

Fazail-e-Namaz

Virtues of Salah

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Author's Foreword

"We glorify Allah and ask blessings on and salute His noble Prophet, his companions and those who follow him in upholding the cause of the right religion."

The indifference of Muslims towards practising Islam these days is too well known. So much so that even Salaat, which is the most important pillar of Islam (after Imaan) and the first and the foremost thing to be reckoned on the Day of Judgement, is being badly neglected. Although every call to 'Islam', nowadays, seems to be only a cry in the wilderness, yet experience shows that efforts in this direction are not altogether fruitless. The glorious words of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) are sure to benefit those with a receptive and submissive frame of mind. With this idea in view and to comply with the long-standing request of some of my dear friends, I have taken upon myself to write this booklet, which is the second of the series on 'Tabligh', the first one being "Virtues of Tabligh."

And my success can only come from Allah! And in Him I trust and unto Him I turn (XI:88)

Foreword

The present-day Muslims, in respect of their behaviour towards Salaat, can be divided into three groups. A large number among them is totally unmindful of Salaat. Quite a few observe their Salaat, but are not particular about Jamaat. Then there are those who are regular in their Salaat (with Jamaat), but their Salaat is devoid of the care and thoroughness which it demands. I have divided the book into three parts to suit the requirements of each group. In each part the illustrious Ahaadith of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) are Versed with their simple translation. The translation is idiomatic and not literal. Explanatory notes have been added wherever necessary. The names of the books of Hadith from which the quotations are taken have also been mentioned for reference.

Part 1: Importance of Salah

There are two Chapters in this part. The first one is on 'Importance of salaah, and the second of 'Warning and Reproach' for those who neglect or discard salaah.

THE REWARDS OF SALAAT

HADITH - 1

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Umar (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying:

"Islam is founded on five pillars: bearing witness that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is His servant and apostle; establishment of salaah; paying of Zakaat; performance of Hajj; and fasting in Ramadhaan."

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) has compared Islam to a canopy resting on five supports. The Kali-mah is the central support and the other four pillars of Islam are, so to say, the remaining four supports, one at each corner of the canopy. Without the central support, the canopy cannot possibly stand, and if any one of the corner supports is missing a collapse will result in the defective corner. Now, let us judge for ourselves how far we have kept up the canopy of Islam. Is there really any pillar that is being held in its proper place?

The five pillars of Islam mentioned in this Hadith signify the most essential duties of a Muslim. Although a Muslim cannot do without any one of them, yet salaah in Islam occupies a position next only to Imaan. Hadhrat Abdullah bin Mas'ood (Radhiyallahu anho) says:

"Once, I inquired of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), which act (of man) was the dearest to Allah. The Prophet replied, 'salaah'. I then inquired which act came next (in order of merit) and the Prophet replied, 'Kindness to parents'. I again asked what was next and he answered 'Jihaad'."

Mulla Ali Qari (Rahmatullah alaih) has Versed this Hadith in support of the belief that salaah is the most important religious duty after Imaan. This is further corroborated by a hadith, in which the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have said:

"Salaah is the best of all that has been ordained by Allah."

HADITH - 2

"Hadhrat Abu Zar (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that once the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) came out of his house. It was autumn and the leaves were falling off the trees. He caught hold of a branch of a tree and its leaves began to drop in large number.

At this he remarked, 'O, Abu Zar! (Radhiyallahu anho) when a Muslim offers his salaah to please Allah, his sins are shed away from him just as these leaves are falling off this tree."

In autumn, usually, the leaves of the trees fall in large numbers, so much so that on some trees not a single leaf is left behind. The same is the effect of salaah performed with sincerity and devotion. All the sins of the person offering salaah are wiped off.

It should, however, be remembered that according to the verdict of the theologians, it is only the saghaa'ir (minor sins) that are forgiven by the performance of salaah and other services.

The kabaa'ir (major sins) are not pardoned without repentance. We should, therefore, in addition to saying salaah, be particular about doing taubah (repentance) and istighfaar (seeking forgiveness). Allah may, however, pardon, by His bountiful Grace, even the kabaa'ir of any person because of his salaah.

HADITH - 3

Hadhrat Abu Uthman (Radhiyallahu anho) says: "I was once sitting under a tree with Hadhrat Salmaan (Radhiyallahu anho). He caught hold of a dry branch of the tree and shook it till all its leaves fell off. He then said to me, "O, Abu Uthman! (Radhiyallahu anho) Will you not ask me why I am doing this?" "Do tell me," I entreated. He said, "The Apostle of Allah had done exactly like this before me, while I was with him under a tree.

He caught a dry branch of it and shook it, till all its leaves fell off". At this he said: *O, Salmaan! (Radhiyallahu anho) will you not ask me why I am doing this?' I replied: 'Do tell me why you are doing this?' He remarked: "Verily when a Muslim takes wudhu properly and then observes his salaah five times a day, his sins fall off just as these leaves have fallen off. He then recited the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"Establish salaah at the two ends of the day, and at the approaches of the night. Verily, good deeds annul ill deeds. This is a reminder for the mindful. (XI: 114)"

The behaviour of Hadhrat Salmaan (Radhiyallahu anho) in the above Hadith displays the profound love which the Sahaabah had for the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). They would often cherish the sweet memories of the time when the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) was living among them. They would, while quoting him, enact exactly what they had seen him doing at a particular moment.

It is really very difficult to cover all the traditions of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), which deal with the importance of salaah and which declare forgiveness for those who guard it. As had already been said before, the theologians restrict this declaration of forgiveness to saghaa'ir (minor sins) only, but in the text of the Hadith there is no such restriction.

My learned father gave me two reasons for this. Firstly, it does not really become a Muslim to commit any of the kabaa'ir (major sins). If perchance any such sins are committed by him, he cannot rest in peace (due to inherent fear of Allah in him) until he washes them with his tears of repentance in crying before Allah. Secondly, the person who performs his salaah with sincerity and thoroughness is very likely to do istighfaar quite a number of times daily. Look for instance at the closing prayer of salaah itself, viz:

"O, My Lord! I have wronged my soul a great wrong, and none forgiveth sins save Thou alone. Then forgive me and have mercy on me. Verily, Thou art the Forgiving, the Merciful.

In the above Hadith, mention is made of wudhu to be done properly. We should, therefore, be sure of the regulations about wudhu and try to observe all of these. For example, take the case of miswaak. It is sunnat of wudhu, but is very often neglected. It is said in a Hadith that the salaah offered after doing miswaak is seventy times superior to the salaah without miswaak. In another Hadith, use of miswaak has been enjoined very strongly, and the following benefits are attributed to it:—

"It cleanses and sweetens the mouth and checks its bad smell."

"It is a cause of Allah's pleasure and a blow to the Devil."

"Allah and his angels love the person doing miswaak." "It strengthens the gums and improves eye-sight."

"It is a purge against bile and phlegm."

To crown all, "It is a sunnah i.e. the practice of our beloved Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam)."

As many as seventy virtues of the miswaak have been enumerated by the theologians. It is said that a person in the habit of miswaak dies with the Kalimah on his lips. The rewards of taking wudhu properly are very many. It is mentioned in Ahaadith that the parts of body washed in wudhu shall glitter on the Day of Judgment and, by this (distinction), the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) will at once recognise his followers.

HADITH - 4(a)

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) asked his companions, 'Do you believe that dirt can remain on a person bathing five times a day in a brook running in front of his door?' 'No', replied the companions, 'No dirt can remain on his body.' The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) remarked: So, exactly similar is the effect of salaah offered five times a day. With the Grace of Allah, it washes away all the sins'."

HADITH - 4(b)

Hadhrat Jaabir (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying:"The likeness of five times daily salaah is as the likeness of a deep brook running in front of the door of a person who bathes therein five times a day."

Running water is generally free from dirt, and the deeper it runs the cleaner and purer it is. A bath in such water surely removes dirt from the body and makes it clean. Salaah offered with due regard for its essentials likewise cleanses the soul of all sins. There are several Ahaadith of the same meaning, though with slight variations in expression, narrated by different companions of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). Hadhrat Abu Sa'eed Khudri (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying:

'Each of the five salaats expiates the sins committed since the salaah preceding it. To explain, let us take the case of a person working in a factory. His job is such that his body gets covered with dust. But there are five streams of running water in between the factory and his house and, on his return from the job, he takes a bath in each stream. The effect of five times daily salaah is quite similar. Any sins of omission and commission between two salaats are forgiven on account of 'istighfaar and taubah in each salaah.'

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) through such parables, aims at impressing that salaah has the wonderful power of removing the sins. If we fail to avail of Allah's mercy, surely we ourselves are the losers.

To err is human. We are likely to commit innumerable acts of displeasing Allah and deserve thereby. His wrath and punishment, but look how relenting our dear Allah is! He has most graciously shown us the way to earn His mercy and forgiveness. It is a great pity if we do not avail of this great favour. Our Allah is always eager to show us His mercy on very small grounds. It is said in a Hadith, that if a person goes to bed with the intention of getting up for Ta-hajjud and perchance does not wake up, he receives the full reward for Tahajjud, although he has been enjoying his sleep at the time of Tahajjud. How boundless is the grace of Allah and what a tremendous loss and deprivation if we do not receive blessings from such a Giver.

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HADITH - 5

Hadhrat Huzaifah (Radhiyallahu anho) says that, whenever the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) happened to face any difficulty, he would at once resort to salaat."

Salaat is a great blessing of Allah. To resort to salaat at the time of worry is to hasten towards His mercy, and when Allah's mercy comes to rescue, there can remain no trace of any worry. There are many traditions concerning this practice of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). Similar was the practice of his companions, who followed him in the minutest detail. Hadhrat Abu Darda (Radhiyallahu anho) says: "Whenever a strong wind blew, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) would immediately enter the masjid and would not leave until the wind had subsided. Similarly, at the time of a solar or lunar eclipse, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) would at once start offering salaat. Hadhrat Suhaib (Radhiyallahu anho) was informed by the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) that all the previous Apostles of Allah (peace be upon them) also used to resort to salaat in all adversities.

Hadhrat Ibno Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) was once on journey. On his way he got the news of the death of his son. He got down from his camel and offered two rakaat of salaat, praying in Tashahhud for a long time. He then recited 'Innaa lillaahi wa innaallaihi raaji-oon' and said, "I have done what Allah has ordered us to do in His Holy Book i.e.

"Seek Allah's help with patience and salaat" (II: 45).

Another similar story is narrated about him. He was on a journey when he received the news about the death of his brother Quthum. He descended from his camel by the roadside, and performed two rakaats of salaat and kept praying in Tashahhud for a long time. After finishing his salaat, he rode his camel reciting the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"Seek Allah's help with patience and salaat, and truly it is indeed hard except to the humble minded." (11: 45).

There is yet another story about him. On hearing of the death of a wife of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), he fell down prostrate. When somebody asked him the reason he said, "Our dear Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) had enjoined on us to prostrate (in salaat) whenever a calamity were to befall us. What calamity can be greater than the death of the Ummul-Mo'mineen?"

When Hadhrat Ubaada (Radhiyallahu anho) was about to breathe his last, he said to the people around him, "I prohibit one and all from crying over me. When my soul departs, I ask every one to perform wudhu, observing all its essentials, and to go to the masjid and pray for my forgiveness, because our Gracious Allah has enjoined on us to "Seek help with patience and salaah." After that, lay me down in the pit of my grave."

Hadhrat Nadhr (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, "Once it became very dark during the day in Madina. I hurriedly went to Hadhrat Anas (Radhiyallahu anho) to know if he had ever experienced similar conditions during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). He said to me. "M'aathallaah! During those blessed days, whenever the wind blew strong, we would hurry to the masjid lest it should be the approach of the Last Day."

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Salaam (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that whenever the members of the Prophet's family were hardpressed in any way, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) would enjoin upon them to say salaah, and would recite the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"And enjoin salaah upon thy people and be thyself constant therein. We ask not of thee to provide sustenance. We provide it for thee. And the Hereafter is for the righteousness." (XX: 132).

It is said in a hadith that when somebody is confronted

with a need, whether pertaining to this life or the Hereafter, or whether it concerns Allah or a mortal, he should perform a perfect wudhu, offer salaah of two rakaats, glorify Allah, then ask blessing for the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), and then pray as under:

"There is no god save Allah-the Clement-the Bountiful. Glorified be Allah, the Lord of the tremendous throne. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. I ask Thee all that leadeth to Thy Mercy and deserveth Thy forgiveness. I ask Thee abundance in all that is good and refuge from all that is evil. Leave me no sin but Thou pardonest it, and no distress but Thou removest it, and no need but Thou fulfilllest it. O most Merciful of those who show mercy!" ;

Wahb bin Munabbih writes: "Have your needs fulfilled by Allah through salaah. In the good old time, if a calamity befell the people, they would hurry towards salaah." It is said that in Koofah there was a porter who was well known for his honesty. People trusted him with their valuables and money, which he carried from one place to another. Once he was on his usual errand when a person met him on the way. and asked him about his destination. When the porter gave him the required information, he said, "I am also bound for the same destination. If I could walk, I would have accompanied you on foot. Will you kindly give me a lift on your mule for one dinar?" The porter agreed and allowed him to share the mule with him. They came to a crossing on the way. The person said, 'Now, which road will you take?' 'The main road, of course,' replied the porter. The person said. 'No. brother. We should go by the other road which is a shortcut and there is plenty of grass enroute to feed the animal.' The porter said, 'I have never been on this path.' The person remarked, 'But I have travelled by this route quite often'. The porter believed him and put the animal on that path. After some distance, the path ended in a terrifying forest where a large number of dead bodies were lying about. All of a sudden the person jumped down from the mule and took out his knife with the intention of slaying the porter. 'Hold your hand', shouted the porter, 'Take the animal and its load, but do not kill me'. The person refused to listen to his entreaty and swore that he would first kill the porter and then take possession of the animal and the goods. Seeing that his entreaties fell on deaf ears and that his cruel heart would not melt, the porter said to him, 'All right if you must kill me, then permit to say my salaah of only two rakaats.' The person agreed and remarked, 'You can please yourself. All the dead you see over here made the same request, but their salaah was of no avail to them.' The porter started the salaah, but could not recollect any soorah to connect with the Fatihah, in spite of his best efforts. Meanwhile the person grew impatient and pressed him hard to hurry up with the salaah. All of a sudden the following verse flashed to his mind:

'Is it not He Who answereth the wronged one when he crieth unto Him, and removeth the evil. . . (XXVII-62).

The porter was reciting the verse and the tears welled up in his eyes, when a horseman suddenly appeared on the scene. He was wearing a glittering helmet and held a spear in his hand. He pierced the body of the pitiless rogue with his spear and killed him there and then. A flame of fire rose from the spot where the dead body fell. The porter fell down prostrate and thanked Allah. After finishing his salaah, he ran towards the horseman and requested him to disclose his identity. He replied. 'I am a slave to Him who answereth the wronged one. You are now safe and can go wherever you like.' Saying this, the horseman rode away and disappeared."

Indeed salaah is a tremendous asset. Besides pleasing Allah it often gets us deliverance from the calamities of this life and provides us with tranquility and peace of mind. Ibn Seereen writes: "If I be allowed to choose between Paradise and salaah of two rakaats, I would prefer salaah. The reason is quite clear. Paradise is for my own pleasure while salaah is for the pleasure of my dear Lord." The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) has said: "Enviably is the lot of that Muslim who is with least encumbrance, whose main fortune is salaah, who remains content with humble provision throughout his life, who worships his Lord in a dutiful manner, who lives a nameless life and who dies an early death, with very little to bequeath and very few to mourn him." In another hadith, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have said: 'Offer your salaah at your homes quite frequently, so that these may be blessed with Allah's Grace and Mercy:'

Hadith-6

"Abu Muslim narrates: I went to see Abu Umaamah (Radhiyallahu anho) while he was in the masjid. I asked him if he had really heard the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "When a person performs wudhu with right performance and then says his fardh salaah, Allah forgives him all the sins committed that day by his feet in going towards evil, by his hands in doing evil, by his ears in listening to evil, by his eyes in looking at evil and by his heart in thinking of evil.' He replied, 'By Allah, I have heard these words from the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) again and again."

Many of the companions have narrated this Hadith with slight variations. Those endowed with the power of Kashf can even witness the sins being shed. It is said of Imam Abu Haneefa (Rahmatullah alaih) that he could tell from the water falling down from the limbs of the person performing wudhu as to which sins had been washed off therewith. In a narration by Hadhrat Uthman (Radhiyallahu anho), the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have warned against being wrong-headed in committing sins in the hope of getting them redeemed through salaah. We have, really, no ground to behave as such on this account. After all, what is the quality of the salaah that we offer? If Allah merely absolves us of our obligation it is His very special favour and grace. Again it is the height of ingratitude to disobey Allah just because He is Clement, Merciful and Forgiving.

