

## Part 6: The Effect of Maintaining Attention in Prayer

If his disposition has not been eclipsed by his misdeeds, the desire to attain perfection never ceases, and the wayfarer continues on his journey towards his Beloved. Almighty Allah molded the human being in a manner that he yearns and is able to soar forever and achieve the higher levels of perfection...

His aim is the Infinite. Examples of such a drive are manifested in the human being's craving for infinite knowledge, power, and beauty... The beauty here lies in how the Creator designed the human being: although man has nothing of his own, not even existence to own his finite perfection, the Infinitely Perfect continually welcomes him to Himself: "To Allah is the homecoming"

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ

***O Man!***

***You are striving***

***Unto your Lord***

***Laboriously,***

***And you shall encounter Him. 1***

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

ان الصلاة قربان المؤمن

***Verily prayer is***

***A means for the believer to attain God's proximity. 238***

One of the most sublime effects of observing attention in prayer, as indicated in the above narration, is Allah's nearness and proximity. The abovementioned verse of the Holy Qur'an also tells us that man is a traveler in this world and that his destination is the neighborhood of his Beloved Creator. Again, in chapter 35, verse no. 18, we read:

وَمَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّىٰ لِنَفْسِهِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

***And whosoever purifies himself, purifies himself only for his own soul's good. To Allah is the homecoming (destination) 3***

Almighty Allah prescribed a set of devotional acts for man to enable him to soar to His Proximity and attain knowledge of His Exalted Presence. It is this sacred aspiration wherein lies the true happiness of the human being. To understand this reality does not require one to search for intellectual proofs.

The innate nature (*fitra*) of the human being itself is a proof of this reality: the human being innately aspires to attain infinite perfection, which exists in none other than his Creator. If his innate nature has not been eclipsed by his misdeeds, the desire to attain perfection never ceases, and the wayfarer continues on his journey towards his Beloved.

Almighty Allah molded the human being in a manner that he yearns and is able to soar forever and achieve the higher levels of perfection. He naturally does not aspire for limited perfection. His aim is the Infinite. Manifestations of such a drive are the human being's craving for infinite knowledge, power, and beauty.

Independent Infinite perfection, however, solely belongs to God, since He alone is the Necessary Existent.

His near servants, however can enjoy His proximity and perpetually soar and progress, since the journey is endless. The beauty here lies in how the Creator designed the human being: although man has nothing of his own, not even existence to own his finite perfection, the Infinitely Perfect continually welcomes him to Himself:

والله يدعو إلى دار السلام ويهدي من يشاء إلى صراط مستقيم

***Allah continually Invites***

***To the abode of peace***

***And continually Guides whosoever***

***He wants***

## ***To the straight path*** 4

# إِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

## ***To Allah is the homecoming.***<sup>5</sup>

The process of getting closer to God should not mislead us to believe that God is at a higher physical plane and we would reach him if we observe attention in our prayers. Rather, the distance is not physical but metaphysical and spiritual.

The human being through a continual process of inculcation of truth in his prayer, undergoes a spiritual transformation: the prayer teaches and orients him. It ignites his heart to repent and wake up. It forces him to seek forgiveness of the sins that he has committed; it teaches him to be an obedient servant of God; it perpetually transforms him and transports him towards true monotheism.

Therefore if concentration is always maintained therein, the true aspirant of perfection can purify his inner self and obey all whatever Allah has commanded him. It is the sense of indifference in man that creates doubt in the possibility of attaining the higher levels of human perfection that the gnostics (*awliya'*) speak about. If one were to painstakingly contemplate and understand even the overt and outer meaning of what he expresses in prayer, he can surely undergo spiritual change.

How can the *musalli* always have the audacity to declare the immaculate nature of God, when he manifests in his practical life actions that are incongruous with his declaration? To rely on people's wealth, for example, is an extension (*misdaq*) of such incongruity: how can one pin his hopes on a human being like himself who (in reality) neither possesses anything of his own, nor has knowledge of his next moment?

How can one show respect to another due to the wealth and affluence of the latter, while he always declares that all praises belong to God, which finally means that every entity is His property? If one were to carefully ponder over what he expresses in prayer and understand the essence of their meaning, his actions would shine with the spirit of monotheism and transport him to the hometown which his heart naturally aspires.

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1. Holy Qur'an, 84:6

2. al-Hindi, Kanzu'l Ummal, tr. 18907

3. 'Masir' in the verse has a meaning worthy of consideration. Its verbal noun (masdar) is 'sayrurah' (the process of becoming). Raghīb, the well-known lexicographer, in his Mufradat says: 'Sara is to transfer from one state to another.' (al-Mufradat, p. 149). The human being by means of devotional practices undergoes a perpetual process of change of state, which according to the Holy Qur'an is endless, since the path to Allah, Whose reality is Absolute & Infinite Perfection is

endless. We say this because whatever distance the human being would be enabled to cover, he would never attain Absolute Perfection something that is perceivable only for the Necessary Being. Even if he were to attain unimaginably exalted heights through devotional practices his perfection would still be limited.

4. Holy Qur'an, 10:25

5. Holy Qur'an, 35: 18

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