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## Importance of Prayer for Ši'a Muslims

*Pomen molitve za šiitske muslimane*

**Abstract:** Human being is a combination of body and divine soul, and as body needs daily nutrition, soul needs it too – in a form of prayer and supplication. Spirituality and connection to the source of this soul which is God, the Almighty is the main goal of prayer. This concept is mentioned in almost all divine religions, including Islam and other Abrahamic religions. In the Qur'an, the divine scripture of Muslims human being is called the vicegerent of God on earth (Q 38:72). This clearly demonstrates the divine soul in human beings, and to feed this soul, man needs daily prayers. This article elaborates on the importance of prayer in Ši'a denomination as the second largest denomination in Islam and also sheds light on different types of prayer, definitions and the main outcomes of prayer in daily life. The research is based on exploratory and descriptive approach based on library studies.

**Keywords:** prayer, Ši'a Islam, spirituality, worshiping

**Izleček:** Človek je preplet telesa in božanske duše, in tako kot telo potrebuje vsakodnevno hrano, jo potrebuje tudi duša – v obliki molitve in prošnje. Duhovnost in povezanost z izvorom te duše, ki je Bog Vsemogočni, je glavni cilj molitve. Ta koncept je omenjen v skoraj vseh religijah, vključno z islamom in drugima abrahamovskima religijama. V Koranu, Sveti knjigi muslimanov, je človeško bitje razumljeno kot Božji namestnik na zemlji (K 38, 72). To jasno kaže na božanski izvor človeške duše, za njeno hranjenje pa človek potrebuje vsakodnevne molitve. V tem članku je podrobno opisan pomen molitve v šiitski veroizpovedi kot drugi največji veroizpovedi v islamu, osvetljene pa so tudi različne vrste molitve, opredeljene in glavni rezultati molitve v vsakdanjem življenju. V raziskavi sta uporabljena raziskovalni in deskriptivni pristop, ki temelji na knjižničnih študijah.

**Cljučne besede:** molitev, šiiti, šiitski muslimani, duhovnost, bogoslužje

## Introduction

Before talking about prayers in Ši'a perspective, it should be mentioned that in Islam, Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (way of life) of the Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH)<sup>1</sup> and 12 Imams after him are the main sources for knowing the religious beliefs and practices of Islam. According to Muslims, there are no falsehoods or mistakes in the Qur'an and it has remained unaltered since its revelation. Sunnah also includes the speech and behaviour of the Prophet and Imams (PBUT),<sup>2</sup> which have been passed down from generation to generation in written form.

Generally speaking, the basics of Ši'a Islamic belief are based on two things: *principle beliefs of religion* and *practical duties* which will be elaborated on as follows:

*Principle beliefs of Religion (uṣūl al-dīn) (أصول الدين)* which is belief in five principles:

- i. Divine Unity (*Tawhīd*) (توحيد);
- ii. Prophethood (*Nubuwwa*) (نبوت);
- iii. Resurrection (*Ma'ād*) (معاد);
- iv. Divine leadership (*Imāma*) (امامت); which refers to the divine leadership of 12 Imams, appointed as successors of the Prophet (PBUT);
- v. Divine Justice (*'Adl*) (عدل).

1 PBUH is acronym for »Peace Be upon Him or her« which is used always referring to 12 Imams who are male and if it refers to Lady Fatima Zahra, daughter of prophet Muhammad who is included among the 14 infallibles of the Ši'a. In other words, Ši'a Muslims believe in 14 infallibles including holy prophet of Islam, his daughter and the 12 Imams. In this way Muslims always contribute courtesy and respect to them. It should be also mentioned that Muslims use it for even other prophets who are believed are infallibles. Ši'a Muslims believe that there 124 thousands prophets in the history of mankind which 5 of them arch prophets who are Muhammad, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (PBUT).

2 PBUT is acronym for »Peace be upon Them« is plural form of PBUH when we want to refer hadith, sayings or any quote to more than one infallible, i.e., when we refer to the names of two or above of the infallibles in the texts according to Ši'a belief.



*Practical duties* (*Furū' al-dīn*) (فروع الدين) is combined of three parts:

1. *Act of Worship or Jurisprudence* also known as *Šarī'a* which talks about branches and different types of religious personal practices and is of nine duties:
  - i. Prayer (*Ṣalāt*) (صلاة);
  - ii. Fasting in Ramadhan (*Ṣawm*) (صوم);
  - iii. Obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca (Hağğ) (حج);
  - iv. Charity from Harvest (*Zakāt*) (زكات);
  - v. Charity from money and incomes (*Hums*) (خمس);
  - vi. Holy struggle (*Gihād*) (جهاد);
  - vii. Enjoining good and forbidding wrong (*Amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa al-nahī 'an al-munkar*) (امر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر);
  - viii. Confessing the love toward prophet Muhammad and the 12 Imams (PBUT) (*Tawallā*) (تولى);
  - ix. Avoiding from hatred toward prophet Muhammad and the 12 Imams (PBUT) (*Tabarrā*) (تبرى).
2. *Ethics and Spirituality*. In the main texts of Islam, i.e. the Qur'an, Hadiths (sayings of the prophet and Imams) and the tradition of prophet Muhammad and infallible 12 Imams there are various teachings for ethical behaviours introducing ethics and practical ways to achieve spiritual perfection through personal prayers, rituals and beliefs as well as adherence to the rights of others and commands to regulate social and family relationships from Islam's moral teachings.
3. *Social and civil duties*. In Islam, there are numerous religious orders for many things in everyday life; things like marriage, divorce, buying, renting, mortgages, food and beverages, hunting, criminal affairs and



