

The Role of *Salat* as the Means of Spiritual and Social Ascension: Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari's Point of View

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Abstract

The second pillar of Islam is salat. It is the first obligatory act imposed on a person after professing allegiance. The primary purpose of salat is to reawaken the dormant love of Almighty within human hearts. Salat is defined as a kind of worship in which the love of Almighty` is present in an awakened state, despite the fact that people of different religions practice varied forms of worship. Salat is enhanced with the fundamental characteristics that help to prevent the degradation of human character, awaken Almighty's love, and foster consciousness and self-realization, all of which can contribute to the development of religious equality worldwide. It has both exoteric and esoteric aspects. Most people prefer only the external side and do not try to search for the inner side - so the love of Almighty is not awakened in the human mind, and consequently, the degradation of human character is increasing. Religious conflict is on the rise in all corners of the world as a result of failure to comprehend the true meaning of salat. The purpose of this research is to explore how prayer might arouse the love of Almighty in human hearts and bring about social and religious harmony by eradicating disputes between various religions. The study has been evaluated in light of Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari's perspectives. In this case, analytical and descriptive methods were used to conduct the study. The findings and results demonstrate how salat can promote social harmony, equality, and peace among people regardless of caste, creed, or religion in order to create a social and state system based on coexistence in which conflicts between religiously opposing groups won't persist. The study may aid future researchers in expanding their research into the social and spiritual effects of prayer by arousing one's love for Allah (Subhanahu), which may aid in the establishment of a society and a state based on peaceful coexistence.

Keywords

Equality, Love of Almighty, Religion, *Salat*, Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari

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Introduction

The main foundation of faith in Islam is believing in the oneness of Allah, not associating any party or other deity with him. Faithful Muslims put their complete trust in Allah, submit to him, and rely upon his help and assistance. The following remark of Syed Delowar Hossain about the essence of faith and submission to Almighty which are mentioned in his book entitled *Manob Sobhoyta* is worth mentioning: “The word "Muslim" actually refers to the act of submitting oneself to Allah (Subhanahu OaTa’la) and means "one who submits." Since all creatures must abide by the laws and regulations of Allah”³ (Hossain, *manob* 13-14). The other meaning is "one who attains peace." This peace only comes from submission to the Almighty.

In the essay entitled "A Case Study of a Muslim Client: Incorporating Religious Beliefs and Practices," Hamdan (2007) stated his opinion regarding the essence, implication, and originality of sources of divine knowledge that are applicable to all fields of human life and civilizations.

Islam is a religion that covers every aspect of life: spiritual, social, economic, political, and family. It is considered a way of life that does not separate religion from all other spheres. As such, direction can be found for even the smallest detail, in the two main sources of knowledge, the Qur’an and the Hadith. The Qur’an is the holy book of Muslims that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in the Arabic language. Of all the revealed books, it is the only holy book that has been preserved in its original form (95).

Numerous interpretations of *Salat* exist. In the context of our study, we will base our review effort on Syed Delawor Hossain

³ The quoted extract is authors’ own translation from original Bengali text: যেহেতু “ইছলাম” আরবী শব্দ, এর আভিধানিক অর্থ “গার্দান নেহাদন বতাতাত” অর্থাৎ আনুগত্য গ্রহণ। যাহা বিশ্ব-নিয়ন্তা আল্লাহর আনুগত্যকে বুঝায়। সৃষ্টি মাত্রই সূক্ষ্মাতিসূক্ষ্ম মহান শক্তি আল্লাহর অনুগত থাকিতে বাধ্য।

Maizbhandari's operational definition, with a focus on the internal aspects of *Salat*, which have been discussed as follows in *Belayot Mutlaka*

“*Ṣalāt*⁴ (صلاة) lexically means to set fire and to encourage. It is to kindle the fire of Divine love concealed in a seeker. The Arabs use the word ‘*iqāma-aqim* (إقامة- أقم الخيمة)’ refers to raise fallen tent. It means to ignite the Divine love and to prepare oneself to achieve that goal.

Therefore, worship that does not ignite Divine love and aspiration is not a proper worship or prayer. Although different religions have various settings, it can be termed as ‘*ṣalāt*-prayer’ wherever the Divine love can be found present and active.

Understanding this concept will surely eliminate religious conflicts. *Wilāyat-e-muṭlaqa-e-aḥmadī* is the best way to eliminate religious conflicts by coordinating among them. Only with its influence, religious conflicts can be eliminated from this world. (Hossain, *Wilayat* 167).

Salat is a Muslim's obligatory prayer. According to Islamic Jurists, every man and woman who has reached puberty is required to offer *salat* five times a day in a prescribed manner and at a specified time. Hossain (2023) asserts, “The Holy Quran orders to perform the prayer with the word ‘*aqimu*’ (أقيموا) or 'establish'. *Salat* also refers to the correct method of the prayer that has been practiced continuously since the time of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him.)” (Hossain, *Wilayat* 230). The main objective of *salat* is to awaken the dormant

⁴ The quoted extract is authors' own translation from original Bengali text:

ছালাত শব্দের আভিধানিক অর্থ আগুনকে প্রজ্জ্বলন ও উদ্দীপন করা। অর্থাৎ খোদা-প্রেমের ধামা চাপা পড়া আগুনকে জাগ্রত করা। সেইরূপ "আকীম" শব্দ বিচ্ছিন্ন ও পতিত খিমা বা তাবুকে বিন্যস্ত করার জন্য আরবেরা ব্যবহার করিয়া থাকে। এখানে ইহার অর্থ খোদার প্রেমাগ্নি জাগ্রত করা এবং তজ্জন্য নিজেকে গুছাইয়া লওয়া-বা- যথাযথ বিন্যস্ত করা বুঝায়। সুতরাং যেই এবাদতে খোদার প্রেম-প্রেরণা জাগ্রিত হয় না তাহা এবাদত বা সুষ্ঠু ছালাত যোগ্য নহে। বিন্যস্ততার দিক দিয়া বিভিন্ন ধর্মের বিভিন্নরূপ হইলেও যেখানে এই খোদা-প্রেম জাগ্রত অবস্থায় পাওয়া যায় তাহাকে ছালাত বলা যাইতে পারে। ইহা বুঝিতে পারিলে ধর্ম বিরোধ মিটিয়া যাইতে বাধ্য।

love of Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{Ōa'Ta'la}) in order to establish union with the Creator. Offering *salat* won't be considered *salat* in the true sense if it doesn't reawaken dormant love. Syed Delawor Hossain asserts that *salat* is regarded as *ibadat-e-mutnafia* (preventative religious rites). According to him, three things should be kept in mind while performing *salat* that are covered in the holy Quran. The first issue is to remember (*zikr*), the second is to become conscious, and the third is to avoid thinking about the outside world. The holy Quran declares, اقيموا الصلوة لذكري (And establish regular prayer for My remembrance) (Al-Quran, 20:14) (The Quran 881). The preceding verse implies that *salat* should be offered to remember Allah. The word '*Aqimu*' in the Holy Quran means to organize. "That is, organize regular prayers for my commemoration"⁵ (Hossain, *belayot* 141). Since *salat* should be offered in such a way that Allah's remembrance is well organized and the remembrance of worldly things is removed.

The second topic covered in the holy Quran is becoming conscious. In this case, the holy Quran declares, ولا تكن من الغافلين (And be not of those who are unheedful) (Al-Quran, 07:205) (The Quran 466). The holy verse implies that when offering *salat*, one should not be unconscious but rather alert. In other words, the *salat* should be functioning with *hujuri qalb* (full attention and concentration). In this regard, the Hadith of Gabriel mentions that "That you worship Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{Ōa'Ta'la}) as if you are seeing Him, for though you don't see Him, He, verily, sees you" ("Hadith of Gabriel"). The third topic is avoiding worldly thoughts, as stated in the holy Quran, "حتى تعلموا ما تقولون" (until ye can understand All that ye say) (Al-Quran, 04:43) (The Quran 223). That is, when reciting the *salat*, one should understand what he is saying. During the *salat*, one should not think about worldly issues. If worldly issues are addressed in *salat*, the purpose of *salat* will be interrupted.

