

Azan & Salat (Namaz)

To a Muslim; SALAT is most important. He may forget anything but not Salat. In order to realize that a Muslim is perennially linked to SALAT, Allah has attached to it an effective system of Azan. Prior to Salat, it is announced by means of Azan that the appointed time of Salat is approaching. Then everyone comes to know that it is time for prayer. The English translation of Azan is :

Allah is the greatest of all
Allah is the greatest of all
I swear that there is none to worship except Allah
I swear that there is none to worship except Allah
I swear that Muhammad (PBUH) is Allah's messenger
I swear that Muhammad (PBUH) is Allah's messenger
Come towards Salat
Come towards Salat
Come towards success
Come towards success
Allah is the greatest of all
There is none to worship except Allah

Azan is an announcement for all who believe that God is the greatest. Hence a believer should leave everything else aside and proceed immediately towards the mosque to offer SALAT. This is so because SALAT is the way to achieve success and salvation.

Azan is a means of announcement that the time for SALAT has arrived. Azan must reach the ears of all believers so that nobody may be deprived of its call. Therefore, nowadays Azan is usually said in loudspeakers.

WUDHU

Prior to SALAT one has to perform Wudhu (ablution) i.e. washing some external body parts in a stipulated manner. Without Wudhu there is no SALAT.

Wudhu prepares a Muslim, both physically and mentally, to be in the presence of Allah.

SALAT

Having been inspired by God's mercy and compassion, man has been expressing his reverence to God for ages - to demonstrate his devotion for and submission to Him. There are a number of ways of worship prevalent in this world through which man manifests his adoration to God. Some pray before a statue of an imagined form of God, whereas some others maintain that God is formless and refuse to pray before a statue. Some pray by singing and playing music whereas some prefer silent meditation. Whatever is the means, the objective of the prayer is the same - to achieve pleasure of God.

God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. Does He approve of our methods of worship? Are all methods the same for Him (even if there are differences among them)? Man does not ponder over this question nor does he think that this is a significant issue. Instead of using his own wisdom, in devotional matters, man merely follows his ancestors and expects success.

When God has created this magnificent universe so meticulously, how can He ignore the need to inform us about the proper methods of worship? How can He let man invent his own methods to worship God and how will God accept those methods?

SALAT is the method of worship given to man by God. God Himself has prescribed this method and through His messengers He informed men about it in every age. The last and final version of God's message was sent down to His last prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the form of the Holy Quran.

It is very unfortunate that people assume that SALAT is meant for Muslims. In fact it has been prescribed

for the whole of mankind.

The whole world is Allah's creation. He is present in it and in all its directions. Nonetheless, according to Allah's order a Muslim has to turn his face towards "Qibla" while offering Namaz. Qibla is the direction in which Ka'bah is situated. Ka'bah is in the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia. It symbolises oneness of God. It is the centre of God's oneness throughout the world. A Muslim, whichever country he lives in, turns his face towards Ka'bah while praying.

"From wheresoever you might come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; for that indeed is the truth from your lord, and Allah is not unmindful of what you do." (The Qur'an 2:149)

SALAT Establishes Direct Contact with Allah In many religious acts of worship, prayers are meant as expression of devotion towards God. But in Islam SALAT is a means to form direct link with God. It is a wonderful means to interact with Allah. Therefore, after the declaration of faith in God, it is obligatory on the part of a Muslim to offer SALAT as the most important act of devotion.

What would be more pleasant an experience for a man than to establish direct and immediate contact with his creator and sustainer? SALAT is one such powerful tool that helps one to do so. There is no need of a mediator between man and God. Man gets such an opportunity (of direct contact with God) everyday not once but five times a day.

Time of PRAYER

It is compulsory for every Muslim to offer SALAT five times a day - before sun rise, in the afternoon, in the evening, soon after the sun set and finally at night before one goes to sleep.

"Set up regular prayers, for such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times." (The Qur'an 4:103)

SALAT is a Collective Worship

It is compulsory for a Muslim to offer Prayer five times a day, that too in a mosque. Owing to any valid reason, if one is unable to go to the mosque he is permitted to offer SALAT alone, but Islam gives preference to collective offering of prayer.

A Mosque is a place where people assemble to offer Namaz collectively. In a mosque you do not find a statue or an image of God. The one who officiates the collective Namaz is called "Imam". There is no "priest class" in Islam. Any person from among the assembled devotees may become Imam.

SALAT Puts an End to Inequality and Disparity

God has not created any man superior or inferior to another. All are equal to Him. Since ancient times some people regarded themselves as superior to others. The higher category harasses and exploits other people whom they consider low. Islam disapproves of such categorisation and considers all human beings equal. All are brothers of one another. Namaz is the living example of this equality and brotherhood. Neither any special privilege is given to any class or person nor any class or person is prohibited in a mosque.

While offering Namaz in congregation, all have to stand in rows. The one who enters the mosque first, finds place in the first row. No special place is reserved for anybody.

In Namaz all stand side by side touching each other's shoulders; therefore the question of untouchability does not arise at all. Owner, servant, rich or poor, all stand side by side and bow down before Allah who is the Lord of everybody.

SALAT Generates the Concept of Unity

To whichever country or place a Muslim belongs, the method of offering Namaz is the same for all. All prostrate before only one God. All recite verses of the same Quran in the same language (Arabic). All bow down and prostrate before God at the same time, get up and sit down at the same time. This practice infuses the feeling of collectivity and unity in them.

SALAT Eradicates Evils

Namaz is an excellent tool for eradication of evils. The objective of abstaining from evils is to achieve obedience to and pleasure of God. Namaz promotes and encourages one in this respect as it is offered five times a day.

"Recite what is sent of the book by inspiration to thee and establish regular prayer: for prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life)." (The Qur'an 29:45)

How is Namaz offered?

The method of offering Namaz is very simple. To know and witness how Namaz is offered one can go to a mosque. It is a myth that others (other than Muslims) are not allowed to enter a mosque. The whole method of offering Namaz may be divided in four sections:

1. To Stand before God with respect : In this state a few verses from the Qur'an are recited. By this we praise God, and our faith in His instructions and message gets strengthened. This goes on five times a day.

2. To bow down before God with awe : By accepting God's sovereignty, greatness and compassion, man bows down before Him. In fact, man needs to do this. This state is called "Ruku".

3. To prostrate before God (as a repentant sinner) : To lay down one's whole body in prostration before God and to put one's forehead on earth is "Sajda". By doing so, one symbolically declares that one is ready to obey God and receive His commands.

4. To sit before God with awe : By sitting before God with respect, one proclaims God's greatness and His noble attributes and begs God to forgive him and to condone his sins.

Man's life can never touch success if he ignores his creator who gives him life and arranges everything he needs in order to live. Remembering God is the most significant act in our lives. If we show dereliction in our duty, we will cause our own loss. This is the message given to all human beings through Azan and Namaz five times each day.



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