

Servanthood and Submission of Prophet Muhammed (puh)

Nonetheless, the salat (ritual prayer) is considered as the best action through which he articulates his servanthood. He says that there is a specific way for each Prophet to serve God, and that his way is through the ritual prayer which is his 'utmost desire'. The Qur'an describes this servanthood with the following verse (26:218-220): "Who sees you when you stand up (for prayer). And your turning over and over among those who prostrate themselves before Allah, Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower." The Arabic term *taqallub* in the verse describes the insistence on, patience with and his struggle to do justice to servanthood. The description given in this verse is supported by the narrative of the Companion who relates that the Prophet (puh) makes a noise like a boiling saucepot during his prayer. It is almost impossible to know what he was experiencing internally. One day he told his Companions to laugh little and cry (for the sake of God) a lot, continuing to say, 'If you know what I have known, you will leave your house and go to seclusion.' At the end of the report, he says 'I wish I was a tree that could be cut.' This is some kind of annihilation in his servanthood of God. Ritual prayer is thus the most essential dimension of servanthood in Islam.

No one can describe the Prophet's prayer more vividly than his beloved wife Aisha. One day she was asked by two followers about the most astonishing thing she saw in the Prophet (puh). She said: 'All of his actions are astonishing.' Following their insistence, Aisha began to tell them about his visit to her one night: 'He came to me; we were together lying in bed and before midnight he asked permission from me to worship, saying 'O Aisha, leave me alone with my Lord, I would like to serve Him''. Upon this Aisha said 'O Prophet (puh), I love you and I love what you desire (namely his servanthood).' He stood up and started praying up until the time of Morning Prayer. When the Companion Bilal came to recite the Call to Prayer, he saw the Prophet crying. First his tears wet his beard and then tears dropped on the ground. He said: O Prophet, did not Allah forgive your past and future (mistakes)? The Prophet relied: 'Should I not become a thankful and grateful servant of Allah?' According to him, ritual prayer is the most important way to knock on the door of his Lord's Mercy; therefore, he never neglected his prayers until he passed away. Again, the Mother of the Believers, Aisha, says when he prostrates, 'I sometimes think that he has passed away', due to the lengthy periods in which he was engaged in Prayer. These are all vivid demonstrations of his submission and servanthood.

Abu Zarr narrates that one night the Prophet prayed with one verse until morning. The verse is as follows: 5:118 'If You punish them, they are Your servants. If You forgive them, You are the Almighty, Most Wise.' He is also very conscious of his community. In the Qur'an Allah mentions in several places his servant's mercy on his community. Because of his great concern about his community's guidance, he was warned by God: 'Perhaps you will kill yourself with grief because they do not believe.' In another place in the Qur'an the Prophet is presented as follows: 9:128 'Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous (he is in) respecting you; to the believers (he is) compassionate'. Being self sacrificing is another dimension of his servanthood and submission. His servanthood in fasting, pilgrimage and alms giving are not different from his prayer.

There is a strong relation between the servanthood of Prophet Muhammed and his supplication. Supplication is in actual fact the most important dimension of his servanthood. In his words, supplication in and of itself is servanthood. Words become insufficient and limited in relation to talking about his supplication, because this is only be felt or lived rather than described. In his supplication, there is a taste of the pleasure of belief, a breath of otherworldliness, deep sincerity and powerful trust in God. Supplication, according to the Prophet, is the key concept in bridging servanthood (*ubudiyyah*) and divinity (*uluhiyyah*). The Prophet says 'the supplication is the brain or essence of the worship.' So, whoever knocks on the door of supplication and that door opens for him or her, it means that the door of Mercy is open.

The companions tell us that the Prophet (puh) taught them the Qur'an as well as supplications. Knowing his companions and keeping in mind their need, he taught different prayers for different individuals. The Qur'an describes life without supplication as 'meaningless' (25:77). In addition, it also commands the believers to 'pray unto their Lord and He will hear their prayer. And respond to them' (40:59). The Prophet (puh), while reciting the Qur'an and whenever he came across the verses of mercy, offered his supplication to God to forgive him and shower him with mercy; whenever he recited verses of punishment, he sought refuge in Him from evil. He never missed an opportunity to resort to supplication. He gave many clues to his companions

about the proper way, time and place of prayer. Because in the eyes of God there is nothing above supplication, the Prophet advises increasing your supplication during your ritual prayer, especially at the prostration. This is, according to the Prophetic tradition, the servant's closest moment to God and is the best time in which your supplication will be accepted. To preserve the sincerity of the heart and to establish some kind of supplication culture in his community, the Prophet (puh) advised his companions frequently to pray on behalf of his or her friends, relatives or believers.

When we look at his worship, prayers and supplications, it is easy to realise how comprehensive and how rich in content and deep in meaning they are. Once he was asked about how to pray and he replied that one should ask Allah to give them good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend them from the torment of the fire. At another time, he advised his companions to ask God not to give what they want but give them what He is pleased with it. Thus, it is very important to ask God; it is equally as important to know *how* to ask God. In several places, the Prophet warns his community not to neglect asking from God, because God will be angry against those whom do not ask of Him. The Prophet reminds the companions that asking from God means the unceasing feeling being in the presence of God. Real servanthood lies in real and proper supplication. The Prophet himself says: 'I will seek refuge to God hundred times every day.' His submission in his supplications have deep meaning and are in complete accord with the surrounding circumstances. They reflect profound belief and total confidence. I would like to end my talk by giving few examples of his Qur'anic and Prophetic supplications:

O Allah, I seek refuge to you from useless knowledge, a heart that does not shudder and an unsatisfied soul.

O My Lord, I ask you to enable me to do good to refrain from vice, to love the poor, and to forgive me and have mercy on me. I ask you for Your love and for love of whom You love, and love of the actions that will make me nearer to Your love.

Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who preceded us to the faith, and keep our hearts from harbouring any hatred towards those who believed. Our Lord, You are Compassionate, Most Merciful (59:11)

O Allah, You are my Lord. My ears, my eyes, my flesh, my blood and bones will prostrate in front of the Lord of the universe.

Our Lord! Cause not our hearts to stray after You have guided us, and bestow upon us mercy from Your Presence. Lo! You, only You, are the Bestower. (3:7)

"Our Lord, shower us with Your mercy, and bless our affairs with Your guidance. (18:11)

O My Lord, put between me and errors a distance as great as that which you have put between East and West. O my God, cleanse me of my errors as a white garment is cleansed of dirt.

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