⁵ The quoted extract is authors' own translation from original Bengali text:

অর্থাৎ আমার স্মরণের জন্য নামাজ কায়েম বা বিন্যাস্ত করা।

Therefore, when offering *salat*, one should be conscious and alert, and one should understand what one is reciting.

The three points mentioned above are critical for *salat*. If those are not addressed while offering *salat*, spiritual ascension and societal peace will not be possible. Since ancient times, different religions have prayed in different ways, but the goal is the same: to reach the Almighty and achieve spiritual connection. Syed Delawor Hossain examines the theme in *Tasawwuf-e-Islam*, where there is a mention of religious unity.

The true fact is that all different religions are similar in their essence despite their circumstantial differences. Although they apparently differ in their outward appearances, the essence of religion is one and identical, as the ultimate goal of all religions is Creator. Different groups exist in different religions. The existence of various groups in different religions is the will of Allah.⁶ (Hossain, *belayot* 4).

The lack of the three issues mentioned above is so intense that we offer *salat* on a regular basis, but our spiritual ascension remains elusive. On the other hand, the *salat*'s external benefits are also not being realized. If *salat* is offered while addressing the three issues mentioned above, it will result in spiritual and social development. Therefore, the study aims to explore how prayer might arouse the love of Almighty in human hearts and bring about social and religious harmony by eradicating disputes between various religions.

Research Objectives

The study includes following objectives:

⁶ The quoted extract is authors' own translation from original Bengali text: সত্য কথা এই যে, যত রকমের ধর্ম আছে, অবস্থামতে বিভিন্ন হইলেও মূলতঃ অভিন্ন। অভিব্যক্তিতে একটি অপরটির অনুরূপ না হইলেও ইহা বাহ্যিক, যাহার নাম ধর্ম, এই ধর্মবস্তু অভিন্ন ও এক। যেহেতু সমস্ত ধর্মের লক্ষ্যস্থল খোদা। যদিও বিভিন্ন ধর্মে বিভিন্ন গোষ্ঠী সংশ্লিষ্ট। ইহা আল্লাহর ইচ্ছাশক্তি সত্ত্বত।

- To explore how prayer (*salat*) might arouse the love of Almighty in human hearts and bring about social and religious harmony by eradicating disputes between various religions and building a coexisting society.
- To study the writings, speeches, and teachings of Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari on the numerous spiritual and social advantages of *salat*. Look closely at his points of view to comprehend his position.
- To examine Maizbhandari's assertions that *salat* fosters divine connection and spiritual development.
- To investigate his spiritual practices and disciplines in *salat* to demonstrate how they can influence those seeking a deeper level of faith.
- Moreover, find out Hossain's thoughts on *salat*'s ethical and moral principles and how they impact relationships, community involvement, and society, as well as his ideas on how *salat* can improve society.
- To consider Maizbhandari's interpretation of *salat* as a means of integrating spirituality with social responsibility. Holistic spirituality combines personal devotion with compassion and social activism.
- This study examines Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari's view of *salat* (Islamic ritual prayer) as a catalyst for spiritual and social advancement.

Research Questions

A coexisting society in which people respect the customs of others regardless of caste or religion. The human being is the most influential factor among the other factors influencing the social system. If there is no harmony between man's physical, mental, and spiritual consciousness, his actions will be impure; thus, harmony between the body, mind, and soul, and human society's actions are regarded as the primary goal of all religions. Our question is whether

spiritual development, above all, can ensure individual development through continuous social harmony and development. What is Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari's view on this? Despite numerous studies, the philosopher Khademul Fokra Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari's perspective on *salat* has yet to be worked out. So we believe that research on this subject is very important and timely in the current context. This allows us to draw some research questions about the subject.

1. What is the intrinsic inner meaning of *salat*? And does it have universality in achieving the inner purpose of all religions?
2. How does *salat* play a role in the spiritual upliftment of human beings?
3. How does *salat* ensure the progression of society and coexistence?
4. What is the point of view of Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari about *salat* as a catalyst for spiritual and social advancement?

Literature Review

Salat (صلاة) is derived from the word *salyun* (صلي) which means to awaken the hidden fire. “*Salat*, according to *tafseer ibn Arabi*, is the awakening of the love of Allah (Subhanahu) in the mind⁷” (Hossain, *belayot* 142). Some assert that the literal meaning of *salat*, which is derived from the Arabic word '*salwat* (صلوات)', is admiring beauty, saluting, and worshiping a holy entity. Some believe that this word derives from the same root as the word '*sala*,' which means to draw closer and sacrifice to fire. “*Salat* is a ritual prayer of Muslims made five times daily in a standing position alternating with inclinations and prostrations as the worshiper faces toward Mecca” (“*Salat* Definition & Meaning”). *Salat* is extremely important in the Islamic

⁷ The quoted extract is authors' own translation from original Bengali text:

তফসীরে ইবনে আরবীতে আছে খোদার প্রেমায়ি মনে জাগ্রত করার নাম নামাজ বা সালাত।

religion. Imann, or faith, is associated with the inner side of Islam, whereas *salat* is associated with both the inner and outer sides of Islam. *Salat*, as stated in the following Hadith of the Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him.), is the foundation of Islam: “The cornerstone of Islam and its foundation is the Salat, and its umbrella is Jihad (i.e., fighting in the cause of Allah...)” (Al-Fawzan 14).

Salat is an Islamic ritual prayer, has a significant impact on mental health. it is essential in removing an individual's disappointment and bringing mental peace. The holy Quran discusses the two benefits of *salat*. The first is 'satisfaction for the heart' (Ar-Ra'd:28), and the second is a 'source of keeping a person away from wrong behavior' (Al-'Ankabut: 45). In this context, "satisfaction for the heart" is defined as a state of mental peace that frees an individual from worries and depression. Despair and fear are major contributors to the decline of mental health. It has a significant impact in this situation. One who performs *salat* mindfully his “fear (*khaof*) or despair (*yahzagoon*)” vanishes (Ijaz et al. 3).

Sayeed and Prakash (2013) in their paper titled “*The Islamic prayer (Salah>Namaaz) and yoga togetherness in mental health.*” expressed their opinion

Studies have proven that non-Muslim participants merely going through the physical movements of Salah also showed appreciable results from the exercise. Several reports on the application of prayers in psychotherapy illustrate the positive outcome in the individuals exhibiting pathological symptoms such as tension, anxiety, depression and antisocial tendencies (S224).

In recent time Callender et al.(2022) at their research “*Prayers and Mindfulness in Relation to Mental Health among First-Generation Immigrant and Refugee Muslim Women in the USA: An Exploratory Study*” found that

Prayer helps to build community, Prayer promotes wellbeing, Prayer increases faith, and Prayer encourages intentional awareness. The findings demonstrate that prayer involves awareness and has a strong influence on mental health (3638).

In 2012, Amirfakhraei and Alinaghizadeh conducted a study on the mental health effects of *salat* among medical students at Bandar Abbas Azad University of Iran. They studied on two groups of students: those who pray regularly and those who pray only occasionally or not at all. The sample size of the study was 200 students. The study found that students who prayed on a regular basis had higher self-esteem, less depression, and anxiety, resulting in increased mental strength. A similar result was obtained in a study of 500 students conducted in Turkey. According to the findings, approximately 40% of students found happiness and comfort in praying, while “25.8% of students believed that their sins have been washed away and that makes them more calm and contented” (Najam et al. 4).

Salat aids in the development of moral character. It instills qualities such as responsibility and punctuality. It also assists an individual in protecting himself from immorality, unethical behavior, and crime. Immorality, wrongdoing, and crime are the primary contributors to the degradation of character. If the individual offers *salat* with full attention and mindfulness, his filthiness of character will be removed. Character is a valuable asset. If the character is good, then all actions of the person will be good.