judgments that each have judgments. These rulings are discussed in the science of jurisprudence as transactions. In other words, this part contains the social and congregational duties from the first part of practical duties. A large part of the Islamic sources is dedicated to the introduction of good and avoiding bad morals and practical ways to achieve moral perfection. Recommendations to respect the rights of others and orders to regulate social and family relations are among the moral teachings of Islam.

In Islam, there are two major denominations, Shiism and Sunnism, each of which is divided into many sects. The most important difference between these two denominations is the issue of Imamate or succession after the demise of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH); in other words, both Šī'a and Sunni believe in the same God, Qur'an, Prophet and Resurrection, however, the difference is in the succession to prophet Muhammad (PBUH); Šī'a believe in 12 Imams (Imamat): that the Prophet's successors must be appointed by God, and according to prophetic traditions (Hadiths), there are twelve imams, starting with Imam 'Alī and ending with Imam Mahdi, and Sunnis believe in caliphate (4 caliphs after the prophet, i.e. Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uṭmān and 'Alī) who are chosen by people, not God, and this division started exactly after the demise of holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

After this short general information about principle and practical beliefs of the Šī'a, we get to know the main position of prayers in Šī'a belief which stands in the realm of practical duties and its main objective is to take man to perfection and nearness to God the Almighty. Prayer in Islamic conception has two meanings that seem to differ with that in Christianity which will be discussed as follows.

## **2 Importance of prayer in Šī'a belief**

Prayer and supplication to God is unique, and unparalleled important things exists in all religions; in Islam, it has been the main theme of the devotional programs and the most effective factor in purifying the soul and the inner being. Correct prayer and supplication is the most beautiful and the most profound way that connects man with the Truth and Reality



of creation which Is God the Almighty and causes the soul to fly towards the Kingdom and the fragrant spiritual and mystical atmosphere.

Prayer itself is an educational school and a privileged class for cultivating the soul and leading it towards virtues and perfections. Accordingly, in various verses of the Qur'an, prayer is described as the most important value and in Hadiths as the highest act of worship; in other words, prayer it is the brain of worshipping God the Almighty.

Even though there are many values and factors that lead to perfection and prevent pollution and depravity, according to the Qur'an, it is as if, if there is no prayer, other values lack effectiveness and real properties. It says: »Say, My Lord does not respect you, if it is not your supplication« (قُلْ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْكَ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ) (Q 25:77) or blames those who worship other than God: »Or (these ignorant polytheists) worship idols instead of God that do not benefit or harm them, and the disbeliever turns his back on the command of his Lord.« (وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَىٰ) (Q 25:55) The Messenger of God (PBUH) also said: »Prayer is the brain of worship.« (لِدُعَاءِ مُخِ الْعِبَادَةِ) He also says: »Du 'ā (prayer) is the best form of worship« (أَفْضَلُ الْعِبَادَةِ الدُّعَاءُ) (Nouri 1408, 5: 167; Mağlisi 1403, 93: 300). To explain how »prayer is the brain of worship«, one can say that everything has a foundation and a pillar on which the affairs related to it are established or regulated. Therefore, since the consistency and strength of a human depends on his intellect and power of recognition and understanding (i.e. brain), and without it he will be considered in the ranks of animals, the worship of God is also based on the brain, and without it, all worships lose their content and value, and in some cases, instead of building, worship causes the destruction of thought and action based on the above two words. The brain of worship and the best worship is prayer.

Therefore, a believer without prayer is like a person without a brain, and the worship of such a believer will be a lifeless skeleton and a soulless body.

Prayer is the unique way that calms the soul and heart, which is insisted on and considered as one of the pillars of the Šī'a school of thought.



The main three dimensions of prayer are:

- 1) Repelling calamities and asking for needs in the light of prayer.
- 2) Supplication, humility, secret and deep spiritual and mystical need in prayer, which has a great effect on inner purity.
- 3) Paying attention to high-level self-building and explaining the most excellent mystical, moral, cultural and political lessons in the form of prayer, which are also fully observed in prayer, and in fact, this aspect of prayer is the education class in itself.

In the following section, we aim to shed light on different types of prayer, definitions and dimension through which one can get to know the main stance of prayer in Šī‘a spiritual thoughts.

### 3 Types of prayer in Šī‘a Islam

The word »prayer« generally suggests two concepts in Islamic terminology; i.e., for both concepts there is only one equivalent in English »prayer«.

