

THREE TIMES SALAT OR DU'A

By:- MUMTAZ ALI TAJDDIN S. ALI



WORD SALAT - ITS MEANING

Worship (*ibada*), according to Islam is a mean for the purification of man's soul. The root *bd* gives us both the widest and the most fundamental word for the approach of man to God. The root *bd*, which has a primary meaning of "make" or "do," passing into the sense of service. The basis of the *ibada* is the fact that human beings are creatures and thus bond-servants of God, to Whom they are destined to return. The relationship which exists between slave (*abd*) and God is that of "worshipper" and the "worshipped." If *ibada* is the general name for the rites by which the *abd* express his creatureliness, the most outward observance of this activity is that for which the word *salat* (ritual prayer) is used.

The equivalent word for *salat* in Persian is *namaz* (pl. *namazha*), which has been corrupted into *nmuz* by the Afghans. This word is commonly in usage in Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, etc.

The word *salat* (pl. *salwat*), when Islam adopted it, had a long history. In Holy Koran, Jesus once prayed that, "And He has enjoined on me prayer (*salat*) and poor-rate so long as I live." (19:31). In the narration of Ismael, the Koran says, "And he (Ismael) enjoined on his family prayer (*salat*) and alms-giving." (19:55). The Holy Koran quotes Luqman as advising to his son, "O my son! Keep up prayer (*salat*)." (31:17). It is also stated in Koran that, "And We delivered him (Abraham) and Lot....And We gave him Isaac and Jacob, a son's son....And We revealed to them the doing of good deeds and keeping up of prayer (*salat*)." (21:71-73). In addition, "(Abraham said) O'our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! that they may keep up prayer (*salat*) (14:37). And also said, "My Lord! make me keep up prayer (*salat*) (14:40). When Moses received first revelation, God said, "Surely I am God, there is no god but I, therefore, serve Me and keep up prayer (*salat*) for My remembrance." (20:14). The people of Madain said to Shu'aib, "They said: O'Shu'aib! does your prayer (*salat*) enjoin you that we should forsake what our fathers worshipped." (11:87)

The Aramaic verbal noun *s'lota* (bowing or bending) had passed into several dialects with the meaning of prayer. This word was used by Aramaic speaking Jews for the obligatory recital of the 18 benedictions. In Hebrew, the synagogue of the Jews has been also termed as a *salat*, vide Koran, 22:40. It also means to walk behind anything constantly. In horse-race, the second horse runs just behind the first horse, is also called *salla*. Its meaning indicates to follow the divine law constantly.

Another view suggests that the word *salat* means "burnt." It signifies that through the agency of worship, a person seeks to burn or kill the animal instinct within him. The verb from which it derives is *salla* (hallow); as an act of God it is translated as "to bless"; and as an act of man it is translated as "to pray."

The word *salat* is used 85 times in the Koran. The usual Koranic phrase is *qama bi's-salat* or *qama ila 's-salat* or *aqama ilaiha* (he rose to pray) is more often used. Other corresponding phrases are *ata bi 's-salat*, *adda 's-salat*, *qada 's-salat*, *shahida 'i-isha*, *dakhala fi salatihi* and *bashara salatahu*.

W. Montgomery Watt writes in "MUHAMMAD IN MEDINA" (London, 1956, p. 304) that, "The usual translation of *salat* is "prayer," but this corresponds rather to *dua*." The word *du'a* is derived from *da'wa* or *ad'iya*, meaning to call or cry.

FORMATION OF THE SALAT – ITS EVOLUTION

In Mecca, it appears that the ordinance of the *salat* was revealed in a fragmentary manner. The life of the Prophet in Mecca had been primarily concerned with the fundamentals of Islam : the Unity of God, the judgement day, worship and the purification of the soul. For the worship, God simply commanded, "And magnify the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with (exclusive) devotion." (33:8). In fact, what is considered ritualism in the Islamic institution of prayer was simply a way to feel the Divine presence and ponder over His greatness, glory and love by adopting certain reverential prostrations.