Salat has a significant social impact. The main notable social benefits of *salat* are interpersonal interactions. Muslims gather in the mosque to offer *salat*, where they can meet and exchange views and opinions. As a result, by sharing their perspectives, they can solve any social problems or issues. It strengthens people's bonds. In congregational prayers, everyone stands shoulder to shoulder, which promotes equality and equity. The number of social crimes is

soaring daily. Juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, pornography, and “broken families” (Azad 218), which result in out-of-control situations, are a few examples of social crimes. In such circumstances, *salat* can reduce social crimes and foster societal stability and peace. The holy Quran has guaranteed that *salat* keeps one from great sins and evil deeds. One of the ways to prevent social crime is to create social awareness. Muslims gather in the mosque five times a day to pray. As a result, a bridge of unity, heart and love is created between Muslims. In this way they can collectively prevent any social injustice.

Salat is the platform of spiritual progress. It has been mentioned in the holy hadith that prayer is the stair of progress for believers. During prayer, the worshiper has an opportunity to gain the identity of his being. He is able to understand in *salat* at what level he is standing. Along with gaining the identity of the seven levels of *nafs*, he can determine his position. Those who are able to gain self-identity in *salat*, become absorbed in permanent *salat*. They are so engrossed in the love of Almighty that they are not satisfied with praying five times a day. Rather, they are engaged in prayer every moment. “A water bird cannot quench its thirst even if it stays the whole day in water. Likewise, lovers absorbed in the ocean of love are not satisfied with five times prayers; rather, they are always absorbed in prayers or in the remembrance of Allah,”⁸ (Hossain, *belayot* 142-44).

Racism has taken on a lethal form in the United States, Europe, and other countries today. Several recent horrific incidents involving whites and blacks have opened a new chapter in human history. George Floyd, a minority resident of St. Louis Park, America, was killed by white police officer Derek Chauvin,

⁸ The quoted extract is authors’ own translation from original Bengali text: পানি খাওঁতী পাখি যেমন সারাদিন পানিতে থাকিয়াও তাহার জলতৃষ্ণা মিটাইতে পারে না; সেইরূপ এশক বা খোদা প্রেম-বিভোর চিত্ত মানব নির্দিষ্ট ওয়াক্ত মতে নামাজ আদায় করিয়াও তৃপ্ত হয় না বরং তাহারা “সবসময়ই” নামাজে বা খোদা স্মরণে রত থাকে।

sparking outrage and hatred across the country. That news was taken very seriously by internationally recognized newspapers and television channels. It is reported, "In April 2021, former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes, was convicted of murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death" (Choi). However, the United Nations General Assembly affirms that all people are born free, equal, and endowed with basic human rights and "have the potential to contribute constructively to the development and well-being of their societies" ("International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | United Nations"). In this situation, the Islamic prayer system, or *salat*, can be very helpful in eradicating racism and in creating a society based on *Adle Mutlaq*, or equality of justice.

The important feature of *salat* is that during the congregational prayer there is no distinction between rich, poor, high, low, king, subject, slave, owner, black and white, etc. Dr. Allama Iqbal has very beautifully mentioned this in '*Shekwa wa Jawabe Shikwa*'. He echoes the words in the lines below.

"آگیا عین لڑائی میں اگر وقت نماز۔ قبلہ رو ہو کے زمیں بوس ہوئی قوم حجاز
ایک ہی صف میں کھڑے ہو گئے محمود و ایاز۔ نہ کوئی بندہ رہا اور نہ کوئی بندہ نواز
بندہ و صاحب و محتاج و غنی ایک ہوئے۔ تیری سرکار میں پہنچے تو سبھی ایک
ہوئے" (11-10 Iqbal)⁹

The couplets above depict a beautiful scene of Islamic prayer. *Salat* completely resolves the differences that people create. *Salat* eliminates class discrimination among people and establishes a society and state based on *adle mutlaq*, or equality of justice.

⁹ The following extract is the authors' own translation from the above Urdu text: When it was time for prayer while fighting, the people of Hejaz used to stand facing the Qibla and pray. Sultan Mahmud Gajnabi and his servant Ayaz stood in the same queue. There was no difference between master and servant. The slave and the master, the needy and the rich became one - When they came to the court of Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{ta} ^{la}), they all became one.

Syed Delowar Hossain Maizbhandari

Syed Delowar Hossain (1893-1982 AD) was the grandson of Khatemul Auliya Ghawth al-Azam Syed Ahmad Ullah (1826-1906 AD), the founder of Maizbhandari Tariqa. Syed Faizul Hoque (1865–1902 AD) was his father, who was the only son of Ghawth al-Azam Maizbhandari Hazrat Mawlana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah. At the start of his spiritual journey, Syed Delowar Hossain received his spiritual initiation from Syed Aminul Hoque Wasel, Syed Ahmad Ullah's nephew and deputy. His grandpa, Hazrat Mawlana Syed Ahmad Ullah, re-initiated him when Syed Aminul Hoque Wasel died. At the age of 23, he married Syeda Sajeda Khatun, the daughter of Hazrat Mawlana Syed Golam Rahman (1865–1937 AD), “chronologically the second spiritual figure of the *tariqa*” (Muhiuddin 48), and a nephew and deputy of Syed Ahmad Ullah. He was the father of five sons and six daughters. He initiated and gave *khilafah* (spiritual succession) to his first son, Syed Ziaul Hoque (1928–1988 AD), in 1966, who became renowned for his spiritual feats in his lifetime.

In 1974, he designated his third son, Syed Emdadul Hoque (b. 1936), as the spiritual heir to his *godī* and nominated him to carry out the responsibility as the *Sajjāda nashīn* of Gausia Ahmadiya Manzil. Hazrat Mawlana Syed Delowar Hossain Maizbhandari systematically attempted to analyze and present the basic ideologies and features of the Maizbhandari Tariqa. The number of his published and edited works is 10 (ten). Namely: 1. *Gausul Azam Maizbhandarir (Q) Jiboni O Karamat* (Biography and Miracles of Ghawth al-Azam Maizbhandari) 2. *Belayat-e Mutlaqa* 3. *Gotontontro* (Constitution), 4. *Protibad Lipi* (Protest letter), 5. *Renaissa Juger Ekti Dik* (An aspect of the Renaissance period in the area), 6. *Biswa Manabotay Belayat-er Swaroop* (The form of *Belayot* in World Humanity, 7. *Manab Sobhoyta* (Human civilization), 8. *Milade Nababi and Tawallode Gausia*, 9. *Muslim Achar Dhorma* (Muslim religion's rituals), 10. *Tazkiyaye*

Mokhtachar ba Multotto (Volume 1). All these books are considered the primary source of knowledge and research about Maizbhandari Tariqa. In order to comprehend the philosophical perspective of Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari regarding the concept of *salat*, it is imperative to thoroughly examine the aforementioned literature.

Methodology

The analytical and descriptive methods have been used to conduct the study. A conceptual framework has been drawn in which *salat* is an independent construct with some mediating and dependent constructs. The mediating constructs are ‘awakens divine love’, ‘prevents degradation of character’, ‘awakens self-realizations’, ‘confirms the nature of seeking the creator’, ‘*adle mutlaq* or establishes the equality of justice’, ‘preventing the conflicts between religions in the world’, ‘spiritual excellence or perfected human’, ‘ensuring the social progress’ and the dependent construct is ‘co-existence’. Primary data was gathered from the books of Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari, while secondary data was gathered from books, research journals, daily newspapers, Wikipedia, and online sources. The conceptual framework is attached below.

