



A SERMON BY USTAZ ISHAQUE AMFOH ON THE TOPIC: SALAT; THE SOURCE OF INNER PEACE, DELIVERED DURING THE 37TH ANNUAL NATIONAL RALLY OF THE MAJLIS KHUDDAMUL AHMADIYYA GHANA AT GSTS, TAKORADI

Assalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuhu

Mr. Chairman, Delegates from the office of the Ameer and Missionary In-charge, Regional Missionary and President, Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya, Ghana, Colleague missionaries, all national and regional Aamila members present, audience, I salute you with the Islamic salutation of peace Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullah Wabarakatuhu. I am highly honoured to be called upon to share with you a discussion on salat: the source of inner peace. This is a broad topic and I pray that I would be able to deal with it within the minutes available to me. Salat is the second pillar of Islam. After the confession of one's faith, one has to practically demonstrate the profession of such declaration. It is in the light of this demonstration that Allah the Almighty states in the Holy Qur'an

'Woe unto those who pray but are unmindful of their prayers' (107: 5-6); that is to say those who are unaware of the reality of *Salat*.

Mr. Chairman, the topic of my discussion for this dawn therefore is, 'Salat: the source of inner peace.'

First of all, it should be well understood that Prayer is an entreaty which a worshipper makes to God at the time of his separation from Him in torment and with a melting heart that he may be granted a meeting with God, inasmuch as no one can be purified unless God purifies him and no one can meet with God until God brings about a meeting. Man is bonded in a diversity of chains and collars. He desires to get rid of them but they persist. Despite man's intense desire that he may be purified, his ego stumbles. It is for God to purify a person from sin. There is no power that can purify you by force. God has prescribed Prayer for the generation of pure inner

sentiments. This is the most reason why Allah says in the Qur'an that the contentment of the heart is solely realized in the performance of prayer.

Furthermore, the *Salat* is a prayer which is submitted to God in travail and burning with a heart aflame, so that vicious thoughts and evil designs may be gotten rid of and a holy love and a pure relationship may be established and one may be enabled to keep to God's commandments. The word *Salat* indicates that true Prayer is not offered only with the tongue but must be accompanied by burning and sizzling and being consumed by fire. God Almighty does not accept Prayer until the worshipper at the time of prayer arrives on the edge of death. Because, *Salat* is a sure way of taking one nearer to God.

Salat is Prayer at its very highest level, but people do not appreciate it duly. In this age, many Muslims are not devoted to frequent *salat* performance. These people are unaware of the reality of *Salat* and defame God's commandments. For a seeker of truth, mere supplication is of no benefit compared with the *Salat*. The way of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was that at a time of difficulty he made his ablutions and stood up in *Salat* and made his supplications in the *Salat*. My experience is that nothing takes one so near to God as *Salat*. The various postures of the *Salat* demonstrate respect, humility and meekness. In *Qiyam* (standing posture) the worshipper stands with his arms folded as a slave stands respectfully before his master and king. In *Ruku* (bowing) the worshipper bends down in humility. The climax of humility is reached in *Sajda* (prostration) which indicates extreme helplessness (*Speech at the Annual Conference, 1906, pp. 6--8*).

I tell you again that if you wish to establish a true relationship with God, hold fast to *Salat* in such a way that your body and your tongue and your spiritual designs and emotions should all become *Salat* (*Malfoozat, Vol. I, p. 170*).

Moreover, It is a supplication addressed to the Lord of Honour without which a person cannot be truly alive, nor can he procure any means of security and happiness. When God Almighty bestows this grace upon a person it is only then that he obtains true comfort. From that moment he will begin to feel pleasure and delight in *Salat*. As he derives pleasure from delicious food he will begin to derive pleasure from his weeping and crying in *Salat*. Before he experiences that

condition in his *Salat* it is necessary that he should persist in *Salat* as he swallows bitter medicine so that he may be restored to health. In the same way it is necessary for him to persist in *Salat* and in making his supplications while he derives no pleasure from them. In such condition he should seek pleasure and delight in *Salat* with the supplication: *Allah* Thou knowest how blind and sightless I am, and at the moment I am like the dead. I know that in a little while I shall be called and shall present myself before Thee and no one will be able to stop me. But my heart is blind and unenlightened. Do Thou cause to descend upon it such a flame of light that thereby it may be inspired with Thy love and devotion to Thee. Do Thou bestow upon me such grace that I shall not be raised up sightless and join the blind. When one supplicates in this manner and persists in the supplication he will see that a time will arrive when something will descend upon him while he is engaged in such type of prayer which will melt his heart (*Malfoozat, Vol IV, p.321-322*).

