

Effect of Prayer on Social Life

The reforming effect of prayer is certainly not confined to the individual only. It encompasses a wide range of social domains, so that the life is organized and straightened according to Allah's will.

In order to fulfill the objectives of prayer, the Qur'an links keeping up prayers to social reformation and doing good deeds.

The Holy Qur'an declares:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ

“...and you shall speak to people good words and keep up prayer and pay zakat (the poor-rate) ...” (2:83)

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

“Have you not seen those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands, and keep up prayer...” (4:77)

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ

“And We made them imams who guided (people) by Our command and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer...” (21:73)

الَّذِينَ إِن مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

“Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay zakat (the poor-rate) and enjoin good and forbid evil; and Allah's is the end of affairs.” (22:41)

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ ۚ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

“Recite that which has been sent down to you of the Book and keep up prayer; surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest and Allah knows what you do”. (29:45)

Examining these verses, we notice:

1. Prayer is always linked to good speech, **“and you shall speak to men good words”**, lest the worshipper say something evil, he or she should say nothing except what is good and constructive. Nor does the devotee tell lies, backbite, vilify, or curse. Such an individual should never say defamatory words but seek to promote good and virtue. As a tool to attain this goal the Muslim uses a good word, the word of reform, and faith, and should always speak what is charming and pleasing... because speech plays an effective role in reforming the community, and the individual ideologically and educationally. It is conducive in establishing healthy psychological and social ties:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تُؤْتِي أَكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ۗ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ

“Have you not considered how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word (being) like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven. Yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord? And Allah sets forth parables for people that they may be mindful. And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth’s surface; it has no stability”. (14:24–26)

2. Similarly, prayer is linked to abstaining from mistreating people, and dealing with them unjustly, or encroaching on their property, souls, honour and anything that belongs to them.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

“Have you not seen those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands, and keep up prayer...” (4:77)

This has been revealed so that crime and transgression be rooted out entirely and peace and stability prevail.

3. Prayer is also linked to doing good, and calling man to righteousness. instructing mankind to do what

is beneficial, and endeavour to fulfill humanity's objectives of progress in social construction, politics, economics, sociology, ethics... and in fact, the entire sphere of life.

The Holy Qur'an says:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ ۚ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ

“...and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the alms and Us (alone) did they worship”. (21:73)

4. Prayer is also linked to enjoining good and forbidding wrong:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

“...surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil...” (29:45)

Linking prayer to social reform, fighting against corruption and decadence as personified in evil and wrong, certainly has the best reformatory results in the life of both the community and the individual.

Thus, the individual and the community that maintains prayer, are centres of enlightenment, human reform, and uprightness, because prayer cultivates deep inside man:

A. Conscious awareness through continual worshipping of Allah, fear of committing sins and shame of disobeying Him. How can a devotee commit any crime or disobey Allah, when he stands in front of Him praying, asking His forgiveness and reward, five times a day?

B. Prayer nurtures in man the desire to repent, and turn to righteousness by continually asking Allah's remission of sins and seeking refuge with Him from committing further sins. Inwardly the gap between man and sins widens and the desire to righteousness and reform is intensified.

C. Prayer cultivates in man love of good for others and saves him from bearing grudges and egoism which are the source of myriad evils and human misadventures in all of life's domains. In prayer the worshipper asks good for all people. He or she requests for them goodness and forgiveness. Consequently, feelings of love, and benevolence in their broader, general social context are encouraged.

Loving of what is good is not only expressed by *du'a* (supplication). This most noble human feeling extends outward and is reflected in the behaviour and actions humanity securely and calmly undertakes in its shade.

And praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

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