#### 3.1 *Ṣalāt* (صلاة)

It is the specific practice that five times a day a Muslim stands in the presence of God and worships Him and the orientation is toward Mecca. *Ṣalāt* is the most important worship of Muslims which is referred to by highly respectful and reverent phrases in the Qur'an and Hadiths, such as the pillar of the religion, ascension of spirit, soul purifier, the first practice which will be questioned about on the Day of Judgment, and the requisite for the acceptance of good deeds. It is also mentioned in these sources that prayer wards the sins off, determines the border of faith and infidelity, and eliminates arrogance. This daily *Ṣalāt* is 51 *Rak'at*<sup>3</sup> but only 17 *Rak'ats* are obligatory in daily prayers 5 times as follows:

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3 *Rak'at* or *Rak'a* literally means to »bow« and technically is an action combined of 4 parts: standing, reciting two chapters from Qur'an, one bow and two prostrations. Each *rak'at* lasts minimum 1 minute or more, depending on the length of chapters one recites in each.



- i. Morning prayers (صلاة الصبح): 2 *Rak'ats*
- ii. Noon prayers (صلاة الظهر): 4 *Rak'ats*
- iii. Evening prayers (صلاة العصر): 4 *Rak'ats*
- iv. Sunset prayers (صلاة المغرب): 3 *Rak'ats*
- v. Night prayers (صلاة العشاء): 4 *Rak'ats*

Other than these 17, the other 35 Rakats are recommended *Ṣalāts* which are optional for the praying person to do beside the obligatory ones. It is said that the 35 recommended prayers are complementary to the 17 obligatory ones. The Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) said, »One who recites his five daily *Ṣalāt* with complete purity and in their prime time, on the Day of Judgement, this *Ṣalāt* will be a divine light and proof for him; and one who disregards the *Ṣalāt* will be raised up alongside with Faro and oppressors.« In addition to its spiritual aspects, prayer is known as the most important motto or sign of Islam. Friday prayer صلاة الجمعة (*Ṣalāt al-ġum'a*) and congregational prayer صلاة الجماعة (*Ṣalāt al-ġamā'a*) embody the social aspect of this worship.

Talking in details, *Ṣalāt* in Islam is of two kinds by itself: obligatory Salat and recommended Salat.

- i. Obligatory (mandatory) *Ṣalāt* (*Ṣalāt al-wāġib*) (صلاة الواج) are the daily prayers as mentioned above, as well as prayers for dead person (*Ṣalāt al-mayyit*) (صلاة الميت), prayers of Ayat (*Ṣalāt al-āyāt*) (صلاة الآيات) which is done in the times of any unusual natural events like earthquake, terrifying tornado and eclipses.
- ii. Recommended Salat (*Ṣalāt al-mustaḥibb*) (صلاة المستحب), also called *Nawāfil* (نوافل), are prayers in the form of Salat which are recommended to be done for more nearness to God and great spiritual rewards are considered for them. These are mentioned in Hadiths as highly beneficial for both this world and the future life. There are different types for recommended prayers:



- i. Daily *Nawāfil*, performed before or after the obligatory daily prayers.
- ii. Prayers, performed in specific times of the day, such as night almost two hours before sunrise.
- iii. Prayers prescribed in the names of the Infallible Ones (a).
- iv. Prayers prescribed in the names of some of the companions of the Prophet and Imams (PBUT) such as the prayer of Ġa'far al-Tayyar.
- v. Prayers prescribed to be performed in specific days, such as the prayer of the beginning of the month.
- vi. Prayers prescribed to be performed in specific places, such as the prayer in the mosque of Jamkaran or holy shrines.
- vii. Prayers prescribed to be performed for requests and solving spiritual and worldly problems, such as the prayer for increasing daily sustenance.

### 3.2 *Du'ā* (دُعَا)

It literally means »calling« or »supplication«, and technically means »remembering God and calling upon Him«. The English word »prayer« is therefore used for both. *Du'ā* literally means asking someone to do or not to do something, and the difference between *Du'ā* and command is that the one who is commanded to do something is inferior to the one who commands, while in the case of *Du'ā*, the one who is prayed to is superior to the one praying (Tūsī 1409, 4:424). The word *Du'ā* and its derivatives are used 215 times in the Qur'an to indicate various meanings, including *Du'ā*, calling to something, worshipping, making a claim. Addressing the Prophet Muhammad, God says in the Qur'an:

When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth





on Me: Let them also, with a will, Listen to My call, and believe in Me: That they may walk in the right way. (Q 2:186)

*Du'ā* or supplication prayer in Šī'ā heritage mainly is divided into two types:

- (i) *Verbal supplication*: this type of supplication is in the form of written supplication in authentic sources like *Mafātīḥ al-ġinān* (مفاتيح الجنان) translated as *Keys to the Heavens* that one reads in holy places like holy shrines, visiting graves, Mecca, Medina and so on, or in holy moments like holy nights in month of ramadhan or other holy months. Verbal prayer is of different kinds by itself:

1. *Munāḡāt* (مناجات) means »whispered prayer«. In this kind of prayer, the servant of God talks with God privately, as one talks to a friend or to oneself, thus the believer feels free and can tell of his grievances, he confesses his own sins and asks God for forgiveness and assistance to go the right way. One example of *Munāḡāt*:

