

CHAPTER TEN

Salaah and Science ¹

O Allah (The Exalted) bless the One, the request for blessings upon whom brings favour to this house and that house.

When a person sleeps at night the body is lifeless; the circulation also slows down. It is in need of something to get the circulation going again and for this the prayer of Tahadjud has been prescribed together with the prayer of Fajr. After a short period the Ishrak, then the Chast prayer. A person then works at home or goes to work and pressure and stress starts building up, but the Dhuhr prayer calms us down relieving stress. After comes 'Asr then Maghrib prayer to remind us of our family business. After we have eaten the last meal of the day but before a person retires to bed the longest prescribed prayer is 'Isha. It helps to digest the food we have eaten so as not to cause the body any strain.

Salaah a cure

A famous Muslim Doctor had a lot of pain in his joints and weakness of the muscles; making it hard for him to practise medicine. He was told to offer Salaah! Inevitably his illness was cured, all praise be to Allah (The Exalted). He stopped taking his medication instead offering all prayers with peace and sincerity. After that he advised all his patients so they too were cured very quickly.

A Doctor from Pakistan Doctor Abd Al-Majid Zaman Usmani went to study Psychotherapy² in Europe. He studied the actions of Salaah and was quite surprised. Thinking of Salaah as just an obligation, not realising the benefits nor the fact that it was a cure for many major illnesses. The Doctor gave a list of illnesses that would be cured via Salaah. Mental Diseases, nerve diseases, **Psychics Diseases**, Restlessness, depression and anxiety, Heart diseases, Arthritis, Diseases due to Uric Acid, Stomach Ulcer, diabetes and its complication, Eye and E.N.T.³ diseases.

Cleanliness

One of the conditions to be fulfilled before commencing the prayer is cleanliness. Not only of the person's body but clothes and the place where prayer is to be offered. According to scientist there are germs everywhere, which could be passed on by each other's body or clothing. This has been discovered not so long ago. Islam told us this, many centuries ago. We have been taught by Allah (The Exalted) and His beloved Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to keep the body and clothes clean from any impurities, e.g. urine, faeces, blood, vomit etc. If a person enters the Mosque and is unclean then there is a chance that he will pass on germs to the next person so people will not want to sit or pray near them and will become disliked.

If he used the Mosque hat which different people use then there is a chance one may be affected by loss of hair leading to baldness, itchiness and dandruff etc. Would any person go to an interview smelling or with unclean clothes? We should think who we are standing before in Salaah, when we look at the prayer of the companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) we find that they would shake and shiver due to the fear of Allah (The Exalted). What has happened to our prayer?

It is in a person's nature that he wants to be respected by people. When a person does not practise the cleanliness shown by Islam then one will fall pray in physiological⁴ illness and the worst being weakness and low esteem. It is important that we live together and show love to each other, it has been seen that an unclean person is hated in the community, by means of Islam a person has been shown how to live with love within the community that he stays clean so people love him. For this reason not only should we pray Salaah with congregation but it has been emphasized that when people gather at a place then they will know of each others condition and needs.

¹ See Volume One, Chapter Twenty-Two for this Sunnah

² Methods of treatment of mental disorders and Psychological problems.

³ Ear, Nose and Throat.

⁴ The science of the functioning of living organisms and of their component parts.

Islam teaches love and respect of one another. If we follow the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) then we will achieve many benefits in this life and the hereafter. When Muslims gather in congregation and pray then there is no difference between rich or poor, all are one standing in front of The Creator in humbleness. That's when we are at peace with our surrounding.

Section One

The Islamic Prayer ⁱ

Yoga is called "one of the oldest systems of personal development encompassing body, mind and spirit" by the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, yoga has become one of the fastest growing health trends today. It has been renowned for centuries for its curative powers of movement.

Yoga consists of a number of body positions in which one remains for a desired length of time while breathing in a rhythmic manner. Its benefits have been researched by many doctors who now recommend it to their patients, by many medical schools such as Harvard, and by many foundations such as the Menninger Foundation.

In fact, yoga has become so popular that secretaries have developed a simplified sitting version that they can do at their desks. The elderly, pregnant women and athletes also have their own versions.

Interestingly, for the millions of people enrolled in yoga classes, the Islamic form of prayer has provided Muslims for fourteen centuries with yoga's benefits. This simple form of "yoga" offers physical, mental, and spiritual benefits five times a day as Muslims assume certain positions while reciting Qur'an and adhkar (remembrances).

Of course, not all the yoga positions are found in the Islamic prayer. However, hospital researchers have concluded that patients benefit from even a simplified version of yoga, and most hospital yoga programs, such as those at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Centre in Massachusetts, consist of only five to seven positions.

The Muslim prayer has five positions, and they all (as well as the recitations we make while performing the prayer) have a corresponding relationship with our spiritual and mental well being, according to modern scientific research. The benefits of performing specific movements and recitations each day come from the correct performance of the position or action itself, the length of time the position is held, and from careful and correct recitation techniques.