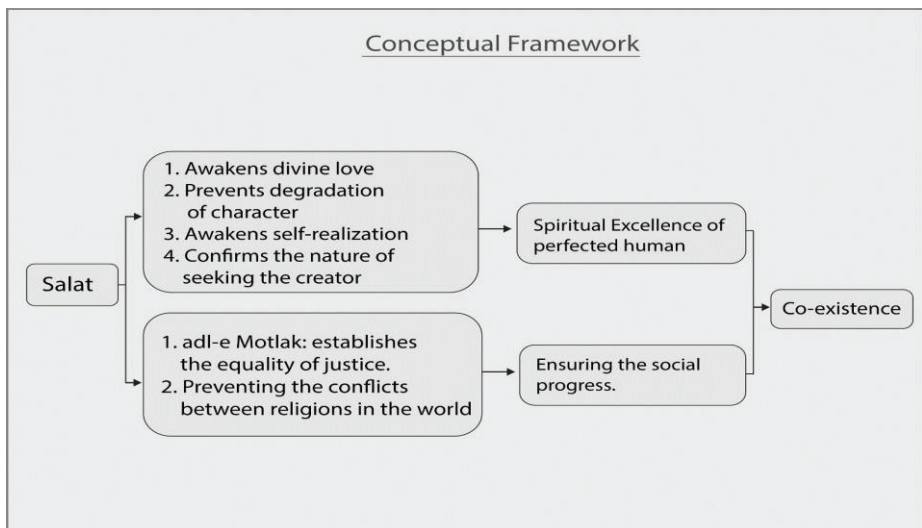


Figure: 1. the figure above depicts the conceptual framework, in which *salat* is an independent construct with mediating and dependent constructs.

In Figure 1. *salat* is an independent construct where ‘awakens divine love’, ‘prevents degradation of character’, ‘awakens self-realizations’, ‘confirms the nature of seeking the Creator’, ‘*adle mutlaq* or establishes the equality of justice’, prevents the conflicts between religions in the world’, ‘spiritual excellence or perfected human’, ‘ensuring social progress’ are mediating constructs, and ‘co-existence’ is the dependent construct. It implies that offering *salat* with full attention and mindfulness can awaken divine love, prevent character degradation, awaken self-realization, confirm the nature of seeking the Creator, establish equality of justice, and prevent conflicts between religions in the world. If these conditions are met, the individual advances to the next phase, which is spiritual excellence or perfected humanity, as well as social progress, which brings coexistence in society and the state.

Findings, Results and Discussions

***Salat* is a Means of Awakening Divine Love**

Divine love is required for any worship to be accepted in the court of Allah. Worships become futile and tasteless if it does not help to awaken Divine love. *Al-Wadud*, which means "loving," is one of Allah's divine names. The importance of Divine love has been emphasized repeatedly in the Quran and Hadith. In this regard, the Prophet (^{Peace Be Upon Him}) says, ‘Whoever possesses three qualities will taste the flavor of true faith: that Almighty and his Prophet are dearer to him than anything else; that a person loves another purely for the sake of Almighty; and that he dislikes returning to the state of disbelief as he would dislike being thrown into the blazing fire’. Divine love is the first and foremost condition mentioned in the above Hadith for the fulfillment of *imaan* (true faith). *Salat* is the key catalyst for arousing love of Allah. The following hadith bears witness to its favor: “My servant draws near to Me by carrying out

obligatory duties and then continues to draw nearer to Me through voluntary acts until I love him" (Hussain 75). Through *salat*, a worshipper can approach Allah, get closer to Him, and form a strong bond with Him. *Salat* is a supplication to and conversation with Allah, and thus requires complete concentration. *Salat* is a very blessed and auspicious ritual. Every word spoken in it is imbued with Allah's majesty and sanctity. There are twelve thousand virtues in *salat*.

In this context of divine love and the ultimate soul, Mawlana Rumi compares the sonic distance between the human soul and the Supreme Soul to the sound of a flute. The flute is constantly weeping in anguish to be returned to its original source as it is taken from the reed bed. The flute's cry is echoed in the lines that follow:

Listen to this flute, how it complains, telling a tale of separation;

‘Ever since I was cut off from my reed bed, all have lamented my bewailing.

I want the breast torn asunder so as to reveal the agony of my yearning.

Everyone who has been separated from its origin longs to be united with it’ (Hussain 75-76).

Similarly, the human soul is constantly yearning for union with the Supreme Soul. And there is only one way to union with Almighty, which is heavenly love. Hence, *salat* is regarded as one of the means of attaining divine love. Sin, immorality, and evil deeds are regarded as impediments to the love of Allah. Indulging in sins destroys man's latent love for Allah. In this case, *salat* is regarded as one of the tools for purging sins. Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari stated in this context that “prayers (*salat*), fasting (*roza*), *Hajj*, *Zakat*, and other practices are effective for abstaining from sins and are regarded as *Ibadat-e-Motnafia*”¹⁰ (Hossain, *belayot* 141). He also asserted that

¹⁰ The quoted extract is authors’ own translation from original Bengali text:

for controlling deterioration in character, *Ibadat-e-Motnafia* (preventative religious rites) is essential. The Holy Quran states, "The prayer (*salat*) prevents human beings from doing wrong, and it saves people from shameful activities." Establish a prayer (*salat*) to remember me"¹¹ (Hossain, *belayot* 141).

***Salat* Prevents Degradation of Character**

Character is a principle of human nature. It is a permanent lighthouse and source of illumination and guidance that warns travelers of potential hazards on the path. Ghazali says, "Morality is a firmly established condition'. An individual needs moral character and a committed mindset in order to be moral. All the qualities that flourish in a person of moral character are "honesty, compassion, justice, courage, gentleness, forgiveness, humility, modesty, generosity, and patience" (Hussain 78). In this case, *salat* plays an important role in preventing the deterioration of character by bringing out the above qualities. *Salat* is effective in flourishing civilizations. Because all the things that are included in *salat* are ablution and purification of clothes. Bad, obscene, and vulgar acts are destructive of civilization and destroyers of character. *Salat* is capable of developing moral character in people and transforming them into civilized and characterful individuals.

In the renowned Sufi book entitled "*Belayote Mutlaka*", Hossain asserted about human basic instincts.

Mawlana Shah Oliullah Dehlowi discussed in his book 'Al Qawlul Jameel' about the reality of nafs-ego and opined that "Discussion about attaining the conditioning of the soul: Goals of all paths lead towards attaining a state of the soul called '*nisbat*'-affiliation. It is an affiliation of peace and connection of light with The Almighty Allah. The essence of

নামাজ, রোজা, হজ্জ, জাকাত ইত্যাদি এবাদাতে মোতনাফিয়া বা পাপকার্য বিরতকারী ইবাদতের পর্যায়ভুক্ত।

¹¹ The quoted extract is authors' own translation from original Bengali text:

আমার স্মরণের জন্য নামাজ কায়েম বা বিন্যস্ত কর।

this is the spiritual conditioning of the (human) reasoning soul to acclimatize to the state of angels or to witness ‘jabarut’ or the higher world¹² (113-114).

Hossain also added that human minds are always scattered, and practicing *salat* can help them concentrate

It is exclusively related with the nature of mind. If the mind keeps roaming distraughtly, it should be brought back to its desired location and be watched over, and should be confined within its vicinity like we do with the animals. As a result the human animalistic instincts will be tamed like cows, buffalos or other animals. This method is for those people whose *nafs* is *ammāra* and whose location is in the apparent world¹⁰ (142).