Those who are strict in the observance of their Prayers (23:10); this means those believers who are themselves watchful over their Prayers and do not need any reminder from anyone else, their relationship with God has the quality that the remembrance of God becomes dear to them and becomes the source of their comfort and their very life, so that they are constantly watchful of it and every moment of theirs is devoted to it and they do not like to be parted from it at any time.

It is obvious that a person is extremely watchful every moment only of that the loss of which he deems would spell his ruin, like one who, while traversing a waterless wilderness in which there is no likelihood of his finding water or food for hundreds of miles, is most watchful of such provisions as he has with him, holding them as dear as his life because of his conviction that their loss would mean his death. Thus, the true believers are watchful of their prayers like such a traveler. They do not neglect their prayers even at the risk of loss of wealth or honor or of incurring anyone's displeasure. Any apprehension of missing their prayer causes them great anguish and brings them near unto death. They cannot endure the thought of being neglectful of the remembrance of God for a single moment. They deem prayer and the remembrance of God their essential nourishment on which depends their very life. This condition is reached when God Almighty loves them and a bright flame of His personal love, which is the very soul of their being, descends upon their heart and bestows a new life upon them and thereby their spiritual being is illumined and becomes alive. In such a condition they occupy themselves with the

remembrance of God, not out of any sense of formality or desire for appearance, but because God makes their spiritual life, which they hold dear, dependent upon the nourishment provided by His remembrance, as He has made man's physical life dependent upon physical nourishment. Therefore they love this spiritual nourishment more than physical nourishment and are very careful of its loss. This is the consequence of the spirit which is caused to descend upon them like a flame and which generates perfect communion with the love of God in their hearts. They do not desire to be separated from it for a single moment. They suffer for it and endure torments on its account but do not wish to be separated from it for a moment, and are constantly watchful of their prayers. This becomes natural for them, inasmuch as God has made the *Salat* which is their loving remembrance of Him an essential nourishment for them, and by manifesting His personal love for them has bestowed upon them the delicious delight of Divine remembrance. In this way the remembrance of God becomes as dear to them, and even dearer than life itself. The Personal love of God is a new soul that falls on their hearts like a flame and makes *Salat* and the remembrance of God a nourishment for them. Thus they believe that they live not by bread and water but by the *Salat* and the remembrance of *Allah*. This is evident in the lifestyle of the Holy Prophet_{sa} where he would stand up for prayers in the middle of the night to such an extent that his feet got swollen and tears wet his prayer mat.

Additionally, *Salat* strengthens a believer's spiritual faculties. The remembrance of God coupled with love which is called the *Salat*, truly becomes their food without which they cannot survive and which they guard and watch constantly, like a traveler who in the midst of a stark wilderness guards his scanty supply of bread and water. The Absolute Bestower has appointed this condition also as a stage in the spiritual progress of man which is the last stage. The remembrance of God together with love, the technical name of which is *Salat*, truly becomes for a worshipper a substitute for nourishment. Indeed he repeatedly seeks to sacrifice his soul in return for this nourishment and cannot survive without it, as fish cannot survive without water. He deems a single moment away from God as death itself. His soul is always in prostration at the threshold of God and he finds all his comfort in God. He is convinced that if he were parted from the remembrance of God for even a moment, he would die. As food generates a feeling of freshness in the body and strengthens the physical senses like seeing and hearing, in the same way at that stage the remembrance of God which is coupled with love and devotion strengthens a believer's

spiritual faculties, that is to say, his eye acquires the faculty of beholding visions clearly and in a subtle manner, and his ears hear the word of God Almighty and his tongue gives expression to that word in a clear, bright and delightful manner. He sees true dreams frequently which are fulfilled like the advent of the dawn, and on account of his pure and loving relationship with God he partakes of a great number of true dreams that convey good tidings to him. This is the stage at which a believer feels that the love of God serves him as nourishment. This new birth takes place after the spiritual framework becomes ready, and then the spirit which is aflame with the Personal love of God falls upon the heart of such a believer and suddenly a superior power lifts him above the stage of humanity. This is the stage which is designated spiritually as a new creation. At this stage God Almighty causes a blazing flame of His Personal love, which is designated the spirit, to descend upon the heart of a believer and thereby removes all its darkness and pollutions and weaknesses. With the breathing of this spirit, the beauty of the believer which initially was at a lower stage arrives at its climax and he acquires a spiritual glory, and the narrowness of a vicious life is totally removed and the believer feels that a new spirit has entered into him which was not there before. He acquires a wonderful sense of serenity and contentment through the spirit. His personal love surges up like a fountain and waters the plant of his servitude.

