

THE IMPORTANCE OF DUA (SUPPLICATION)

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

And your Lord said: "Supplicate to Me, I will respond to your supplication. Verily, those who are too proud to worship Me, they will surely enter Hell in humiliation!" (Surah Al Ghaafir, Verse 60)

Here, in this verse, Allah has instructed His servants to call on Him (by making dua), and has given the assurance that He will answer their supplications. Hafiz Ibn Katheer has stated, 'Here, Allah encourages His servants to call upon Him and He guarantees to respond'. (Tafseer Ibn Katheer vol.5 pg. 411 Dar Al Kitab Al Arabi Beirut 2013)

In a tradition, it is narrated that the Prophet ﷺ once said, 'My Ummah (nation) has been given three things which were not given to anyone except the prophets. When Allah sent a Prophet in the past, He said to that Prophet 'Call on Me and I will answer you'. Allah did the same (to this Ummah) and said, 'Call on Me, I will respond to your supplication'. When Allah sent a Prophet (in the past), He said to that Prophet, 'He (Allah) did not place upon you (the Prophet) any hardship in religion'. Allah revealed the same to this Ummah and said, 'and Allah has not laid any hardship upon you in your religion' (22:78). When Allah sent a Prophet (in the past), He made him a witness over his people. The same was done to this Ummah when Allah made them witnesses over mankind'. (Tafseer Al Qurtubi vol.15 pg. 286 Maktaba Rasheediya Queta Pakistan; Tafseer Ibn Katheer vol.5 pg. 411 Dar Al Kitab Al Arabi Beirut 2013)

The above tradition shows that Allah has been very kind to this Ummah (nation of the Prophet ﷺ) by giving them the privilege of supplicating to Him, and also the assurance that He will respond to their supplication. As seen in the tradition, this was an honour which was given only to the prophets of the past.

Other traditions show that 'dua' (supplicating to Allah) is a very sacred and noble act which is loved by Allah. Regarding this, the companion Numan bin Basheer (R.A) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once said, 'Indeed the supplication is worship (Ibadah)'. The Prophet ﷺ then recited the verse as a support, 'And your Lord said, 'Call upon Me, I will answer you'. (Abu Dawood, Chapter regarding supplication / Tirmidhi, Chapter regarding Sura Al Muamin)

Based upon the above verse of the Holy Quran, the Prophet ﷺ encouraged the believers to call upon Allah, and to supplicate to Him for all their needs, no matter what the need may be. In one tradition, Anas (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Each of you must ask His Lord to fulfil all his needs, to the extent that he must ask Him for the lace of his shoes when it is lost'. (Tirmidhi, Hadith No.3604, Pg.1068, Darussalam)

In another tradition from Aisha (R.A), the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Ask Allah for everything, even shoe laces, because if Allah does not make it easy for you to obtain it, you will not obtain it'. (Al Baihaqi in Shubal Imaan Hadith No.1079, Pg.368, Vol.2, Maktaba Rushd)

The Prophet ﷺ also mentioned that Allah becomes angry when one does not supplicate to Him. In this regard, Abu Hurairah (R.A) said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'Whoever does not supplicate to Allah, He becomes angry with him'. (Trimidhi, Chapter – Whoever does not ask Allah, He gets angry with him)

Dua (supplication) is therefore a very great act of worship which the blessed Messenger of Allah ﷺ has spoken highly about and has highlighted its great significance. In one tradition, Abu Hurairah (R.A)

narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘There is nothing more noble and honoured in the sight of Allah than Dua (supplication)’ (Tirmidhi, Chapter – What has been related about the virtue of Supplication).

This hadith shows that the act of making dua (and supplication) to Allah is extremely beloved to Allah, and has an exalted position in His sight. It is for this reason, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Ask Allah for His grace and kindness, for Allah likes to be asked, and it is a great act of worship (Ibadah) that one waits for ease in hardship’. (Tirmidhi, Chapter – What has been related about the virtue of Supplication).