My God, offences have clothed me in the garment of my lowliness; separation from Thee has wrapped me in the clothing of my misery. My dreadful crimes have deadened my heart; so bring it to life by a repentance from Thee! O my hope and my aim! O my wish and my want! (Imam Sajjad 2001, 232)

2. *Dikr* (ذکر) is another format of *Du'ā*, (supplication) literally means »remembrance«, or »mention«, and technically, means »remembrance of God and verbal mentioning« which is frequently translated as »invocation«. Qur'an emphasizes the necessity of *Dikr* and its role in providing for spiritual wants and psychological needs. The word *Dikr* and its derivatives are used about 300 times in Qur'an and most of them are about remembering God, divine blessings, divine verses and reminding them. *Dikr* has been divided into two types of verbal *Dikr* and heart *Dikr*, and factors such as faith, piety, belief in the resurrection, and heavenly books as necessary for the realization of God's remembrance are mentioned as prerequisites of it. Peace of heart, daily substance and wealth, fear of God, knowledge and insight, salvation, God's remembrance of human, revitalization



of the heart, God's forgiveness, and heaven are mentioned among the rewards of *Dikr*, i.e., *Dikr* has both worldly and heavenly influences on life which should be repeated in fixed numbers mutinied in supplication books. Obstacles include selfishness, Satan, arrogance, too much attention to the physical life like wealth, fame and lust. Turning away from the remembrance of God has unfortunate consequences, which are mentioned in religious texts as struggle and hardship of livelihood, companionship with Satan, blindness in the Day of Judgment and divine punishment. These are the outcomes of forgetting *Dikr*. One example of *Dikr* is to repeat these sentences after each *Ṣalāt* called *tasbīhāt Haḍrat Zahrā* (PBUH) (تسبیحات حضرت زهرا)<sup>4</sup>:

God is the Greatest (*Allahu akbar*) (34); (الله اکبر times)  
 All praise belongs to God (*Al-hamdu li-llah*) (33); (الحمد لله times)  
 Glory be to God (*Subhān Allah*) (33); (سبحان الله times)

3. *Ziyaratnameh* (زیارتنامه) literally means »Holy visiting (pilgrimage) text« which is recited when visiting the shrine of each of the infallible Imams and pure descendants of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the martyrs of the Ahl al-Bayt<sup>5</sup> (PBUH). Since for »pilgrim« there is a need of prerequisite of politeness and knowledge, the speech one utters during pilgrimage should be lofty, mystical and polite. Each pilgrim can recite sentences and prayers in his own language as a pilgrimage book, but in our sources there are Arabic texts which are documented by Imams and are known as »Mathura Pilgrimages« meaning well-documented pilgrim texts. The most important ziyarat texts are: *Amīn Allah* (امین الله), *Ġami'a Kabīra* (جامعة كبيرة), *Wārīṭ* (وارث), *ʿāšūrā* (عاشورا), and *Arbaeen pilgrimage* (زیارت الاربعین). The main mostly referred of books of prayers and pilgrimages are: *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahḡad* (مصباح

4 Praises of lady Fatima Zahra, daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which are strongly recommended to say after each Salat, preferably by a rosary which has 100 physical string of knots or beads. When you accumulate 34 + 33 + 33 you have number 100. So the rosary beads are separated into 3 parts.

5 Ahl al-Bayt literally (اهل البيت) means people of the house referring to the Imams after prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The term Ahl al-Bayt or Ahlul Bayt is very important for the Ši'a Muslims and one can hear this word frequently in daily life.



(المتهدج), *Mafātiḥ al-ġinān* (مفاتيح الجنان), *Al-Mazār* (المزار), *Biḥār al-Anwār* (بحار الانوار) in the volume of pilgrimages. One example of *ziyaratnameh*:

السَّلَامُ عَلَى آدَمَ صِفْوَةِ اللَّهِ مِنْ خَلْقَتِهِ

*Al-salāmu alā ādama ṣifwati li-lāhi min ḥalīqatihi,*

Peace be upon Adam, the chosen one of Allah from among His creation.

السَّلَامُ عَلَى شَيْثٍ وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ وَخَيْرَتِهِ

*Al-salāmu alā šaythin walī Allāhi wa-ḥiyaratihi,*

Peace be upon Seth (Shaith), the friend of Allah and His elite.

السَّلَامُ عَلَى إِدْرِيسَ الْقَائِمِ اللَّهِ بِحُجَّتِهِ

*Al-salām alā idrīs al-qā'im li-llāhi bi-ḥuġġatihi,*

Peace be upon Enoch (Idris), who established (religion) on behalf of Allah by His authority.

السَّلَامُ عَلَى نُوحٍ الْمُجَابِ فِي دَعْوَتِهِ

*Al-salām alā nūḥ al-muġābi fī da'watihi,*

Peace be upon Noah (Nūh), whose invocation (for punishment) was answered.

