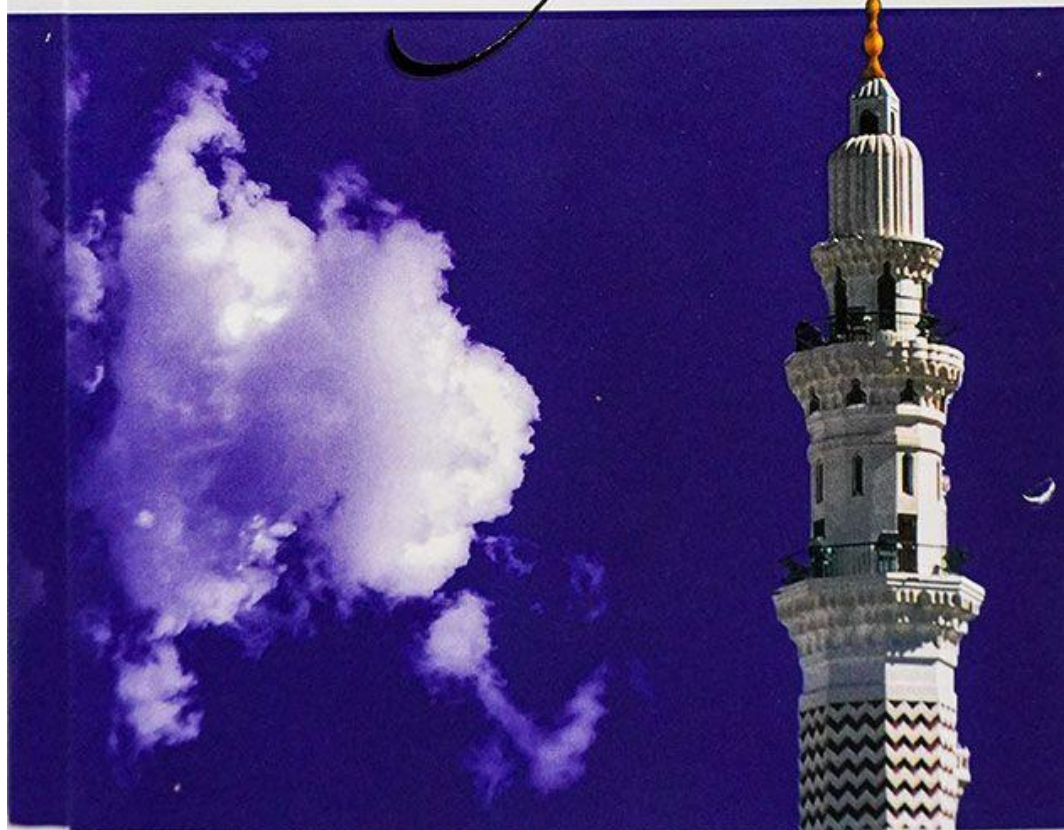


# Prayer

*According to the Sunnah*



*Compiler: Prof. Muhammad Zulfiqar*

DARUSSALAM

## Contents

Unknown Preacher of Islam .....	17
<i>Salâh</i> : Obligation, Eminence and Importance .....	27
Negligence in the Matter of <i>Salâh</i> is <i>Kufr</i> (Infidelity) .....	29
Eminence of <i>Salât</i> .....	34
Purification: The Ruling of Purification and Its Status .....	47
Kinds of Purification .....	48
Kinds of Impurity .....	49
What Purifies? .....	49
Purification from Urinating/Defecating .....	52
Answering the Call of Nature in Public Places .....	52
Touching the Private Parts with Right Hand .....	52
Odd Number of Stones or Other Solid Things .....	53
Washing the Private Parts with Water .....	55
Urinating into a Hole .....	56
Urinating in the Bath Area .....	56
Severe Pressure of the Call of Nature Invalidates .....	57
Strict Orders to Avoid the Splashes of Urine .....	57
Floor Soiled with Urine .....	59
Garment Soiled with the Blood of Menses .....	59
Garment Soiled with Semen .....	59
Garment Soiled with the Urine of the Suckling .....	60
Soiled Shoes .....	61
If a Dog Drinks Water from a Vessel .....	61
Hide/Leather of a Dead Animal .....	61
Anything Tasted by Cat .....	62
Eating in Gold and Silver Vessels .....	63
<i>Ghusl</i> (Complete Bath) and Its Legislation .....	65
When <i>Ghusl</i> Becomes Obligatory .....	66
The Method of Performing <i>Ghusl</i> .....	68
When <i>Ghusl</i> is Recommended .....	70
On Washing the Dead .....	71
On 'Eid Festivals/'Eid Days .....	72
On Donning the <i>Ihram</i> (The Pilgrim's Dress) .....	72
On Entering Makkah .....	73
Issues Related to Sexual Intercourse and <i>Ghusl</i> .....	73



## UNKNOWN PREACHER OF ISLAM

Major Massey, an officer of the British Indian Army declined to fire at the defenseless crowd in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar for which he was court-martialed and demoted to the rank of lieutenant. When he attained the rank of Major again, he was posted to the Attock Fort. He recounts an incident there which proved a turning point in his life.