Hadith-7

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, "Two persons of one clan came to Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) and embraced Islam at one and the same time. One of these was martyred in a battle and the other died a year later, Hadhrat Talha bin Ubaidullah (Radhiyallahu anho) says that he saw in his dream that the person who had died later was admitted into Paradise before the martyr. This surprised him. I do not recollect whether it was he or somebody else who narrated this dream. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) thereupon remarked: "Has not the person dying later fasted for one additional month of Ramadhaan, and has he not offered six thousand or odd rakaats of salaah more during the year he lived after the martyr?"

Really, we do not know how valuable salaah is! The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) was often heard saying, "The comfort of my eyes is in salaah." This is an expression of his profound love for salaah. As such, what else can be more valuable than salaah?

Hadith-8

Hadhrat Ibn Mas'ood (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying: "At the approach of the hour of a salaah, an Angel is deputed to proclaim, 'Arise, O Children of Adam! and extinguish the fire that you have (by committing sins) kindled to burn yourselves. So, the people rise up, perform wudhu and offer their Zuhr prayer. This causes forgiveness of their sins committed since day-break. The same is repeated at Asr, Maghrib and Ishaah. After Ishaah people go to bed, but there are some who busy themselves in good, while some others in evil deeds.

Hadhrat Salmaan (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "After Ishaah the people get divided into three groups. There are some for whom the night is a source of blessing and gain. They are those who spend it in the worship of Allah, while other people are asleep. For them the night brings great reward from their Lord. There are others who turn their night into a burden and curse for themselves, for they indulge in various dark deeds in the dead of night. To them the night brings woe and misery. There is the third group of people who go to bed immediately after Ishaah; they neither gain nor lose."

Hadith-9

Hadhrat Abu Qataadah bin Rab'iyy (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "He heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying. Allah has said, "O, Muhammad! I have ordained five times daily salaah for thy followers. I have made a covenant with myself that whosoever is regular in performing his salaah at its fixed hour, he shall be admitted into the Paradise. Those of thy followers who do not guard their salaah, are not included in this covenant."

In another hadith, it is said that Allah has ordained five times salaah and whosoever is mindful of his salaah, by doing wudhu properly and by praying at fixed hours with sincerity and devotion. is assured by Allah of his entry into Paradise; and whosoever does not guard his salaah, there is no such guarantee for him; he may-or may not be forgiven. salaah has indeed a tremendous value. It affords us an opportunity to \,receive Allah's guarantee for Paradise. When an honourable person of some financial standing or having executive power gives us a guarantee or stands surety for meeting any of our requirements of this world, we feel quite satisfied and happy and we consider it our duty to remain obliged and devoted to him. Here Allah the Absolute Sovereign of both the worlds, is giving the guarantee and is standing surety for the real success after death in return for five times daily salaah, which does not involve much effort on our part. If even then we do not avail of the opportunity, we shall have none to blame, but ourselves for the dreadful doom that awaits us.

Hadith-10

Ibn Salmaan says that he heard one of the companions of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) narrating, "When we had won the battle of Khaibar, we beganto buy and sell among ourselves the booty that had fallen to our lot. One of us went to Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) and said, 'O, Apostle of Allah, no one else has earned so much profit as I have obtained in today's trade.' 'How much did you earn? asked the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). He replied, 'I kept on selling and buying till I earned a net profit of three hundred 'Ooqiyyah' of silver.' The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) said, "Shall I inform you of something better than that?" He exclaimed, 'Do tell me, O, Prophet of Allah!' The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) remarked 'Two rakaats nafl after (fardh) salaah.'

Three hundred Ooqiyyahs of silver come to about three thousand rupees. According to the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), the perishable gain of this world stands no comparison with the everlasting gain of the Hereafter. Our life will be pleasant and worth living if we develop our 'Imaan' to an extent where two rakaats of salaah, in our sight, are more valuable than all the riches of this world. salaah is really a great treasure and that is why the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) has called it 'the comfort of his eyes' and had been enjoining its observance right up to his last breath. Umme Salamah (Radhiyallahu anha) narrates that the last words of the

Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), which he could hardly utter, were about guarding the salaah and kindness towards the slaves. There is a similar hadith narrated by Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anho) as well.

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) once deputed in Jihaad a Jamaat towards Najd, They returned victorious very soon with a handsome booty. When the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saw the people envying them and wondering at their quick and lucrative return, he said to them, "Shall I inform you of a group of people who earn much more in a much shorter time? They are those who perform their Fajr with Jamaat and keep sitting after prayer till a little while after sunrise and then offer two rakats of salaah." According to Shaqeeq Balkhi, a very famous Shaikh, five things could be acquired through five channels; an increase in provisions through 'Chaasht' a light in the grave through Tahajjud, a very satisfactory answer to Munkar and Nakeer through the recitation of the Qur'an; an easy crossing of Siraat through fasting and alms, and room under the shade of Allah's Throne on the Day of Judgement through seclusion (i.e. Zikr).

There are so many sayings of the Holy Prophet [Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) enjoining salaah and explaining its virtues that it is very difficult to cover all of them in this small book. A few quotations are, however, reproduced below as a benediction:

1. "Salaah was the first and the foremost thing ordained by Allah, and it shall be the first and the foremost thing to be reckoned for on the Day of Judgement. "
2. "Fear Allah in the matter of salaah! Fear Allah in the matter of salaah! Fear Allah in the matter of salaah!.
3. "Salaah intervenes between man and Shirk."
4. "Salaah is the mark of Islam. A person who says his salaah at the fixed hours with sincerity and devotion, observing all its regulations including the Mustahabbaat, is surely a Mo'min."
5. "Of all things that have been ordained by Allah, Imaan and salaah are the most valued. If there were any other thing better than salaah, then Allah would have ordained it for His Angels, some of whom are always in ruku and others in sajdah."
6. "Salaah is the pillar of Islam."
7. "Salaah abases the Devil."
8. "Salaah is the light of a Mo'min."
9. "Salaah is the best [ihaad."
10. "Allah keeps relenting towards a person so long as he is engaged in salaah." .
11. "When a calamity befalls us from the heaven, people frequenting the masjid are spared and saved."
12. "If some major sins of a Muslim land him in Hell, the fire would not burn those parts of his body which have touched the ground while he was in sajdah during his salaah."
13. "Fire has been forbidden to touch those parts of the body which touch the ground while performing the sajdah."
14. "Of all the practices, salaah made at fixed hours is most loved by Allah."
15. "Allah likes most the posture of a person when he is in sajdah, pressing his forehead on the ground in humility."

16. "A person in sajdah is nearest unto Allah."
17. "Salaat is a key to Paradise."
18. "When a person stands in salaat the gates of Paradise are let open and all the veils between him and Allah are lifted (provided that he spoils not his salaat by coughing etc)."
19. "A person in salaat (so to say) knocks at the door of the sovereign Lord, and the door is always opened for him who knocks."
20. "The position of salaat in Islam is as the position of the head in a body."
21. "Salaat is the light of the heart. Let those who wish enlighten their hearts (through salaat)".
22. "If a person wishes to have his sins forgiven by Allah, he should perform the wudhu properly, offer with devotion two or four rak'aats of fardh or nafl and then pray to Allah. Allah will forgive him."
23. "Any strip of earth, on which Allah is remembered in salaat, takes pride over the rest of the Earth."
24. "Allah accepts the prayer of a person who prays to Him after performing two rakaats of sa la at. Allah grants him what he prays for, sometimes immediately and sometimes (in his own interest) later."
25. "A person who performs two rakaats of salaat in seclusion, where nobody except Allah and His Angels see him, receives a writ of deliverance from the fire of hell. "
26. "Grant of one prayer (wish) becomes due to a person from Allah after each fardh salaat performed by him."
27. "Fire of Hell is forbidden and the Paradise becomes due to a person who performs his wudhu properly and says his salaat conscientiously, according to its regulations."
28. "The Devil remains scared of a Muslim so long as he is particular about his salaat, but no sooner does he neglect it than the Devil gets a hold upon him and aspires for success in seducing him."
29. "Salaat at its early hours is the most excellent practice."
30. "Salaat is the offering of the pious."
31. "Salaat at its early hours is a practice most liked by Allah."
32. "At dawn, some people go to the masjid and some to the market. Those going to the masjid are the flag-bearers of Imaan and those leaving for the market are the flag-bearers of the Devil."
33. "The four rakaats before Zuhr have the same reward as the four rakaats of Tahajjud."
34. "The four rakaats before Zuhr are counted equal (in reward) to the four rakaats of Tahajjud."
35. "Mercy of Allah turns towards a person standing in salaat."
36. "Salaat at the dead of night is most valued, but there are very few who do it."
37. "Jibra-eel (Alayhis salaam) came to me and said, O, Muhammad (Sallallohu alaihe wasallam)! however long thou livest thou shalt die one day, and whoever, thou may love thou shalt depart from him one day. Surely, thou shalt receive the recompense of whatever (good or evil) thou dost. No doubt the dignity of a Mo'min is in Tahajjud and his honour is in contentment and restraint."

38. "Two rakaats in the late hours of the night are more valuable than all the riches of this world. But for fear of hardship to my followers, I would have made these obligatory."

39. "Keep offering Tahajjud, for it is the path of the righteous and the means of approach to Allah. Tahajjud keeps one away from sins, causes forgiveness of sins and improves the health of the body."

40. "Allah says, 'O, son of Adam! Do not be weak in offering four rakaats in the early part of the day, for I shall suffice thee in thy jobs in the rest of it."

Books of hadith are full of discourses on the virtues of salaah, enjoining its observance on all Muslims. The forty short hadiths given above can be memorised and thus the reward of knowing ahaadith in that number can be earned. In fact, salaah is really a big boon, but this is realised only by those who have enjoyed its taste. That is why the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) used to call it the comfort of his eyes and used to spend the major part of the night standing before Allah. For the very same reason, our dear Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) even on his death-bed charged us and enjoined on us to be particular about salaah. It has been reported in many ahaadith that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) would often say, "Fear Allah concerning salaah." Abdullah bin Mas'ood, (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "Of all the practices, salaah is the dearest to me."

One of the Sahabah narrates, "One night I happened to go to the masjid. I found the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) in salaah. I felt an ardent desire to join him. I made my intention and stood behind him; he was reciting 'Baqarah' at that time. I thought that he would finish the qiraah and go for ruku at the end of the hundredth verse, but he did not do so. Then I thought he would perhaps go to ruku after finishing two hundred verses, but he did not stop even there. I was sure then that he would finish qiyaam with the end of the soorah. When the soorah ended he hymned, 'Allahumma Lakalhamd' (Allah! Thine is all Glory) a number of times and then started 'Aal Imraan'. On finishing that soorah he again hymned 'Allahumma Lakalhamd' three times and started 'al-Maa'idah'. He went into ruku only after finishing that soorah. In ruku and sajdah he recited tasbeeh and some other prayers, which I could not catch. In the second, rakaat he started 'al-An'aam' after 'Fatimah'. I could not continue with him any longer and broke away helplessly." What the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) recited in one rakaat comes to about one sixth of the whole Qur'an. Besides, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) must be reciting at ease with proper Tajweed; we can well imagine how long the rakaat would have been. It was on this account that his feet would often get swollen. But no amount of strain and inconvenience in salaah is in the way of one whose heart is imbued with its sweetness.

Abu Ishaq Subaihi is a famous muhaddith. He died a centenarian. He would often exclaim in his old age, "Alas! This infirmity and old age have deprived me of the delight of long salaah. I am now only able to recite 'Baqarah' and 'Aal-Imraan' in my salaah of two rakaats." These two soorahs comprise about one eighth of the whole Qur'an.

Muhammad bin Sammaak, the famous Soofi, writes, "My neighbour at Koofah had a son. The boy fasted during the day and kept praying and hymning during the night. This constant strain emaciated him so much that his body was reduced to a skeleton. His father requested me to admonish him. Once I was sitting at my door when the boy passed by. He greeted me with 'Assalaamu alaikum' and sat down. I had hardly said anything when he interrupted saying, 'Dear Uncle! Maybe you intend to admonish me to reduce my pursuits. Listen to my story first. I had a few friends in the locality. We decided among ourselves to vie with one another in worship and adoration of Allah. They all applied themselves so hard that they were soon sent for by Allah. They embraced death delightedly and peacefully. Now I am the only one left behind. What will they think of me when they know of my lagging behind? Dear Uncle! My friends really strived very hard and achieved their goal,' He then began to relate the pursuits and accomplishments of his departed friends. which astonished all the listeners. After this he left me. I heard a few days later that the boy too had died (May Allah bless him)."

Even in these days there are persons who remain engaged in salaah for the major portion of the night and devote the whole day to Tableegh, Ta'leem and other services in the path of Allah. Maulana Abdul Waahid Lahori (peace be upon him) was a famous saint who lived about two centuries ago. He sighed and wept when he learnt that there was no salaah in Paradise-being the place for recompense and not of labour. He remarked, "How shall we enjoy the Paradise without salaah!" Such people are really the salt of this Earth. May Allah give us their strength of Imaan and love for His worship! Aameen.

Before I finish this chapter, let me reproduce the following lovely Hadith from Munabbihat by Ibn Hajar, "Once when the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) was sitting among his companions, he remarked, "Three things of this world are very dear to me: Perfume, Women and salaah-the comfort of my eyes." "Quite true" rejoined Abu Bakr (Radhiyallahu anho), "And I cherish three things: a look at thy face, spending of my wealth on thee and that my daughter is thy wife, O Prophet of Allah!" "Quite true", said Hadhrat Umar (Radhiyallahu anho), "And the three I love most are; enforcing that which is right, forbidding evil and wearing old clothes." "Quite true", said Hadhrat Uthman (Radhiyallahu anho), "And the three I love most are: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and reciting the Qur'an." "Quite true", said Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anho). "And I love the three things most: serving a guest, fasting on a very hot day and smiting the enemy with my sword." At this, Jibraeel (Alayhis salaam) appeared on the scene and said to the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), "Allah has sent me to tell you what I would love if I be one of the mortals." "Yes, do tell us, Jibra-eel", said the Prophet. Jibraeel then replied, "If I had been like you, I would have loved three things: guiding the people gone astray, loving those who worship in poverty and helping the poor family men. And as for Allah, He loves three characteristics of His slaves: striving in His Path, crying at the time of repentance. and steadfastness in want and hunger."

Hafiz Ibn Qayyim writes: 'Salaah ensures daily bread, promotes health, drives out diseases, strengthens the heart, brings light and beauty on the face, pleases the soul, refreshes the body, cures indolence. relieves the mind, feeds the soul, illumines the heart and guarantees Allah's favour. It grants protection against Allah's Doom. It keeps the Devil away and brings us nearer to Allah. In short, salaah is a guarantee for all that is desirable and a protection against all that is undesirable for both body and soul, equally in this world and in the Hereafter.'

WARNING AND REPROACH FOR NEGLECTING SALAH

The books on hadith mention very severe punishment for those who neglect salaah. From many traditions on the subject, only a few are reproduced in this chapter. Although a single warning from the most truthful Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) was enough, yet we find that, out of love and mercy for his followers, he has cautioned them again and again and in various manners lest they should neglect salaah and suffer the consequences. In spite of all this, alas! we are unmindful of salaah, and still we have the audacity to consider ourselves devotees of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) and champions of Islam.

HADITH - 1

Hadhrat Jaabir bin Abdullah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet of Allah (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying:

1. "To discard salaah is to be linked with Kufr."
2. "To discard salaah is to be linked with Kufr and Shirk."
3. "Discarding of salaah is the only partition between Imaan and Kufr."

There are a number of ahaadith on the subject. On one occasion, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have said: "Hurry up with your salaah when it is cloudy (lest you should err and miss the correct time), for to discard salaah is to become a kaafir." What a stern warning against even missing the correct time of salaah, as (according to this quotation) to miss the correct time of salaah is to discard it. Although, according to the interpretation of the Ulama, the verdict of kufr is given against a person only when he rejects (and not simply neglects) salaah, yet the words of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) occurring in these ahaadith should be very weighty for those who have any regard for him. It may, however, be noted that some of the very important companions of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) like Umar, Abdullah bin Mas'ood, Abdullah bin Abbas (Radhiyallahu anhum), etc. and eminent jurists like Ahmad bin Hanbal, Ishaq bin Raahwayh, Ibn Mubaarak, (Rahmatullah alaihim), etc. are definitely of the opinion that verdict of kufr can be given against the person who intentionally discards his salaah. May Allah save us!