The inherent virtue of *salat* is the eradication of wrongdoing and obscenity. By saying the prayer, the worshiper is able to bring out the positive traits that are dormant in him. *Salat* is an effective shield against wrongdoing, crime, obscenity, and illegal acts. A person who performs *salat* is constantly aware that Allah (^{Subhanahu} ~~OaTa~~ ^{la}) is observing their good and bad deeds. He cannot do any evil, even while hiding from Allah. He thus improves his character. It is a very effective way to prevent shameless and bad deeds. This prayer is the essence of all worship. A true worshiper is able to remove impurities from his heart by offering five daily prayers. As a result, his character becomes pure and transparent. That is why *salat* is one of the tools of character improvement. And, the person who could not correct his character through prayer and could not stop himself from committing sins, it should be understood that he did not say his prayer accordingly. In this hadith, it has been mentioned that “the

¹² The quoted extract is authors’ own translation from original Bengali text:

নফছ বা মানব সত্ত্বাতে এক স্থিতিশীল অবস্থা সৃষ্টি করা ছুফী সাধনার সমস্ত পন্থার মুখ্য উদ্দেশ্য। এই স্থিতিশীল অবস্থাকে ছুফী পরিভাষামতে নিছবত বা সম্বন্ধ বলা হয়। ইহা নছ বা মানব সত্ত্বার বিশুদ্ধতা ও পবিত্রতা জনিত আয়ত্বাধীন বন্ধু বিশেষ। ইহা দ্বারা খোদা তাঁহার শান্তি ও আলো জগতের সহিত মানবের ধারাবাহিক ও নিকটতম যোগাযোগ সৃষ্টি করে। ইহাতে ফেরেশতা জগত গুণ বিশিষ্ট বা তৎউর্দ্ধ জবরুত জগত অবগতি জনিত হাল বা অবস্থা আয়ত্ব হয়।

prayer of a person which cannot refrain from bad and shameless acts is not a prayer at all”¹³ (Ahmad).

Salat Awakens Self-realization

Self-realization is the process of striving for full potential as fundamental yet attainable, also known as self-actualization. “Self-actualization, in psychology, a concept regarding the process by which an individual reaches his or her full potential” (Sullivan). Kurt Goldstein, a physician specializing in neuroanatomy and psychiatry, pioneered it in the early half of the twentieth century. Self-realization necessitates transcending the constraints of ego consciousness. It assists a person in developing his personality by moving beyond “ego-centric identifications” (Boni 24). Among the Islamic prayers, *salat* is very effective at awakening the worshiper's consciousness. A worshiper must pay complete attention while performing *salat*. He should be aware of and comprehend what he is saying during *salat*. While offering *salat*, he must refrain from worldly thoughts and meditation. He should imagine in his mind that I am observing Allah, even though I am not, but He is. When the procedures outlined above are followed correctly, self-realization will develop in the personality of a worshiper. According to Syed Delawor Hossain,

During the prayer, when an individual searches for his ownself, he can realize his location in the spiritual levels and it becomes easier for him to know whether he is in the stations of ‘*ammara*’ ‘*lawama*’ ‘*mulhama*’ ‘*mutmainna*’, ‘*radia*, ‘*mardia*, or ‘*kamila*’¹⁴ (Hossain, *belayot* 144).

¹³ The quoted extract is authors’ own translation from original Bengali text:

যে লোককে তার নামাজ নির্লজ্জ ও খারাপ কাজ-কর্ম থেকে বিরত রাখতে পারলনা, তার নামাজ নামাজই নহে।

¹⁴ The quoted extract is authors’ own translation from original Bengali text:

এই নামাজ বা উপাসনা অবস্থায় যখন মানব নিজকে বা নিজ সজাগ সত্ত্বাকে তালাস করে তখন বুঝিতে পারে, সে কোন স্তরে আছে। “আম্মারা, লাওয়ামা, মোলহেমা, মোতমাইরা, রাজিয়া, মর্জিয়া বা কামেলা ইত্যাদিতে নিজ পরিচয় লাভ করা তখন সহজ হইয়া পড়ে।

The aforementioned quote alludes to *salat* as a means of self-realization. Self-realization elevates a worshiper to the level of 'Divine witnessing' (*mushahadah*), which refers to perceiving the outward as a reflection of the inward and knowing that the Divine can be seen in both the inner and outer worlds. In this context, Jalal ad-Din Rumi says, "This outward spring and garden are the reflection of the inward garden: the whole of this world is a single nugget, and the inward is the mine" (Boni 159).

Self-realization enables a person to fully experience who they are, aids in realizing their potential as human beings, and helps to create an unbounded space where all conflicts, ambiguity, and worries can find peace and resolution. One of the tools of self-identity is self-realization. According to a Sufi, "he who knows himself knows his Lord." In this context, there is an ancient Greek aphorism that says, "Know thyself". The famous saying of Socrates is that an unexamined life is not worth living. The word "unexamined" in this context refers to unconsciousness and a lack of self-awareness. According to transpersonal psychology, optimal wellbeing of an individual lies in the spiritual and transpersonal level of self-realization. Transpersonal psychology does not concentrate on a single issue. It is said to locate the source of the problem. For example, if a person is depressed, his depression is not prioritized. Instead, it is advised to identify the source of depression and develop "self-awareness" (Boni 5). Remembering the Creator is one way to awaken self-awareness. Also, *salat* is a great way to remember Allah. Therefore, *salat* can be said to play an important role in self-reflection, self-realization, and self-identification.

***Salat* Confirms the Nature of Seeking the Creator**

Salat is one of the means of establishing a relationship with Allah. That is why *salat* is called *mi'raj* (ascension towards and into Heaven) of the believers in the hadith. The following narration by Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari reveals how the ritual system

of *salat* plays a role in achieving spiritual excellence and ensuring the search for Almighty:

1. In the first part of *salat*, i.e. commencing with the *Takbiratul ihram* [the statement of “Allahu Akbar” with the description of the excellence of Allah, raising both hands, the detachment of the family is proclaimed, and then, keeping the hands under the navel, this detachment is fully expressed.
2. It is expressed as moving forward from the animal level to the angelic level during *ruku* (bowing).
3. In the *Kuyud*, or sitting state, in this visible world, he declares himself to be the drive of Almighty's will power, thinking of himself as a stationary material like a mountain.
4. The state of *sjida* (prostration) is considered to be a loyal praiser of the Lord and uttering *tasbeeh* declares complete surrender like an angel.
5. While reciting *tashahhud*, the recitation of *durood*, *salam* in the presence of Allah (Subhanahu) is imitated during *mi'raj* of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him.).
6. In the last part of the *salat*, “it is concluded by *salam*; Which is *Shayer Ma'Allah* (the movement with Allah) after *Shayer Fillah* (the movement towards Allah), and it is wished for peace, liberation, and well-being of the people of the world which is a sign of universal love and affection”¹⁵ (Hossain, *belayot* 144).

Salat is one of the ways to awaken the love of the Almighty. When the worshiper engages in prayer with full attention, he is freed from worldly thoughts and absorbed in Almighty's thoughts. This state of the worshiper has been termed by Syed Delawor Hossain as *shayer fillah* i.e. the movement of the worshiper towards Allah. *Salat* has two aspects, one is external, and the other is spiritual. The

¹⁵ The quoted extract is authors' own translation from original Bengali text: ছালাম দ্বারা ছায়র ফিল্লাহর পর ছায়র মা'আলাহ, জগদ্বাসির শান্তি-মুক্তি ও মঙ্গল কামনা করা হয়; যাহা সার্বজনীন প্রেম প্রীতি ও ভালবাসার নিদর্শন।

external benefit is that it brings cleanliness to the human body and clothes. And the spiritual benefit is that it awakens love for the Creator. And through prayer, the love of Almighty is awakened in his heart, then he finds Almighty. And every moment of a seeker of Almighty counts as a prayer. However, they do not always pray publicly. In this context, the following verse of the Holy Quran is worth mentioning – *الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ* (Those who remain steadfast to their prayer) (Al-Quran, 44:23). Mawlana Rumi said that “the five times prayer is the prayer that shows the way. Lovers of Almighty are always in prayer”¹⁶ (Hossain, *belayot* 142).

Salat is a way to develop a relationship with Allah, much like the Prophet Hazrat Muhammad's (^{Peace Be Upon Him.}) *mi'raj*. We can face Almighty Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{OaTa'la}) and communicate with Him through prayer. We can get closer to Him and make our spiritual faculties sharpest and most receptive to the truth while performing *salat*. The best synchronization of our body, mind, and soul occurs during *salat*. It makes a man appear to be the most sensible, human, and “almost otherworldly” (Omer). When a worshiper realizes the presence of Almighty in *salat*, he frees his heart from carnal desires, ego and animalistic desires and immerses himself in the meditation of Almighty.

