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# Prayers of the Friends of God

One of the eminent features of those trained at the school of the reverend Shaykh is their presence of heart in prayer. And this became possible only because the Shaykh did not accord any value to the spiritless ostentatious prayers, and tried to make his disciples perform really devotional prayers.

In the Shaykh's guidelines concerning prayers, there are four basic principles in this regard, which are adopted from the Holy Qur'an and Islamic traditions:

## 1. Love

The reverend Shaykh believed that as a lover enjoys talking to his beloved, a performer of prayers also should enjoy amorous whispering to his lord. Personally, he was like this as friends of God are all like this.

The Holy Prophet (s) described his joy in prayers as follows:

> "جعل الله جل ثناؤه قرة عيني في الصلاة، وحبب الى الصلاة كما حبب الى الجائع الطعام، والى الظمآن الماء، وان الجائع اذا اكل شبع، وإن الظمآن اذا شرب روي، وأنا لا أشبع من الصلاة"

"Allah-Great is His Adoration-made the delight of my eyes in prayers and made prayers beloved to me as He made food beloved to the hungry and water beloved to the thirsty; (with the difference that) when the hungry eats he will be satiated and when the thirsty drinks he will be quenched, but I never get satiated (or quenched) from (performing) prayers."[1]

One of the Shaykh's disciples, who had spent thirty years of his life with him, said: 'God knows that I witnessed him standing in prayers like a lover before his Beloved, engrossed in His Beauty .In my whole life I only saw three people who were extraordinary in their prayers; the late Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat, Ayatollah Kuhistani, and Agha Shaykh Habibullah Gulpayigani in Mashhad. They were amazing when standing in prayers; I would see intuitively that the quality of sphere (around them) was otherworldly;

they paid no attention to anything other than God.

## 2. Courtesy

To be courteous in the presence of the Almighty lord by performers of prayer is one of the issues that Islam has greatly stressed. Imam al-Sajjad (a) said in this relation:

> "حق الصلاة ان تعلم انها وفادة الى الله عز وجل، وانك فيها قائم بين يدي الله عز وجل فاذا علمت ذلك قمت مقام الذليل الحقير، الراغب الراهب، الراجي الخائف، المسكين المتضرع، والمعظم لمن كان بين يديه بالسكون والوقار، وتُقبل عليها بقلبك وتقيمها بحدودها وحقوقها"

"The right accorded to prayer is that you should know prayer as entering the presence of Allah the Most High, and that, when saying prayer, you are standing before the Most High Allah. So, knowing this, you should stand in prayer as an abased and humble servant, eagerly devoted, hopefully fearful, helplessly lamenting; and proceed to prayer peacefully and gracefully with great respect to the One you are standing before, and perform it whole-heartedly with (full) observance of its rules and rights."[2]

The reverend Shaykh said about the courtesy of presence:

"The Satan is always distracting man; remember not to break your attention to God, be courteous in prayer as when you stand attentively before an eminent personality, so that if your body is pricked by a needle, you would not move!"

The Shaykh said the above in reply to his son who said to him: 'You smile sometimes when you say prayers.' His son said: 'I guess he was smiling at the Satan implying that he cannot challenge him (i.e. the Shaykh)!'

Anyway, the reverend Shaykh believed that any move (of the body) in the presence of the Lord is considered as rude and is caused by temptation from the Satan. He said:

"I saw the Satan kissing the part of the body that one scratched in prayer!!"

## 3. Presence of Heart

The quintessence of prayer is remembering God and sincere presence of the performer's heart in the sacred companionship of Most Exalted God. Thus the Holy Prophet (s) said:

> "لايقبل الله صلاة عبد لا يَحظر قلبه مع بدنه"

"God would not accept the prayer of a person whose heart is not present with his body."[3]

In view of this issue and before leading the congregational prayer, the reverend Shaykh tried to prepare those attending the prayer to find presence of heart. His own prayer was a typical one with presence of heart.