4. *Tawassul* (توسل) is one of the most important beliefs of Šī'a and most Muslims. It means to ask for intercession to someone with a high position as a divine intermediary before God the Almighty in order to get closer to Him, which is not considered as polytheism. The notion of *Tawassul* is nearly related to the concept of *Šafā'a* (شفاعة) (intercession) and both are often mentioned together. Asking Prophet and Imams (PBUT) as an intermediary is among the significant beliefs of the Šī'a due to God's order in the Qur'an (5:35 as example<sup>6</sup>) and many Hadiths of the *Ahl al-bayt* (PBUT). One of the most comprehensive supplications is *Tawassul Ziyāra*. In addition to the holy shrines of the Prophet and the Imams, the tombs of the children and descendants of Imams are also respected. They are known as Imam-zadah, and the tombs of many of them have become holy shrines. The holy shrines

6 »O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and seek the means of recourse to Him, and wage jihad in His way, so that you may be felicitous.«



of Zaynab, the sister of Imam Husayn, which is in Damascus and Ma'sumah, the sister of Imam Reda, which is in Qom, are the most popular holy shrines of all *Imam-zadah* (امامزاده). One example of *Du'ā Tawassul*:

O God, I am asking you and I turned to you through your prophet, the prophet of mercy Muhammad (may God bless him and his family), o Aba al-Qasim, O Messenger of God, o leader of mercy, o our leader and master, we brought you and made you a mediator and made you a means to God and placed you in front of our needs, o honourable person before God, intercede for us with God.

(ii) *Behavioural and non-verbal supplication*: Behavioural and non-verbal supplications are defined as a behaviour or act of doing something or even suffering for the sake of God and are considered a prayer by itself. Accordingly, when for example one visits a holy place, though saying nothing, the act of presence in holy place, since it is a mean of nearness to God and spirituality, is considered as supplication or invocation. Following are the main types that will be elaborated on briefly; to research and write about them we would need writing volumes of books like *Bihār al-Anwar* (بحار الانوار) which was written by late Maḡlisi in 110 volumes.<sup>7</sup> Generally speaking, any form of humanistic behaviour with divine intention and pleasing God the almighty is mentioned as a non-verbal prayer, even if in the form of feeding an animal or helping ecosystem.

1. *Ziyārat* (زیارت): literally means to pay visit to a person or a place and technically means to do pilgrimage to a Godly and divine person no matter deceased or alive. In Shiism there are numerous holy Shrines or tomb of saints and holy places mostly in Medina, Iraq, Syria and Iran. 11 Imams from 12 Imams were all martyred and their shrines are places for *ziyārat*. There are more than 92 famous holy shrines for the Ši'a, though there are more if we count the non-famous ones as well.

7 *Bihār al-Anwār* (Arabic: بحار الأنوار, lit. »Seas of Lights«) is a comprehensive collection of Hadith compiled by Ši'a scholar Muḡammad Baqir Maḡlisi (d. 1110/1698). It is a Hadith collection as the secondary source used beside the Four Books.



2. *Tawassul* by heart: defining *tawassul* has been done in the verbal supplication part, however, *tawassul* or asking for intercession even by heart and just thinking about it with the intention of nearness to God is a supplication by itself in the Šī'a belief.
3. Haġġ pilgrimage: performing Haġġ pilgrimage, i.e. going to Mecca and paying visit to the Holy Mosque (مسجد الحرام) and Ka'aba (كعبة) (House of God) and doing circumambulation is one of the most beloved religious acts as well as wajib which is strongly recommended for any Muslim for completion of religion. In Haġġ obligatory pilgrimage (*haġġ al-wāġib*) (حج الواجب) or even recommended on which is called 'Umra (عمرة) the Haji, the performer, should circumnates 7 times around Ka'aba, and this very act in Arabic is called *ṭawāf* (طواف). *Ṭawāf* literally means to surround, and to go around something on foot, and *ṭawāf* is said to someone who goes around the house; in the term of jurisprudence, *ṭawāf* means to go around the Ka'aba. According to the laws of Islam, *ṭawāf al-ka'aba* is considered as one of the obligations of Haġġ, that a person with certain conditions must go around the house of God (Ka'aba) seven times, and in each round he or she must start from the Black Stone and end there. Another name for *ṭawāf* in jurisprudence is *ṣawṭ* (شوط) with the difference that *ṭawāf* refers to the total of seven strokes (Esfahani 1426, 531).
4. Alms giving (*ṣadaqa*) (صدقة): paying alms including donations and charities, refers to property that is given with the intention of being closeness to God. *Sadaqa* is either obligatory or recommended, as stated in the verses of the Qur'an (9:60)<sup>8</sup> and Hadiths. According to Hadiths, giving charity not only does not cause a decrease in a person's wealth, but also brings blessing or an increase in wealth. According to the verses and traditions, the recipient of charity is God, so it is better that charity is free from property and given secretly. Qur'an has introduced charity as a means of forgiving

8 Alms is reserved only for the needy, the poor, and those responsible for [collecting and distributing] it, and those whose hearts are won, and in the [way of liberating] slaves, and debtors, and in the way of God, and in the way of those who are left on the way. [This] is an obligation from God, and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.



sins. Many effects have been mentioned for charity in Hadiths, such as healing the sick and prolonging life. Alms are divided into two categories:

- i. **Mandatory:** In this type of charity, a person must give a part of his personal property to specific people under specific conditions. Mandatory charity are, e.g., *zakāt*, *ḥums* and *fiṭriyya*.
- ii. **Recommended:** There is no specific amount and a person can give any amount of their wealth to the poor and needy in the way of God. (Tabatabayi 1402, 2: 40).