This tradition informs the believers that Allah likes to be asked from His servants. In other words, He loves when His slaves supplicate to Him and place their needs before Him, so that He can grant them what they ask for. The hadith also tells the believers that waiting for ease to come from Allah when one is struck with hardships, is a great form of worship as it requires one to be patient and forbearing. One should therefore not ‘give up’ on dua, thinking that his dua may not be accepted. Instead, whenever he is in difficulties and hardships, he should continue to make dua (supplicate) to Allah, and wait for ease. It is in this regard, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Do not be incapable and weak in making dua, for certainly Allah does not cause destruction/harm (bring difficulties) to anyone who makes dua’. (Ibn Hibban, وذكر وجاء / كتاب الدعاء, والتكبير, والتهليل, Hakim, النجاة من الأفات لمن دام على الدعاء في أوقاته).

In another tradition, Abu Hurairah (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Dua is the weapon of a believer; it is a pillar of Islam and a light in the heavens and earth’. (Hakim, كتاب الدعاء, والتكبير, والتهليل).

This hadith speaks of another great benefit of dua and explains that ‘dua’ serves as a weapon which protects the believer. It protects him from great calamities, from attacks from the satans and human beings, and from the oppressors and tyrants. It is therefore the best form of weapon that a believer possesses.

Another tradition narrated by Anas (R.A) states that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Dua (supplication) is the essence of worship’. (Tirmidhi, Chapter – Something else about: The supplication is the essence of worship). While explaining this narration, the scholars have stated, ‘Supplication is not only an extremely fundamental act of worship (Ibadah), but it is the very essence of all forms of worship. The purpose of worship is to express one’s helplessness and dependency to Allah. When a person engages in worship, his external self and internal self are humble in Allah’s presence. Since supplication entails a great expression of humility, it is regarded as the essence and marrow of all forms of worship’.

‘When making supplication, a person admits his dependence on Allah, and places his needs before Allah with the conviction that none other can assist him. He acknowledges the fact that only Allah can give him what he requires, and that none can prevent Allah from fulfilling his needs. Realising all of this, he stretches his hands before Allah, thereby expressing the deepest humility and dependence. This becomes a form of worship, attracting Allah’s pleasure’.

‘As for the person who does not want to make dua (supplication), he regards it below his dignity to beg of Allah, indicating that he is filled with pride. Allah is therefore extremely angry with such a person’. (Anwarul Bayaan vol.4 pg. 456 Darul Ishaat Karachi 2005)

The believers have also been encouraged by the Prophet ﷺ to make dua to Allah for good health and well being. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ said that this is the best thing that a person can ask Allah for. In this regard, Abdullah bin Umar (R.A) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘When the door of making dua is opened for a person, then Allah also opens the door of His mercy for him, and from among the things which can be asked for, the best in the sight of Allah is that one supplicates for good health and well being’. (Tirmidhi, Hadith No.3554, Pg.1051, Darussalam / Hakim, كتاب الدعاء, والتكبير, والتهليل)

With respect to the acceptance of one’s dua, the Prophet ﷺ has given an assurance to the believers

that once they continue to make dua to Allah, He will grant its acceptance. Regarding this, Abdullah bin Umar (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘When the door of making dua is opened for a person, then Allah will also open a door to its acceptance’. (*Mussanaf Ibn Abi Shaiba, Hadith No.29778, Pg.89, Vol.19, Muhammad Awamma*). This tradition explains that when a person is granted the ability to make dua (to Allah) regularly, then Allah Himself will grant its acceptance.

In another tradition, Salman Al Farsi (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Your Lord is Kind and Most Generous, and He is too kind to let His servant raise his hands to Him, and bring them back to the servant empty’. (*Tirmidhi, Hadith No.3556, Pg.1064, Darussalam / Abu Dawood, Hadith No.1488, Pg.306, Darussalam*).