Salat Establishes Adle Motlaq (the equality of justice)

Adle mutlaq or equality of justice “refers to equality in giving rights and in enduring by obligations without discrimination for any reason, either for religion, race or colour”. Islam has placed a strong emphasis on treating everyone fairly. It is both a moral quality and a trait of the human personality. If justice is established everywhere, society and state will be dominated by peace and tranquility. The Prophet's tradition declares its significance as follows: “There are seven categories of people whom Almighty will shelter under His

¹⁶ The quoted extract is authors' own translation from original Bengali text:

পাঁচ ওয়াক্তিয়া নামাজ পথ দেখানো নামাজই বটে। খোদার প্রেমিকগণ সবসময়ে নামাজে রত থাকে।

shade on the Day when there will be no shade except His. (One is) the just leader". In the holy Quran, the Almighty Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{OaTa'la}) declares, "Almighty commands justice and fair dealing" (Quran 16:90) ("Justice in Islam | Perspective from Quran and Sunnah - Islamic Articles").

Adle mutlaq, or equality of justice, has always been and continues to be very important. There is a lot of abject poverty and inequality in today's modern, prosperous world. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2004, 1100 million people have a daily income of less than \$1, with 432 million living in South Asia and 323 in Sub-Saharan Africa. South and East Asia are home to "831 million undernourished individuals" (Al-Jarhi & Zarqa 44). If there was equality of justice everywhere, there would be an equal distribution of wealth. As a result, poverty would be reduced and wealth would not be accumulated in any particular individual or group.

The Islamic system of prayer provides a practical illustration of *adle mutlaq*, or equality of justice. The owner and the servant, the king and the subject, the high and the low, the good and the mean, all stand in the same row and offer the prayer while participating in the congregation. In order to establish *adle mutlaq*, or equality of justice, *salat* is crucial. In the modern era, discrimination based on race, class, and wealth has reached extreme levels. In this case, the role of *salat* in preventing caste and class discrimination is undeniable. The importance of *adle mutlaq* is immense in establishing peace and order in society and preventing injustice. Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{OaTa'la}) continues to govern His entire creation on the basis of *adle* or righteousness. Where there is no error. Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{OaTa'la}) has insisted on the establishment of *adle mutlaq* in society and the state.

***Salat* Prevents the Conflicts between Religions in the World**

The main causes of religious conflict in the world are lack of tolerance, not being devoted to one's own religion, and the absence of love for Almighty in the prescribed prayers of religion. *Salat* is

the main form of prayer in Islam. Through prayer, a worshiper can develop a loving relationship with his Lord. Similarly, other religions have practices of prayer. The main purpose of every prayer is to attain nearness to the Almighty. When love for the Creator is awakened, absolute tolerance is awakened in people. Absolute tolerance is to behave tolerantly and show tolerance towards the opinions or religious doctrines of others while remaining steadfast in one's own religion or doctrine. The philosopher Voltaire said of absolute tolerance, 'I may disagree with you, but I would give my life to allow you to express it'. Islam has laid great emphasis on toleration. One of the ninety-nine names of Allah (^{Subhanahu} _{Wa Ta'ala}) is *Haleem*; which means tolerant. Freedom of expression is prioritized in Islam, and imposing one's opinion on the opinion of others is prohibited. In this regard, Al-Quran has stated - 'Let there be no compulsion in religion' (Al-Quran, 2:256) (The Quran 115).

Islam (2020) has quoted, "Religious tolerance is the realization of the expression of religious experience in the form of community" (2). According to some studies, tolerance is the primary indicator of religious harmony. The existence of tolerance among various religious communities is essential. Without tolerance, religious harmony cannot be built, and there can be no mutual respect, love, or cooperation between communities. Tolerance is a wonderful and noble concept that is embedded in the teachings of all religions, including Islam. Therefore, Islam has a viewpoint on how to implement tolerance in the face of religious diversity.

In pluralistic societies, religious diversity is common. Islam is in favor of this religious diversity. The Medina Charter is a prime example of this. The Prophet (^{Peace Be} _{upon Him.}) established the Islamic state with the Muslims, pagans, Jews, and Christians who lived in Medina and recognized each nation's security and freedom. The concept of *tawhida adayan*, or religious equality, can be useful in resolving religious conflicts. In this context, Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari stated that

The concept of *tawhid-e-adyan* or religious unity, which is evident from the following verses of the holy Quran.

إن الذين آمنوا والذين هادوا والصابئين من آمن بالله واليوم الآخر
وعمل صالحا فلهم أجرهم عند ربهم ولا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون

Indeed the believers (the Muslims) and those among the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians who sincerely accept faith in Allah (Subhanahu OaTa'la) and the Last Day* and do good deeds – their reward is with their Lord; and there shall be no fear upon them nor shall they grieve.

Knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and oneness of Allah (Subhanahu OaTa'la) (*tawhid*) are the trust that Allah (Subhanahu OaTa'la) bestowed upon mankind. Accordingly, everyone is entrusted with the oneness of Allah (Subhanahu OaTa'la) and knowledge, regardless of their faith or caste. Not rendering the trust will be considered as a betrayal to Allah. *Tawhid-e-adyan*¹⁷ or the concept of religious equality views that the ethical goals of all religion are analogous and therefore, does not disrespect any religion. It is evident from the essence of the following verses:

أفتؤمنون ببعض الكتاب وتكفرون ببعض فما جزاء من يفعل ذلك منكم إلا
خزي في الحياة الدنيا ويوم القيامة يردون إلى أشد العذاب وما الله بغافل عما
تعملون

17 বেলায়তে মোত্লাকা যে তৌহীদে আদ্য্যানের বা ধর্ম ঐক্যের সমর্থক তাহার প্রমাণ স্বরূপ পবিত্র কোরআন পাকের আয়াতসমূহ নিম্নে উদ্ধৃত করা হইল “যাহারা খোদা বিশ্বাসী এবং যাহারা ইহুদী নাহারা (খৃষ্টান) বা ছাবেয়ীন, যেই হউক না কেন, যদি তাহারা আল্লাহ ও পরকালে বিশ্বাস করে এবং সংকার্য করে তাহার পুরস্কার আল্লাহতায়ালার নিকট রক্ষিত আছে। তাহাদের কোন ভয়ভীতি এবং অনুতাপ নাই।” (ছুরা বাকারা ৬২ আয়াত)

মানব জাতির উপর আল্লাহতায়ালার যে আমানত অর্পণ করিয়াছেন তাহা মায়ারেফাত ও তৌহীদই, সুতরাং ধর্ম-জাতি নির্বিশেষে প্রত্যেকেই এই তৌহীদ ও মায়ারেফাতের আমানতের বোঝা বহনকারী। যদি আদায় না করে আল্লাহতায়ালার আমানতের খেয়ানত হইবে। ধর্মসাম্য-বা-তৌহীদে আদ্য্যানের নিকট যে সর্বধর্মের নৈতিক লক্ষ্যবস্তু এক এবং কোন ধর্ম যে ইহার নিকট হয় নহে ইহার পোষকতায় নিম্ন আয়াতটি দেওয়া হইল।

“তোমরা কি খোদার কোন কেতাবকে বিশ্বাস এবং কোন কেতাবকে অবিশ্বাস কর? তোমাদের মধ্যে এই রকম যাহারা করে বা কর তাহারা সংসারে অপদস্থ এবং কেয়ামতের দিন কঠোর আজাবের দিকে প্রত্যাঘর্ষিত হইবে। আল্লাহ নিশ্চয় তোমরা যাহা করিতেছ তাহার সম্বন্ধে অবগত আছেন।” (ছুরা বাকারা ৮৫ আয়াত)

So do you believe in some of Allah's commands and disbelieve in some? So what is the reward of those who do so, except disgrace in this world? And on the Day of Resurrection they will be assigned to the most grievous punishment; and Allah (^{Subhanahu} _{OaTa'la}) is not unaware of your deeds (Hossain, *belayot* 56).