Effects of alms giving in life: many Hadiths narrate about the virtues, blessings, benefits and effects, among them:

- i. **Avoiding evil and bad death:** Removing the calamity, avoiding bad death, etc. is one of the effects of charity. Imam Baqir (PBUH) the 5th infallible Imam of the Ši'a says: »Charity keeps seventy evils away from a person and also keeps a bad death away from a person; because the owner of charity never dies a bad death.«
- ii. **Healing the sick.** In a Hadith it is said: »Heal your patients with charity.« And we read in another Hadith that it is recommended for a sick person to give charity with his own hands.
- iii. **Remover of poverty:** Imam Baqir (PBUH) again has been quoted as saying: »Kindness and hidden charity drive away poverty.«
- iv. **Spiritual works of charity:** According to the Qur'an, charity in the way of God is a profitable business and a valuable transaction that leads to great rewards and reaching the divine paradise, protects a person from the horrors of the Day of Judgment, and saves him from the painful punishment of God.



- v. Removing sadness from the donor: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says: When you bring the night to the morning, give charity so that the sadness of that day will be removed from you, and whenever you bring the day to night, give charity so that the sadness of that night will be removed from you.
- vi. Guarantee of heaven: Imam Ali (PBUH), the first Infallible Imam of the Šī'a and the true successor of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says: I guarantee heaven for six groups. One is a man who leaves alms to give, but dies; So he is from heaven. The other five groups are: those who visit the sick, pilgrims, those who defend Islam, those on the way to Friday prayers and those on the way to the funeral who die and do not return home.

Therefore, alms giving is one of the most recommended spiritual acts and hundreds of books have been written in this regard. (Tabatabayi 1402, 2: 420–433)

5. *Nazr* (نذر) or »vow«: The vow is that a person promises himself or herself to do a good deed for the sake of God, or to leave a deed that is better not to be done for God in the way of spirituality and purification of soul. *Nazr* may have different philosophies, some of which are:
  - i. Reaching the desired and fulfilling the need.
  - ii. Insisting on serving God and trying to reach the position of closeness to God.
  - iii. Strengthening motivation in the direction of spiritual progress.
  - iv. Rescue from hardships and difficult events.

As an example, one makes a vow that if he or she heals from sickness to donate some amount of property to a person, place or institution. Act of *nazr* is strongly recommended for mystical wayfarers.



6. Feeding the poor or animals: feeding the poor, the needy, animals, watering plants, taking care of the environment and the nature and similar humanitarian causes are considered as spiritual practical supplication provided to be done with the intention of serving God and closeness to him.
7. Social works: In Islam, a set of social services such as solving the plight of Muslims, supporting and caring for orphans, resolving problems between two Muslims, visiting the sick and paying charitable loans to the needy, and etc. are highly recommended and many rewards and virtues have been expressed for them. From the Islam point of view, Muslims have interests and bonds with each other, especially that they enjoy the bond of religious brotherhood; for this reason, they are called *umma* (أمة) or community. Referring to these connections, Imam Sadiq, the 6th infallible Imam of the Ši'a (PBUH) introduces Muslims as members of one body and says: »A believer and his brother are like a body, if one part of the body hurts, other parts will also hurt, the believers' souls are from the same soul.« In another famous Hadith from him we read: »He who does not care about the affairs of the Muslims will be happy with the Muslims.« (مَنْ أَصْبَحَ لَا يَهْتَمُّ بِأُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَلَيْسَ بِمُسْلِمٍ) (Kulayni 1388, 2: 163)

Sa'di, the famous Iranian poet wrote a very famous poem that has even been recited in United Nations sessions:

Human beings are members of a whole  
 In creation of one essence and soul  
 If one member is afflicted with pain  
 Other members uneasy will remain  
 If you've no sympathy for human pain  
 The name of human you cannot retain





بنی آدم اعضای یکدیگرند  
 که در آفرینش ز یک گوهرند  
 چو عضوی به درد آورد روزگار،  
 دگر عضوها را نماند قرار  
 تو کز محنت دیگران بی غمی،  
 نشاید که نامت نهند آدمی

These kinds of social services may not be regarded as acts of devotion and may be considered as only recommended, but for some of them, such a great reward and virtue is mentioned in the Hadiths that one would consider it as a mandatory religious act. Besides, helping others is a faster way to reach mystical approaches than an isolate personal mysticism and just personal dimension.