Therefore, while making dua, one should do so with humility and sincerity and hope for its acceptance.

In another tradition, the Prophet ﷺ mentioned that there are different ways in which one’s dua can be accepted. Regarding this, Abu Saeed Khudri (R.A) stated that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘When a believer makes dua to Allah and it does not involve sin or severing family ties, then Allah will definitely grant him one of three things. His dua may be immediately accepted and he gets what he supplicated for; his duas are stored up for the hereafter so that he will achieve abundant goodness there; or his duas are used to turn away and protect him from harms and calamities which may befall him in the future’. (*Ahmad*)

The above tradition shows that Allah will always grant a believer what he asks for in one way or another, providing that he does not ask for anything that is prohibited in Islam. In addition to this, one must not be hasty in his dua. The Prophet ﷺ warned the believers about this and said, ‘The servant will receive a response so long as his dua does not involve sin or severing ties, and so long as he is not hasty’. It was said, ‘What does being hasty mean?’ He said, ‘When he says, ‘I have made dua and have made dua, and I have not seen any response’, and he gets tired/frustrated and stops making dua’. (*Bukhari, Muslim*)

There are indeed many benefits and virtues of making dua which have been highlighted in the above mentioned traditions, and for this reason, the Prophet ﷺ has instructed his followers to hold firmly to the act of making dua to Allah. In this regard, he is reported to have said, ‘Dua helps in removing calamities which have already fallen upon a person, and it also helps in removing such calamities which will fall upon a person in the future. Thus, O servants of Allah! Hold firmly to dua (and make it binding upon yourselves)’ (*Tirmidhi, Hadith No.3548, Pg.1051, Darussalam*)

THE ADAAB (ETIQUETTES) OF DUA

On the topic of dua, the scholars have mentioned a number of etiquettes which should be observed by one who is making dua to Allah. These are all evident from the authentic traditions of the Prophet ﷺ which should be adopted if one wishes that his duas be accepted/granted by Allah.

Some of these are as follows:

- 1) One should have firm belief in Allah and be sincere in his supplication
- 2) When one begins to make dua, he should first praise and glorify Allah, then send peace and blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ and then place his need/request to Allah. In a narration, it is stated that once while the Prophet ﷺ was sitting, a man came in and after performing Salaah, made dua and said, ‘O Allah forgive me and have mercy on me’. Upon this, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘O worshipper, you have been too hasty. When you have performed your prayer and are sitting, you should praise Allah as He deserves to be praised, and send blessings upon me, then make your request to Allah’. (*Tirmidhi, Hadith No.3477, Pg.1032, Darussalam*)

Another tradition says that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘When one of you makes dua, let him start with the praise of Allah, then let him send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ, and then let him ask for whatever he likes after that’. Sending blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ is a very important act in dua, and one must not leave it out. Regarding this, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Every dua is kept back until you send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ’. (الباب – من اسمه أحمد، Tabarani in *Al Awsat*, عليه وسلم)

3) While making dua, one should turn towards the Qibla, since this is Mustahab. It is narrated by Abdullah bin Umar (R.A) that in the battle of Badr, when the Prophet ﷺ sought Allah’s help by making dua, he turned towards the Qibla and raised his hands. (Muslim). While commenting on this, Imam An Nawawi said, ‘This shows that it is Mustahab to face towards the Qibla when making dua’. (*Sharh of Sahih Muslim*)

4) When making dua, one should raise the hands with the inside of the palms facing upwards (towards his face). In a tradition from Malik bin Yasar, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, ‘When you ask Allah, ask of Him with the palms of your hands, not with the back of them’. (*Abu Dawood, Hadith No.1485, Pg.305, Darussalam*)

One should also pass the hands over his face upon the completion of dua. Regarding this, Umar (R.A) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, when raising his hands in dua, would not put them down until he had wiped his face with them’. (*Tirmidhi who said it was Saheeh, Hadith No.3386, Pg.1005, Darussalam*)