In Mecca, the following verses revealed for the prayers:-

"Enjoin *salat* upon your people" (20:132)

"Stay with those who invoke their Lord" (18:28)

In its formative stage, the glorification, bowing and prostration in standing and sitting postures were simply the name of the formal prayer. The Holy Koran says, "And rely on the Mighty, the Merciful, Who sees you when you stand up. And your turning over and over among those who prostrate themselves before God." (26:217-219) And also, "And wait patiently for the judgement of your God, for surely you are before Our eyes, and celebrate the praise of your God when you rise. And in the night, give Him glory too, and at the setting of the stars." (52:48-49)

Ibn Ishaq (85-151) writes in his "SIRAT RASUL ALLAH" (tr. A. Guillaume, London, 1955, p. 112) that Salih bin Kaisan relates from Urwa bin al-Zubayr from Aisha that, "When prayer was first laid on the apostle, it was with two prostrations for every prayer: then God raised it to four prostrations at home, while on a journey the former ordinance of two prostrations held."

Abu Huraira was asked, "Is it necessary to recite any other *sura* with Sura Fatiha in the *salat*?" He said, "It will be beneficial if other *sura* is added, otherwise Sura Fatiha is sufficient." (AL-MUSLIM, 2:31)

In Mecca, the original Muslim community had no special place for worship. The Prophet used to perform the *salat* at home or in secret in the narrow alleys of Mecca with Ali and other earliest Companions. (IBN HISHAM, p. 159) The Prophet also performed the *salat* between the Yamen corner and the Black Stone. (IBN HISHAM, p. 190)

When the pagan Arabs embraced Islam, some persons used to bring small idols in the mosque and kept them secretly in their armpits. Besides, none of them followed the discipline and conversed during prayers. The following verse revealed:-

Wa kumu li'lahi qanetin (2:238)

“And stand up truly obedient to God.”

The word *qunut* means humbleness.

The worshippers looked at the incoming and outgoing people during the prayers, therefore, following verse revealed to impart that the first condition of a prayerful mind is humility.

Kad aflaham momenun l'lazin'hum fi'salatihim khashe'un (23:1-2)

“Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers.”

The word *khushu* means to bend or cast eyes downward or fear.

Concentration is the principal matter to be followed in the prayer. The people tied their camels outside the mosque, and focused their minds on their animals during the prayer. The following verse revealed:-

Wa tab'tal alaihi tabtila (73:8)

“And devote yourself to Him with devotion.”

The word *tabtil* means to cut off from worldly affairs.

Besides, the *salat* should not be recited loudly by one who leads, and thus the Koran says:-

Wala tajahar bi'slatika wala tukhafit biha wa chabtagi baiyna zalika sabila (17:110)

“And do not utter your *salat* with a very raised voice nor be silent with regard to it, and seek a way between them.” (17:110)

The word *bayan* means middle or no high or low.

When the Prophet was firmly settled in Medina, the mosque was also built, the prayer was instituted, the alms tax and fasting were also prescribed, legal punishments fixed, the forbidden and permitted prescribed, and Islam took up its abode with them.

SALAT – ITS TIMING

“Indeed, the *salat* (*du'a*) is ordained for believers in fixed time.” (4:103)

The word *kitabau mauquta* means an ordinance regulated as to time or ordained to be performed at fixed times.

The word “*muwaqib*” means the timing for prayers. Abu Daud and Nissai quote Ammara bin Ruweba that the Holy Prophet said that those people would never enter the hell, who had performed *salat* in morning and evening. Upon hearing it, one person from Basra asked Ammara whether he himself had heard the Holy Prophet as saying, to which Ammara admitted. The person said, “I also testify that I have also heard it.”

