they become unmindful of the worldly pleasures! Every drop of tear that issues forth from their eyes in prayer, gives immense

pleasure to their hearts. The tears that come from their eyes in fear of Allah, give them the pleasure of having Allah's Fear.

The Prophet (S) has said, "The noblest person is one who loves to pray. His heart is full of Allah's love. His limbs and other parts are obedient to the Will of Allah. For prayer he would abandon worldly activities and he would be oblivious of the comforts of life. He would be totally dedicated to prayer of Allah without giving any thought to earning a place in the Heaven."

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) narrates that Allah says, "O my worshippers! Derive benefit from prayers in the world, as you would in the Hereafter. As there are the five senses in the bodies of humans, with whose help they feel things, their spirits too have faculties of senses. The spirits derive the truths and meanings through their use. As the bodily senses keep them away from wrong-doing, so do the spiritual senses prevent them from committing sins.

People with good taste distinguish between good taste or otherwise. But when a person falls ill, even sweet things taste bitter to him. In such a condition the person loses his confidence on his faculty of taste. Similarly, as long as the spiritual senses of a person are not dominated by carnal desires, he will be busy in prayer and supplication. But once the negative desires gain ascendance over him, he starts feeling that good deeds are bitter for him. He refrains from prayer and starts indulging in sinful acts. In his eyes, now, the evil appear good and the good appear evil."

Allah observes about the Infallible of the Family of the Prophet (the Ahl-ul-Bayt) thus, "Allah is friendly towards them, and they are friendly towards Allah." They are such worshippers of Allah that even if they are in the Heaven and they don't have the Pleasure of Allah, then the Heaven would be worse than the Hell for them. And if they are in the Hell and have the love of Allah, then the fire of the Hell will be like flowers for them.

Therefore prophet Ibrahim (as) thought that the fire of Nimrod, to which the tyrant consigned him, was a bed of flowers. If Allah had not thought it fit to change the fire into flowers, prophet Ibrahim (as) would have accepted it without a whimper of complaint.

Let's take the example of an ordinary mortal. In his worldly love for the beloved he would go to any extent to please. He would undergo any amount of hardship willingly for the sake of the loved one. Wherever he goes, whatever he does, the sole aim is to please the beloved. But when a person gets to love Allah, he rises above the concept of the Heaven and the Hell. The biggest thing in his eyes now will be to have the pleasure of Allah. He likes the Heaven because he thinks that Allah likes it and wishes to be away from the Hell that he thinks Allah doesn't like the Hell.

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen (as) has said, "O Allah! If You consign me to Hell and separate me from my friends, I might bear the harsh hardships of the Hell with forbearance. But how could I withstand separation from You!" One who has reached such heights in his love for the Creator can't be disobedient to the Omnipotent Allah.

Allah exhorts the Prophet (S) thus, “O Muhammad! Tell the people. If you wish to have Allah’s friendship, then follow me that Allah will be friendly with you.” Again Allah says, “One who is friendly with Allah, Allah is friendly with him. And those who have Allah’s friendship are in safety.” Such a person will be safe from the machinations of the Satan in this world.

And prophet Musa bin Imran (as) received the Revelation thus, “O Musa! Liar is a person who claims that he is friendly with Allah but sleeps away when the night comes. A friend seeks to converse with his beloved in loneliness! In the loneliness of nights Our friends converse with Us in a manner, as if, they are in Our presence! This status is achieved by a mu’min (pious person) when he thinks of Our countless Blessings and accepts their greatness.”

The Prophet of Allah (S) said to his companions, “Tell me which of Allah’s Bounties is the first one?” Everyone made his guess about the bounties. Some said dainty food is the best Blessing, another said that the children, and more particularly the male child, are Allah’s best Bounty. Alas, when the Prophet (S) was not satisfied with any of the replies, he asked Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as), “O ‘Ali! Tell me. Of the countless Bounties of Allah, which one is the best?!”

The Prophet’s Vicegerent said, “O Prophet of Allah! You know better than me and whatever I know has been taught to me by you! But since you are ordering me to respond to your question, I am complying.