In summary, although each religion has its own set of rules for praying, the basic goal of prayer remains the same. And that is-coming closer to Almighty. In this regard, Islam (2020) argues, "Every religion must have its own rules in worship. But this difference is not a reason to divide" (Islam 4).

Spiritual excellence

The term "spirituality" is derived from the Latin root *spiritus*, which means "breath," as breath is linked to life. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1974), the semantic interpretation of spirit is "the life-giving, vital, animating force of human beings and also the vigor, courage, and ardor that infuses life with energy" (Delgado 158). Makkar and Singh (2021) state, "Spirituality is an intrapersonal and metaphysical relationship with a higher power or transcendent force that provides motivation, purpose, and a sense of connectedness with others" (Makkar & Singh 2). Syed Delawor Hossain claims that moral humanity or moral human religion are other names for spirituality. It is not at all constrained by social or national boundaries. By adhering to some rules set forth by the Quran and the Prophet's (^{Peace Be} _{Upon Him.}) tradition, one can achieve spiritual excellence or perfect humanity. *Salat* is the first step towards spiritual excellence, or perfected humanity. Abdul Gaffar et. al, (2021) mentioned that humans are the only creatures capable of manifesting Allah's name and nature, both in the form of the Majesty and Beauty of Allah.(150). A human can communicate with the Supreme Being through *salat*. It is the most effective way to establish a relationship with Allah. The Prophet's (^{Peace Be} _{Upon Him.}) declaration backs it up, as *salat* is the *mi'raj* for believers.

Salat is the most effective way to achieve spiritual excellence. When the following factors are considered, the issue becomes clear:

1. The best quality of human character is humility. This quality is important for spiritual excellence. *Salat* is the best way to demonstrate this humility. When offering *salat*, the worshiper must submit himself to Allah's court with humility and proper etiquette. The holy Quran also praises such believers as successful who are humble while offering *salat*.
2. An essential component of achieving spiritual excellence is self-awareness. A self-aware person is able to gain self-identity. That is why it is mentioned in the holy hadith that whoever knows himself knows his Lord. *Salat* is very important in developing self-awareness. Believers who are self-conscious in prayer are defined as successful in the Holy Qur'an.
3. Self-realization is very important for spiritual excellence. A self-realized person is able to know and understand that this world is transitory. In this world we have come on tour for a while. At the end of the tour, everyone has to reach their respective destinations. And that destination is union with the Almighty. *Salat* can awaken that self-realization. When a worshiper stands in prayer freed from worldly thoughts, the higher thoughts arise in him. Then he considers the closeness of the Almighty as the most important thing.
4. Divine Love is most important for spiritual excellence. No worship is accepted in the court of Allah (Subhanahu Oa'Ta'la) without Divine Love. And prayer is one of the means to awaken that Divine Love. *Salat* is one of the tools for spiritual excellence in the eyes of those who love the Almighty. That is why they are constantly engaged in prayer.
5. Another essential component for spiritual excellence is patience and perseverance. Allah (Subhanahu Oa'Ta'la) is with those who are patient, according to the essence of the Holy Quran. That

is why Allah (^{Subhanahu}_{OaTa'la}) has instructed us to seek his assistance through prayer and patience. The power of patience can be seen in a worshiper when he is standing like a mountain in prayer. He turned away from all associations with the outside world and stepped in front of one Creator.

6. Remembrance of Allah (^{Subhanahu}_{OaTa'la}) is a key component of spiritual excellence. Remembrance of Allah (^{Subhanahu}_{OaTa'la}) brings about tranquility. And the state of mindfulness is more advanced in achieving the proximity of Allah. Therefore, *salat* is one way to remember Allah. Allah (^{Subhanahu}_{OaTa'la}) is praised at every stage of the prayer, from the opening to the closing.
7. A sin-free life is one of the most important factors in achieving spiritual excellence. If a person is used to living a sin-free life, he can have a pure soul. And those who have a pure soul are successful in attaining the proximity of Almighty. And *salat* is a shield to protect from obscenity and immorality. A person who prays frees himself from the taint of sin and accustoms himself to leading a pure life. As a result, he attains spiritual excellence and is able to attain closeness to Allah.
8. Another important adjunct to spiritual excellence is self-criticism, meditation on one's faults. In Sufi terminology, that is called *telowate wajud*. That is to meditate on the previous day's good and bad deeds. When the servant stands in prayer, the image of the good and bad of the previous day floats before his eyes. When an image of a good deed appears, he then thanks Almighty and becomes more motivated by Almighty's love. And when the image of an evil deed appears in front of him, he becomes afraid and repents while in prayer. Thus he proceeds on the path of spiritual excellence.

***Salat* Ensures Social Progress**

The prevention of social crimes is essential for social progress. Otherwise, there will be no social progress. Theft, robbery, murder, larceny, eve-teasing, gambling, adultery, drug addiction, and usury are examples of social crimes. To stop social crimes, Islam has given clear instructions. In order to stop social crimes and prepare for the Hereafter, the Holy Qur'an mentions a number of earthly penalties. The main aspect of fighting social crimes is to make each person a pure human being. *Salat* can be very helpful in this. Because the governing force that can shield a person from obscenity, immorality, and social crimes is found in *salat*. Social progress is defined as the capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the foundations that enable citizens and communities to improve and sustain the quality of their lives, and create the conditions for all individuals to realize their full potential. Social progress is the result of progressively reducing social harm. We might be thinking about a set of moral-structural theories such as fairness, equality, democracy, and self-determination. And we could define progress as institutional reform that improves one or more of these aspects of society.

Social development can be assessed on several moral structural theories. Which has already been mentioned. Those structural theories are fully found in *salat*. One of the most important factors in ensuring social progress is fair dealing. The lack of fair dealing leads to social crimes and the destruction of society's peace. *Salat* has the potential to establish fairness among society's residents. Heritage et al. (2000) confirmed at their paper about the spiritual culture and social progress,

The most important factor of social progress at the present time and for the future must be the humanization of scientific-technical progress, education and other social organizations. As the promotion of social progress requires promoting the development of culture, an important goal in

the administration of culture is the realization of its humanistic or spiritual essence. Therefore, spiritual culture is the most successful and purposeful expression of man and society and the most important factor in social progress (17).

Congregational prayer of Islam is the best example of social progress. In this context, Syed Delowar Hossain Maizbhandari says, "Here upon social progress and spiritual excellence are closely related" (Hossain, 2009, 143). *Salat* also contains other moral structural theories such as equality, democracy, and self-determination. There are no distinctions between low and high, black and white, or poor and rich when offering *salat*. Standing shoulder to shoulder is a powerful indicator of equality. Freedom and freedom of speech are very challenging issues these days. However, Islam's prayer system offers a simple solution to this problem. *Salat* is a shining example of democracy, liberty, and freedom of speech. When everyone lines up to pray in the mosque, no one from the back row can move to the front row. In this case, the person who was first in the front line is more entitled. Even a wealthy person in the back row has no chance unless the front row is empty.

Peaceful Religious Coexistence

In order to have peaceful religious coexistence, tolerance is essential. Tolerance means to put up with, bear, or endure. Abdul Rahman & Khambali (2013) explain

Tolerance is defined as the willingness of an individual to accept others' rights to be different and respecting without being judgmental. Tolerance contributes to the shaping of human rights, pluralism, democracy and law legislation. Tolerance acknowledges that humans are naturally different in terms of appearance, character, behavior and they have the right to live peacefully without interruptions of their rights. Tolerance is an attitude of openness; to listen to different views of others, and functions two-ways; offering one's

view and accepting others, and does not affect the religious beliefs of each other in that shared space (82, 84).

Religious coexistence is possible if tolerance finds space among diverse communities. Religious coexistence is the idea that people of different religions can live together in peace and harmony. The term "coexistence" refers to a situation in which two or more groups of people are able to live side by side, with each group's differences being acknowledged and respected, and any conflicts between the groups being resolved peacefully.