“Glorify the name of your God morning and evening” (76: 25)

In Mecca, the Muslims had no mosque or proper place to offer prayers due to the oppression of the pagan Arabs. During the period of 13 years in Mecca, the Muslim offered their prayers in *fajr*, *maghrib* and *Isha*. There is no indication of five times prayers in Meccan period. According to Marshall G.S. Hodgson in “THE VENTURE OF ISLAM” (London, 1974, 1st vol., p. 179), “The bowings and prostrations of formal worship, the *salat*, were commonly done at least three times a day in unison, normally at the prayer ground at the Prophet’s home.”

Later on, the theologians debated on it, but found no explicit indication. In order to justify five times prayers in the Meccan period, someone fabricated a Hadith, known as the Hadith-i Miraj, which became the only source to claim that the Islam ordained five times prayer.

FRIDAY SALAT - ITS ORIGIN

It appears that the Jews offered midday worship in Medina, known as *minhah*. It was performed from the moment when the shadow of a vertical stick was equal to the length of the stick and the minimum shadow of the stick at noon. There was a strong recommendation that the Muslims should gather together in some public place in midday. It must be known that the Prophet had offered forenoon prayer in the Kaba in Mecca, for according to “MASNAD” (1st vol., p. 95), this prayer was permitted under the pagan doctrine too, but mocked at by the Meccan chiefs there assembled. In Medina, it was usual to hold this worship in the courtyard of the Prophet during the Friday. Thus, a weekly *salat* was created, known as the *zuhr* (early afternoon), and if it was offered sometimes at late afternoon for some reasons, then it was called *asr*. The later jurists in the Abbasid period added these two terms (*zuhr* & *asr*) on daily basis with the original ordinance of three prayers to make the five times prayer, such as *fajr* (morning), *zuhr* (early afternoon), *asr* (late afternoon), *maghrib* (sunset) and *isha* (early night). It means that on Friday the *zuhr* prayer was replaced by the congregational prayer (*salat al-jumah*).

The Friday prayer was mostly offered in early afternoon (*zuhr*), but not taken very seriously in the early days. There is a report that once the congregation broke up at the arrival of corn dealers from Syria, while the Prophet was conducting the service. Only twelve or according to another report, only forty worshippers remained there, and this conduct occasioned the following revelation:-

“And when they see merchandise or pastime, they break up for it, and leave you standing. Say: What is with God is better than pastime and (better) than merchandise.” (42:11)

Later on was witnessed the devotion when a Muslim would set no store by any amount of earthy treasures in preference to his prayers, and God admired such devotion: “These are the persons whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of God and the keeping up of prayer and giving of poor-rate.” (24:37)

Thus, the midday prayer (*zuhr* or *asr*) on Friday had been ordained with the following verse:-

“O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then haste to the remembrance of God and quit trafficking; that is better for you if you know.” (42:9)

When the jurists collected the traditions and codified the canons, about 150 years after the death of the Holy Prophet, it appears that the midday prayers greatly influenced them, who gave a final touch to the five times prayer. In their justification, many traditions were minted, which is explained by Ibn Hajr (4th vol., p.700).

FIXATION OF FIVE TIMES PRAYER

We have already mentioned that the Friday prayer in Medina used to be performed either at *zuhr* or *asr* according to the circumstances. These timings were reserved for Friday only. Nevertheless, the Prophet himself reported to have performed daily additional *salat* either at *zuhr* or *asr*. Sometimes he performed two additional *salats* at *zuhr* and *asr*. The reason behind it was unknown. What he practiced privately was a different, but what practices he imparted were important, since he never wanted to create hardship for his *ummah*.