Of the Bounties of Allah, the best is the capability of invention. When there was nothing, He gave us the faculty of existence and observation.” The Prophet (S) said, “O ‘Ali! You are right. Now, What is the next best Bounty?”

Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) said, “The second Bounty is that Allah has not created us like the flora and the minerals (mountains, rocks, trees etc) but He has endowed us with spirit and animation.” The Prophet (S) said, “Verily! You are right. Tell me what is the third Bounty?”

Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) said, “The third Bounty is that Allah has bestowed to the human–kind the best features of face and body” The Prophet (S) said, “You are right. What is the fourth Bounty?”

Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) said, “The fourth Bounty is that Allah has gifted the human beings with the external and spiritual senses.” The Prophet (S) rejoined, “True. What is the fifth Bounty?”

Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) said, “The fifth Bounty is that Allah has given intellect and wisdom to the human beings.” The Prophet (S) said, “You are right. O ‘Ali! What is the sixth Bounty?”

Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) replied, “The sixth Bounty is that Allah has gifted to us the wealth of the True Faith and has not created us in ignorance.” The Prophet (S) said, “This too is true. What is the seventh Bounty?”

Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) said, “The seventh Bounty is that Allah has bestowed us with immortal life in the Hereafter. The Prophet (S) said, “True! What is the eighth Bounty?”

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) said, "Allah has created us free and not slave to anyone." The Prophet (S) said, "You are right. What is the ninth Bounty?"

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) said, "The ninth Bounty is that Allah has created the earth and the sky and all they contain for our benefit and gave us full control of these elements." The Prophet (S) assented and asked, "What is the tenth Bounty?"

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) replied, "The tenth Bounty is that Allah has created us men and superior to women." The Prophet (S) asked, "O 'Ali! Tell about more Bounties of Allah!"

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) said, "O Allah's choicest of creations! The Bounties of Allah are uncountable. My entire life shall be insufficient to enumerate them." The Prophet (S) said, "O 'Ali! Truly, you are the inheritor of the knowledge! Whosoever follows you will be on the Right Path. Your friends shall find Deliverance! Your enemies and adversaries shall be deprived of the rewards on the Day of Judgment!" Then he (S) said, "the way to achieve nearness of the Creator is to talk more of Him. The best prayer is the supplication of the pious person!" Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) said,

<blockquote class="rtl">مَا عَبَدْتُكَ خَوْفًا مِنْ نَارِكَ وَلَا طَمَعًا فِي جَنَّتِكَ، وَلَكِنْ وَجَدْتُكَ أَهْلًا لِلْعِبَادَةِ فَعَبَدْتُكَ.</blockquote>I don't worship Allah with the desire for the Heaven nor for the fear of the Hell! I Worship Him because I found Him deserving of Worship!

This is the stage of Divine Understanding when even if the supplicant is sent to the Hell, he will continue with his supplication unmindful of the Hell Fire!

If someone questions that when at the height of piety Heaven and Hell have no relevance for the pious, then how is it that the prophets and the Infallible persons always expressed wish for the Heaven and deliverance from the Hell in their supplications?

The fact is that Heaven has different connotations in its intrinsic and apparent aspects. Its fruits, for example, have different tastes for different individuals to suit every individual palate. For some the taste might be just good and for the others because of their profound faith, there will be the feeling of spiritual happiness.

For example: If a king serves food to a commoner from his royal table, the person would relish the delicacies doubly because he is getting the honor of having food on the royal table and the food that is out of the ordinary for him. When the same food is served to a nobleman, he too would enjoy eating it. But it would not be anything out of the ordinary for him that he gets the same food every day on his own table. However he cherishes the honor of sharing the table with his monarch!

The prophets too pray for the Heaven that it would enhance their status in the eyes of the Creator and not for any physical comfort! When they crave safety from the Hell, it is not from the fear of the Fire but to prevent themselves from the displeasure of Allah! Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) has said in one of his

supplications, “O Creator! I can have forbearance when You punish me but how could I bear separation from You. The heat of the Fire of the Hell can be bearable for me but how could I bear the heat of the fire of separation from you!