HADITH - 2

Hadhrat Ubaadah bin Saamit (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates. 'My dear friend the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) while enjoining upon me seven good practices said, "Do not ascribe anything as partner to Allah, though you may be cut into pieces or burnt alive or crucified; do not forego salaah intentionally, lest you should get out of the fold of Islam; do not perpetrate disobedience of Allah, lest you deserve His wrath; and do not take to drinking, for that is the mother of all evils', "

In another hadith, Hadhrat Abu Darda (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "My dear Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) warned me saying, 'Do not ascribe anything as partner unto Allah, though you may be cut into pieces or burnt alive or crucified; do not discard salaah intentionally, as Allah is free from any obligation to a person who knowingly neglects salaah; and do not take wine, for that is the key to all vices."

HADITH - 3

Hadhrat Mu'aaz bin Jabal (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates: "The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) enjoined upon me ten things, viz, 'Do not ascribe anything as partner unto Allah, though you may be slain or burnt alive; do not disobey your parents, though you may have to part with your wife or your entire wealth; do not neglect fardh salaah, intentionally, for Allah is free from obligation to a person who neglects fardh salaah intentionally; do not take wine, for it is an evil habit; that is the root of every vice; do not commit disobedience of Allah, for that brings the wrath of Allah. Do not turn your back to the enemy in battle, though all your comrades may have fallen. Do not fly from the locality where an epidemic has broken out. Do spend on your family members according to your

capacity; let your rod be hanging on them, as a warning and to chastise against neglect of their duties towards Allah."

According to this hadith, we should not spare the rod in checking the children from becoming reckless in doing anything they like. Sometimes it is necessary to use the rod. It is a pity that out of love we do not use the rod in the beginning and, when the children get spoiled, we cry and complain about them. To spare the rod and to spoil the child is no kindness at all. Who would like to save a child from a surgical operation under advice from a doctor for the simple reason that it would cause pain to him? The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have said very often: "Enjoin salaah on your child when he is seven years old. and beat him if he neglects it after he reaches ten." Hadhrat Abdullah bin Mas'ood (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "Guard the salaah of your children and inculcate good habits in them". Luqmaan the wise used to say, "The use of the rod on a child is as indispensable as is water for the fields." The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe was allam) is reported to -have said, "A person while admonishing his children earns more reward from Allah than when he is spending about seven pounds of grain in His path." In another hadith the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) has said. "May Allah bless a person who keeps a lash hanging in his house for the admonition of his housefolk." On another occasion he said, "No father can bestow anything better on his children than to teach them good manners."

HADITH - 4

Hadhrat Naufil bin Mu'aawiyah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "A person who has missed one salaah is like one who has lost all his family and wealth."

Salaah is missed usually when either a person is in the company of his family members or is in pursuit of money. According to this hadith, the ultimate loss sustained in missing a salaah is in no way less than the loss of the whole family and property. In other words, if we miss a salaah we should be as much grieved as when we lose all of our folk and entire belongings. If we are cautioned by some reliable person about the presence of gangsters on a certain road, where people are robbed and killed during the night, we need a lion's heart to ignore the caution and travel on that road even during the day time. Strange enough to note that we have been cautioned again and again by the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) and we do believe that he was really the true Messenger of Allah, yet we heed not the caution and go on missing salaah one after the other.

HADITH - 5

Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu .anho) narrates that he heard i the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "A person who combines two salaahs without any strong excuse reaches one of the doors of kabaa'ir (major sins). "

Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahd anho) reports that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) once said. "Do not delay in three things: salaah when its time has set in, burial when the bier is ready and marriage of a solitary woman when her match is found." Many persons who consider themselves as practical Muslims perform a number of their salaahs in combination on returning home, on the very feeble excuses of travel, trade or occupation. To put salaah off till after its set time without a strong excuse (illness, etc) is a major sin. Although it is not so disastrous as neglecting salaah, yet it is quite serious.

HADITH - 6

Abdullah bin Amr (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) while talking about salaah said: "For its votary salaah shall on the Day of Judgement be a light for him, an argument in his favour, and a means of his deliverance. Whereas there will be no light no defence and no deliverance from doom for him who does not guard his salaah, and he shall meet.the fate of Pharoah, Haamaan and Ubbay .bin Khalaf."

Everybody knows that Pharoah-the big disbeliever-had been so arrogant that he proclaimed himself 'Lord the Highest' and made his people worship him. Haamaan was his Chief Minister and accomplice. Ubbay bin Khalaf was the most active and severest enemy of Islam among the disbelievers of Mecaa. Before the Hijrah, he used to

announce to the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) most insolently, "I have reared a horse, which I feed very well; I will slay you one day riding on its back." Once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) replied to him, "Inshaa-allaah! you shall meet your end at my hands." In the battle of Uhud, he ran about in the field in search of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "If Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is not slain today, then I stand no chance of surviving." He at last found the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) and advanced to attack him. The Companions decided to finish him before he reached the Prophet, but the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) stopped them. When he came near, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) took a spear from one of the companions and struck him with it, causing a little scratch on his neck. He staggered and fell down from his horse and then fled towards his camp crying, "By Allah, Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) has killed me!" His people tried to console him and told him that it was only a bruise and there was nothing to worry about, but he would say, "Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) had once announced to me in Mecca that he would kill me. By Allah, had he only spat at me, I would be no more." It is said that he cried like a bull. Abu Sulyall, who was very active on that day, put him to shame for crying in that manner over a slight wound, but he said, "Do you know who has inflicted this injury upon me? It was none other than Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). By Laa and Uzza! if my agony be distributed over all the people of Hijaz, none of them would survive. Since the time he had declared that he would kill me, I was sure that I would meet my death at his hands. If he only spat at me after that declaration, I would be no more." So he died on his way back, at a day's journey from Mecca.

Look! a disbeliever like Ubbay bin Khalaf is so sure about the truth of the Prophet's words that he does not have the slightest doubt about his own death; but where do we stand? Although we believe in him as the greatest Prophet of Allah. consider his words to be most, genuine and boast of our love for him. yet how far do we act upon his advice and how much do we fear the punishments about which he has warned us! It is for each one of us to ponder over and answer.

Ibn Hajar, while quoting this hadith, has also mentioned Qaaron with Pharaoh and others. He writes: "Sharing the fate of these people on the Day of Judgement is due to the fact that it is often the pursuits specific to these guilty persons which cause neglect of salaah. If, therefore, a person neglects salaah due to a craving for wealth, he will meet the fate of Qaaron; if due to love for power then that of Pharaoh; if due to a yearning for attachment to a ruler, then that of Haamaan; and if due to occupation in trade then that of Ubbay Bin Khalaf." Meeting the same fate as theirs, explains fully the severest tortures in store for those who neglect salaah. Although the disbelievers shall have to suffer their doom forever, while the believers will be released after their period of punishment is over and will ultimately be allowed to enter Paradise, yet this period of punishment, who knows, may last for thousands of years.

HADITH - 7

It is said in a hadith that, Allah bestows five favours on a person who is mindful of his salaah, viz: His daily bread is made easy for him; he is saved from the punishments in the grave; he shall receive his record in his right hand on the Day of Judgement; he shall cross the Siraah with the speed of lightning and he shall enter Paradise without reckoning. As for him who neglects his salaah, he shall meet five types of punishments in this world, three at the time of death, three in the grave and three after resurrection.

Those in this world are: he is not blessed in life; he is deprived of the light with which the faces of the righteous are endowed; he receives no rewards for his good practices; his prayers are not answered; and he has no share in the prayers of the pious. Those at the time of death are: he dies disgracefully; he dies hungry; he dies in thirst; which the water in the oceans of the world cannot quench.

Those in the grave are: He is so squeezed there that the ribs of one side penetrate into the ribs of the other side; fire is burnt inside for him and he is rolled on cinders day and night; a serpent with fiery eyes and iron nails equal in length to a day's journey is let loose on him and shouts with a thundering voice, 'My Lord has charged me with

thrashing you till sunrise for neglecting Fajr, till Asr for neglecting Zuhur, till sunset for neglecting Asr, till Isha for neglecting Maghrib and till dawn for neglecting Isha. The serpent will keep on thrashing him thus till the Last Day. Each blow pushes him to a depth of seventy arm's length. The punishments will last till the Day of Judgement.

Those after resurrection are: His reckoning will be a hard one; Allah will be angry with him; and he will be thrown into the Fire. According to one report, he will have following three lines inscribed on his forehead: 'O you who neglected Allah's duty' 'O you who has deserved Allah's wrath.' 'Now despair of Allah's mercy, as you neglected our duty to Allah.'

Eminent theologians like Ibn Hair, Abu Laith Samarqandi (Rahmatullah alaihim), and others, have mentioned this hadith in their books. Although I have not been able to trace the text in original books on hadith, yet other hadiths, some of which have already been mentioned and some are to follow, corroborate its meaning. Neglect of salaah, as has been stated above, leads one to kufr; hence no punishment is too severe for this offence. But it should be borne in mind that even after the declaration of a person as being guilty, Allah is free to pardon him as and when he pleases. He says in His Holy Book:

"Lo! Allah pardoneth not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. Allah pardoneth all (save that) whom He will. (IV: 116)"

If then it pleases Allah to pardon anybody neglecting salaah, it will be most fortunate; but who can be sure of this fortune?

It is also stated in hadith that there will be three courts to be held by Allah on the Day of Judgement. The first will judge between kufr and islaam and there will be no pardon. The second will be to judge the duties and conduct of one towards another. All aggrieved shall be compensated there; compensation will either be realised from the aggressor or paid by Allah Himself, if He pleases to pardon anybody. The third will deal with duties towards Allah. Here the doors of Allah's mercy will be thrown wide-open and He shall pardon anybody He wills. In the light of all that has been said above, it must be clearly understood that we deserve the punishments that have been laid down for our commission of sins, but the All-embracing mercy of Allah overrides everything and knows no bounds.

It was a habit with the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) to enquire from the companions, just after Fajr, if anybody had seen any dream. He would then interpret the dream as related to him. One day, after enquiring from others as usual, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) himself narrated a long dream in which two men came and took him with them. Besides others he reported certain events which he happened to see in his dream. He said: "I noticed the head of a person being crushed with a heavy stone. It was struck with such force that, after crushing the head, the stone rolled down over a long distance. The head would assume its normal shape by the time the stone was brought back for repeating the process. This continued incessantly. On inquiring from one of my companions, I was told that the person first learnt the Qur'an, but failed to practise upon it and also used to go to sleep without offering the fardh salaah." There is another similar narration, in which the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have seen (in his dream) a group of people being treated likewise. Ibra-eel (Alayhis salaam) informed him on his query that those were the persons who used to neglect their salaah.

Mujahid (Rahmatullah alaihi) says, "Allah blesses the people who guard their salaah, just as he blessed Hadhrat Ibrahim (Alayhis salaam) and his descendants."

Hadhrat Anas (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "If a person dies with sincere Imaan, observing the commandments of Allah, performing salaah, and paying Zakaat, when he dies Allah is pleased with him."

Hadhrat Anas (Radhiyallahu anho) also narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "Allah says, 'I hold back retribution, deserved by a locality, when I see therein some people who frequently visit the masjid, love one another for My sake, and pray for forgiveness in the hours of darkness.'"

Hadhrat Abu Darda (Radhiyallahu anho) wrote to Hadhrat Salmaan: "Spend most of your time in the masjid. I have heard the Prophet [Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "The masjid is the abode of the pious. Allah has taken upon Himself to bless the person who spends most of his time in the mosque. Allah shall keep him in comfort and shall make him cross the Siraat with great ease. Surely Allah is pleased with such a person."

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Mas'ood (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying: "The masaajid are the Houses of Allah, and people coming therein are His visitors. When everybody treats his visitors kindly, why should Allah not be kind to His guests?"

Hadhrat Abu Sa'eed Khudri (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying: "Allah loves the person who is attached to the masjid."

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, 'When a dead person is laid in the grave, even before the people present at his burial clear off, Munkar and Nakeer visit him. Then, if the person is a Mo'min, his good practices encircle him; salaah comes close to his head, Zakaat to his right, Fast to his left, and the remaining good deeds towards his feet, so that none can approach him. Even the angels do the necessary questioning while standing at a distance.'

One of the companions reports that when the inmates of the Prophet's house were hard-pressed in any way, he would enjoin salaah on them and recite the following verse:

"And enjoin salaah upon thy people and be constant therein. We ask not of thee a provision, We provide for thee. And the Hereafter is for the righteousness." (XX: 132).

Asma (Radhiyallahu anha) narrates that she heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "All the people will be gathered together on the Day of Judgement and they will all hear the voice of the announcing angel. He will say, 'where are those who glorified Allah in ease and adversity?' A group will rise up and enter Paradise without reckoning. It will then be announced, 'where are those who forsook their beds and spent their nights in worship?' Another group will rise up and enter Paradise without reckoning. The angel will again announce, 'where are those whom trade and business did not distract from remembrance of Allah?' Yet another group will rise up and enter Paradise.' In another hadith, the same account is given, with the addition that in the beginning the angel will say, "All those gathered here will see today who are the honoured people", and with the modification that the angel at the time of third announcement will say, 'Where are those whom their engagement in trade and business did not distract from salaah and remembrance of Allah?'

Sheik Nasr Samarqandi (Rahmatullah alaih), after quoting this Hadith writes, "When all the three groups will have entered Paradise without reckoning, a monster with a long neck, shining eyes and most eloquent tongue will rise up from Hell and say, 'I have been deputed on all who are proud and ill-tempered.' It will then pick up all such persons from the crowd, as a fowl picks up grain and then it will fling them into the Hell. It will rise up again saying, 'This time I have been deputed on all who maligned Allah and His Apostle' (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam).' It will then pick up all such persons and throw them into the Hell; it will appear for the third time and will, in a similar manner, take away all those who made images and pictures. The reckoning will then commence after these three groups have been eliminated."

It is said that during the early times people could see Satan. A person approached him saying how could he be like him. Satan told him that had he never received such a request before and asked him what had prompted him to ask for it. The person told him that he wished it from his heart. Satan told him to neglect his salaah and to swear

very frequently, not caring whether he was doing it truthfully. The person told Satan that he would swear by Allah never to give up salaah and swear falsely. Satan told him that never before he had been tricked by a human being to seek his advice. He was determined never to do so in future.

Hadhrat Ubayy (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "Give glad tidings to the Muslims that they shall be honoured and exalted, and their religion shall prevail, but there is no portion in the Hereafter for those who exploit Islam for worldly gains."

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have said, "I saw Allah in His best form. He said to me, 'O Muhamrnad! what are the Highest Chiefs (Angels) arguing about?' I said, 'I have no knowledge about that.' Allah placed His gracious hand on my bosom. I felt its solacing coolness right through my heart, and the entire universe was revealed to me. I said, 'They are arguing about the things which exalt the things which atone for the sins the rewards for the paces taken while going for salaah (with Jamaat), the virtues of performing wudhu properly when it was very cold. and the blessings that a person deserves when after performing one salaah he keeps on sitting in masjid till the next salaah.' A person particular of these shall live a blessed life and shall die an enviable death."

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported (in many ahaadith) to have said, "Allah says, 'O, Son of Aadam! Say four rakaats of salaah in the early part of the day. I shall help thee in accomplishing all thy jobs during the rest of the day."

It is said in a hadith: "Salaah is the cause of Allah's pleasure, is loved by the Angels, is a tradition of the Prophets, gives enlightenment about Allah. causes the prayers to be granted, blesses the daily bread, is the root of Imaan, refreshes the body, is a weapon against the enemy, shall intercede for its adherent, is a light in the darkness and a companion in the loneliness of the grave, is a reply to the questioning of Angels, is a shade against the Sun on the Day of Judgement, is a protection against the fire of Hell, is a weight for the scales of good deeds. is a means of swift crossing over the Siraat and is a key to Paradise."

Hadhrat Uthman (Radhiyallahu anho) is reported to have said. "Allah bestows nine favours on a person who guards his salaah and is particular in performing it at its appointed hours: viz; He is loved by Allah. he enjoys good health, is constantly under the protection of angels, his home is blessed, the light of righteousness shines on his face, his heart is made soft, he shall cross the Siraat with the speed of lightning. he is saved from Hell, and his neighbours in Paradise are those about whom Allah has said.

'There shall be no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve (11: 36).

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) says, "Salaah is the Pillar of Islam and it has ten virtues, viz: It is a charm of the face, a light of the heart, health and refreshment for the body. a company in the grave. a means for the descent of Allah's Mercy, a key to the Heaven, a weight of the scales (of good deeds) a means of winning Allah's pleasure, a price of Paradise and a protection against the fire of Hell. A person who is particular of salaah, in fact, establishes deen and one who neglects it demolishes (so to say, the structure of) deen."

According to one hadith, there is healing in salaah.

Once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saw Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) lying on his stomach. He said to him, "Are you suffering from stomach pain?" He replied in the affirmative. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) said, "Then get up and busy yourself in salaah, for that will heal you."