Another tradition narrated by Abdullah bin Abbas (R.A) states that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Ask Allah with the palms of your hands, and when you have finished, wipe your hands over your face’. (Abu Dawood, كتاب الوتر – باب الدعاء). Saeed bin Yazeed has also narrated from his father Yazeed (R.A) that when the Prophet ﷺ made dua, he would raise his hands, and would then wipe his face with the hands. (*Abu Dawood, Hadith No.1492, Pg.306, Darussalam*)

Imam Bukhari has narrated the statement of Wahb who said, ‘I saw Abdullah bin Umar (R.A) and Abdullah bin Zubair (R.A) making dua and they wiped their hands on their faces’ (*Al Adab Al Mufrad by Imam Bukhari, Chapter of raising hands in supplication*)

5) Another etiquette of dua is that while supplicating to Allah, one should raise one’s hands to the level of the shoulders or chest. In this regard, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, ‘Dua (supplication) is to lift one’s hands to the level of the shoulder, and Ibtihhaal (i.e. turning earnestly in supplication to avoid harms from oneself) is to raise the hands stretching them out’. (*Baihaqi in his Sunan, باب ما ينوي المشير بإشارته في التشهد / Hakim in his Mustadrak, كتاب الرقاق*)

Imam Abu Dawood has also narrated from Ikrima that Abdullah bin Abbas (R.A) said, ‘The etiquette of asking from Allah is that you should raise both hands to the level of your shoulders or close to them. The etiquette of seeking forgiveness from Allah is to indicate with the index finger, and the etiquette of earnestly repenting and turning to Allah (Al Ibtihhaal) is to stretch out both hands together’. (*Abu Dawood, Hadith No.1489, Pg.306, Darussalam*)

From this narration along with other similar ones, it is evident that there are three different practices that are connected to the act of making dua (supplicating to Allah) and seeking forgiveness from Allah. The first practice is to point (indicate) with one’s finger, without necessarily lifting one’s hands. This action is done when one seeks forgiveness or makes a general Dhikr (remembrance of Allah). As mentioned by Allama Teebi in his Sharh (commentary of Ahadith), this is the way of condemning the Nafs (base desires) and Satan for having caused one to do a wrong.

The second practice is to raise one’s hands to the level of one’s shoulders or chest, with the inside of the palms facing one’s face. This is done for regular duas that one makes at anytime when he is supplicating

and beseeching Allah.

The third practice is one which is done when one petitions Allah in difficult situations, imploring Him earnestly for His help, and relief from hardships, sufferings and calamities. This occurs in cases of seeking rainfall at the time of drought, when one seeks protection from an imminent enemy attack etc. In these situations one does *Ibtihal* to Allah. That is, he stretches out his hands towards the heavens (skies), begging and beseeching Allah for help.

6) When one makes dua to Allah, one should have firm faith that Allah will respond to the dua. One must be focused and attentive while making dua and must not be negligent and absentminded. While speaking about this, Abdullah bin Umar (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘The hearts are containers (vessels), (they can be filled with good or bad), and some are similar to others. So when you ask Allah, O people! Ask Him having firm belief that He will respond to you. For Allah does not respond to a servant who calls on Him with a heedless and negligent heart’. (*Ahmad, Hadith No.6667, Pg.592, Vol.2, Darul Fikr*)

In this hadith, the Prophet ﷺ informed the believers that while making dua to Allah, they must have a firm conviction in their hearts that Allah will accept their duas and respond to them. He also emphasized that one must be fully attentive and focused in his dua. One must think carefully of what one is saying, and the mind and heart must both be present while the words of the dua are said on the tongue. If one becomes absentminded and his heart becomes heedless of the duas one is making, then Allah will not respond to such duas. The Prophet ﷺ made this very clear when he said, ‘Certainly Allah does not respond to the dua of one who calls on Him with a heedless and negligent heart’.