There are many examples of Prophet's religious practice, which he never recommended to the Muslims, whose few illustrations are given below:-

- a) The Prophet fasted for two months in Ramzan and Shaban months. Besides, the first fortnight of the month he devoted usually for fasting. Two Mondays, one Thursday, and according to some reports Friday as well, were the fast days in every month. For the first ten days of Muharram and for six days from the 2nd of Shawal month to the 7th, he was always fasting.
- b) Besides the obligatory prayers, he performed some 39 *raka'ts* – two in the morning, four in the forenoon, six in the afternoon, six early in the evening, two at sunset, six early in the night, and thirteen about midnight.
- c) Sometimes, the Prophet recited Sura Marium in the morning *salat*. Sometimes he read 60 to 100 Koranic verses in the morning *salat*. He also recited some 30 Koranic verses during the afternoon prayer, and about 15 verses in late afternoon prayer.
- d) The Prophet married nine times, while the Koran ordained permission of four marriages.

In like manner, in addition to the three prescribed *salats*, the Prophet used to offer *salat* afternoon (*zuhr*) and late afternoon (*asr*) in Medina.

But, he did not approve his religious practice for the Muslims.

It infers from the scrutiny of the traditions that some people in Medina offered three *salats* as well as the *salats* of *zuhr* and *asr* when they watched the Prophet to do so. It appears that the Prophet never prevented them. Before the time the average Muslims begin to perform five prayers, he put forward a middle way of the combination of the prayers. The Koranic ordinance of three times prayer was not abrogated; therefore, he did not like to put the *ummah* into hardship.

There are twenty-one narrations of sound Hadith that pertain to the Prophet's joining together of the two sets of prayers, i.e., *zuhr* – *asr* & *maghrib* – *isha* to make three prayers in a day. Firstly, he emphasized upon the travellers. According to Bukhari (18:13-15), the two afternoon prayers, *zuhr* and *asr* may be combined when one is on a journey, and so may the two night prayers, *maghrib* and *isha*. He also permitted to those who were at homes (AL-MUSLIM, 2:151). Later on, the Prophet is reported to have exhorted the combination of prayers voluntarily to all the Muslims. Ibn Abbas reports that the Holy Prophet combined the *zuhr* and *asr* prayers, and *maghrib* and *isha* when there was neither journey nor fear. Being asked, why he did it, the reply was, "so that his followers may not fall into hardship." (AL-MUSLIMS, 6:5). It is also related that the Prophet prayed at *zuhr* and *asr* together, and the *maghrib* and *isha* together, without being a traveller or in fear (AL-MUSLIM, 2:151). Thus, this practice became known as *jam bain al-salatin*

(combination of two prayers). The wisdom behind it was to retain the original Koranic injunction of three prayers intact.

Between the period of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Ali, the Muslims in Medina prayed for five times and other three times prayer on the basis of the combination of the *salats*. When the early Umayyad rulers broke their relation with Medina, the issue of daily prayers became unsettled, and it also influenced the other Muslim regions till the final ruling of the Sunni jurist, which has been explained briefly as under:-

“In Syria in olden times it was not generally known that there were only five obligatory *salat*, and in order to make certain of this fact it was necessary to find a Companion still alive who could be asked about it.” (ABU DAUD, 1st vol., p. 142 and NISAI, 1st vol., p. 42)

“In the time of Hajjaj bin Yusuf and the Umayyad caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz,” write Ibn Nadim in his “KITAB AL-FIHRIST” (Leipzig, 1871, p. 91), “the people had no idea of the proper times for prayer and the most pious Muslims were unsure of the quite elementary rules.”

The pious Muslims, however, endeavored to demand adherence to a fixed tradition in the name of the Prophet and, when they found that the government did not support them in efforts which seemed unimportant to the latter, they produced the following prophecy of the Prophet: “*idha kanat alaykum umara yumituna al-salat*” means, “There will come amirs after me who will kill the *salat*” (TIRMIZI, 1st vol., p. 37).

Goldziher writes in “MUSLIM STUDIES” (London, 1971, 2nd vol., p. 40) that, “The fact is, however, that during the whole of the Umayyad period, the populace, living under the influence of their rulers with little enthusiasm for religion, understood little of the laws and rules of religion. Medina was the home of such rules and it would have been vain to seek them in circles under

Umayyad influence.” After being frustrated from the Umayyad caliphs, the pious Muslims of Syria became eager from the new regime of the Abbasids. Adherence to the caliph was an integral element in Muslim belief. Thus, the Abbasid priest propagated a faked Hadith that, “He who does not cling to the *aminullah* (the confident of God), by which the caliph is to be understood will not benefit by the five *salats*.”