[Step 4: Total Devotion Of Mind And Heart](#)

Among the conditions for prayer, one most important condition is the total dedication and devotion of the heart. If there is no humility and fear of Allah (*Khudu wa Khushu*) in prayer, then it remains ineffective. Even, such prayer might bring the person punishment. If a person is conversing with the king and his mind is elsewhere and the king notices that his subject is not giving his full attention, he might punish the person for his lack of attention.

Humility of heart means that the heart is in full attention towards his Creator while in prayer. The person makes his body and mind totally submissive to the heart. If this state is achieved in prayer, then even the lonely (*furada*) prayer offered by a person will be highly rated. It would be quite possible that he might get the reward of congregational prayer because the heart in this case functions as the leader (*Imam*) of the congregation and the different parts of the body of the devotee as the followers.

As the faith increases, the humility of heart too increases in the same proportion. Therefore the humility of the hearts of the Infallible persons of the prophet’s Family (*the Masoomeen*) is of the highest order. The limbs and body of Amir’ul-Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) used to shiver when going for the prayer. Somebody asked him, “O ‘Ali! Is it not the same body that captured the fort of Khaibar and single handedly rent away the invincible gate of the fort!” Amir’ul-Mu’mineen (as) replied, “No doubt! This is the same body but you must know that at this moment I am on my way carrying the important charge which even the land, the skies and the mountains refused to carry!”

It is said that one day Imam Zain-ul-’Abidin (as) was engrossed in his prayer and Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as), still a child, fell in the well of their house. His mother started shouting, “O Son of the Prophet (S)! Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) has fallen into the well.” But Imam Zain-ul-’Abidin (as) continued with his prayer. The mother of Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) was running between the parapet of the well and the place where the Imam was praying. Alas, when Imam Zain-ul-’Abidin (as) finished his prayer, he went to the well and rescued his son who was hail? and hearty.

The Imam told to his wife, “you know that I was standing in prayer before my Creator. If He was displeased, the consequence would be grave. Our purpose is only to get the goodwill of our Lord and the biggest personal loss is inconsequential. There was no reason for me to fear about the safety of my son. I was present in front of my Master with total dedication of my heart and was not attending to the household matters!”

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) said that some devotees offered prayers with one-third dedication of

heart, some others with one-fourth dedication and others with one-fifth dedication of the heart. The Angels will record the prayers for reward only to the extent of the dedication of the heart of the supplicant. Therefore it is advised that people should offer as many supplementary prayers as possible besides their mandatory prayers.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) said, "the heart in which there is the desire for reward and fear of retribution on the Day of Judgment will become eligible for entry to the Heaven."

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) has said, "when a person prepares to offer prayer, Allah's kindness and blessings shadow him and the Angel of Beneficence proclaims, 'O Creation of Allah! If you know how much your Creator is kind on you, you will not raise your head from your prostration!'"

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) has said, "when the attention of a person is diverted from his prayer, then Allah says, 'O My Creation! Is there any god greater than Me towards whom your attention is diverted.' Then Allah observes the lack of attention of the person thrice and finally He gives to him no more attention.

The dedication of the heart during prayers is dependent very much on the circumstances of the person. The more the person is perfect in his Faith and Belief, the more dedication of heart he will manifest. Ja'far bin Ahmed narrates that when the Prophet (S) used to stand up for offering prayer the color of his face used to change and from his chest a sound used to emanate which used to indicate enthusiasm.

When Imam Hasan (as) used to do the ablutions for offering prayer, his body used to shiver and the color of his face used to turn yellow. People asked him the reason for this change in him. He said, "It is necessary for every worshipper that when he prepares to go to the presence of his Creator, he keeps in mind His Greatness and Omnipotence. Because of this feeling the person's face will turn yellow and his body will shiver."

It is said that after completing the ablution for prayer Imam Zain-ul-'Abidin (as) used to have shivering in his body and the face used to turn yellow. On being asked by people, he used to reply, "don't you know the Greatest Creator before whom I am going to offer my supplications."