One notices, when touching any part of the body that it responds by being more "awake" and aware. Another part of the body that was not touched, but is along the same nerve pathway, may also respond. When a person is sitting, for instance, they may not be thinking about their legs, which are momentarily at rest; however, if someone touches them, they will again be "aware" of them.

Studies have found that varying areas of the body, when activated by touch, movement or thought, evoke specific emotional and physical responses in much the same way that a smile can evoke the feeling of happiness, and actually increase circulation – even if one was feeling sluggish and unhappy before smiling. This is one of the reasons that it is so important to perfectly perform all of the movements of the Islamic prayer, rather than haphazardly rushing through them.

Section Two

Actions of prayer

Raising the hands

When a person raises the hands to the ears to commence the prayer then the muscles of the upper arms, shoulders and neck muscles are exercised. According to research this is extremely beneficial for those with heart problems. It also saves one from paralysis.

Let us look at the companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) what they went through in a day we would probably not go through during our entire life. Even in the battle fields though their lives were at risk, they would not leave Salaah. Half would leave for Salaah whilst the other half would carry on fighting. When the other warriors return to the battle field, the second half would pray. It is unfortunate

today we are working in the comfort of our offices or work places yet we leave Salaah after we finish work or at break time when the time of prayer has passed by. How can we have blessing in our lives when we leave the command of Allah (The Exalted) in which he has placed tremendous benefit for us? It is due to the weakness of our faith that we are depriving ourselves of these benefits.

Time management and discipline

Divan Singh Maftoon was a famous journalist who published a magazine named 'Country', he writes; that "Salaah teaches time management, whoever wants to learn discipline learn about Salaah. If all Muslims become complete observers of Salaah, then they are the ones who will control the world."

A non believer is showing us the benefits of Salaah; if we do not practise our religion then we will be a failure in this world and no doubt in the next too. Look at the lives of the four caliphs and how they ruled. They all had one motto, which was 'Following the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.'

Timing of prayer

A person by nature likes movement, the reason a person's health is in good state is due to movement and Salaah itself is an exercise. Allah (The Exalted) has prescribed the prayer with prescribed times and the breaks between them.

Tahadjud

The Doctors say that the early Morning Prayer is a cure for insomnia, not only that but a cure for heart illnesses, muscles pain, mental illnesses, weak eyesight etc. This prayer creates energy in a person which keeps one fit throughout the day. *Doctor Noor Ahmed Noor, Professor at Nishter Medical college Multan Pakistan* states; "Western Doctor have said that those who wake up for Tahadjud prayer are cured from depression and never suffer from anxiety". Psychology researchers⁵ found that waking people up who suffer from anxiety were cured from their illness. They woke up prayed and went to sleep having some medication. After some months they were very well, hence the western Doctors have said that this is the best cure for this type of illness.

Fajr

Let us take a look at the benefit of the first prayer of the day. If a person wakes up without washing the face and has his breakfast then the bacteria gathered in the mouth throughout the night will go down the stomach and produce diseases, stomach bloating, inflammation and ulcers.

Dhuhr

People get stressed whilst at work. Breaks are important to wind down and recharge your energy. The Dhuhr prayer helps us the wind down and rids stress.

'Asr

At the time of Asr the speed of the circumbulation of the earth reduces having an effect on the five senses. At this time a person begins to consider the affairs of the evening and hurries to complete his work of the day, meaning at this time the stress is building up which has an effect on the body. Offering the Asr prayer gives more energy to the individual.

Maghrib

A person thanks his creator through actions for the sustenance He (The Exalted) provides. The work carried out throughout the day has supported him with his family and children. When a person has an urge to thank Allah (The Exalted) one will sit with his partner and converse with them with peace and affection. Children by nature copy actions of the parents promptly. Basically if the prayer is offered on its prescribed time then the children will be inclined to be obedient towards their parents as it is the prayer that makes a person humble. The prayer will become a habit for the child to listen to the parents. However, if a child has been given nothing except things that morally corrupts his mind then he will naturally disobey the parents.

'Isha

A person by nature is desiring at all times. When one comes home from work, they will eat to the full to quench their desire. Now when that person lies down on a full stomach there is a fear of many illnesses and the mind

⁵ The science of the functioning of living organisms and of their component parts.

will not be at peace. But to offer 'Isha prayer the person will find peace and the tiredness will disappear, they will sleep better because during prayer they have excersiced and hence, the food will be better digested.

Salaah promotes health

Although the real purpose of Salaah is worship, it has a large number of additional benefits. Salaah keeps our body active, helps digestion and save us from muscle and joint diseases through regular balanced excersice. Salaah helps the circulation of blood. The prayers are arranged in such a manner that those at the time of an empty stomach are brief e.g. Fajr and those after meals are longer and give more exercise to the body e.g. Dhuhr and Isha. During the month of Ramadhan an additional twenty units are prescribed which help to expand the additional calories consumed during the breaking of the fast.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ By Karima Burns, MH, ND; 11/01/2001

ⁱⁱ Islam and medicine. Hasan Ghaznawi. Article presented at the 10th annual convention of Islamic medical Association in orlando, Florida on October 21-23; 1997.