7) One should be consistent in making dua and should supplicate continuously. He should not stop making dua, nor should he become tired of doing so. Regarding this, Abu Hurairah (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘The servant will receive a response (answer) for his dua as long as he does not ask for something sinful or severing of family ties, and as long as he is not hasty’. It was said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, what is being hasty?’ He said, ‘When the servant says, ‘I have made dua, and I have made dua, but I have not seen that it has been accepted’. At that time, the servant becomes frustrated and stops making dua’. (*Muslim, 6936, Pg.1186, Darussalam*)

In this hadith, the Prophet ﷺ exhorted the believers to make dua continuously and should not stop doing so. One should not look at the amount of duas one has made already, nor should one entertain thoughts that his duas are not accepted. Instead, one should understand that as a slave and servant of Allah, his duty is to continue to call on Allah with utmost humility. Dua itself, is a very great act of worship and has an honoured position in the sight of Allah. One should therefore, not become tired and weary of making dua, saying that he has done it many times already and has not seen signs of its acceptance. Allah will certainly respond to the supplications of His servants, as long as they are sincere in their duas and do not ask for anything which is prohibited in the Shariah. Sometimes, the servants get what they ask for in this world and at times, they receive it in the hereafter. Sometimes, their requests are fulfilled immediately, and at times, they are delayed. Allah is the Most Wise, whose works are filled with wisdom, hence, He responds to the requests of the servants at a time when it is most beneficial for them and when it is in their best interest.

8) One should make dua with firmness in his request and with strength and steadfastness in what he is asking Allah for. Regarding this, Abu Hurairah (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘When one of you makes dua to Allah, let him not say, ‘O Allah, forgive me if You wish’. But, he should be firm and become strong in his request. For certainly, it is not difficult for Allah to grant anything’. (*Bukhari, باب: ليسعزم المسألة فإنه لا مكره له*)

9) From among the etiquettes of making dua and ensuring that it is accepted, is that one must ensure that one's food, drink and clothing are halaal (pure and good). The Prophet ﷺ spoke about this and also informed the believers that the dua of a person whose food, drink and clothing are from haraam (unlawful) sources, will not be accepted by Allah. Regarding this, Abu Hurairah (R.A) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Verily Allah is pure and accepts nothing except that it is pure. Allah has ordered the believers with the same command which He has given to the Prophets and said, 'O Messengers! Eat of the pure (halaal), and do righteous deeds. Verily, I am well acquainted with what you do'. Allah has also stated, 'O you who believe! Eat of the pure things which We have provided you with'. (After quoting these two verses regarding the command of Allah to consume only the halaal), the Prophet ﷺ then mentioned about a man who travels a long distance and is dishevelled and dusty. The man then stretches his hands to the heavens and says, 'O Lord, O Lord', but his food is haraam (unlawful), his drink is haraam, his clothing is haraam, and he has been nourished with haraam, so how can his duas be accepted'. (Muslim, Hadith No.2343, Pg.409, Darussalam)

While the first part of verse 60 (of Sura Ghafir) encourages the believers to supplicate to Allah, the second part gives a stern warning to those who fail to do so. It states:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

“Verily! Those who are too proud to worship me, they will surely enter Hell in humiliation!”

While explaining this part of the verse, the commentators have stated that it means, 'those who, on account of pride and arrogance, abandons the act of supplicating to Allah and considers themselves to be in no need of doing it, will suffer the humiliating punishment of being thrown in the fire of Hell'. (Safwah At Tafaseer vol.14 pg. 85 Dar Al Quran Al Kareem Beirut 1981)

Some commentators have explained that it means, 'those who are too proud to worship Me and supplicate to Me, and instead, they worship others and supplicate to others, then they will enter Hell in humiliation'. (Bayaanul Quraan vol.2 pg. 443 Maktaba Al Haq Mumbai)