The fire that in the beginning had only possessed a certain degree of warmth blazes up at this stage and burning up all the straw and tinder of the human self brings it under the complete control of the Divine and comprehends all the limbs. Then, like a piece of iron which when it is heated in a fierce fire becomes red and looks like fire itself, such a believer manifests Divine signs and actions, as the red hot piece of iron manifests the effects and qualities of fire. This does not mean that such a believer becomes God. Only it is a characteristic of Divine love that bestows its own colour upon that which is manifest, while the inner qualities of servitude and its weakness continue. At this stage God becomes the bread of the believer which sustains his life, and God becomes the water by drinking which the believer is delivered from death, and becomes the cool breeze that comforts the heart of the believer. At this stage it would not be inappropriate to say metaphorically that God enters into the believer and saturates his whole being and makes his heart His throne; then he beholds not through his own spirit but through the spirit of God and hears through it and speaks through it and walks through it and overcomes his enemies through it

inasmuch as at this stage he arrives at the station of non-being and the spirit of God bestows upon him a new life through the manifestation of its personal love for him. Then he becomes the illustration of the verse: Then We develop it into a new creation; so blessed be *Allah*, the Best of creators (23: 15) (*Zameema, Braheen Ahmadiyyah Part V, Now published in Ruhani Khazain (London, 1984) vol. 21., pp. 54-58*).

In addition, *Salat* should be carried out in an excellent manner. It is not enough to be satisfied with the outward performance of *Salat*. Most people observe the *Salat* only formally and get through it quickly as if it were a burdensome task which should be gotten rid of speedily. Then there are those who get through the *Salat* quickly and thereafter occupy themselves with long drawn out prayers which take twice or three times as much time as the *Salat*, whereas the *Salat* itself is nothing but prayer. He who does not observe it in that spirit and does not occupy himself with supplication in the course of it fails to observe the *Salat*. You should seek to make your *Salat* delicious like food and cold water, lest it should bring woe upon you rather than blessing. *Salat* is an obligation due to God. It should be carried out in an excellent manner (*Malfoozat, Vol VI p. 370*). Also, Supplication should be made during *Salat*. The *Salat* is the effective criterion of the piety of a worshipper. He who weeps throughout his *Salat* is bestowed security. As a child weeps loudly in its mother's lap and is comforted by the love and compassion of its mother, in the same way he who supplicates God with humility and a melting heart in his *Salat* places himself in the lap of God's providence and compassion. He who finds no delight in the *Salat* has not yet truly tasted the pleasure of believing. *Salat* does not merely mean physical postures and movements. Some people get through the *Salat* quickly like the nibbling of a hen and then start long supplications, that is to say perform the *Salat* quickly as if it were a formal ceremony, whereas that is the time for supplicating God Almighty. Having emerged from it without any gain they start their supplications. Make your supplications during the *Salat*, make the *Salat* a means of supplication and prayer (*Malfoozat, Vol. II, p. 145*).

The philosophy of five daily prayers

What are the five daily prayer services? They are pictures of your different conditions during the course of the day. You pass through five conditions at a time of trial and your nature demands that you must pass through them. The first of these is when you are warned that you are about to

be afflicted with a calamity. For instance, imagine that a warrant has been issued for your presence in court. This is the first condition which disturbs your serenity and contentment. This condition resembles the time when the sun begins to decline, as on the receipt of the court warrant. Corresponding to this condition the noon prayer service has been prescribed, the time of which begins with the decline of the sun.

You experience the second condition when you are drawn close to the place of the calamity. For instance, when having been taken into custody under the warrant you are produced before the magistrate. At that time you are in terror and the light of security seems as if it were about to depart from you. This condition resembles the time when the light of the sun diminishes and the human eye can fix itself upon the sun and it becomes obvious that the time of its setting is near. Corresponding to this spiritual condition the afternoon prayer service has been prescribed.

The third condition sets in when you lose all hope of deliverance from the calamity. For instance, when after the recording of the prosecution evidence which is designed to bring about your ruin, you are charged with an offense and a charge-sheet is prepared. At this time you almost lose your senses and you begin to think of yourself as a prisoner. That condition resembles the time when the sun sets and hope of daylight comes to an end. The sunset prayer service is prescribed corresponding to this spiritual condition.

The fourth condition is when you are afflicted by the calamity and its deep darkness envelops you completely. For instance, when after the close of the evidence you are convicted and sentenced and are committed to the custody of the police. This condition resembles the time of nightfall, when everything falls into deep darkness. The evening prayer service is prescribed corresponding to this spiritual condition.