It is narrated that Fatima bin Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali once called Jabir Ansari and told him, "you are a companion of the Holy Prophet (S). I am requesting you to advice Imam Zain-ul-'Abidin (as) not to prolong his prayers that his forehead, thighs and back are injured and swollen." Jabir Ansari went to the presence of the Imam (as) and found him busy in his prayer and the weakness of his body and visage was evident.

The Imam (as) gave some place to Jabir to sit beside him and inquired about his health in feeble voice. Jabir said, "O Son of the Prophet (S)! Allah has created the Heaven for you and your friends and the Hell for your enemies and adversaries. Then why are you taking so much hardship on yourself?" the Imam (as) said, "O companion of the Prophet (S)! My ancestor, the Prophet (S) of Allah, who has a

great status in the eyes of the Creator, and also Allah has forgiven all possible acts of omission and commission of his past and present, kept himself so much busy in prayer that his feet used to develop inflammation. The companions used to tell the Prophet (S) that Allah has been so kind to him that He promised to forgive his mistakes. Then they wondered why the Prophet (S) was inflicting so much hardship on himself.

The Prophet (S) used to say, “O my companions! When God is showering so much kindness on man, is it not his duty to thank Allah for the bounties He has granted.”

Jabir said to Imam Zain-ul-'Abidin (as), “O my master! Have kindness on your followers. Because of your existence Allah is kind on the Muslims and no curse is falling on them from the skies.”

The Imam (as) replied, “O Jabir! I wish to be like my ancestors in prayer that I am able to meet them!”

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says that one day his father went to the presence of his own father and found him busy in his prayer. He noticed that the face of the Imam (as) had turned yellow and his forehead was bruised and the feet were swollen. The cheeks of the Imam (as) were injured because of excessive crying. When he saw the condition of his father, he cried out aloud. The Imam's attention was diverted towards his son and finding him crying he asked him to fetch the book of Amir'ul-Mu'mineen (as) in which he had discussed about the subject of prayer. He fetched the book. The Imam (as) cried the more after reading the book and said, “Who has the strength to pray like the Amir'ul-Mu'mineen (as) did!

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says that when Imam Zain-ul-'Abidin (as) used to stand up with the intention of the prayer, his face used to turn yellow and while in prostration, his eyes used to get wet.

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) says that Imam Zain-ul-'Abidin (as) used to offer one thousand rakaat of prayer in a period of one day and night. When he used to stand up for the prayer, the color of his face used to change and it used to appear as if he was standing like a hapless person in the presence of a great king. His entire body used to shiver and it used to give the impression as if he was offering his last prayer. When asked about his condition during the prayer, he used to retort that one should suitably present himself to the Great Creator.

It is said that one of the Imam's child fell from a height and fractured his hand. There was commotion in the house and a bonesetter was called. The bone of the child was set; but all this while the Imam (as) was busy in his prayer. The next morning when he saw the arm of his son in a sling, he inquired about the reason of the injury.

One day the Imam's house caught fire and the neighbors put it out. The Imam (as) was totally oblivious of the incident. When the people asked him the reason, he replied, “I was busy putting out another big fire!

Abu Ayoob narrates from Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) that when Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) used to

stand up for prayers, the color of his red face used to turn yellow and it always gave an impression that he was face to face with Allah, busy conversing with Him.

The Creator of the Universe has ordered man to offer prayer in the morning, evening and noon, five times in a day to renew his dedication and obedience to Him.

Prayer is the height of devotion that lifts a human being from the ground to the unimaginable heights. It is the medium for achieving nearness to the Almighty Allah. Prayer awakens the believers from their slumber of negligence and reminds them of the Hereafter. Islam has set clearly defined schedules for the prayers and it keeps the believers reminded to come for the congregations. The first call comes in the early morning to raise the people from their slumber. This call, which is termed the *adhaan*, is made in loud tones in which the name of the Great Allah (*Allah ho Akbar*) is repeated four times to break the slumber of the proud and the negligent. Then follows the witness there is no god but Allah.

Man should not worship other humans, animals, plants and other elements of nature like the mountains and the rivers. You must reiterate that He, Allah, is One and Only Creator and Has made arrangements for the benefit of man in this world and the hereafter. He has sent His Messenger, His Friend and Prophet (S), with clear messages for the believers to listen to and act on them implicitly.