In the sultry heat of June, Major Massey returned from parade to work on a special report from his office. So urgent was this business that he skipped his lunch. At 2 p.m. he looked out of the window and saw an Indian soldier, laden with a sack of bricks, being driven around the ground like an animal under the burning sun. The soldier was undergoing a punishment by order of his commanding officer. When the soldier slacked, the Sikh sentry lashed his back urging him to pick up full speed. This act lasted for an hour. Meanwhile Major Massey marveled at the courage and stamina of the soldier. At 2:30 p.m. the Sikh sentry gave his victim half an hour to rest. The soldier went straight to the water tap. He washed both hands, rinsed his mouth thrice but did not take a single draught of water. He then washed his face and arms up to the elbows. Lastly he washed his feet. Folding his hands and facing the Ka'bah he stood on the fiery hot ground to pray to his Lord. No sooner did he raise his hands in prayer than his tormentor, the Sikh sentry, descended upon him and ordered him to resume running.

As he watched this scene from his office window, Major Massey's wonder passed all bounds. He walked down to the office of the Indian unit and enquired from the unit Major if the soldier undergoing the punishment had committed a serious offense. Massey appreciated the soldier's grit for disdaining to take a draught of water in such extreme hot weather. In Massey's eyes, the soldier was a superman so Massey recommended that the man be relieved of further punishment and summoned to the unit office. When the soldier was produced before him, Major Massey's first question to him was, "For what offense did you suffer such a harsh punishment?"

He replied that he had been late for the parade by a few minutes for which the Sikh Company commander had pronounced this sentence on him. In a fit of religious pique Sikh officers of the Indian Army usually inflicted the severest punishments on Muslim soldiers.

So then Major Massey asked him:

"After such heavy physical exertion in such hot weather didn't you feel thirsty? You just rinsed your mouth, didn't you?"

"Sir, I am human," said the soldier, "and I was dying with thirst. I am a Muslim and this is the month of Ramadân in which the Muslims are forbidden to eat and drink. Fasting in Ramadân is the third article of faith in Islam and every adult and healthy Muslim is ordained to fast from dawn to dusk." The soldier expatiated on the subject of fasting.



"But you could have quenched your excruciating thirst with one or two draughts of water. No one was watching you." said Major Massey

"Allâh was watching!" said the soldier, "He is Omnipresent. I would sooner give away my life than disobey His Command."

The Major then asked, "You were given a few minutes' rest, why didn't you seek relief in a shady spot?"

"Sir," replied the soldier, "Salât (prayer) is the principal article of faith in Islam and it has to be offered punctually. Had I allowed myself to rest, I would have missed it and incurred Allâh's wrath. For me duty to Allâh takes precedence over personal ease."

The Major was stunned by the character of this unknown preacher of Islâm. Back in his bungalow he lay immersed in deep thoughts for a long time. How wonderful was the philosophy of Islâm and its Laws which struck the devotion of these humble followers! The Major renounced social life in the club, lost interest in his military duties and fell into a contemplative mood. His brother officers wondered what had driven the Major into the abstraction. A week later he took four days' leave which he spent browsing in Rawalpindi bookshops. He purchased dozen of books on Islam in English and a few chapters of the Qur'ân translated into English. Returning to Attock, he was wholly absorbed in studying this material. Over the next few days he had acquired an ocean of information about Islâm. He made up his

mind forthwith to enter the fold of Islam, begin a new life, expiate for past sins and devote the rest of his days to the propagation of Islam. On Friday the *Adhân* was announced from the Fort Mosque. Major Massey had a bath, donned a clean dress and headed for the mosque. The congregation was assembling and the *Imâm* had yet to begin the '*Khutbah*' (public address before the prayers). Stepping forward to the front row the Major humbly requested the *Imâm* to initiate him into the Islamic faith. "I am convinced," said the Major, "that Islâm is the only true religion with the only revealed scripture which has not brooked the slightest alteration during the last fourteen centuries. Indeed, Islâm presents a complete code of life."

All this from the tongue of a British Major was truly amazing for the *Imâm* and the congregation. The *Imâm* perhaps was pondering over the consequences of such a proceeding. All eyes were on the Major and the assembly remained motionless, but it soon galvanized itself and vociferously demanded the Major's initiation into Islâm in the short time that was left for the sermon to begin. The assembly expressed its resolve to rise in revolt if the authorities took any punitive measures against the *Imâm*. It was the *Imâm's* bounden duty, they said, to take the pledge of faith from any non-Muslim desiring to convert to Islâm. The *Imâm* then asked the Major to pronounce the creed of faith (i.e. the *Kalimah*) and recited to him the articles of Islâm. The Major, now a Muslim, was named Abdul Rahman. Shouts of *Takbir* [Allah is Greatest] rose from the congregation. The men kissed the Major's hands, embraced him and congratulated him on his



acceptance of the true religion.