Once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), in his dream, saw Paradise and heard the footsteps of Hadhrat Bilaal (Radhiyallahu anha) there. Next morning he said to Bilaal: "What deed of yours helped you to follow me even to Paradise?" He replied: "When my wudhu breaks even at night, I take a fresh wudhu and say as many 'rakaats' of nafl salaah as I can."

Safeeri (Rahmatullah alaih) writes: "The Angels address a person who misses Fajr as 'O you wrongdoer', and one who neglects Zuhr as 'O you loser', and one who ignores Asr as 'O you transgressor', and one who omits Maghrib as 'O you kaafir', and one who does not say Isha as 'O you violator of Allah's commandments."

Alama Sha'raani (Rahmatullah alaih) writes: "It should be clearly understood that a calamity is drawn off from a locality the people of which are particular about salaah, whereas a locality the people of which neglect salaah is frequently visited by calamities. Earthquakes, thunderbolts and sinking of houses are not unexpected where people are not particular about salaah. Simply guarding one's own salaah is not enough, because when a calamity strikes, it does not befall the wrongdoers alone. It affects everybody in that locality. Once the Sahabah asked the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam): "Can we perish while there are pious people among us?" the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) replied, "Yes, if vice becomes predominant." It is therefore necessary that other people should also be enjoined to stick to Allah's commandments and refrain from wrongdoing.

HADITH - 8

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have said, "A person neglecting his salaah (even though he makes it up later) shall remain in Hell for a period of one Haqb. A Haqb is equal to eighty years of three hundred and sixty days each, and a day in the Hereafter shall equal one thousand years of this world."

Abul Laith Samarqandi (Rahmatullah alaih) is responsible for the hadith in which the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have said, "The name of a person who neglects even a single fardh salaah intentionally is written on the gate of the Hell, which he must enter." Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhi yallahu anho) narrates that. once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) said, "Pray, O Allah! cause not anyone of us to be a wretched destitute." He then said: "Do you know who is a wretched destitute?" At therequest of the companions, he explained to them saying, "A wretched destitute is he who neglects his salaah. In Islaam there is nothing for him." In another hadith it is said, "Allah will not care a bit for the person who has been neglecting salaah intentionally, and for him shall be an awful doom."

It is reported in a hadith that ten persons will be specially tormented, and one of them will be" the person who neglects his salaah. It is said that his hands will be tied while the angels shall smite him on his face and back. Paradise will tell him, 'In me there is no room for you,' and Hell will sav to him, 'Come to me. You are for me and I am for you,' It' is also reported that there is a valley in Hell named Lamlam. This vallev is infested with serpents as fat as the neck of a camel and' as long as one month's journey. A person neglecting salaah shall be tormented in this valley. In another hadith. it is reported that there is a vale in the Hell. which is known as the Pit of Grief; it is infested with scorpions of the size of a mule. This place is also meant for tormenting the people who neglect salaah. Of course, there is nothing to worry if the most merciful Allah pardons the sins. But are we really prepared to ask for His pardon?

Ibn Hajar writes that a woman died. Her brother was present at her burial. By chance his purse fell into the grave and was buried with the dead body. The brother realized this after he had returned home and was very sorry for the loss. He decided to dig up the grave secretly and take out the purse. When he dug it up. he saw that the pit was in flames. He returned home stricken with grief and related the story to his mother and inquired if she knew why it was so. The mother informed him that his sister used to delay in salaah and offered it after its fixed hours. May Allah save us from these habits!

HADITH - 9

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying: "There is no place in Islaam for a person who does not say his salaah, and there is no salaah without wudhu." Hadhrat Abdullah bin Umar (Radhiyallahu anho) also heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying. "There is no Islaam in a person when there is no salaah by him. The position of salaah in Islaam is as the position of the head in a body."

Let those who do not offer salaah, and not only call themselves Muslims but also boast of their being champions of the Muslim cause, ponder over these words of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). They dream of reviving the past glory of Islaam. but would not care to know how rigidly the people responsible for that glory stuck to the practices of Islaam.

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbas (Radhivallaho anha) suffered from cataract of the eye. People told him that the disease could be treated, but he would have to miss his salaah for a few days. He said: "This is not possible; I have heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying. 'A person who does not say his salaah shall stand before Allah while Allah shall be angry with him.'" The companions of the Prophet would rather like to go blind than to forego salaah (though permissible under such circumstances) even for a few days. When on his last day Hadhrat Umar (Radhiyallaho anho) was stabbed by a Majoos, he often remained unconscious and eventually died due to excessive bleeding. While on his death-bed he was made conscious of the approaching salaah hours and he performed salaah in that very condition and would remark: "There is no lot in Islaam for a person who does not say his salaah." These days it is considered unkind and improper to induce the patient or even ; allow him to say his salaah. What a world of difference is there between the view-points and approach of the Muslims of these two ages!

Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallaho anho) once requested the Prophet (SallaUaho alaihe wasallam) to give him a servant. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) said "Here are three slaves; take anyone you like." Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallaho anho) said, "You may kindly choose one for me." The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) pointed towards a certain man and said, "Take this one; he is particular about his salaah. But you are not to beat him. We are forbidden to beat one who says salaah." We, on the other hand, mock at our servant and consider him a liability if he goes for salaah.

Sufyaan Thauri (Rahmatullah alaih), the famous Soofi once fell into a state of ecstasy. He remained in his house for seven days without sleep, food and drink. When his Shaikh was informed of his condition, he inquired if Sufyaan was observing the hours of his salaah. He was told that his salaah was quite regular and safe. At this, the Shaikh remarked, "Glory be to Allah, Who has not allowed the Devil to have an upper hand on him!"

Part 2: Importance of Jamaat

As has already been said in the foreword, there are many who say their salaah regularly but are not very particular about Jamaat. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is as emphatic in enjoining Jamaat as he is particular about salaah. This part also consists of two chapters. The first deals with the rewards of Jamaat and the second with the consequences of its neglect.

REWARDS OF JAMAAT

Hadith-1

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Umar (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying: "A salaah with Jamaat is twenty-seven times superior to salaah performed individually."

When we offer our salaah for getting reward from Allah, then why should it not be done in the masjid, where the reward earned is twenty-seven times more. Nobody will be so unwise as to forego a profit twenty-seven times greater with simply a little extra labour. But we are so indifferent about the profits promised for our religious practices! This can be due to nothing but our disregard for deen and the rewards of it. It is a pity that we apply ourselves so hard to acquiring the trifling gains in this material world; but are so unmindful of the gains in the Hereafter, which yield twenty-seven times more with a little extra effort. We often argue that for going to the masjid for Jamaat we have to close the shop and will thus lose business. These pretexts and others of the kind cannot stand in the way of those who have perfect faith in the Greatness of Allah, and in His word; and who realize the value of the blessings and reward in the Hereafter. It is in respect of such people that Allah says: .

"Men, whom neither merchandise nor sale beguileth them from remembrance of Allah and constancy in salaah." (XXIV; 37).

It is said of Saalim Haddaad (Rahmatullah alaihi] (a trader and a great Soofi) that on hearing Azaan he would turn pale and grow restless. He would stand up immediately, leaving his shop open and recite these couplets:-

1. "When Thy summoner stands up to summon, quickly I stand up. To respond to (the summons of) The Mighty Lord Who hath no peer."
2. "I reply to the summons with complete submission and cheer, 'Here am I, O Bountiful One.'"
3. "My face grows pale with awe and fear, and occupation in Thee distracts me from all other occupations."
4. "I swear by Thee, naught is dear to me save Thy remembrance.

Nothing is more ravishing for me than Thy sweet name."

5. "O, will there be a time for us to be together?"

A lover is happy only when he is with his love."

6. "He whose eyes have seen the light of Thy Beauty Can never be solaced. He must die yearning for Thee."

It is said in a hadith: "People frequenting the masjid are its pegs (dwellers). Angels are their companions and visit them when they are sick and help them when they are at their jobs."

Hadith-2

"Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "Salaah with Jamaat is twenty-five times superior to salaah which is said in a house or in a shop. It is so because when a person performs wudhu in right earnest and walks on to the masjid, with the sole intention of

performing salaah, each step he takes, adds one blessing to his account and wipes out one sin therefrom. Again, if he keeps sitting in the masjid (with wudhu of course) after the salaah is over, the angels keep on seeking Allah's blessing and forgiveness for him. And as long as he keeps sitting in the masjid waiting for salaah, he goes on earning rewards as if he is busy in salaah."

In Hadith No 1, the superiority of salaah with Jamaat over that offered individually is described as being twentyseven times more, while this hadith mentions only twenty five times. Various theologians have discussed at length this seeming inconsistency. The following are some of the explanations:

1. "This variation from twenty-five to twenty-seven is due to variation of ikhlaas (sincerity) in different individuals."
2. "In Sirri (quiet) salaah (i.e., Zuhr and Asr), it is twenty-five times, while in [ahri (loud) salaah (i.e., Fajr, Maghrib and Ishaah), it is twenty-seven times."
3. "In Fajr and Ishaah, when it is somewhat inconvenient to go out due to cold and darkness, it is twenty-seven times, but in other salaahs it is twenty-five times."
4. "In the beginning it was twenty-five times, but subsequently Allah (by special favour on the followers of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) raised the reward to twenty-seven times."

Some others have brought forward a still finer explanation. They say that the reward for salaah with Jamaat mentioned in this Hadith is not merely 25 times but a doubling (2 raised to the power) twenty-five times, which comes to 33,554,432 times. This is something not beyond the bountiful Mercy of Allah. When neglect of one salaah can cause punishment in Hell for one Huqb (as we have seen in the last chapter), so much reward for one salaah with Jamaat is quite conceivable.

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) has also explained to us how the reward goes on increasing in the case of a person who, after performing wudhu, leaves his house with the sole intention of joining Jamaat for salaah in the masjid. Each step he takes, brings one reward as well as washes away one sin. Banu Salama, a clan in Madina, had their houses at some distance. They intended to shift close to the masjid. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) however, advised them saying: "Stay where you are. Every step you take when coming to masjid is written in your account." It is said in a hadith: "The likeness of a person performing wudhu at home and then leaving for masjid is as the likeness of a person who, after dressing in the ihraam [Ha]j apparel) at his house, leaves for Hajj",

Further, in the same hadith, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) points to another act of great value; i.e., as long as one remains sitting in masjid after the salaah is over, the angels pray for him asking for forgiveness and mercy. The angels are the innocent and holy creation of Allah. So, the effectiveness of their prayers is self-evident.

Muhammad bin Samaak (Rahmatullah alaih) is a famous theologian and Sheikh. He died at the age of one hundred and three. He used to perform two hundred rakaats of nafl salaah daily. He writes: "For forty years, I never missed the first takbeer of salaah with Jamaat, except once when my mother had died." The same Shaikh writes:

"Once I missed the Jamaat. As I knew that salaah with Jamaat was twenty-five times superior, I repeated this salaah (individually) twenty-five times to make up the loss. I heard in my dream some one saying to me, 'Muhammad! You have repeated your salaah 25 times (in the hope of making good the loss), but what about the 'Aameen' by the Angels?' It is reported in many ahaadith that when the Imaam says 'Aameen' after Fatihah, the Angels also say Aameen and all the past sins of a person whose Aameen coincides with that of the Angels are

forgiven. This is possible only in a salaah with [arnaah, hence Maulana Abdul Hayy quoting this story about the Shaikh writes:

"Even if a person goes on repeating his salaah (individually) a thousand times, he cannot get the collective blessing of a salaah with Jamaah." This is obvious. He not only loses 'Aameen' with the Angels, but also the blessings of the congregation and the prayers of the Angels after salaah, with many other spiritual benefits. This should also be borne in mind that the prayers of Angels can be deserved only when the salaah is a proper one. If the salaah of a person is not, as it should be (according to hadith) it is flung back like a dirty rag at his face, then how can the Angels pray for him?

Hadith-3

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Masood (Radhiyallahu anho) says: "If one wishes to meet Allah on the Day of Judgement as a Muslim. he must say his salaah at a place where Azaan is called out, viz., a masjid, as Allah has prescribed through His Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) such practices which are nothing but guidance through and through: and salaah (with Jamaah is one of them. If you start saying your salaah at your houses (as so and so is doing). then you will be discarding the Sunnah of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) and no sooner you desert his Sunnah than you go astray. When a person performs wudhu correctly and then leaves for the masjid, at each step that he takes, he gets one blessing and has one sin wiped out. During the lifetime of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) no one would miss Jamaah except an open munaafiq or a real invalid. Even the munaafiq dared not miss the Jamaah and a sick person who could be taken to the masjid with the help of two men would be helped to join Jamaah."

This shows the extreme vigilance of the Sahabah over their salaah with Jamaah. Even a sick person was brought to the masjid somehow or other, even though it needed two men to help him. This concern was quite natural when they found the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) himself so very particular about it. It is said that when the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) was on his deathbed, and he would frequently faint, he succeeded in making wudhu after several attempts and, though he could hardly stand, went to the masjid with the help of Hadhrat Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) and another companion. Hadhrat Abu Bakr (Radhiyallahu anho) led the salaah at his instance, and he himself joined the Jamaah." .

Hadhrat Abu Darda (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) once said to him, "Worship your Lord as if you see Him before you, count yourself among the dead, beware of the curse of the wronged ones and, even if you could crawl to the masjid, do not miss Ishaah and Fajr with Jamaah."

It is said in another hadith, "Ishaah and Fajr are very heavy on those who are munaafiq. If they knew the reward of the Jamaah, they would go to the masjid and join the Jamaah even if they had to crawl."

Hadith-4

Hadhrat Anas bin Maalik (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "A person who in all sincerity is constant in his salaah with Jamaah for forty days, without missing the first takbeer, receives two awards: one for deliverance from Hell and the other for freedom from nifaaq."

If a person is regular in his salaah (with sincerity) for forty days and joins the Jamaah from the very start [i.e., when the Imaam calls out his first takbeer), then he shall neither be a munaafiq nor shall he go to Hell. A munaafiq is a person who feigns being a Muslim, but there is kufr in his heart. Genesis of man (according to hadith) takes place in periods of forty days. This seems to be the significance of forty days in this hadith, and so the Soofis attach importance to this period (called Chillah in Urdu) for purposes of spiritual discipline.

Lucky indeed are the persons who do not miss their first takbeer for years together.

Hadith-5

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "A person who performs wudhu scrupulously, and then goes to the masjid and finds that Jamaat is over, receives a reward equal to that of Jamaat . This would not diminish anything from the reward of those who have actually performed their salaah with Jamaat ."

This is indeed Allah's great favour and beneficence that the mere effort and a slight exertion is enough to entitle us to a reward of Jamaat , though actually we fail to join it. Who is the loser then if we ourselves get left, and miss the bounties of the most Bountiful?

This hadith also shows that we-should not postpone going to the masjid in apprehension of the Jamaat being over. Even if we find on reaching the masjid that Jamaat is over, we will still get the reward thereof. If, however, we are certain that the Jamaat is already over, then there is of course no idea in going to the masjid for Jamaat .

Hadith-6

Hadhrat Qubaath bin Ashyam Allaithi (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "Two persons performing salaah together with one as Imaam are liked by Allah more than four persons saying salaah individually. Similarly four persons performing salaah with Jamaat are liked by Allah more than eight persons saying it individually. Similarly again, eight persons performing salaah with Jamaat are liked by Allah more than one hundred persons saying it individually."

In another hadith it is said, "A big Jamaat is more preferred by Allah than a small Jamaat ." Some people think that there is no harm in having a small Jamaat of their own at their houses or at their business premises. This is not correct, as in the first place they are deprived of the reward of saying salaah in the masjid and secondly, they lose the blessing of salaah with a big Jamaat . The bigger the congregation, the more pleasing it is to Allah. When our sole aim is to achieve the pleasure of Allah, why should we not adopt a manner more pleasing to Him. It is reported in a hadith that Allah is pleased to see three things, namely, a row of worshippers offering salaah with Jamaat , a person, busy in salaah at the time of Tahajjud at the dead of night, and a person fighting in the way of Allah."

Hadith-7

Hadhrat Sahl bin Sa'd (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "Give glad tidings to those who go to the masjid frequently during hours of darkness, for they will have perfect light on the Day of Judgement."

The value of going to the masjid in the darkness of night shall be realised on the dreadful Day of Judgement, when everybody shall be in a very miserable plight. A person subjecting himself to inconvenience in the hours of darkness in this world shall be more than compensated in the next, as he shall carry with him a light more glorious than that of the sun. In a hadith it is reported that such persons shall occupy the pulpits of light, with no worry at all, while others will be in utter bewilderment. In another hadith it is said, "Allah will say on the Day of Judgement, Where are My neighbours?" The Angels will inquire, "Who are Thy neighbours, O Allah?". Allah will reply, 'Those who used to frequent the mosques.'

In a hadith it is said, "Of all the places on this Earth, the mosques are the dearest to Allah, and the markets are the most offensive to Him."

