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Humility, Modesty and Concentration in Salat

After reading the *Takbirat ul Ihram* and *Dua e tawajjuh* and turning your attention towards Allah, if you so desire, continue the *Salat* by reciting the *Istighatha* – (أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ) I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed *Shaitan*) that you may seek protection from the whisperings of the devil in Allah and dominate him through His grace.

Thereafter, you can proceed with the recitation of Surah Hamd, the second surah, bowing, prostration, *qunoot*, *tasbihat*, *tashahud* and *salam*, in the order prescribed. While performing the aforementioned actions, strive to synchronize your limbs with your heart so that just as the latter has become humble and modest, each part of the body feels lowly, meek and submissive in the presence of the Almighty Creator.

Therefore, it is necessary that you gather all your attention, do not pay attention to what is going around you, and distance yourself from anything that diverts your attention. To achieve success in this, endeavor to find a lonely, simple and unattractive place. Fix such a time for your *Salat* when your thoughts are soothed and relaxed, and there remains no room for laziness, physically as well as psychologically.

It is also necessary that you obey the instructions of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) concerning the methods of *qiy'am*, bowing, prostration, *tashhud* and *salam*. For, these instructions are indeed very effective for concentration and humility. Moreover, recite the wordings slowly and try to pay utmost attention to their meanings and concepts unfailingly. Allah the Almighty says,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ.

“Surely the believers are successful; those who are humble in their prayers.” (Qur’an, 23: 1-2)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ

“O ye who believe! Do not go near prayers while you are in an intoxicated condition till you know what you are saying.” (Qur’an, 4:43)

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a) explains,

لَا تَقُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ مُتَكَاسِلًا وَلَا مُتَنَاعِسًا وَلَا مُتَثَاقِلًا. فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ خَلَلِ النَّفَاقِ. وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ نَهَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْ يَقُومُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَهُمْ سُكَارَى. يَعْنِي مِنَ النَّوْمِ.

“Do not stand for prayers lazily, yawning or feeling heavy (i.e. considering it to be a burden). For all these are from the traits of hypocrisy. Allah has prohibited the believers from standing for prayers while they are intoxicated i.e. (intoxicated) from sleep.”¹

Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) elaborates,

إِذَا كُنْتَ فِي صَلَاتِكَ، فَعَلَيْكَ بِالتَّخَشُّعِ وَ الإِقْبَالِ عَلَى صَلَاتِكَ. فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يَقُولُ: “الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ.”

“When you are in your prayers, then it is obligatory for you to be humble and welcome your prayers. For Allah the Almighty (while describing the believers) says, ‘those who are humble in their prayers.’”²

The same Imam (‘a) says,

“Certainly, I love the believer among you who while standing for the obligatory prayers, turns his full attention towards Allah and cleanses his heart from all worldly inclinations. His turns his face with his entire heart towards Allah, Who in turn, turns towards him and makes his heart overflow with His love and affection and Himself loves him tremendously.”³

Again, Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) says,

مَنْ صَلَّى رَكَعَتَيْنِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَقُولُ فِيهِمَا، أَنْصَرَفَ وَ لَيْسَ بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ ذَنْبٌ إِلَّا غَفَرَهُ لَهُ.

“One who prays two units (rak'ats) of prayers knowing fully what he is saying in it, he does not turn away from it (after completion), but there remains no sin between him and Allah, that He does not forgive.”⁴

Imam Al-Baqir ('a) says,

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيُرْفَعُ لَهُ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ نِصْفُهَا أَوْ ثُلُثُهَا أَوْ رُبُعُهَا أَوْ خُمْسُهَا. فَمَا يُرْفَعُ لَهُ إِلَّا مَا أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهَا بِقَلْبِهِ. وَإِنَّمَا أَمَرْنَا بِالنَّافِلَةِ لِيَتِمَّ لَهُمْ بِهَا مَا نَقَصُوا مِنَ الْفَرِيضَةِ.