When you have spent a certain time in the darkness of the affliction, Divine mercy surges up and delivers you from the darkness, as the dawn succeeds the darkness of the night and daylight begins to appear. The dawn prayer service is prescribed corresponding to this spiritual condition. God Almighty in view of your five changing conditions has prescribed five prayer services for you. You can thus understand that these services have been prescribed for the benefit of your soul. If you desire security against these calamities you should not neglect the five daily services,

as they are a reflection of your inner and spiritual conditions. The *Salat* is a remedy for the calamities that may threaten. You know not what type of circumstances the new day might confront you with. So before the beginning of the day supplicate your Divine Master earnestly that the day may prove to be a source of benefit and blessing for you {*Kashti Nuh (Qadian, Ziaul Islam Press, 1902) Now printed in Ruhani Khazain, Vol.19, pp. 63-65*}.

The *Salat* is an instrument for delivery from sin. It is a quality of the *Salat* that it makes a person secure against sin and vice. So seek a *Salat* of that type and try to make your *Salat* such. *Salat* is the soul of bounties. The grace of God Almighty is received through *Salat*. Then observe it duly so that you might become heirs to the bounties of God Almighty (*Malfoozat, Vol. V, p. 126*).

What is the *Salat*? It is the submission of one's humility and one's weakness to God and to seek the fulfillment of one's needs from Him. In the course of the *Salat* the worshipper sometimes stands before God with folded arms signifying his consciousness of the glory of God and his eagerness to carry out His Commandments; at other times he falls into prostration in complete humility and devotion and seeks the fulfillment of his needs. Sometimes, like a beggar he praises Him from Whom he begs and proclaiming His greatness and His glory seeks to move His mercy and supplicates Him. A faith that has nothing comparable to the *Salat* is altogether empty.... *Salat* means the love and fear of God and the preoccupation of the heart with His remembrance. That is faith. He who seeks escape from Prayer is no better than an animal. To eat and drink and sleep away the hours like an animal is not faith. This is the practice of the disbelievers...For him who desires to meet God and is anxious to reach Him the *Salat* is a conveyance by climbing into which he can arrive at his goal speedily. He who gives up the *Salat*, how shall he arrive?

Since the Muslims have abandoned the *Salat* or have given up observing it with the serenity and comfort and love of the heart, being neglectful of its true reality, Islam has begun to decline. The time when the *Salat* was observed properly was a great time for Islam, when it had become dominant in the whole world. Since the Muslims have given up the proper performance of the *Salat* they themselves have been abandoned. It is the *Salat* performed with heartfelt earnestness that delivers a person from all difficulties. It is my repeated experience that I pray for the resolving of some difficulty and while I am still occupied with the *Salat* God resolves the difficulty.

REVIEWED

By SHOoba ISHA'AT - MKAGH at 6:32 pm, Nov 29, 2016

What happens in the *Salat*? One raises one's hands in supplication and the other listens to him well. Then a time comes when He Who listens speaks and responds to the supplicator. This is the situation in the *Salat*. The worshipper falls into prostration before God Almighty and submits his difficulties and his needs to Him. The result of true and real *Salat* is that soon the time comes when God Almighty responds to the supplicant and comforts him with His words. Such an experience is not possible without the true observance of *Salat* (*Malfoozat, Vol V, pp. 253-255*).

The *Salat* is truly so called when a sincere and holy relationship is established with God and the worshipper becomes so devoted to the pleasure of God Almighty and His obedience and so upholds his faith above all worldly values that he is ever ready to lay down his life in the cause of God. It is only then that it can be said that his *Salat* is worthy to be called by that name. So long as this condition is not established and the worshipper does not become a model of sincerity and faithfulness his prayers and other actions are without effect (*Malfoozat, Vol. VI, p. 240*).

Do not perform the *Salat* as a mere ceremony, but observe it with the burning and the melting of the heart and supplicate continuously in the *Salat*. It is the key to the resolving of all difficulties. In addition to the prescribed prayers and glorification supplicate much in your vernacular so that your heart should melt, and continue this effort till you arrive at that condition for that is the means of the achieving of all true objectives. All physical postures during the *Salat* should represent the condition of the heart also. When the worshipper stands in the *Salat* his heart should also be standing erect for God's obedience; when he bows down the heart should also bow down; and when he goes into prostration the heart should also prostrate itself, which means that the heart should not let go of God at any time. When he reaches that condition he will begin to get rid of sins (*Malfoozat, Vol. VI, pp. 367-368*).

Mr. Chairman, all in all, the above discussions have thrown more light to the *salat* performance, and I believe if much devotion and attention is given to its performance as it should be, the world will observe such a spiritual revolution full of blessings, security, peace and tranquility. It is my fervent prayer that the youth of today should pay heed to *salat* performance and become so active in order to enjoy this inner peace associated with *salat*. Akhirul da'wanaa wa anil laahi rabbil aalameen.

9

REVIEWED

By SHOoba ISHA'AT - MKAGH at 6:32 pm, Nov 29, 2016