In another hadith, the 'masajid' are called "The gardens of Paradise."

Hadhrat Abu Sa'eed (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, "The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) once said, 'Bear testimony to the Imaan of the person frequenting the masjid, and then he recited the following verse of the Qur'an'

"He only shall tend Allah's masjid who believes in Allah and the Last Day." (IV: 18)."

The following are a few more ahaadith about the virtues of salaah with Jamaat:-

1. "Making wudhu when inconvenient, walking towards the masjid and sitting there (after one salaah), waiting for the next salaah, wipe out the sins. "
2. "The farther a person lives from the 'masjid' the greater the blessing he receives." This is so because a person coming from a distance shall have to walk more and, as already mentioned, every step will fetch him a blessing. For this very reason some companions have been reported to be taking short steps in going to the masjid in order to earn more blessings.
3. "There are three things in this world for which people would fight with one another if they come to know their rewards. These are: To call out the Azaan; to go to the masjid for Zuhr in the scorching heat of the sun; and to be in the first line while in salaah with Jamaat ."
4. "Seven persons shall be accommodated under the shade of Allah's mercy on the Day of Judgement, when everybody will be most bewildered under the inconceivably intense heat of the sun. One of them will be the person whose heart remains attached to the masjid. He is anxious to return to the masjid if he leaves it on any account. Another hadith narrates that Allah loves those who love the masjid."

Each article of faith in Islam is a source of innumerable blessings and rewards from Allah, and carries boundless benefits showered on those who adhere to it. Besides, no commandment of Allah is without a deep significance. It is often difficult to understand the full benefits of Allah's commandments, as no one can encompass His Knowledge and Wisdom. Some of the sages of Islam have tried to explain the importance of salaah with Jamaat , but their explanations vary with the extent of their understanding and their power to probe into Divine secrets. Our respected Shaikh, Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (may Allah illumine his grave), in his famous Book 'Hujjatullahil Balighah' writes:-

"To save the people from the fatal effects that their own customs and rituals can bring them, there is nothing more useful than to make one of the religious services so common a custom and so public a ritual that it may be performed openly before everybody by any person, whether he be learned or illiterate. The town-folk and the countrymen should both be equally anxious to observe it. It should become a subject of rivalry and pride among all of them, and it should be so universally practised that it becomes part and parcel of their social set-up, so much so, that life without it may be worthless for them. If this is achieved, it will help in establishing the worship and obedience of Allah and will form a very useful substitute for those rituals and customs which could cause them serious harm. Since salaah is the only religious observance that surpasses all others in importance and universality, both in reason and authority, it becomes therefore absolutely necessary to get it established universally by propagating it and by arranging special congregations, where it can be performed with absolute unity of form and purpose."

"Further, in every community or religious society, there are a few who have the capacity to lead, while the rest simply follow. There are some others who can be corrected with a little counsel or reproach. Then there is a third grade of people who are very weak in faith and, if they are not made to worship in public, they are prone to discard it altogether. It is therefore in the best interests of the Islamic society that all its members perform the worship collectively and in congregation, so that the delinquents may be distinguished from the observers and the shirkers from the adherents. This will also cause the people with less knowledge to follow the Ulama, and

make the ignorant to learn from the learned the specific requirements of worship. The worshipper will distinguish right from wrong and genuine from counterfeit, so that the right and the genuine may prevail and the wrong and the counterfeit may be suppressed."

"Besides, these congregations of people loving Allah, seeking His Mercy, constantly fearing Him and having their hearts and souls turned to Him alone, have the wonderful effect of causing His blessings and Mercy to descend from Heaven.

"Moreover, the Muslim community has been raised so that the word of Allah be held supreme and Islamic Order be paramount over all others. This object cannot be achieved unless all Muslims, big and small, the elite and the common, the town folk and the countrymen, perform alike the most sublime service and the most sacred ritual of Islam (i.e., salaah) by assembling together in one place. It is for this reason that the Sharee'ah (Islamic Law) lays such special stress on Friday congregation and on salaah with jamaah, by explaining the blessings that accrue therefrom and punishments awarded for neglect thereof. For the open and conspicuous observance of this important service, two types of assemblies are required: one for people of a clan or a particular locality and the other for the people of the whole town. Since the assembly of the former at any hour is convenient and that of the latter comparatively difficult, so for the former, the gathering for salaah (with jamaah) five times daily, has been laid down and in the case of the latter gathering, the weekly Friday salaah has been devised and ordained. "

REPROACH ON GIVING UP JAMAAT

Just as Allah has promised rewards and blessings for adhering to His commandments, so has He warned us of the woeful consequences and punishments for their neglect. We are in bondage to Allah and as such it is obligatory on us to obey Him. No compensation or reward is due to us for our obedience to Him. If He gives a reward, it is surely a matter of His extreme favour on us. Similarly no punishments can be too much for us if we disobey Him-our Lord, for there can be no greater crime for a bondsman than to disobey his Master. Hence no warning or premonition was required to be imparted. Yet Allah and His Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) have so very kindly cautioned us in various ways, warned us frequently of the consequences and explained to us again and again, just to save us from disaster. If even then, we don't take a lesson, who could there be to save us from the inevitable consequences?

Hadith-1

Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, "I heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "If a person in spite of hearing the azaan does not go to the masjid (and he prefers to say his salaah at home) without a strong excuse, then his salaah is not accepted. When the Companions inquired as to what could be a strong excuse, he replied, "Illness or fear."

It may perhaps appear from this Hadith that the salaah performed at home (after hearing the Azaan) is no salaah at all; the Hanafiyyah do not hold this view. According to them, though the reward and blessings promised for fardh salaah will not be awarded, yet the person saying the salaah at his place does absolve himself of the obligation. But in the opinion of some of the companions and their successors, salaah with jamaat (after hearing the Azaan) is fardh and its discard is haraam. According to many other theologians, such a person is not even absolved of the obligation in respect of salaah of that hour. Anyhow, he is surely committing the sin of discarding jamaat. In another hadith narrated by Hadhrat Ibn Abbas, it is stated that such a person is guilty of disobedience of Allah and his Apostle (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) also says, "No good is done by, nor any good is done to, the person who does not join jamaat after hearing the Azaan. Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "It is more appropriate to pour molten-lead into the ears of a person who does not go to join jamaat."

Hadith-2

Hadhrat Mu'aaz bin Anas (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "A person who does not go for salaah after hearing the Azaan is committing a great wrong and is doing an act of kufr and nifaaq."

According to this hadith, not to join jamaat after hearing the Azaan is not becoming of a Muslim and is the practice of a kaafir or a munaafiq. What a strong reproof!

In another hadith, it is said, "Not to join jamaat after hearing the Azaan is sufficient to render a person most unfortunate and most wretched."

Hadhrat Sulaimaan bin Abi Hathmah (Radhiyallahu anho) is one of the eminent people of the early days of Islam. He was born during the lifetime of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), but was too young then to have had the honour of listening to any hadith from him. During the Caliphate of Hadhrat Umar (Radhiyallahu anho) he was made in charge of the market. One day Hadhrat Umar (Radhiyallahu anho) found him missing in Fajr salaah. Hadhrat Umar (Radhiyallahu anho) went to his house and inquired from his mother why Sulaimaan was not present in Fajr. She replied, "He kept saying nafl salaah throughout the night, and sleep overpowered him at the time of Fajr." At this, Hadhrat Umar (Radhiyallahu anho) remarked "I would prefer my Fajr with jamaat to my offering nafl salaah all night long."

Hadith-3

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "I wish I could ask the boys to collect a huge quantity of firewood for me, and then I would go around and set fire to the dwellings of those who say their salaah at their own houses without any excuse."

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), who was most kind and merciful towards his followers and was greatly pained to see them even in a little trouble, gets offended so much that he is ready to set fire to the houses of those who are content with saying salaah at their houses.

Hadith-4

Hadhrat Abu Darda (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "If there are (even) three persons in a village or in a desert. and they do not say their salaah with jamaah, then Satan gets hold of them. Remember that jamaah for salaah is very necessary for you. Surely a wolf devours a lonely sheep, and Satan is the wolf for men."

This shows that people busy in farming etc. should arrange to say their salaah with jamaah if they are three or more in number. Even if they are two. it is better to have jamaah. The farmers in our country are generally negligent of salaah and consider their occupation a sufficient excuse for their neglect, and even those who are considered pious prefer to perform their salaah individually. If the farmers working in the nearby fields get together at a place and perform prayers in jamaah, they can have quite a big gathering and thereby receive the wonderful blessings of Allah. Notwithstanding the sun, rain, heat and cold, they keep busy for a trifling worldly gain, but lose tremendous amount of Allah's reward by losing salaah. On the other hand, they can earn a reward fifty times more (as conveyed in another hadith) by offering their salaah with jamaah in the fields.

It is stated in a hadith, "When a shepherd calls out the Azaan at the foot of a hill (or in the fields) and starts his salaah, Allah is greatly pleased with him and says proudly to the Angels, 'Behold My slave! He has called out the Azaan and is offering his salaah. All this he does out of fear for Me. I therefore grant him forgiveness and declare his admittance into Paradise."

Hadith-5

Somebody asked Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho), "What about a person who keeps fast all day and offers nafl salaah all night, but does not go to the masjid for jamaah and Jumu'ah?" "He is doomed to Hell", replied Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho).

Such a person, being a Muslim, may ultimately get freedom from Hell, but who knows after how long. The ignorant among the Soofis and Shaikhs are very particular about Zikr and nafl salaah and consider this an act of eminence in piety, while they are not particular about salaah with jamaah. It must be clearly borne in mind for all times that no person can achieve religious eminence except through complete adherence to the practices of the beloved Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam).

It is stated in a hadith that Allah curses three persons:

An Imaam who insists on leading the people of a place in salaah, although they do not like him on some reasonable account, a woman who is under the displeasure of her husband; and a person who hears the Azaan but does not go to the masjid for salaah with Jamaah.

Hadith-6

Ka'b Ahbaar says, "By Him who revealed the Torah to Moosa, the Injeel to Eesa, the Psalms to Dawood (Alayhimus salaam), and the Qur'an on Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), the following verses were revealed in respect of saying fardh salaah in those places (mosques) where the Azaan is said: "On the day when the glory of Saaq is revealed and they are ordered to prostrate themselves, but are not able, with eyes downcast, abasement

stupifying them. And they had been summoned to prostrate themselves when they were quite hale and healthy." (LXVIII: 42 and 43).

The glory of Saaq is a particular type of glory to be displayed on the Day of Judgement. All Muslims will fall prostrate on seeing this glory, but there will be some whose backs will turn stiff and they will be unable to prostrate themselves. As to who these unlucky persons would be, different interpretations have been given by different commentators. According to this hadith, which is also corroborated by another narrated by Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho), those shall be the persons who were called for salaah with jamaat, but did not go for it.

A few other interpretations of the same are given below:-

1. Hadhrat Abu Sa'eed Khudri (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates on the authority of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) that these shall be the persons who used to offer their salaah to be seen by other men.
2. These shall be infidels who did not say salaah at all
3. These shall be the munaafiqeen. (Allah knows best and His knowledge is most perfect).

What a terrible thing to be so abased and disgraced on the Day of Judgement that, while all Muslims shall fall prostrate at seeing Allah's glory, those who neglected salaah with jamaat shall be singled out by their inability to do so.

Besides these, many other warnings have been given against the neglect of jamaat. But as a matter of fact, none is necessary for a good Muslim to whom the word of Allah and His Apostle (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is all important. And for one who has no regard for their word, all such warnings are meaningless. But a time will come when every soul shall be called to account, and punished for its misdeeds, and then no amount of penitence shall be of any avail.

PART 3: IMPORTANCE OF SINCERITY AND DEVOTION IN SALAH

There are many persons who offer their salaah and quite a lot of them are particular about jamaat as well, but they say it so imperfectly that, instead of earning blessings and reward for them, it is rejected forthwith. This, however, is not so bad as to discard salaah altogether, which as we have already learnt, is very serious. Although we are deprived of the rewards by saying a defective salaah, which is not accepted, yet we are saved from the insolence of neglecting and disobeying Allah's commandments. However, when we spend our time, leave our work and undergo inconvenience, then why should we not see that we get the best return for our time and labour by saying our salaah as best as we can?

This third part is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, a few quotations from the Holy Qur'an about the people who are condemned for their bad salaah and those who are praised for their good salaah, are given. In the second Chapter, stories about the salaah of a few lovers of Allah are collected. The third chapter consists of the sayings of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) on this subject.

QUOTATION FROM THE QUR'AAN

Verse -1

"Their flesh and their blood reach not Allah. but devotion from you reacheth to Him." (XXII: 3 7)

Although this particular verse refers to the animal sacrifice yet in principle it equally applies to all other rituals. It is sincerity and devotion in a service by which if its acceptance would be judged by Allah. Hadhrat Mu'aaz (Radhiyalaho anho) says, "When the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) deputed me to Yemen, I requested him to give me some parting advice. He replied, 'Be sincere in all your services, as sincerity will magnify the value of an action, however insignificant it may be.'"

Hadhrat Thaubaan (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "Blessed be the sincere ones, for they are the lamps of guidance. They cause the worst evils to be driven off through their sincerity." It is said in another hadith, "It is through the presence of the weak and due to their salaah and their sincerity that Allah's help comes to all the people.'

Verse -2

"Woe unto worshippers who are heedless of their salaah, who want but to be seen at salaah." (IV: 4-6)

"To be heedless" has been given the following different interpretations:

1. To be so careless as to miss the correct time of salaah.
2. To be inattentive in salaah.
3. To forget the number of rakaats.

Verse -3

"Now there hath succeeded them (Prophets) a later generation who have ruined salaah and have followed lusts. So they will meet Ghayy." (XIX: 59)

In the dictionary 'Ghayy,' is explained as deception, which points towards the awful doom and ruin in the hereafter. According to many commentators, Ghayy is a pit in Hell full of blood and pus. The persons who had ruined their salaah shall be thrown into this pit.

Verse-5

"And naught preventeth that their (the hypocrites) ~ j contributions should be accepted from them, save that they have disbelieved in Allah and in His Apostle, and they come not to worship, save as idlers, and pay' not (their contribution) save reluctantly." (IV: 54)

Note: The quotations I to V above relate to those who ruin salaah. On the other hand, the following speak of those whom Allah praises for their good salaah.

Verse-6

"Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their salaah. And who shun vain conversation. And who are payers of the Zakaat. And who abstain from sex, save from their wives or the slaves that their right hand possess, for then they are not blameworthy but who craveth beyond that, such are transgressors-And who faithfully observe their pledges and their covenants. And who pay heed to their salaah. These are the heirs who will inherit Firdaus (Paradise). There they will abide." (XXIII: 1 to 11)

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) says, "Firdaus is the apex and the best portion of Paradise, where from all its rivers originate. Allah's throne will be placed there. When you pray for Paradise, always pray for Firdaus."

Verse-7

"And truly it (salaah) is hard save for the humbleminded; who know that they have to meet their Lord, and that unto Him they are returning." (II: 45-46)

Verse-8

"In houses which Allah hath allowed to be exalted, and His name shall be remembered therein, do offer praise to Him at morning and evening, men whom neither merchandise nor sale beguileth from remembrance of Allah and establishment : of salaah and paying Zakaat, who fear that Day when the hearts and the eyeballs will be overturned so that Allah may reward them for the best of what they did and increase reward for them out of His bounty. Allah giveth blessings without measure to whom He will." (XXIV: 36 to 38)

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) says "Establishment of salaah means performance of ruku and sajdah properly and constant concentration in salaah with complete humility and submission." Hadhrat Qataadah (Radhiyallahu anho) says: "Wherever the words ' Establishment of salaah' occur in Qur'an. they mean to guard its hours. to perform wudhu in the right manner and to observe ruku and saidah properly."

Verse-9

"The (faithful) slaves of Rahman (the Beneficent) are they who walk upon the earth modestly and when the foolish ever address them, they answer: Peace; and who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and ••• standing." (XXV: 63-64) ~

After describing a few more qualities of His faithful slaves, Allah says in the same context:

"They will be awarded the high place for as much as they were steadfast, and they will meet therein with welcome and the word of peace. Abiding there for ever. Happy is it as abode and station." (XXV: 75-76)

Verse-10

"The believers in our revelations are those who forsake their beds, to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of what We have bestowed on them. No soul knoweth what is kept hid for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do." (XXXII: 16-17)

Verse-11

"Lo! those who keep from evil will dwell amid gardens and water-springs, taking to that which their Lord giveth them; for Lo! aforetime they were doers of good. They used to sleep but little in the night. And ere the dawning of each day, would seek forgiveness." (L1: 15-18)

Verse-12

"Is he who worships devotedly in the hours of the night, prostrate or standing, afraid of the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord (to be counted equal with a disbeliever)? Say (unto them, O Muhammad) (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam): "Can those who know be equal with those who know not? But only men of understanding will pay heed." (XXXIX: 9)

Verse-13

And angels would be entering through every door proclaiming: "Peace be upon you, as a reward for your perseverance on religious practices." Thus how splendid would be their end! (XIII: 22-23).