On this juncture, the tradition quoted by Ibn Hajar (4th vol., p. 238) will be important to find a missing chain. Accordingly, Abu Darda once came in Medina from Baghdad. He showed his ability to perform *salat* more than three prescribed times. The Prophet told him to add two more *salat* before noon and afternoon. Thus, he offered five times prayer and returned Baghdad as if a missionary, where he preached five times *salat*.

It implies that the Baghdad school gradually practiced five times prayer. Later on, the Umayyad rule in Islam was entirely secular with the exception of the episode of caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz and was little permeated by religious motives in its forms and aims. The Umayyads were little concerned about the religious life of the population. They paid little attention to religion either in their own conduct or in that of their subjects. Dinawari writes in “KITAB AL-AKHBAR” (Leiden, 1888, p. 249) that if a man was seen absorbed in devout prayer in a mosque, it was a pretty safe assumption that he was not a follower of the Umayyad dynasty but an Alid partisan.

Hajjaj bin Yusuf, the Umayyad governor in Iraq once rebuked Anas bin Malik like a criminal and threatened to grind him as millstones would grind and to make him a target for arrow. (DINAWARI, p. 327). Caliph Yazid bin Abdul Malik contemptuously called Hasan al-Basari a *Sheikh al-Jahil* and threatened to kill him, vide “HISTORY OF ARABS” (ed. De Goeje, Leiden, 1869, p. 66).

People travelled to Medina, the place of origin of the Hadiths, from where the religious stream flowed. On this juncture, the jealous Umayyad rulers called Medina as *al-Khabitha* (dirty one). The governor of Yazid I in Medina gave it the name of *al-Natna* (evil-smelling one), vide MUWATTA, 4th vol., p. 61)

The Abbasid rule bore from the beginning the hallmark of a religious institution. The Abbasid's aim however was to make the recognition of their claims to rule into a religious affairs.

When Abul Abbas, the founder of the Abbasids asked the people in Basra to fulfil the duty of the fast-alms (*zakat al-fitr*), they took counsel and sought to find Medinians who might guide them about this religious duty which was entirely unknown to them (ABU DAUD, 1st vol., p. 162 and NISA'I, 1st vol., p. 143). The same community in the first years of its existence had no inkling of how to perform *salat*, and Malik bin al-Huwayrith (d. 94) had to give them a practical demonstration in the mosque of the actions accompanying the liturgy. (NISA'I, 1st vol., p. 100)

The Abbasid interest in canonical studies increased in the same measure as their political influence was taken away by governors and usurpers. It was a time when the movement to establish the *sunna* as a science and as the standard of life, received official recognition.

Theologians now found the ground prepared to make accepted in practice the *sunna*, which in the Umayyad period was pushed into the background. In Iraq, for example, Shu'ba (d. 160) made the *sunna* prevail in public for the first time. In Marw and Khorasan, al-Nadir bin Shumayl (d. 204) introduced the *sunna* in public, and likewise Abdullah al-Darimi (d. 255) in Samarkand made the *sunna* public. Abu Sa'id al-Istakhri (d. 328) in Sijistan and Yazid bin Abi Habib (d. 128) introduced *sunna* in Egypt for the first time.

Favored or at least not hampered by disregard, the Islamic studies of law developed freely, and the new stones laid by the repressed jurists of the first century could now be expanded by steady increase to form the edifice of Islamic science.

In sum, with the progress of the literature of the Muslim jurists during the early Abbasid period, the *salat* for five times was given a conclusive ruling in Islam. According to the ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS (ed. James Hastings, London, 1956, 10th vol., p. 197), "In the first generation after Prophet's death it was a subject of discussion which of the daily *salats* must be regarded as obligatory, and there was also difference of opinion as to the exact times of a day at which the Prophet had usually performed his devotions. But gradually it was recognized in the whole Muslim world that the five *salats* were obligatory for every Muslim."