8. Contemplation (*tadabbuur*) (التدبیر): there is a very famous Hadith from holy prophet of Islam and Imam Ali (PBUH) (Reyshahri 2005, 7: 543), the first infallible Imam of the Šī'a that »a second (an hour) of contemplation is better than seventy years of worship« (تفکر ساعة افضل من عبادة سبعين سنة). There are numerous expressions close to this theme from the Prophet of Islam and his family (PBUH) that have come to our attention, and these expressions themselves require thinking and meditation, why and how deep thinking about God and His blessings is worthier than mere worshipping without understanding? The same Hadith is from 6th Imam of the Šī'a that one of the companions asked Imam Sadiq (PBUH) about the above Hadith from Imam Ali (PBUH) how »thinking for an hour is better than worshipping for a night or seventy years«. What kind of thinking is this and how should one think? Imam Sadiq (PBUH) said: When a person passes by a ruined house, he should say: »Where are those who lived in you? Where are those who built you? Why don't you speak?« According to this noble Hadith, it can be understood that thinking is superior to worship, which leads to learning and contemplation on one's condition and relationship with God. Accordingly, one should not look at the quantity of worship and judge people and religiosity merely by the number of prayers or worship, but rather the quality is more valuable. In history of Islam, we have several evidences that in the last moment of life, it is essential if you are spiritual and



religious or not. There are examples of religious people who die in deviation and irreligiosity and contrarily, there are irreligious people who repented in the last years of life and became mystics. So religious people should not be proud of themselves or become arrogant. In mysticism, the worst enemy is »I«, i.e., the worst enemy is one's self and constantly saying »I am so or I was so...«. A real religious person always forgets himself or herself and only sees God everywhere in the shape of human, nature, heavens and all creation.

9. *ʿIrfān* and *Riyāḍat* (العرفان و الرياضة): In Šīʿa belief the ultimate goal of prayers and worship is to reach the level of Irfan. Irfan in Arabic means deepest Knowledge in God and the person practicing it is ʿArif (عارف). There is nothing more beautiful for a Šīʿa Muslim than being Arif or mystic. Irfan is different from Sufism. Sufism is mostly well-known among Sunni Muslims, while Irfan is recognized in Šīʿa Islam. An Arif closes his physical eyes and opens the eyes of the heart. This can be attained through Riyazat or hard spiritual work. Let's look at this in more details.

Islam consists of two parts, external and internal, that is, *šarīʿa* (شريعة) and *ṭarīqa* (طريقة) (the spiritual way) which are necessary and obligatory for each other; these two concepts are like »effect and meaning« when they are together and the fruit of this combination is »truth« (Mutahari 1978, 1: 144).

In mystical orders, this togetherness is mentioned as follows: Shariah is the actions about the body and Tariqat is about the heart. Sharia is to decorate the exterior with obedience through Tariqat which means to purify the interior with good manners and friendship and remembrance of God and enlightening the heart to know Him. So both of these are like the brain and the skin, also like the words and the meaning, like the soul and the body, or the lamp and its illumination, or like the drug and its effect, and the combination between the outer and the inner. Irfan is the lamp and prayer is the effect.



Irfan is classified in 2 ways:

- i. *Subjective or theoretical Irfan* (‘*irfān nazārī*) (عرفان نظری): Theoretical mysticism means a mystical worldview, one that a mystic has about the world, God and man, and interprets existence with it. In other words, theoretical mysticism is a type of theoretical wisdom that interprets existence and expresses the quality of the relationship between God, man and the world through discovery, intuition and illumination based on the foundations of divine religion, and tries to know the truth through His manifestations, i.e. names, attributes, actions and works. The way of knowledge is present, revelation, intuition and illumination. Mysticism in this part is like theological philosophy, which is in the capacity of interpretation and explanation of existence, and just as divine philosophy introduces subjects, principles, and issues for itself, mysticism also introduces subjects, issues, and principles. But, of course, philosophy only relies on rational principles and principles in its arguments, while mysticism uses the so-called »discovered principles« as the basis of its reasoning and then explains them with the language of reason (Dehbashi and Mirbagheri 2014, 18).

Principles of belief in theoretical mysticism: A series of basic beliefs and issues constitute the main characteristics of theoretical mysticism, the knowledge of which helps to understand the behaviours and intellectual framework of a mystic; they are:

- a. Movement and action are the basis

In mystical vision, knowledge does not only rely on basic, rather, action is the principle and basis of work as well, i.e. knowledge is the result and product of action (exactly the opposite of philosophers’ method). In order to reach mystical awareness, one must go through the steps and go through the process which is full of hardships and suffer.



b. Belief in the Truth of the world

The Arifs consider the Truth (God) of the objects around them as the source and this material world to be in the external world as a mirror, and they acknowledge that this Truth has appearances and manifestations that are multiplied in these manifestations; it has an inner being that is pure Truth, and with its complete »unity«, it is free from any kind of multiplicity. The wrong impression made here is to attribute Arifs (mystics, also Urafa عرفا as plural form of Arif) to the idealists, while what is mentioned in Urfa's statements about the illusion of the world, is all in the position of comparing these manifestations to that general truth and the inner unity.

c. Firm belief in the »unity«

Unity is the central concept and experience of all existing mysticisms, and the most important feature of the mystics is their monotheistic view of the world and its parts. In Qur'an we read: »Both the East and the West belong to God, so if you turn in any direction, you have turned to God, for God is indeed all-Bounteous, all-Knowing.« (Q 2:115)

d. Belief in austerity and struggle (*al-riyāḍa wa-l-muḡāhida*)  
(الرياضة و المجاهدة)

Mystical schools teach that the only possible way to reach spiritual perfection is through persistent and arduous effort. In order to reach this goal, a mystic must work hard to tolerate and be firm and persevere in the face of suffers, trials and tribulations since they all are Divine test for spiritual growth.