Then the worshippers are exhorted to make haste to come for the prayer, which is to their own advantage. They are told that the prayer is the best of acts and they must hurry to join it. At the end of the call to the believers it is repeated that Allah is Great.

There are people in this world who, even after hearing the loud call to prayer, continue with their mundane activities. But there are others who willingly pay heed to the call, keep away their worldly tasks for the time, and proceed to join the prayer.

It is said that when the time for the prayer comes, one angel calls on behalf of Allah, "O believers! Proceed towards prayer and extinguish the fire of your sins with the light of the prayer." When a pious person decides to go for prayer, he is required to cleanse himself of the apparent dirt. He should also cleanse his mind of any negative thoughts that might be there. When he is ready for the prayer, first he must wash his face. At this time he must say, "O Allah! You have said that on the Day of Judgment some faces will turn black and others will be white and shiny. Please make my face shiny and prevent it from going black." While cleansing the right hand, he should remember that on the Day of Judgment, the pious would carry their record of actions in the right hands and the sinners would carry their records in the left hands.

Therefore he must pray that his record of actions is held in the right hand on the Day of Judgment. While anointing (*masah*) his forehead, he should pray, "O Allah! Please be kind on me." While anointing the feet, he should pray that the feet do not falter on the Bridge of *Sirat* on the Day of Judgment.

It has been mentioned in the traditions that a house which has dogs, where intoxicants are stored, where pictures and paintings are kept, the Angels of blessings do not come. These things should be kept away from the living quarters and even the thoughts of these forbidden things should be banished from the minds of the believers. At the threshold of the mosque, he should say, “O Allah! You have opened this door to me, please open the doors to Your nearness too for me!” While standing at the place of prayer, he should say *iqamah* and in his mind recall the words of the *adhaan* and their meanings because prayer is the height of piety and the Prophet (S), while he was in *Me’raj*, reiterated the words *Allah O Akbar* while entering every stage. Therefore before every prayer the words *Allah O Akbar* are repeated seven times.

Now the person is ready for the conversation, that is, for offering his prayer to Allah. At this stage, he should say

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ السَّمِيعِ الْعَلِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ.

“I seek refuge in Allah the all-hearing all-knowing from the cursed devil?” to ward off the Satan. Now that the time to go to the presence of the Almighty Allah has come, the worshipper should say *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem.*

These words are reiterated before any work is commenced and particularly so when one starts to offer his prayer. Even in our mundane lives we have to praise the important persons when we approach them. When we stand in the Presence of Allah, the Beneficent and Merciful, it is natural that we must praise Him and acknowledge that He is the Lord of The Day of Judgment (*Youm iddeen*). Then the worshipper says, “*Iyyaka nabudo* (We worship only You)”

Therefore, the Prophet of Allah (S) has said, “Whilst praying think that you are seeing Him (*Allah*) and in humility submit, *waiiaka nastaeen* (O Sustainer! We ask for your succor for our failings and shortcomings!). Thereafter a request is made to Allah to include the prayers of the supplicant with the prayers of the persons on whom Allah has showered his Blessings and Bounties and not of those on whom Allah’s wrath has fallen!”

Now we quote Amir’ul-Mu’mineen ‘Ali’s (as) eloquent saying,

وَاعْلَمُ أَنَّ أَوَّلَ عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ الْمَعْرِفَةَ بِهِ، أَنَّهُ الْأَوَّلُ قَبْلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، فَلَا شَيْءَ قَبْلَهُ، وَالْفَرْدُ فَلَا تَأْنِي لَهُ، وَالْبَاقِي لَإِلَى غَايَةٍ، فَاطْرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا فِيهِمَا وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ، وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ، وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

“The best prayer is Knowledge of Allah (*Ma’rifa*) and Identification that He is ahead of everything and nothing was there before Him. He is the only One and has none like Him. He is Immortal and has no end. He is the Creator of the Universe and everything that is found on the earth and in the sky. He is Omniscient (*Khabeer*) and Gentle (*Lateef*) and he is *Omnipotent*; that He has control over all things!”

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