

Fast 9: Prayer — Means of Purification

- In a hadith, the saying of prayers is compared to washing oneself in a river. It is reported:

“The Holy Prophet said: If one of you has a river at his door in which he washes himself five times a day, what do you think? Would it leave any dirt on him? The Companions said: It would not leave any dirt on him (and he would be perfectly clean). The Prophet said: This is an example of the five prayers, with which Allah blots off all the evils of a person.”

By the blotting out of evils is meant curbing the tendency to go against Divine injunctions. The person who feels himself in the Divine presence five times a day has his mind purified of all scum, just as the bather is purified of physical dirt.

- Prayer, according to the Holy Quran and Hadith, is the means for the purification of the **soul**. The purification of the **body** and the **garments** that one wears is declared in the Quran to be necessary as a preparation for prayer.
- The 74th chapter of the Quran is the second revelation which the Holy Prophet received. Its first five verses may be quoted here to show the importance of outward cleanliness in the religion of Islam. Addressing the Holy Prophet, it says:

“O you who wrap yourself up! Arise and warn, and your Lord do magnify, and your garments do purify, and uncleanness do shun” (74:1–5).

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ ﴿١﴾ قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ ﴿٢﴾ وَرَبَّكَ
فَكَبِّرْ ﴿٣﴾ وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ ﴿٤﴾ وَالرُّجُزَ
فَاهْجُرْ ﴿٥﴾

“Warning the people” (i.e., warning them of the consequences of wrong-doing), “magnifying the Lord” which is done through prayer, and “**purifying the garments and the body**”, are laid down here as three fundamental duties.

- The two ideas, the purification of the body and of the soul, are very often mentioned together in the Quran, for example:

“Surely Allah loves those who turn much to Him, and He loves those who purify themselves.” (2:222)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

“Certainly a mosque founded on observance of duty from the first day is more deserving that you should

لَمْسَجِدًا أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ ﴿٥٠﴾

stand in it. In it are men who love to purify themselves. And Allah loves those who purify themselves.” (9:108)

فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَّطَهَّرُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ
الْمُطَهَّرِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

In the second verse above, by those “who love to purify themselves” are meant those who purify themselves bodily to go to the mosque for prayer and purify their hearts by observance of duty.

- Hadith also lays special stress on outward purification. According to one hadith, “purification is the key to prayer”; and according to another, “purification is one-half of faith”. Inward purity is the real aim, but outward purity is a necessary preparation. A **pure mind in a pure body** is the watchword of Islam. Here cleanliness is not *next* to godliness but it is half of godliness or faith.
- The Holy Quran further says:

“O children of Adam, attend to your adornment at every time (or place) of prayer” (7:31).

يَبْنَئِ آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ

This shows that when assembling in mosques for prayer, attention must be paid to outward appearance and purity as well. One who is dirty in clothing or person would undoubtedly be offensive to others. Hence it is specially laid down that, in the larger gatherings on Fridays, everyone must take a bath before coming to prayer, and use scent if possible. But what is specially aimed at is adornment in a spiritual sense. A Muslim must attend to inner beautification, for prayer is really meant as an aid to the beauty of the soul. He must come to prayer with a **heart** free from all impurities and full of the highest aspirations and noblest sentiments.