An 'ārīf believes that *muḡāhida* or austerity, although necessary, is not sufficient. Rather, it is God's love and care that works and solves problems. In the eyes of 'ārīf, there is no obstacle for God's attraction and unseen providence to bring people to the



level of knowledge and intuition at the very beginning of the work without going through the steps of the wayfaring process.

e. Love

Although love is one of the basic issues of mysticism, mystics say they are unable to define it. Ibn Arabi says in this context: »Whoever defines love, has not known it, and whoever has not tasted a sip from that cup, has not known it, and whoever says, ‘I got drunk from that cup, has not known it, that love, it is a wine that does not satisfy anyone.’« (Ibn Arabi [n.d.], 2: 111)

- ii. *Objective or practical Irfan* (‘*irfān ‘amālī*) (عرفان عملي): This part of mysticism expresses the actions and duties of man towards himself and others, towards the world and towards God; for this reason, this part of mysticism has been called »spiritual journey« or *Seir wa Soluk* (سير وسلوك). Consistency is known for four things:

- a. Eating less: making a habit of being hungry and eating less and eating only as much as needed.
- b. Sleeping less: waking up and sleeping less and, in addition, staying awake at night revives the heart.
- c. Speaking less: silence and less speaking except when necessary.
- d. Hearing less: seclusion and solitude and avoiding company of common people. Of course, this goes just for the beginning. At the end, an Arif should help people.

Talking about ‘*irfa*, ‘*ārif* and ‘*urafā* demands the knowledge from numerous books of which some general information has been elaborated to show how Irfan is the soul of prayers and worships.

10. Martyrdom (الشهادة): Martyrdom refers to being killed in the way of God, which is mentioned in Hadiths as the highest goodness and the most honourable death. In the Qur’anic verses and Hadiths, effects such as staying alive while he or she is dead, enjoying the



right of intercession and forgiveness of sins are mentioned for martyrdom. Martyrdom has a specific meaning and a general meaning. Its specific meaning is the same as the jurisprudential meaning, and its general meaning is that a person is killed or dies on the way to fulfilling a divine duty. Therefore, in Islamic traditions, there are examples of the title of martyr, such as a scholar who dies while seeking knowledge, a person who dies in their bed while having knowledge of God, the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt (PBUT), a person who defends their property or country against the attackers and is killed. Here are some Hadiths showing importance of martyrdom:

- i. I swear by God that my life is in His hands – I would like to be resurrected and killed again and again in the way of God, not once or twice, but several times (Bukhari 1407, 4: 21).
- ii. After entering Paradise, none of the people of Paradise will ever wish to leave it, except for a martyr who wishes to return to the world after seeing all the dignities that God has bestowed upon him and to be alive and killed ten times. (Nouri 1408, 11: 13)
- iii. Above every good thing, there is another good thing, until a person is killed in the way of God, so when he is martyred in the way of God, there is no good deed that is superior to it. (Ibn Babeweyh 1362, 1: 9)

Martyrdom as described briefly here is the last case of non-verbal and practical prayer which is of very high position before God the Almighty and a practical ultimate goal of even an Arif and a true believer. In continuation of this research, the importance of prayer will be elaborated on. It should also be considered that even being injured and losing body organs in the way of God is a constant prayer.

According to all detailed aforementioned contributions, one can understand how important the place of prayer is in our daily life. One should keep in mind that any type of legitimate practice to be done with the



intention of serving God the Almighty, human beings, animals and nature, can be a step for spiritual ascension. This universe is the place of cause and effect or voice and echo; so whatever one does in this world to contribute to the greater good and to move toward being a »perfect man« it will be reflected in his or her life both in this world and hereafter.

## Conclusion

Referring to the definitions, importance and types of prayers, it can be concluded that the word »prayer« in English has several equivalents in Arabic and Šī'a tradition, including verbal and non-verbal prayers, objective and subjective prayers which in some scales are different from those in Christianity or Judaism. It should be noted that prayer in Šī'a thought is not considered just as an individual act of sitting in mosque and just praying, but rather, one should go out to society because even by doing social works, one is practically praying. In all these types of praying, including *Ṣalāt*, *Du'ā*, *Munāğāt*, *Ziyāra*, spiritual and physical austerity, mysticism, Gnosticism, anything can be a way toward spiritual journey and human perfection, provided that all be done in the way of God and with the pure heart and intention to reach ultimate goal of spiritual prosperity, not to show off or be arrogant. A mystic can reach a level where he does not sense »I« and »self« anymore, but only sees the absolute Truth. As prophet of Islam has mentioned, prayer is the soul of worship and Irfan is the soul of prayer. For more detailed acquaintance with these topics and terms, you can refer to the different sections in this article.

## For further studies

It is suggested for completion of this article, some research to be done about importance of mysticism and spirituality in Šī'a Islam.



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