"LO! man was created very impatient. Fretful when evil befalleth him. And niggardly when good befalleth him, save the worshippers who are constant at their salaah." (LXX: 19-23)

After giving some more qualities of these blessed people, Allah says in the same context, "And those who guard their salaah. These will dwell in gardens, honoured." (LXX: 34-35).

Besides the quotations given above, there are many verses of the Holy Qur'an enjoining salaah and exalting and extolling those who say their salaah properly. Salaah is indeed a great boon. That is why Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) has called it 'the comfort of my eyes', and Ibrahim (Alayhis salaam) prayed to Allah,

"My Lord! make me to establish Salaah, and some of my posterity (also); our Lord! and accept the prayer." (XIV: 40)

Here the eminent Prophet of Allah, whom Allah has called 'Khaleel', is asking Allah to make him say his salaah properly and regularly. The Glorious Allah Himself is ordering His beloved Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) thus:-

"And enjoin salaah upon the people and be constant therein. We ask not of thee a provision. We provide for thee. And the Hereafter is for righteousness." (XX: 132).

It is said in a hadith that whenever the housefolk of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) were hard-pressed in any way, he enjoined salaah on them and used to recite this verse. All the Prophets of Allah (peace be upon them) are reported to have engaged themselves in salaah whenever they had any difficulty. But, alas! we are so unmindful and indifferent about salaah that, in spite of all that we proclaim about Islaam and Islamic practices, we pay no attention to it. But on the contrary, if anybody stands up to invite us and to draw our attention towards it, we cut jokes and sneer at him and oppose him, thereby harming none else but ourselves.

Even those who offer the salaah, often perform it in such a way that it will not be wrong to call it a mockery of salaah, as it lacks the proper observation of its requisites and also the devotion and submission obligatory therein. The practical example of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), as also the practices of his illustrious companions, should be the guiding factor in our lives. I have collected the stories about the salaah of the companions in a separate book, named "Stories of Sahabah," and I need not repeat them here. However, I am giving stories from the lives of a few pious persons in the following pages. The practices and the sayings of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) about this subject would appear in Chapter III.

A FEW STORIES FROM THE LIVES OF THE PIOUS

Story -1

Shaikh Abdul Waahid (Rahmatullah alaih) says, "One day I was so much overpowered by sleep that I went to bed before finishing my Zikr for the night. I saw in my dream a most beautiful girl dressed in green silk. All parts of her body and even her shoes were engaged in Zikr. She said to me 'Aspire to possess me; I love you.'" And then she recited a few couplets depicting the eagerness of a lover. When I woke up from the dream, I vowed not to sleep any more during the night. It is reported that for full forty years he never slept at night, and said Isha and Fajr salaats with the same wudhu.

Story -2

Shaikh Mazhar Sa'di (Rahmatullah alaih), the famous pious man, kept weeping for sixty years in love and eagerness for Allah. One night he saw in a dream a few damsels by the side of pearl trees with gold branches, on the bank of the brook brimming with fluid musk, pure and fragrant. The girls were hymning the glory of Allah. He asked their identity. In reply they recited two couplets, which meant, "We have been created by the Sustainer of mankind and Lord of Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) for those people who keep standing before Allah all night long and hymning in supplication to Him,"

Story -3

Abu Bakr Dharir (Rahmatullah alaih) says, "There lived a young slave with me. He fasted all day and stood in Tahajjud all night long. One day he came to me and related: "Last night against my usual practice I went to sleep. I saw in my dream that the wall of the Mihraab was cracked, and from the crevice appeared a few damsels. One of them was very ugly. I asked one of the pretty damsels who they were. She replied that they were my previous nights and that the ugly one was this night."

Story -4

An eminent Shaikh says: "One night I was in a deep sleep and could not get up for Tahajjud. I saw in my dream a girl of such beauty as I had never seen in my life. She was emitting such fragrance as I had never smelt before. She handed over to me a piece of paper on which were written three couplets, which meant, 'You were so enamoured of deep sleep that you have become unmindful of the high balconies of Paradise, where you have to abide for ever with no fear of death. Wake up! It is better to recite the Qur'an in Tahajjud than to sleep.' since then, wherever I feel sleepy, these couplets come to my mind and the sleep goes away."

Story -5

Ataa (Rahmatullah alaih) writes, "I went to the market.

A person had a slave girl to sell, who was said to be mad; I purchased her for seven dinars and brought her to my house. After a portion of the night had passed, I noticed that she got up, performed wudhu and started her salaah. In her salaah she wept so much that I thought she would die of excessive crying. After finishing the salaah, she began to supplicate before Allah saying, 'O my Lord! By the love Thou bearest for me, show mercy on me.' I interrupted by telling her that she should rather say, 'By the love that I have for Thee ... " She got irritated at this suggestion and said, 'By Allah Himself! Had He not loved me, I would not be standing here before Him while you are in your bed.' Then she fell prostrate and recited a few couplets purporting, 'I am growing more and more restless. How can one rest whose peace of mind is taken away by love, eagerness and constant anxiety? O, Allah! Show mercy and give some glad tidings.' Then she prayed in a loud voice thus, 'O Allah! So far the matter between

me and Thee has been a secret. Now people have come to know of it. O, Allah! Call me back.' After saying this, she cried aloud and died on the spot."

Story -6

A similar thing happened with Sirri (Rahmatullah alaih). He writes: "I bought a slave woman to attend on me. She served me for some time, but I was in the dark about her state of affairs. She had a corner in the house reserved for her salaah. After finishing her job, she would go there and offer her salaah. One night, I noticed her performing salaah and then supplicating before Allah. While making her supplication, she said, 'By the love Thou hast for me, do such and such a thing for me.' I shouted out to her, 'O woman, say by the love that I have for Thee.' She retorted, 'My Master, if He had not loved me, He would not have made me stand for salaah and deprive you thereof.' Next morning I sent for her and said to her, 'You are a misfit in your present job. You are exclusively meant for Allah's service. I then gave her some gifts and set her free.'"

Story -7

Sirri Saqti (Rahmatullah alaih) writes about another woman: "When she stood up for Tahajjud she would say, 'O Allah! Satan is but Thy creation. Thou hast full power over him. He sees me and I cannot see him. Thou see-est him and hast control over all his actions, while he has no control over Thee. O, Allah! repel the evil that he wishes to do me. Requit the wrong he may do to deceive me. I seek Thy refuge from his evil designs and with Thy help I cast him away.' Thereafter she would cry bitterly. And as a result thereof she lost the sight of one eye. People admonished her to stop excessive weeping, lest she should lose her other eye as well. She replied, "If it is destined to be an eye of Paradise, Allah will grant me better than this; but if it be that of Hell, then the sooner it is lost the better."

Story -8

Shaikh Abu Abdullah [ilaa says: "One day my mother asked my father to fetch some fish from the market. My father left for the market and I also accompanied him. The fish was bought and we needed a porter to carry it for us. We engaged a boy who was standing there and who had offered to do the job for us. He put the load on his head and followed us. While we were on our way, we happened to hear the Azaan. The boy abruptly spoke, 'Allah's summoner has summoned me; I have to take my wudhu too. I shall now carry the fish after salaah. If you like you may wait, otherwise here it is.' Saying this he put the load down and left for the masjid. My father thought when the poor boy could place his trust in Allah so much, we must as well do so in a greater degree. He, therefore, left the fish there and took me to the masjid. When we three returned after saying salaah, we found the fish lying in the same place as we had left it. The boy then carried it to our house. My father related the strange story to my mother who insisted that the boy should be invited to eat some fish with us. When the invitation was extended to him, he said, 'Excuse me I am fasting.' My father then requested him to have iftaar at our place. To this he said, 'It is not possible for me to return once I am gone. Just possibly, I may stay in a masjid close to your place; if so, then I shall join you in your dinner.' Saying this he went to the masjid and returned after Maghrib. When the dinner was over, I showed him the room where he could rest in privacy. Now, there lived a crippled woman in our neighbourhood. We were surprised to see her walking quite hale and hearty. When we enquired from her how she got cured, she said, 'I prayed to Allah to heal me for the sake of the blessings that your guest carries. No sooner I prayed than I was healed.' When we went to find the boy in the room where we had left him, the door was shut and the boy was nowhere to be seen."

Story -9

It is said of a pious man that once he had a sore on his foot. According to the opinion of the surgeons, if his foot was not amputated, the sore might prove fatal. His mother proposed that the operation should be done while he was absorbed in his salaah. This was done, and no pain was felt by him.

Story -10

Abu 'Aamir (Rahmatullah alaih) says, "I saw a slave woman on sale for a very small sum. She was very emaciated and her hair was dirty. I took pity on her and purchased her. I said to her, 'Come, woman, let us go and make purchases for Ramadhaan.' She remarked, 'Alhamdulillah, all the months are alike for me.' She fasted on all days and stood in salaah for all nights. When Eid drew near, I said to her. 'Woman! You will go with me tomorrow to make purchases for Eid. She remarked, 'My master! You are too much absorbed in this world.' She then went into her room and started her salaah. She was reciting Soorah Ibrahim and when she reached the 16th verse of the Soorah (viz.,

'Hell is before him and he is made to drink boiling, fetid water', which described the doom of a disbeliever, she repeated it again and again, and then gave out a cry and fell dead."

Story -11

Everybody knows Umar bin Abdul Aziz (Rahmatullah ;; alaih). After the four Khulafaa-ur Raashideen he is the most eminent Khalifah. His wife says, "There may be other people more particular about wudhu and salaah; but I have never seen anybody fearing Allah more than my husband. After his daily Ishaah, he would sit at a place reserved for his salaah and raise his hands in supplication and keep crying before Allah till sleep overpowered him. Whenever he woke during the night, he would again start praying and crying before Allah."

It is said that since his becoming Khalifah he never shared the bed with his wife. His wife was the daughter of the great King Abdul Malik. Her father had given her much jewellery in dowry, which included a marvellous diamond. He said to his wife, "Either part with all your jewellery for the sake of Allah, so that I may deposit it in the Baitul Maal or be separated from me. I would not like to live in a house where there is so much wealth." His wife replied, "I can part with a thousand times more wealth, but I cannot leave you." She then deposited everything she had in the Baitul Maal. After the death of Umar bin Abdul Aziz, when Yazeed son of Abdul Malik succeeded him as Khalifa, he said to his sister, "If you like you may have your jewellery back from the Baitul Maal. She replied, "How can the wealth I discarded during my husband's lifetime, satisfy me after his death."

Umar bin Abdul Aziz was on his death-bed when he inquired from the persons round him about the cause of his disease. Someone said, "People think it is the effect of black magic." He said, "No, it is not magic." He then sent for a particular slave of his and said to him, "What made you poison me?" He replied, "One hundred dinaars and a promise of liberty." Umar bin Abdul Aziz (Rahmatullah alaih) took those dinaars from the slave and deposited them in the Baitul Maal, and advised him to run away to some distant place where he could not be seized.

Just before his death, Muslimah (Rahmatullah alaih) came to him and said, "Nobody has ever treated his children as you are doing. None of your thirteen sons has anything to live on." He sat up in his bed and said, 'I have not held back from my sons what they were entitled to. I have, of course, refused them what was actually due to others. If my sons are righteous, then Allah will surely be their guardian as He has said in His Book: He is the guardian of the righteous (VII:196)', but if they are wrong-doers, then why should I care for them?"

Story -1 2

Muhammad bin Munkadir (Rahmatullah alaih) was a Hafiz of Hadith. One night, he wept excessively in his Tahajjud. When someone inquired about it, he said, "During Qiraat, I came across the following words of the Qur'an:

"And the evils that they earned will confront them; and they will be surrounded by what they used to scoff at."
(XXXIX: 48)

He was very anxious and worried at the time of his death, and said that these same words of the Qur'an were looming before him.

Story -13

Thaabit Banaani (Rahmatullah alaih) is another Hafiz of Hadith. He used to cry a great deal while supplicating before Allah. Someone warned him that he would lose his eyesight if he did not stop weeping like that. He replied to him, "What use are these eyes if these do not weep before Allah."

He used to ask in his prayer, "O, Allah! Permit me to offer my salaah in my grave, if ever you grant this privilege to any of Thy slaves!" Abu Sanaan (Rahmatullah alaih) narrates, "By Allah! I was among those present at the burial of Thaabit Banaani. Just after he had been placed in his grave, one of the bricks from the side fell off. I peeped into the pit to find to my great amazement, that Thaabit was offering his salaah. I said to a person standing by my side, 'Look what is that.' He advised me to keep quiet. After the burial, we went to his daughter and inquired from her, 'What was the special practice of your father?' She wanted to know what made us put that question. We related to her the incident at the grave. She said, "He has been constant in Tahajjud for fifty years and prayed every morning before Allah to allow him to offer salaah in the grave if that privilege could be granted to anybody."

Before finishing this chapter, I give below the pursuits (as regards salaah) of some of our eminent Muslim ancestors:

1. Imaam Ahmad bin Hambal (Rahmatullah alaih) is the famous Imaam of one of the four schools of Muslim jurisprudence. Besides being engaged in his usual work, he used to offer daily three hundred rakaats of nafl salaah. After he was lashed by the king for refusal to submit to the royal edict, he became very weak and reduced his routine nafl salaah to one hundred and fifty rakaats. We should not forget that he was eighty at that time.

2. Imaam Shaafi'ee (Rahmatullah alaih) another eminent Imaam of Muslim jurisprudence, used to finish reciting the Qur'an sixty times in his salaah during Ramadhaan. A person narrates, "I remained with Imaam Shaafi'ee for several days and found him sleeping only for a while at night."

3. Imaam Abu Haneefa (Rahmatullah alaih) is famous for his vigil. It is said that for thirty, forty or fifty years (according to the information of different narrators) he offered his Fajr prayer with the wudhu for Ishaah. He would go to sleep only for a few minutes in the afternoon saying, "It is sunnat to sleep in the afternoon."

4. It is said about Sa'eed bin Musayyab (Rahmatullah alaih) that for fifty years he offered his Fajr salaah with the wudhu performed at Ishaah.

Imaam Ghazzali (Rahmatullah alaih) on the authority of Abu Taalib Makki reported the same practice by no less than forty Taabi'ees, some of whom had been doing it for forty years continuously.

5. Muhammad bin Nasr (Rahmatullah alaih) is a famous Muhaddith. His devotion to salaah had no parallel. Once while in salaah, he was stung on his forehead by a wasp and though blood came out, neither did he stir nor did he allow it to disturb his devotion in salaah. It is said that in salaah, he stood motionless like a stick planted in the ground.

6. It is reported about Baqi bin Mukhallid (Rahmatullah alaih) that he used to recite the complete Qur'an every night in thirteen rakaats of Tahajjud and Witr.

7. Hannaad (Rahmatullah alaih] is a Muhaddith. One of his pupils narrates, "Hannaad used to weep very much. One day after he had finished our lesson in the morning, he continued to offer nafl salaah till midday. He went to his place for a short interval and then returned for his Zuhr. He again engaged himself in nafl salaah till Asr. Between Asr and Maghrib, he recited the Qur'an. I left him after Maghrib. I said to one of his neighbours, 'Our Shaikh prays so much. It is really wonderful.' He said, "He had been doing this for the last seventy years. You will wonder still more if you see his prayers during the night."

8. Masrooq (Rahmatullah alaih) is another Muhaddith. His wife narrates, "He used to offer such long rakaats that his legs would get swollen and I sat behind weeping in pity for him."

9. Abu Itaab Sulami (Rahmatullah alaih) is reported to have been fasting during the day and weeping during the night for full forty years.

10. It is said about 'a Sayyid that continuously for twelve days he has been offering his salaah with the same wudhu. For fifteen years, his back had not touched the bed. He would also go without food for days together.

Besides the above, there are numerous records of the pious pursuits of the heroes of Islamic History. It is difficult to cover all of them in this book. All that has been said here is sufficient to serve as examples. May Allah, through His Grace, grant me and the readers of this book the strength to follow in the footsteps of these blessed people! Aameen!

QUOTATION FROM HADITH

Hadeeth -1

Hadhrat Ammar bin Yaasir (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasail am) saying: "When a person finishes his salaah, he gets one tenth, one ninth, one eighth, one seventh, one sixth, one fifth, one fourth, one third or one half of the maximum reward (according to the quality of salaah performed by him)."

This shows that the reward is given in proportion to the sincerity and devotion with which salaah is performed. So much so, that some get only one tenth of the total reward. There are others who get a reward ranging from one tenth to one half of the maximum. It is also correct to say that there are some who receive the reward in full and there are others who get no reward at all.