Accordingly, Dr. Farzam said: 'His prayer was very sober and good mannered.[4] Sometimes when I arrived late for the mass prayer and (passing before him) saw his stature in prayer he looked as if his whole body was shivering; with radiant, pale countenance, he was absorbed in what he was reciting. His attention was totally directed on prayer and his head was always lowered. My implication was that the reverend Shaykh never felt an iota of doubt in his heart.

Another disciple of the Shaykh said: 'He sometimes said to me: "Such and such! Do you know what you say in *ruku* 'and *sajdah?* When you say in *tashahhud:* ' *Ashhadu an la ilaha ilia 'llahu wahdahu la sharika la-h* (I bear witness that there is no god apart from Allah, Who is unique and without partners)', are you telling the truth? Are you not entangled in your carnal vain desires? Are you not attending other than God? Are you not dealing with
(أرباب متفرقون) (many lords differing among themselves) (12:39)?!

## 4. Perseverance in Performing Prayers at their Due Time

Islamic traditions have greatly emphasized performing prayers at their due time. Imam al-Sadiq (a) said:

"فضل الوقت الأول على الآخر كفضل الآخرة على الدنيا"

"Superiority of performing prayers at due time over performing it at the end of (prayer) time is like the superiority of the Hereafter to this world."[5]

The reverend Shaykh was very prompt in performing his five prayers at their due time and enjoined others to do the same.

## "A Servant of Imam Husayn (a) would not put off his Prayers to Such Late Hours"

The able preacher, Hujj. Agha Sayyid Qasim Shoja'i, related an interesting memory about the reverend Shaykh: 'I used to give sermons since my school years and as I was a well-spoken preacher I used to be invited to many sessions for *rawzah*[6], including the sessions held in the house of the late Agha Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat on the seventh day of each lunar month. Upstairs, on the right side, there was the room where women gathered and I recited the *rawzah* for them once every month. The Shaykh's room was downstairs. At that time I was only thirteen years old and had not reached puberty yet.

One day after the sermon was over; I went downstairs and encountered the Shaykh for the first time. He

was holding a hat in his hand had seemed to be going out. I said "salam to him" he took a glance at my face and said:

"The son of the Holy Prophet (s) and the servant of Imam Husayn (a) would not delay his prayer till now!!"

I said: on my eyes! It was two hours to the sunset and I was a guest somewhere that day and hadn't said my prayer; as soon as the Shaykh looked at my face he realized this and pointed it out to me. Since my adolescence and after that when I attended his sessions –which were held in the residence of Agha Hakimi Ahan Furush –I felt this man's sayings were inspired whenever he spoke, as he did not have scholarly knowledge but when he spoke the audience would get absorbed wholeheartedly. I still remember some of his words as he said:

"Leave behind the word 'we'; wherever the words 'we' and 'I' reign there abides polytheism. There is only one pronoun reigning and that is 'He', and if you sideline that pronoun, the other pronouns are polytheistic."

Whenever the late reverend Shaykh expressed such statements, they would get enshrined in one's heart and mind.

## Anger, the Bane of Prayers

The reverend Shaykh is quoted as saying:

"One evening I was passing by a Masjid up the Sirus Avenue in Tehran.7 Entered the Masjid to enjoy the virtue of performing prayer at its due time and went into the *shabistan* (oratory). There I saw someone saying prayer and he had a halo round his head. I thought to myself I would become familiar with him to see what qualities he had that caused him to have such spiritual state in prayer. At the end of the mass prayer I accompanied him out of the Masjid. At the gate he had a row with the Masjid attendant and even shouted angrily at him and went on his way. After (letting out his) anger, I saw that halo disappeared from around his head!"

1. Mizan al-Hikmah, VII, 3092: 10535.
2. Ibid. VII, 3124: 10669.
3. Ibid. VII, 3116: 10635.
4. One of the Shaykh's disciple said: 'Like the late Ayatollah Shahabadi, the Shaykh also repeated the dhikr of ruku 'and sajdah three times.'
5. Mizan al-Hikmah, VII, 3130: 10685.
6. Recital of the Martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (a).
7. This Masjid was located down "Sarcheshmah Avenue". However, due to road expansion it was divided into two sections.

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