"THE SHORTER ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM" (Karachi, 1981, p. 493) comments, "To us, such traditions are an indication that the number of daily *salats* had not yet fixed at five in Muhammad's lifetime. In the canonical Hadith the number of five is found in numerous traditions. We shall therefore have to place the origin of this theory before the end of the first century."

The average Sunnis professed Hanafism, and Abu Yusuf (d. 799), the famous pupil of Abu Hanifa (d. 767) was responsible to spread Hanafism in the Abbasid domain, and earned the title of *sahib hadith wa sahib sunna*. He was appointed Judge in Baghdad and later became the Chief Justice with the authority to appoint judges throughout the Abbasid kingdom. He thus had the golden opportunity to propagate Hanafism.

With the emergence of the Abbasids in the 8th century, the science of jurisprudence flourished, for in that period the four Sunni schools (Hanafism, Shafi'ism, Malikism and Hanbalism) of law

became widespread, traditions were collected, commentaries of the Koran were written and the science of source was compiled. In particular, the works of Abu Hanifa and his disciple, Abu Yusuf and Muhammad al-Shayban (d. 804), the works of Shafa'i were brought out, wherein the five times prayer in a day had been given a final ruling in Islam.

The later jurists ignored the tradition of the combination and included *zuhr* and *asr* with the three daily *salats*, making a final ruling of five times prayer in a day.

It was the period of Imam Muhammad Bakir, who exhorted the practice of combination like the Prophet in order to retain the Koranic injunction and give relief to the followers. Al-Amili writes in "WASA'IL AL-SHIA" (Beirut, 1982, 3rd vol., ch. 4, n.1) that Imam Muhammad Bakir said, "When the sun begins to decline, the time for the *zuhr* and the *asr* begins, and when the sun sets, the time for the *maghrib* and *isha* begins."

Hence, the Shiites consider it permissible to run together the noon and afternoon and the evening and night prayers, so that the prayers are only offered on three separate occasions during the day. The Holy Prophet had approved the practice of combination of prayers permissible and there is a support for this view in the BUKHARI (1:146) and AL-MUSLIM (1:264-5)

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HADITH-I MIRAJ

Anas bin Malik is made to have related that when the Holy Prophet returned from the seventh heaven, Moses asked him at the first heaven, what he had brought for his *ummah*. The Holy Prophet said that he brought an ordinance of 50 times prayers. Moses told that prayer was a weighty matter and his *ummah* was weak, so go back to God and ask Him to reduce the number of prayers. The Holy Prophet returned to the seventh heaven and God reduced the number by half. The Holy Prophet returned and Moses once again persuaded him that it was still intolerable for the *ummah*. Back with God, the Prophet succeeded in reducing the number of *salat* to five a day. Moses told that it was still too heavy burden for the *ummah*, which needed further reduction. The Holy Prophet did not agree with it, and said, "I feel ashamed to go again

in the Holy Presence. I am now satisfied with it. The God told me that He made no changes in His order." We will examine the weakness of this Hadith as follows: -

- 1) The event of Miraj took place in Mecca. Due to the oppression of the pagan Meccans, the Muslims could not offer prayers publicly. No *salat*, *roza* or *haj* was ordained since the situation was absolutely not in their favour in Mecca. Nevertheless, the Muslims offered *salat* secretly in a simple mode at homes or caves. Under these unfavourable circumstances, a heavy injunction of 50 times prayer in Mecca seems quite improbable.
- 2) It is a great pity that the order of five times prayer was not revealed through divine revelation, while other injunctions were come down through usual revelations.
- 3) Granted that the injunction is reliable, then it suggests that the Prophet was quite unknown either his *ummah* would bear it or not. It is curious that only Moses is made first to perceive the distress of the *ummah* of the Prophet of Islam.
- 4) The Prophet ascended to the seventh heaven more than once, and made reduction of *salat* from 50 to 5, and did not feel ashamed on each turn! Why did he feel so on third turn?