It is stated in a hadith that Allah has a standard for fardh salaah. An account is kept of the measure by which a salaah falls short of that standard.

It is said in the hadith that devotion in salaah will be the first thing to be taken away from the world. A time will come when not a single person in the whole congregation will offer his salaah with proper devotion.

Hadeeth -2

Hadhrat Anas (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "When a person offers his salaah at its fixed hours with proper wudhu, with humility and submission and with qiyaam, ruku and sajdah done satisfactorily, then such a salaah rises up in a bright and beautiful form and blesses the person in words: 'May Allah guard you as you have guarded me.' On the other hand, if a person is not punctual with his salaah nor does he perform wudhu, qiyaam, ruku and sajdah properly, then salaah rises up in an ugly and dark shape and curses the person saying, "May Allah ruin you as you have ruined me!" Then it is flung back like a dirty rag at the face of the person."

Lucky are those whose salaah is so perfect in all respects that this most important worship of Allah would pray for them. But what to say about the salaah which most of the people are wont? They go into sajdah direct from ruku, and they hardly lift their head from the first sajdah when they go for the second like a crow pecking at something. The curse that such a person deserves is mentioned in this hadith. When the salaah is cursing us then what else can check our downfall? This is why the condition of the Muslims is deteriorating day by day in every nook and corner of the world.

The same description is given in another hadith, with the addition that a salaah offered by a person with sincerity and devotion rises up highly illuminated, the gates of Heaven are let open for its reception, and then it intercedes (before Allah) for His devotee.

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) has said, "The likeness of a person not bowing fully in ruku is that of a pregnant woman aborting just before delivery."

In a hadith, it is stated, "There are many fasting persons who get nothing out of their fast except hunger and thirst, and there are many worshippers who keep a vigil but get nothing from their vigil except sleeplessness.

Hadhrat Aa'ishah (Radhiyallahu anha) narrates that she heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying. "Allah has decided to save (from punishment of the Hereafter) a person coming before Him who has been offering salaah five times daily at its fixed hours. with due sincerity and devotion and with proper wudhu. As regards a person who does not so come before Allah. there is no guarantee for him. He may be forgiven by Allah's special Grace or taken to task.

Once the Prophet (Sallalloho alaihe wasallam) came to his companions and said. "Do you know what Allah has said?" The companions replied, "Allah and His Apostle know best." He repeated the question twice and the companions made the same reply each time. Then he said. "Allah says. 'By my Greatness and My Glory, I must bring into Paradise the person offering salaah five times daily at its fixed hours. As regards the person who does not ensure his salaah, I may forgive him by My mercy or take him to task.'" •

Hadeeth -3

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyalloho anho) narrates, "We heard the Prophet (Sallalloho alaihe wasallam) saying, 'The first among the doings of a person to be reckoned for on the Day of Judgement shall be his salaah. A person will succeed and attain his goal if his salaah is accepted, and he will fail and lose badly if it is rejected. If any deficiency is found in his fardh salaah, Allah will say (to the Angels): "Look for any nafl salaah in his account". Then the deficiency in his fardh salaah will be made good by nafl salaah. The rest of the religious practices (viz. Fast, Zakaat etc.) will then be reckoned for in the same manner."

This hadith shows that we should have adequate nafl salaah to our credit to make up any deficiency in our fardh salaah. It is a habit with many people to say. "It is enough to observe only the fardh salaah. nafl salaah is meant for the eminent. No doubt it is enough to offer fardh salaah properly, but is it so easy to observe it to the proper standard? Most probably, there will always be some deficiency in one respect or the other, and there is no way out to make up that deficiency except through nafl salaah.

There is another hadith which deals with this point more elaborately. It declares, "Salaah is the foremost duty enjoined by Allah and the first thing to be presented before Allah, and the first thing to be reckoned for on the Day of Judgement. If the fardh salaah is found wanting in quality, then its deficiency will be made good through nafl salaah. The fasts of Ramadhaan will be the next to be reckoned for and any deficiency therein will be made good through nafl Fast. Then Zakaat shall be reckoned for in a similar manner. If after adding nafl the good deeds are found heavier in the scales, the person concerned shall be sent to Paradise, otherwise he shall meet his doom in Hell." Such was the practice of the Prophet (Sallalloho alaihe wasallam) that when anybody embraced Islaam at his hand, the first thing he taught him was salaah.

Hadeeth -4

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Qurt (Radhiyalloho anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallalloho alaihe wasallam) saying "Salaah will be the first thing to be reckoned for on the Day of Judgement. If this is found satisfactory, then the rest of the deeds will also come out as such. If this is not so, then the remaining deeds are sure to be found wanting.

Hadhrat Umar (Radhiyalloho anho) during his caliphate had issued a proclamation to all the officers under him saying, "I regard salaah as the Q10st important duty. A person who ensures salaah is likely to observe other injunctions of Islam as well; but if he discards salaah, he will more easily damage the rest of Islaam."

The above saying of the Prophet (Sallalloho alaihe wasallam) and the proclamation of Hazrat Umar (Radhiyalloho anho) are also corroborated by another hadith, "Satan is scared of a Muslim so long as he is mindful of his salaah; but no sooner he neglects the salaah than Satan descends on him and becomes hopeful of leading him astray, and then he can easily be lured to commit more serious wrongs and major sins. This is exactly what is meant by Almighty Allah when He says,

"Lo! salaah preserveth from lewdness and inequity" (XXIX: 45)

Hadeeth -5

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abu Qataadah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, "The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) once said, 'The worst thief is one who steals from his salaah.' The companions inquired, 'How can one steal from his salaah? O, Prophet of Allah!' He replied, 'When one does not do his ruku and sajdah properly.'

There are many other Ahaadith conveying the same meaning. Stealing is a very disgraceful act and a thief is despised by everybody. What about a person who is declared, 'the worst thief', by no less a person than the Prophet himself?

Hadhrat Abu Darda (Radiyallahu anho) narrates, "Once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) looked up towards the sky and said, 'The knowledge of Deen is soon to be taken away from this world.' Ziyaad (Radhiyallahu anho), who was also present there inquired, 'How can the knowledge of Deen be taken away, O, Prophet of Allah (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), when we are teaching the Qur'an to our children and this process will continue in our posterity?' The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) said to him, 'Ziyaad! I always took you to be an intelligent person. Don't you see that the Jews and the Christians are also teaching their Bibles to their children? Has this prevented their deterioration?' One of Hadhrat Abu Darda's (Radhiyallahu anho) pupils says. "After hearing this hadith from Hadhrat Abu Darda (Radhiyallahu anho), I went to Hadhrat Ubaadah (Radhiyallahu anho) and related the hadith to him." He said, "Abu Darda (Radhiyallahu anho) is quite right. May I tell you the first thing that will be taken away from this world? It is devotion in salaah. You will see that not a single person in the full congregation is saying his salaah with devotion." Hadhrat Huzaifah (Radhiyallahu anho), the confidante of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), was also heard saying, "Devotion in salaah shall be the first thing to disappear."

It is said in a hadith, "Allah does not pay any attention to that salaah with which ruku and sajdah are not performed properly."

Another hadith says, "A person has been offering salaah for sixty years, but in fact not a single salaah of his is accepted by Allah. This is because he has been careless about his ruku in some salaahs and about his sajdah in others."

A great stress is laid on the proper performance of salaah in the famous Epistles of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (Rahmatullah alaih). His discourses on the subject cover a good portion of the Epistles. In one of them he writes, "It is necessary among other things that we should be particular about keeping the fingers of our hands together while in sajdah and separated while in ruku. These regulations are not without a purpose." He further writes, "To keep our glance at the place of sajdah while standing, on our feet while in ruku, on our nose while in sajdah, and on our hands while in Qa'dah, goes a long way in keeping the desired concentration in salaah." When such ordinary regulations, which are only mustahab, increase the value of our salaah, you can't well imagine how much benefit we shall derive if we be particular of other regulations, which are either sunnat or otherwise more important.

Hadeeth -6

Hadhrat Umme Roomaan (wife of Abu Baler) (Radhiyallahu anha) narrates, "Once I was offering my salaah, when I unknowingly started leaning sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other. Hadhrat Abu Baler (Radhiyallahu anho) saw me doing this and reprimanded me so harshly that I was about to abandon my salaah with fear. He told me later that he had heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "When a person stands for salaah, he should keep his body at rest and he should not behave like the Jews, since to remain motionless is one of the complements of salaah."

Keeping the body at rest during salaah is enjoined in many ahaadith. In the beginning, it was a habit with the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) that he kept looking towards the heaven in expectation of Hadhrat Ibra-eel

(Alayhis salaam) to bring him some revelation, so much so that his eyes would sometimes rise up unconsciously even during salaat. When the first two verses of Soorah XXIII (viz.,

(Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their salaat) were revealed, he began to keep his gaze down while in salaat. It is also said about the companions that in the beginning they would sometime cast their glances here and there during their salaat but, after these verses were revealed, they gave up this practice. Explaining these verses, Hadhrat Abdullah bin Umar (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "When the Sahabah stood for salaat they never looked this side or that side. They remained attentive in salaat with their eyes fixed at the place of sajdah, totally absorbed in Allah, their Lord. Someone inquired from Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anho), 'What is devotion?' He replied, 'Concentration in salaat is included in devotion.'"

Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "Humble' (mentioned in the above verses) are those who fear Allah and remain motionless in salaat."

Hadhrat Abu Baler (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, "Once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) said, 'Seek refuge in Allah from sanctimonious devotion.' We inquired, 'What is sanctimonious devotion, O Prophet of Allah! (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam). He replied, 'To feign concentration, with nifaaq lurking in the heart.'"

Hadhrat Abu Darda (Radhiyallahu anho) relates a similar hadith in which the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported to have said, "Hypocritical devotion is that in which a person outwardly pretends concentration, while his heart is devoid of that."

Hadhrat Qataadah (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "For devotion in salaat, the heart should be full of Allah's fear, and the gaze should be kept down."

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) once saw a person fondling his beard while in salaat. He remarked, "If his heart were blessed with devotion, then his entire body would be at rest."

Hadhrat Aa'ishah (Radhiyallahu anha) once inquired from the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) as to what his opinion was about the practice of looking around while in salaat. He said, "It is a damage to salaat caused by Satan." .

Once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) said, "People in the habit of looking up while in salaat must give up that habit, lest their gaze may become fixed and not return to them."

It has been said by many of the companions and their successors that devotion means tranquillity in salaat. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) is reported (by many narrators) to have said, "Offer each salaat (with) such (devotion) as if it were the last salaat of your life."

Hadeeth -7

Hadhrat Imraan bin Husain (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, Someone inquired of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) about the meaning of the verse in Qur'an:

'Lo! Salaat restrains from shameful and unjust deeds. (XXIX: 45)

He replied, "Salaat is no salaat if it does not preserve one from lewdness and iniquity."

No doubt, salaat is a very valuable service and when offered properly, results in preservation from all undesirables. If this result is not achieved, then there is something lacking in the proper performance of salaat. There are many other ahaadith conveying this meaning. Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "Salaat has the power to check the inclination to sins."

Hadhrat Abul Aaliyah (Radhiyallahu anho) explaining the same verse of the Qur'an writes: "There are three essentials of salaah: Sincerity, Fear of Allah, and His remembrance. Salaah is no salaah if these three are missing. Sincerity heralds virtuous deeds, fear of Allah expels vices, and His remembrance is the Qur'an, which in itself is a guidance towards good and guard against evil."

Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) reports that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) once said, "Salaah that does not prevent from lewdness and iniquity instead of bringing close to Allah, takes away from Him."

Hadhrat Ibn Mas'ood (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "A person who does not follow up his salaah, has actually offered no salaah. To follow up the salaah is to shun lewdness and iniquity."

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, :A person came to the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) and reported about a certain man, who was in the habit of offering salaah for the whole night and then committing a larceny before daybreak. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) remarked, "His salaah will very soon wean him off that sin.' This shows that the evil habits can be got rid of by adhering to salaah with due sincerity. It is a difficult and lengthy affair to redeem each and every bad habit. On the contrary, it is easier and quicker to start offering salaah with proper care when through the blessings that follow it, bad habits are sure to disappear one by one." May Allah grant me strength to say my salaah properly!

Hadeeth -8

Hadhrat [abir (Radhiyallahu anha) narrates that he heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) saying, "The best salaah is one with prolonged rakaats." Mujahid while explaining the verse "And stand up with Qunoot to Allah (ii-238)" says Qunoot comprises all such things as proper bowing, devotion, long rakaat, keeping the eyes down, lowering of shoulders in submission and fear of Allah. Whenever a companion of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) stood for salaah, he would not look here and there or level the pebbles at the place of sajdah (while prostrating) or engage himself in any absurd act, or think of any worldly thing (except unintentionally), all for fear of Allah."

Many interpretations have been given to the word Qunoot, which occurs in the Qur'an in the verse mentioned in this hadith. According to one of the interpretations, Qunoot means silence. In the beginning of Islam, it was permissible to talk or to return greetings during salaah, but when this verse was revealed, talking during salaah was absolutely forbidden. Hadhrat Ibn Mas'ood' (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "In the beginning whenever I visited the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam), I would greet him with 'Assalamu alaikum' and he would reply with 'Wa alaikumus salaam' even if he were engaged in salaah. Once I visited him while he was in salaah and greeted him as usual, but he did not reply. I grew very anxious, fearing that his attitude might be due to Allah's displeasure for me. All sorts of anxious thoughts began to enter my mind. One moment, I would think the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) was angry with me and then some other saddening explanation would occur to me. When the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) finished his salaah, he said, "Allah amends His commandments as He pleases. He has now forbidden any talking during salaah." He then recited the verse, 'And stand up with Qunoot to Allah' (11: 238) and said, salaah is now meant exclusively to hymn the glory, praise and sanctity of Allah."

Hadhrat Mu'aawiyah bin Hakam Salami (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "When I visited Madinah to embrace Islaam, I was taught many things. One of those was that I should say 'Yarhamukallaah' when anybody sneezed and exclaimed 'Alhamdulillah'. As I was new in Islaam, I did not know that this was not to be done during salaah. Once we were all standing in salaah when somebody sneezed. I immediately shouted, 'Yarhamukallaah'. Everybody began to stare at me. As I did not know then that we were not to talk in salaah, I protested saying, 'Why are you

all casting these angry looks?' They hushed me up with a gesture, but I could not understand their behaviour, although I decided to be quiet. When salaah was over, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) called me. Neither did he beat or rebuke me, nor was he harsh to me. He simply said, 'It is not permitted to talk in salaah. Salaah is the occasion for praising the glory and magificence of Allah and reciting the Qur'an.' By Allah, I have never met, before or after, a teacher as affectionate as the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam)."

Another interpretation is given by Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) in which he says that Qunoot means devotion. The words of Mujahid given above are based on this interpretation. Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) says, "In the beginning, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) used to tie himself up with a string while in Tahajjud, so that he might prevent sleep over-powering him. It was for this that the following verse was revealed in the Qur'an:

"We have not revealed unto thee (Muhammad) (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) this Qur'an that Thou should be distressed." (XX: 2) It is reported in many ahaadith that the Prophet's (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam) feet would get swollen on account of standing for long hours during Tahajjud. Out of mere kindness and affection for his followers, he, however, advised them to be moderate in their worship, lest any excessiveness should lead to deflection. That is why we find him forbidding a woman from tying herself up for avoiding sleep during salaah.

We should remember that a salaah with long rakaat is surely better and more valuable, provided the endurance limits are not exceeded. After all, there is some meaning in the Prophet's (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) offering such lengthy salaah that would give him swollen feet. When the companions requested him to reduce his toil in worship, as he had been assured of forgiveness in Soorah Fath:

(That Allah may forgive thee of thy sins that which is past and that which is to come (XLVIII:2), he used to say, "Why should I not, then, be a grateful slave of Allah?"

It is stated in a hadith that when, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) offered his salaah, his bosom would give a constant groaning sound, which resembled that of a grinding mill. In another hadith, this sound is likened to that of a boiling kettle. Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anho) narrates, "On the eve of Badr, I noticed that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) stood under a tree, busy in salaah and crying before Allah all night long till daybreak." It is said in a number of ahaadith, "Allah is very much pleased with certain persons one of them is he who forsakes his bed shared with his dear and lovely wife and engages himself in Tahajjud on a winter night. Allah is very much pleased with him, takes pride in him, and in spite of being All-knowing inquires from the angels, 'What made this slave of mine forsake his bed and stand up like this?' The Angels reply, 'The hope of winning Thy Bounty and Grace, and the fear of Thy displeasure.' At this Allah says, 'Listen, I bestow upon him what he hopes for and grant him refuge from what he is afraid of."

The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) says, "None receives a better reward from Allah more than he who is blessed to offer two 'rakaats of salaah."