The news spread like wild fire through the garrison. The unit commander ordered the buglers to sound the officer call. The British and Indian units of the garrison fell in parade ground. Major Massey was divested of his belt and badges of rank in full view of the garrison. The colonel commandant then ordered the Major's confinement to his bungalow under the custody of a senior officer. A report was dispatched to the Army Headquarters in Delhi. The major was tried before a court-martial and was sentenced to "*Bara Pathar*" (Dismissal from service).

His goods were forfeited to the Government and his bank account was frozen and he himself was dispatched to Lahore under custody of a guard. Three or four hundred rupees in cash and the clothes he was wearing that was all he had. The helpless, crestfallen Major knew not what to do or where to go. He had no friend or acquaintance in Lahore. For the time being he took refuge in a small room in Braganza Hotel adjacent to the Railway Station. For many days he shut himself in this room. At first he even ate in his own room but feeling weary, he began to show up in the dining hall, but as yet kept aloof in a corner. What he missed most were his books which had been confiscated. Reading the newspaper was his only pastime. It was a party night and the dining hall was bustling with merry-makers. The major sat alone in a corner lost in thought as usual. The revelers noted the strange man but left him to his abstractions.

At the end of the party a gentleman approached him.

"Who are you?" enquired he, "and what is your nationality? Why are you so depressed? Can I help you?"

Massey introduced himself and requested the gentleman to help him get in touch with some Islamic organization with a view to acquiring knowledge of Islâm. Next day his new friend took the Major to the office of the Lahori party of Jamaat Ahmadiyya. The head of the Jamaat promised to arrange a suitable employment for him. The Major went to the Jamaat library every day to read the Jamaat literature. One day he read in a journal Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani's claim to prophethood and a discussion on the Mirza's prophecies. According to what he had read so far the Major knew that Muhammad ﷺ was the final prophet and the Qur'ân the last scripture of Allâh. In view of this the Mirza's claim to prophethood seemed fantastic. Non-pulsed, the Major sought the help of the librarian to clear this dilemma. The Librarian's explanations gave no satisfaction to the Major. The next day the Major went to the Qadiani mosque to offer the Friday prayer and asked the *Imâm* to help clear the confusion in his mind. But the *Imâm*'s discourse further deepened his doubts about Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's prophecy. Who else could he turn to? He knew no one in Lahore. It was matter of chance that he read an article in the '*Eastern Times*' by Allama 'Abdullâh Yusuf Ali, Principal of Islamia College (Railway Road) Lahore. Massey was familiar with this name because he had read Yusuf Ali's English translation of a few chapters of the Holy Qur'ân. He went to Islamia College and



requested an interview with the Principal. In the course of the meeting Massey acquainted Allama Yusuf Ali with his circumstances and mentioned his perplexity about Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani. The Allama expressed his sympathy for him. As he would be absent in Bombay for a few days the Allama referred Massey to religious scholars for a discussion of his problem. On return the Allama, an accomplished Arabic scholar, translator and commentator of the Qur'ân, exhaustively briefed Massey on the mischief which Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani had created in the world of Islam. The Major's mind was now at rest. He was gaining some eminence among the Muslim elite in Lahore.

Meanwhile the Major's financial resources were exhausted and he privately asked Allama Yusuf Ali to arrange some means of livelihood for him so that he could keep on his feet. The Allama talked to Sir Abdul Qadir, then President of Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam. Sir Abdul Qadir had invited Sir Sadiq Muhammad Abbasi V, the ruler of Bahawalpur State, to preside over the Anjuman's Annual session in the last week of December. Sir Abdul Qadir planned to introduce Massey to the Nawab with a request that a suitable job may be found for the new convert in Bahawalpur State. The Nawab, it was hoped, would favorably entertain the request. The Annual Session of the Anjuman was held on 26 December 1930. Eminent Muslim intellectuals, religious scholars and political leaders from all over the sub-continent were present at the session. They had a session for Major Massey so that he could speak about his reasons for entering the

# صلاة الرسول ﷺ

(بالغة الإنجليزية)

*This work on the life history of the Prophet stands out from other works in quite a few ways. First, every detail mentioned has been traced back to original sources, whose authenticity has been discussed extensively in the footnotes. Second, events of the Prophet's life have been related to modern times and lessons drawn for the benefit of those who happen to face similar situations in their struggle to spread the Prophetic message.*

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