- 5) It further deserves notice that God commanded *salat* for 50 times, and then made alterations two times in His order. Then, why He said that He never made changes in His decree?

It seems that the person who forged above Hadith had a plan in mind to bring the figure of *salat* at five and not less. It was a time when the jurists needed a tradition to support five times prayer, therefore, none of them cared in its authenticity. The sudden emergence of above tradition however met their requirement, but forgot its poor nature. Hence, the Jews provided a juicy source, keeping in mind the high status of Moses. The designer was a Jew, who intended to show that Moses advised the Prophet of Islam about the future grievance of the Muslims, which was unknown to him.

Dr. Ghulam Jilani Burk remarks on the above Hadith in his "DU ISLAM" (Lahore, 1981, p. 234) that, "To sum up the legend, the grievance of the *ummah* was not known to God and the Prophet. If Moses had not played an intermediary role, the injunction of 50 times prayer had been ordained for the *ummah*. And the *ummah* would offer prayers constantly from morning to evening. Neither they can eat nor attend to their necessity of life. It would have forced the people to forsake Islam and follow other path. The foresight of Moses should be applauded who saved the Islam."

According to "QURANI FAISAL'E" (Karachi, 1953, pp. 16-18), "God ordained 50 times prayer, and the Prophet returned with the order. Neither God realized in His order of impossible performance, nor the Prophet, how his people would bear its load. And if it had been realized, it was only Moses.....We only request to think with cool minds, what the non-Muslims had imagined for our God and Prophet when they went through the story. It clearly infers from this tradition that it must have been fabricated by a Jew, so that the superiority of Moses be elucidated and the Muslims be informed the status of Moses before the Prophet."

The Muslim scholars however express great doubts as to the historical character of the above Hadith, nevertheless, it was to be produced as a reliable source, for the Holy Koran is silent for it. G.E. Von Grunebaum writes in "CLASSICAL ISLAM" (London, 1970, p. 47), "....though in Muhammad's lifetime the requirement of five sessions daily was not yet laid down. The Koran prescribes only two or three, and raising the number to five is probably the result of Jewish influence."

Mohammad Jafar Shah Phulwari writes in "ISLAM DIN-I A'SAN" (Lahore, 1955, p. 296) that, "Koran does not describe in explicit words that the prayers are five. In some other sound traditions the evidence of less than five prayers is accessible. The Koranic context is clear and that the words *khums al-salat* or *al-salat al-khums* have not been mentioned."

"The five times of prayer" writes Richard Bell in "THE ORIGIN OF ISLAM" (London, 1968, p. 142), "which ultimately became the rule are nowhere mentioned in the Quran."

Besides, at-Tabrani traced a tradition to Abu Zarin as narrated that once Nafi bin Azrak asked from Ibn Abbas, "Is there any explicit verse in Koran, showing five times prayer?" In his reply, Ibn Abbas quoted the 18th verse of Sura Rum as follows:

"Therefore, glory be to God when you enter upon the time of the evening and when you enter upon the time of the morning. And to Him belongs praise in the heavens and the earth, and in the afternoon, and when you are at the midday."

Ibn Abbas further said that the verse contains the word *hain tamasun*, means maghrib, *hain tas'ju* means fajr, *a'shia* means asr and *hain taz'hareen* means zuhr.

The above tradition indicates that the Companions of the Holy Prophet were not sure of five times prayer, otherwise no such question had been asked. Secondly, the above verse does not contain the word *salat*, but glorification of God.

THREE TIMES SALAT - AN ORIGINAL INJUNCTION

According to "THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM" (1995, 8th vol., p. 926), "In the Koran as a whole, the times of prayers are indicated with a richness of vocabulary which shows a practice still at the evolutionary state. There are, it seems, three essential times, to which the median prayer is added somewhat later."