It has often been mentioned in the Qur'an and ahaadith that the Angels are perpetually engaged in worship.

There are some who shall remain in ruku and some in sajdah till eternity. Allah has combined all these postures of the Angels in our salaah, so that we may get our shares from each type of their worship. Recitation of the Qur'an in salaah is an addition over and above their worship. While salaah is (the sum total of all the postures in the Angels' methods of worship, it gives out its best when it is offered by a person possessing angelic habits. That is why the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) says. "For (a good) salaah, keep your back and stomach light." The back of a person is said to be light when he has very few worldly encumbrances, and his stomach is light when he eats moderately to avoid indolence and laziness, which is a sure outcome of gluttony.

REQUISITES OF GOOD SALAAT SUGGESTED BY SOOFIA

The Soofia write: "There are twelve thousand virtues in salaat, which can be achieved through twelve points. If a person is to acquire full benefit from salaat, then, he must take care of these points. Sincerity is of course essential at every step. These points are as follows:

1. Knowledge: An action performed without knowledge is far inferior to the one done with full knowledge about it. We should therefore know:

- (a) Which of the Islamic Practices are fardh and which are sunnat.
- (b) What is fardh and what is sunnat in wudhu and salaat.
- (c) How does Satan cause obstruction in the proper observance of salaat.

2. Wudhu: We must try to:

- (a) Clean our heart of jealousy and malice, just as we wash the other parts of our body.
- (b) Keep ourselves clean of sins. :
- (c) Be neither wasteful nor abstemious in the use of water.

3. Dress: It should be:

- (a) Got through honest living. (b) Clean.
- (c) According to the Sunnat, e.g. the ankles should not be covered.
- (d) Simple, and should not display vanity and pride.

4. Time: We should be:

- (a) Able to tell correct time at any moment.
- (b) Always watchful about Azaan.
- (c) Particular about the time of salaat, lest we should be too late for it.

5. Qiblah: There are three things to be ensured in facing Qiblah:

- (a) We must face Qiblah physically.
- (b) Have the heart in union with Allah, for He is the Qiblah of the heart.
- (c) Be as attentive as a slave is before his master.

6. Intention: For this we need to be particular about three things:

- (a) We must be definite as to what salaat we are offering.
- (b) Remain constantly conscious of our presence before Allah, Who sees us.
- (c) Have perfect faith that Allah know all that is in our hearts.

7. Takbeer Tahreemah: The essentials of 'Takbeer Tahreemah ' are:

- (a) To pronounce the words correctly.
- (b) To raise both hands right up to the ears. This signifies that we have severed our connection with all, except Allah.
- (c) To feel the greatness of Allah in our heart when we say Allaho Akbar.

8. Qiyaam: While in Qiyaam we should:

- (a) Keep our gaze at the place of sajdah.
- (b) Feel in our heart that we are standing before Allah.
- (c) Not think of anything else.

9. Qiraat: The essentials of Qiraat are:

- (a) To recite the Qur'an with Tajweed.
- (b) To ponder on the meanings of what we recite.
- (c) To bind ourselves to what we recite.

10. Ruku: The essentials of Ruku are:

- (a) To keep the back quite straight i.e. the whole body above the legs should be in one straight line.
- (b) To hold the knees firmly with fingers spread apart.
- (c) To recite Tasbeeh with humility and devotion.

11. Sajdah: The essentials of Sajdah are:

- (a) To place the hands flat and close to the ears.
- (b) To keep elbows raised above the ground.
- (c) To recite Tasbeeh with devotion.

12. Qa'dah: The essentials of Qa'dah are:

- (a) To sit up on the left foot, keeping the right one erect.
- (b) To recite Tashahhud with devotion, keeping the meaning in mind for it contains greetings for the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) and prayer for the Muslim brethren.
- (c) To consider the concluding Salaam a definite greeting to the Angels as well as the people on the right and on the left.

As has been said already, sincerity is the essence of all these points, which requires us:

1. To offer salaah with the sole purpose of pleasing Allah.
2. To understand that it is only through the grace and favour of Allah that we are able to offer salaah.
3. To hope for the reward promised by Allah.

SIGNIFICANCE OF WORDING OF SALAAT

Salaah is really a very blessed and auspicious observance. Every word uttered in it is imbued with Allah's greatness and sanctity. Thanaa, the opening prayer of salaah, contains extremely virtuous and devotional meaning viz:

(1) Subhaanakaallaahumma: O, Allah! I praise Thy Sanctity. Thou art free from all blemishes. Thou art above anything that is not the best.

(2) Wa bihamdika: I praise Thy Glory. All virtues and beauties are admittedly for Thee and benefit Thee.

(3) Wo tabaarakasmuka: Thy name is blessed: and in fact so blessed that blesses everything over which it is mentioned.

(4) Wo ta'aaJaa jadduka: Thy eminence is most exalted. Thy magnificence is most sublime.

(5) Wo laa ilaaha ghairuk: There is no god save Thee.

None has ever been and none shall ever be fit to be worshipped save Thee.

Similarly in ruku we recite "Subhaana rabbiyal azeem."

which means:

"My Magnificent and Almighty Allah is free from all blemishes. I express my humbleness and weakness before His Greatness by bowing my head before Him (for the bowing of head is the symbol of humbleness and submission, just as a stiff neck is the sign of haughtiness and pride). I submit before all Thy commandments and I take upon me Thy service. I am at Thy command. Thou art really very Great and I submit before Thy greatness. "

Similarly in sajdah we express our submission before Allah the Highest, and declare Him above all defects. Our head, which is considered as the most superb part of our body along with our eyes, ears, nose and tongue, is placed on- ground before Him in the hope that He would show mercy and bestow His blessings on us. Standing with our hands folded before Him this was the first expression of our humbleness and submission. This was further augmented by the .bending of our head in ruku and it reached its climax when we placed our head on the ground before Him. In fact the whole salaah is an indication of humbleness and submission, and therefore a means of advancement and success in the world and- in the hereafter. May Allah through His Kindness arouse me and all the Muslims to offer such a salaah. .

SALAAT OF FEW SAHAABAH, TAABI'EES AND SOOFIA

It is said about Hadhrat Hasan (Radhiyallahu anho) . that whenever he performed wudhu, his face grew pale.

When someone inquired from him its cause. he replied. "It is time to stand before the most Majestic and Irresistible Sovereign." On reaching the gate of the masjid he would say,

"O Allah! Thy slave is at Thy door, O, the most Beneficent! Here is a sinner before Thee: Thou hast enjoined upon the good amongst us to overlook the faults of the bad. O Allah, Thou art Good and I am bad So for the sake of all that is most beautiful in Thee, overlook all that is ugly in me. O, The most Bountiful."

He would then enter the masjid.

Zainul Aabideen (Rahmatullah alaih) used to offer one thousand rakaats of nafl salaah daily. He never missed his Tahajjud, whether in journey or at home. His face grew pale when he performed his wudhu and he would tremble when he stood in salaah. Somebody asked him the reason for that. He said, "Don't you know before Whom I am going to stand?" Once when he was engaged in salaah, a fire broke out in his house. He continued his salaah most calmly. When asked about it, he remarked, "The fire of the hereafter kept me unmindful of the fire of this world." He once said, "The pride of a proud person surprises me. The day before, he was a drop of a dirty fluid and tomorrow he will be carrion, and still he is proud." He used to say, "It is strange that people do so much for the world, which is transitory, and do nothing for the hereafter, where they are to live for ever." He used to help the poor in the darkness of night, so that they should not even know who helped them. It came to light only after his death that no less than one hundred families were being supported by him.

It is said about Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anho) that the colour of his face would change and he would tremble at the approach of the hour of salaah. On being asked by someone he said, "This is the time for discharging the trust which the Heaven and the Earth and even the mountains were afraid to bear. I do not know if I shall be able to discharge it."

It is said of Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) that, when he heard the Azaan, he wept so much that his shawl would get wet with his tears, his veins .. would swell and his eyes would become red. Somebody said to him, "We do not see anything in the Azaan that should make you so nervous." He replied, "If people understood what the mu'azzin announced to them. they would give up sleep and forsake their comforts." He then explained to him the warning conveyed by each word of the Azaan.

A person narrates, "I happened to offer my Asr prayer with Zunnoon Misri (Rahmatullah alaih). When he uttered 'Allah' (in takbeer), he was so much struck with awe on account of Allah's Majesty, as though his soul had departed, and when he uttered 'Akbar' I felt my heart would burst with fear of Allah.

Uwais Qarni (Rahmatullah alaih), a famous saint and the most exalted of all the Taabi'ees, would spend his whole night sometimes in ruku and sometimes in sajdah.

Asaam (Rahmatullah alaih) once inquired from Haatim Zaahid Balkhi (Rahmatullah alaih) how he offered his salaah. He replied:

"When the hour for salaah draws near, I perform my wudhu thoroughly and go to the place of salaah. When I stand for salaah, I visualise the Ka'bah in front of me, the Siraat under my feet, Paradise on my right, Hell on my left and the Angel of death over my head; and I think that this is my last salaah, so I may have no opportunity to say another; Allah alone knows what goes on in my heart at that time. Then I say 'Allahu Akbar' with full humility and recite the Holy Qur'an, pondering over its meaning. I do my ruku and sajdah with full humbleness and submission, and finish my salaah quite calmly, hoping that Allah will accept it through His mercy, and fearing that it may be rejected if it is judged on its merits."

Asaam (Rahmatullah alaih) asked him, "Since when have you been offering such salaah?" Haatim (Rahmatullah alaih) replied, "I have been doing it for the last thirty years." Asaam (Rahmatullah alaih) wept and said, "I have never been so fortunate as to offer a single salaah of this kind."

It is said that Haatim (Rahmatullah alaih) once missed his salaah with jamaah and felt for it too much. A couple of persons came to condole with him on this loss. He started weeping and then said, "If I had lost one of my sons, half the population of Balkh town would have come to me for condolence, but on the loss of my jamaah you are the only people condoling with me. It is only because people regard the afflictions in the Hereafter as lighter than the affliction of this world."

Sa'eed bin Musayyab (Rahmatullah alaih) says, "For the last twenty years, I have never been out of the masjid at the time of the Azaan."

Muhammad bin Waasi' (Radmatullah alaih) says, "I love three things in this life; a friend who could warn me on my slips, bread sufficient to keep me alive, and salaah (with jamaat) such that Allah may condone its defects and give me reward for anything good in it."

Hadhrat Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah (Radhiyallahu anho) was once leading the salaah. When the salaah was over, he said to the people, "Satan made a dangerous attack on me while I was leading the salaah. He made me think that as I was leading salaah, I am the best of all of you. I shall never lead the salaah again."

Maimoon bin Mahraan (Rahmatullah alaih) once reached the masjid when the jamaat was over. He recited 'Innaa lillaahi wa innaa ilaihi raaji-oon' and said, "The reward of this salaah with jamaat was dearer to me than sovereignty over Iraq."

It is said of the Companions that they would mourn for three days if they happened to miss the first takbeer and for seven days if they missed jamaat.

Bakr bin Abdullah once said, "You can speak to your Lord and Master any time you like." "How?" inquired somebody. He replied, "Perform your wudhu properly and stand up for salaah."

Aa'ishah (Radhiyallahu anha) says, "The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) would be among us (family members) talking and listening, but on approach of salaah hour, he would all of a sudden behave as if he had never known us and would be completely absorbed in Allah .."

It is said of Sa'eed Tannookhi (Rahmatullah alaih) that, as long as he remained in salaah, tears would flow from his eyes incessantly.

Somebody asked Khalaf bin Ayyoob (Rahmatullah alaih), "Do not the flies annoy you in your salaah?" His answer was: "Even the bad characters in society patiently bear the lashes of the police to boast of their endurance afterwards. Why should I be disturbed by mere flies, while standing in the presence of my Creator?" .

It is said in 'Bahjatun nufoos' that one of the Sahabah was once offering Tahajjud when a thief came and took away his horse. He noticed it, but he did not break his salaah. Somebody asked him, "Why did you not break salaah and catch the thief?" He replied, "I was engaged in something far more valuable than the horse."

It is said about Ali (Radhiyallahu anho) that whenever an arrow got stuck into his body (in a battle), this was drawn out during his salaah. Once he got an arrow stuck into his thigh. This could not be extracted, in spite of several efforts, due to severe pain felt by him. When he was busy in his nafl salaah and prostrate in sajdah, the people drew out the arrow with force. When he finished his salaah, he asked the people who had collected around him, "Have you gathered to take out the arrow?" When they told him that it was already taken out, he informed them that he had no feeling of pain during the extraction.

Muslim bin Yasaar (Rahmatullah alaih), when he stood up for salaah, said to his family members, "You may keep on talking; I shall not be aware of what you talk."

It is said of Aamir bin Abdullah (Rahmatullah alaih) that he would not even hear the beating of a drum while in salaah, nor to speak of the talk of people around him. A person asked him, "Are you conscious of anything while in salaah?" He replied, "Yes, I am conscious of the fact that I have to stand one day before Allah, whence I shall either be sent to Paradise or Hell." The person said, "No, I do not mean that. Do you come to know of anything we

talk around you?" He replied, "It is better that spears pass through my body rather than I grow conscious of your conversation while I am in salaah." He used to say, "My conviction in the things of the Hereafter is so perfect that it is impossible for it to improve, even if I happen to see those things with my physical eyes."

A pious man was asked, "Do you ever think of this world while you are in salaah?" He replied, "I never think of this world, either in salaah or out of it." Another such man was asked, "Do you think of anything while in salaah?" He replied, "Is there anything more attractive than salaah itself to think of?"

In 'Bahjatun Nufoos' it is written about a Shaikh that he had either been offering fardh or nafl salaah or been absorbed in Zikr without break, right from Zuhr to Fajr of the next day. After Fajr, while continuing Zikr, he was overpowered by slumber, when immediately he recited Istighfaar and the following prayer:

"I seek refuge in Allah from the eye that does not get satiated with sleep." It is said about another Shaikh that he would go to bed and try to sleep. But when he failed in his attempt, he would rise up and engage himself in salaah and would say, "a Allah! Thou knowest very well that it is the fear of the Fire of Hell that has caused my sleep to disappear."

There are so many stories about the pious people spending their nights praying in eagerness and love for Allah that these cannot possibly be covered in one book. We have in fact lost the taste for the pleasures of such pursuits so much that we have begun to doubt the veracity of such facts. But these have been related so frequently and 'continuously that if we doubt them we can as well doubt history, for frequency and continuity in narration about an event vouch safe its correctness without dispute.

Again we see with our own eyes people spending the whole night (sometimes even standing) for witnessing a show in a cinema or a theatre. They neither get tired nor does sleep overpower them. When such impious deeds, if indulged in, have such an attraction, then what makes us doubt that the spiritual pursuits can be so attractive and tasteful, while persons partaking in them are specially endowed with additional strength and endurance by Allah? The only reason for our doubt is our ignorance, which is like that of an immature child about the experiences of puberty. May Allah enable us to attain the heights where we may be able to taste the pleasures of His worship.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE

According to the Soofia, salaah is in fact a supplication to and speech with Allah, and therefore needs thorough concentration. In case of other observances, we need not be so attentive. For example, the essence of Zakaat is to spend money for the pleasure of Allah. Spending in itself is so hard on a person that even if he does it inattentively he would feel the pinch of it. Similarly, fasting requires giving up eating and drinking and sexual satisfaction. All these restrictions are really very hard even if not observed by proper attention and devotion. On the other hand, Zikr and recitation of the Qur'an are the chief constituents of Salaah. If these are not done intelligently and attentively, they can make neither supplication nor speech. They are just like the ravings of a person in high fever, which do not require any conscious effort nor carry any meaning for the listener. It is therefore necessary that we should be completely attentive when in salaah, otherwise our salaah will be like the talk of a person in his Sleep, which carries no meaning for the listeners. nor any benefit accrues from it. In the same way, Allah pays no heed to a salaah that is offered inattentively and without concentration. But even if our salaah is not up to the mark. as compared with that of the eminent people in the past, we should not give up the practice. It is absolutely incorrect to think that there is no use offering a salaah unless it is perfect. To offer an imperfect salaah is far better than to give it up completely, as this shall result in punishments of a very drastic nature in the Hereafter. A school of Ulama have declared that person to be a kaafir who intentionally discards salaah (as discussed in full in Chapter I).

It is therefore imperative on all of us to make sincere and genuine efforts to do justice to our salaah and pray to Allah to grant us the ability to offer salaah similar to that of the eminent people in the past, so that we may have at least one salaah of that nature to our credit for presentation before Allah.

In the end, it may be pointed out that the Muhadditheen are rather liberal in accepting the authenticity of the ahaadith relating to the rewards of different religious observances. As for the stories about saints and pious people, these are part of ordinary history and therefore on a different footing.