“Indeed, from the prayers of the believers, 1/2 or 1/3rd or 1/4th or 1/5 th only is accepted. Thus, only that part of the prayers is admitted which is performed with complete attention. And we have ordered the recommended prayers (naafilah) only to cover the deficiencies of the obligatory (prayers).”⁵

Imam As-Sadiq ('a) exhorts,

إِذَا صَلَّيْتَ صَلَاةَ فَرِيضَةٍ فَصَلِّهَا لَوَقْتِهَا صَلَاةَ مُودَعٍ يَخَافُ أَنْ لَا يَعُودَ إِلَيْهَا أَبَدًا. ثُمَّ اصْرَفْ بَبَصْرِكَ إِلَى مَوْضِعِ سُجُودِكَ. فَلَوْ تَعَلَّمْ مَنْ عَنْ يَمِينِكَ وَشِمَالِكَ لِأَحْسَنْتَ صَلَاتَكَ. وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ مَنْ يَرَاكَ وَلَا تَرَاهُ.

“When you perform your obligatory prayers, pray in its time as if it is your last prayers and is never going to return to you ever again. Then look at the place of your prostration. If you knew who is on your right and left, you would have performed your prayers well. And know that you are in front of the One Who sees you although you cannot see Him.”⁶

In his famous Treatise of Rights, Imam Zain al Abidin('a) discusses the rights of the prayers thus:

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّلَاةِ فَإِنَّ تَعَلَّمَ أَنَّهَا وَفَادَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ أَنَّكَ قَائِمٌ بِهَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ. فَإِذَا عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ خَلِيقًا أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهَا مَقَامَ الذَّلِيلِ الرَّاعِبِ الرَّاهِبِ الْخَائِفِ الرَّاجِي الْمِسْكِينِ الْمُتَضَرِّعِ الْمُعْظَمِ مَنْ قَامَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِالسُّكُونِ وَالْإِطْرَاقِ وَ خُشُوعِ الْأَطْرَافِ وَ لِينِ الْجَنَاحِ وَ حُسْنِ الْمُنَاجَاةِ لَهُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَ الطَّلَبِ إِلَيْهِ فِي فِكَالِ رَقَبَتِكَ الَّتِي أَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتِكَ وَ اسْتَهْلَكْتَهَا ذُنُوبِكَ. وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

“As for the rights of the prayers, you should know that it is a means of reaching towards Allah. And you are standing before Allah when you are praying. When you are aware of this, then it is desirous that you

stand during prayers like the one who is disgraced, desirous (of rewards), fearful, scared, hopeful, pauper, crying, respectful of the One Who is before Him. Maintain a dignified calm, head down, limbs humble, tender heart, praying with the best of invocations within yourself, seeking the freedom of your neck from Him, an imprisonment caused on account of your sins and a destruction caused by your misdeeds. There is no strength except Allah's."⁷

Therefore, it is necessary that one who prays, considering the position and status of *Salat*, should pay full attention towards it with his heart and soul, which is worthy of the praying ones. He should derive benefits of both this world as well as the hereafter, from it and the greatest reward of them all, that is, meeting with Allah, comes his way.

It does not befit him to become heedless of Allah, his creator, during his prayers, and instead become engaged in himself. Although apparently this may seem difficult, rather impossible – which is why it is accompanied with such great rewards and compensation – but one should never despair of it.

Perhaps, with Allah's grace, and our efforts, belief and piety, the difficulties will become easy and problems will be solved. For, if you take one step towards Allah, He will pull you a hundred paces towards Himself. Then, turn towards Him with your entire heart and soul. Don't allow laziness and indolence to dominate you and keep Shaitan away from you. Abstain from ignorance and heedlessness that the path is paved and the goal is near.

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1. Tafsir, Ayyashi, vol. 1, p. 242
 2. Usul al Kafi, vol. 3, p. 300
 3. Thawwab al 'amal: 163
 4. Thawwab al 'amal, p. 67
 5. Usul al Kafi, vol. 3, p. 363
 6. Thawwab al 'amal, p. 57
 7. Tuhaf al Uqul, p. 258

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