W. Montgomery Watt writes in "MUHAMMAD IN MEDINA" (London, 1956, p. 305) that, "When the worship was stabilized by the later jurists, it became obligatory for every Muslim to perform it five times daily. It is doubtful, however, whether the five daily hours were regularly observed even during Muhammad's closing years, and a phrase in the Quran shows that there must have been at least three hours of prayer daily."

In view of "THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS" (London, 1956, 10th vol., p. 197), "Some of the earliest verses of the Quran require Muslims to perform the *salat* thrice every day in the morning before sunrise, at the close of day, and during a part of the night."

Explicit injunction for three times prayer is given in the Holy Koran in several verses, which are mentioned here under:-

"Wa aqimi salwata tarfai nahar'e wa zulfam minal lail" (11: 114)

"And establish *salat* at the both ends of the day (morning and evening) and at the approach of the night"

The word *tarf* means an end, extremity or part, and "two ends of the day" refers to the morning and evening, or the *fajr* and *maghrib*, while *zulfam minal lail* means a short while after falling of night. Shibli Noman (1857-1914) also admits in his "SIRAT AL-NABAWI" (2nd vol., p. 112) that this verse contains an order of three times prayer.

"Wa aqimisalwata l'e doluki'shams'e ela gaskil lail wa quranul fajar'e" (17: 78)

"And establish *salat* at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night and in the morning."

The word *doluk al-shams* means "sunset" which refers to the *salat* of *magrib*. The word *gaskil lail* means "the darkness of the night," which refers to the *salat* of *isha*, and *fajr* obviously refers to the *salat* of morning. Ibn Umar relates that the Holy Prophet said that *doluk al-shams* means the sunset, vide "AL-ITQAN" (2nd vol., pp. 631-2) by Jalaluddin Seyuti. Tirmizi and Nisai also admit veracity of this tradition related by Abu Huraira.

Referring the above Koranic verses, Reuben Levy writes in "THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ISLAM" (London, 1962, p. 155) that, "It would appear from these verses that only three appointed times of worship are indicated....For a century or more after the death of the Prophet, it was not definitely known, or decided, actually how many periods of worship were laid down nor at what hours worship was to be performed."

It was a period when no timepiece device existed, therefore, the above three *salats* were used to be performed on the following method:-

1. SALAT AL-FAJR (subh'u du'a)

Also called *salat al-subh*. When any person could perceive his neighbour at near distance in darkness at dawn. (BUKHARI, *muwakit*, p. 21). Its time begins with "the true dawn" (*al-fajr al-sadik*) when the faces can still not yet be recognized, and extends until the daybreak as such before the sun appears. It should be noted that the Arabs designated the early morning as the *dhanab al-sirhan* (the tail of the wolf), and this is when the light gradually begins to get brighter at the place where the sun is about to rise like the light of a lamp.

2. SALAT AL-MAGHRIB (sanji du'a)

It was offered and ended when an arrow was shot from a bow and could be seen at sunset ((*ibid.*, p. 27). Its time begins when the sun disappears beneath the horizon, and normally continues until disappearance of the twilight radiance.

3. SALAT AL-ISHA (somani du'a)

Also called *salat al-atama* (*salat* of black night), and *salat al-layl* (night prayer). When the people felt need of burning lamp in early night. (*Ibid.* p. 24). Its time begins soon after the disappearance of the twilight and extends until the end of the first third of the night.

"AND GLORIFY THE NAME OF YOUR LORD MORNING AND EVENING, AND ADORE HIM DURING PART OF THE NIGHT, AND GIVE GLORY TO HIM THROUGH THE LONG NIGHT."
(36:25-26)

Above verse further boost to explicit evidence of three times prayer as well as the midnight worship in a day. This Islamic practice in fact is being performed by the Shia Ismaili Muslims in the world.

Compiled on 13th December, 2003

=====