Syed Delawor Hossain refers to *tawhid*, or monotheism, as the fundamental tenet in resolving religious disputes. According to Hossain, if it is possible to bring the entire world under the shadow of *tawhid*, then it is possible to ensure peaceful religious coexistence. If it is not possible to include the entire human race as Muslims, he believes that they must be included at least in *Tawhid*. He also stated that

Ramananda, Ramanuja, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Sri Loknath, Nanak, Kabir, Raja Rammohan Ray, Brahmabadi Chaitanya, and others did not accept Islam while rejecting Hindu Paganism, but accepted Tawhid¹⁸ (Hossain, *belayot* 61).

The prayer system of Islam is a shining example of the recognition of the Oneness of Almighty. It recognizes all religious values. Because one of the basic principles of religion is equality, justice, kindness, compassion, etc. And all those features are beautifully expressed in the Islamic prayer system. *Salat* ensures peaceful religious coexistence for the reasons stated above. Farrokhian et al. (2016) mentioned that the most important religious duty is a summary of Quran and Islam (256), therefore, it consists

¹⁸ The quoted extract is authors' own translation from original Bengali text: রামানন্দ, রামানুজ, স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ, শ্রীশ্রী লোকনাথ, নানক, কবীর, রাজা রামমোহন রায়, ব্রহ্মবাদী চৈতন্য প্রভৃতি, হিন্দু পৌত্তলিকতা হইতে দূরে সরিয়া ইসলাম গ্রহণ না করিলেও তওহীদের স্বীকৃতি দান করিতেছে।

of all religious values and might impact a society's cultural and social sectors. They also add that developing congregational *salat* promotes benevolence and compassion in society, and it is in such a society that political, economic, social, and cultural goals are attained. Thus, clearly, *salat* is the cornerstone of all religious practices. *Salat* promotes spiritual development regardless of its content.

Metaphorical Relationship between *Salat*, *Usul-e-Sab'a* and Spiritual (*Fakiri*) Music

Is there any Metaphorical relationship between *salat*, *usul-e-sab'a*, and spiritual (*Fakiri*) music? By considering the intrinsic objectives of *salat* and *usul-e-sab'a*, we can conclude that there is a close relationship between these two terms. But how? It is mentioned in Hadith-e-Qudsi that half of the *salat* is for the servants of Almighty. In this sense, spiritual progress and social prosperity are deeply related. For instance, in the practice of *salat* first one disassociates oneself from worldly activities by raising two hands above and describing the greatness of Almighty Allah, and then completes this disassociation by closing one's hands which symbolizes *Fana anil khalk*, or self-reliance, metaphorically, that means abandoning earthly aid and seeking refuge only in Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{QaTa'la}) (Brandt 260). Second, the experience of marching forward from the stage of beasts to the stage of angels via *Ruku* which is a metaphor for *Fana anil hawa*, or avoiding unnecessary things because beasts always do unnecessary things but angels do not. As a result, human nature should resemble that of an angel. Thirdly, to declare sitting as the conveyance of Almighty's willpower, considering oneself still and inanimate like hills and mountains in this mundane world, which is a metaphorical symbol of *Fana Anil Irada*. In Sufi terms, surrendering one's will to the will of Allah (^{Subhanahu} ^{QaTa'la}) is called "*Fana anil Irada*" (Hoque et al. 25). Maizbhandari Tariqa accepts all religions. The founders of the Maizbhandari tariqa Ghawth al-Azam Hazrat Mawlana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah,

“developed a fairly elaborate (*sapta paddhati*) methodology” (Bertocci 13). This method is constructed with the seven types of the pursuit method. It is divided into two facets, the three types of *fana* (the annihilation) and “the four types of *mauth* (the death)” (Bhuiyan 144). The basic principle of Maizbhandari tariqa is *Usul-e-sab’a*, which can be practiced by all humankind regardless of caste or creed. So universally, this method can be applied to prevent the degradation of human character, which is the fundamental objective of *salat*.

Hossain (2009) deeply observed the essence of music for increasing devotion of the human mind to the Almighty, and he compared this event to the goal of *salat* because *salat* means the rekindling of the dormant love of the human heart for the Almighty.

The tradition of spiritual music (*sama* ¹⁹) was practiced among the Sufis in the past and as in the present. Such spiritually intoxicated heart enables a wayfarer to easily forget about his surroundings and uplifts in a state of sinless reality, which is the ultimate objective of *salat*. It makes the wayfarer float in the ocean of Divine love and liberates him from the temptations of his own egoistic desires. Whoever experiences the taste of this Divine ocean, has the opportunity to make his impure soul annihilated and transform its reality like an object fallen in a salt lake (becomes salty). His ‘self’ attains the attribute of purity. They Holy Quran said, “Indeed good deeds wipe out the evil deeds¹⁹ (118).

¹⁹ The quoted extract is authors’ own translation from original Bengali text:

এই ফকিরী গান বাজনা ছুফীদের ভিতর পূর্বেও ছিল, বর্তমানেও আছে। এই ভাবপ্রবণ চিত্ত এমন এক বস্তু, যাহা ছালেক বা এই পথের পথিককে নেহায়েত সহজে সবকিছু ভুলাইয়া এক পাপ বিরত অবস্থায় পৌঁছাইয়া দেয় যাহা ছালাত বা নামাজের উদ্দেশ্য। ইহা মনের সমস্ত কামনা-বাসনা ভুলাইয়া খোদা পথচারীকে খোদার প্রেম- সমুদ্রে ডুবাইয়া দেয়। এই প্রেম সমুদ্রের লবণাক্ত আত্মদে আত্মাদিত হইয়া উঠিলে তাহার অপবিত্র হান্তি বা সত্তা বিলুপ্ত হইয়া লবণহ্রদে পতিত বস্তুর মত লবণাক্ত হইতে বাধ্য হয়। তখন সেই ব্যক্তির সত্তা বা নফছ পবিত্র সাব্যস্ত হয়। যেমন কোরআনেঃ- নিশ্চয় “হাছনাত” বা পুণ্য “ছইয়াত” বা পাপকে বিনাশ করে।

In the Eyes of the Visitors

Sunipun Barua, a 40-year-old individual employed in the banking sector, frequently experiences a strong attraction towards Maizbhandar Sharif. Upon my inquiry regarding the motivations underlying his recurrent visits, he responded with a profound emotional state, articulating, "I experience an inexplicable and profound sense of connection in this place." The individual's statement implies that in the spiritual environment of Maizbhandar Sharif, they encounter an indescribable and profound emotion that compels them to revisit the place repeatedly (Barua, Sunipun. Interview. Conducted by Mejbaul Alam Bhuiyan. 2023).

Nirjon Chakma, a student enrolled in the Department of Pali at Chittagong University, originates from the picturesque hilly area of Khiram, Fatikchori. He regularly visits the revered Maizbhandar pilgrimage site. When I inquired about his attitudes towards engaging with music, his response provided valuable insights. The individual expressed that the act of engaging with music enables them to establish a deeply intimate connection with the Divine. According to the individual's statement, they experience a palpable sense of proximity to the Divine, which imbues them with the ability to attain an elevated level of focus. The viewpoint Nirjon offers reveals a particular facet of his spiritual journey. By means of music, the individual explores a means of establishing a connection with the transcendent, wherein harmonies and cadences appear to surpass the physical realm, resonating with a more profound aspect of their existence. The individual's proclivity for spiritual focus and their capacity to achieve inner balance serve to underscore the profound spiritual importance that music holds in their lives. Nirjon Chakma utilises music as a means to establish a deep spiritual connection and achieve a state of tranquil concentration that aligns with his visits to the revered sanctuary of Maizbhandar (Chakma, Nirjon. Interview. Conducted by Mejbaul Alam Bhuiyan. 2023).

I asked Bosirul Alam, Khotib of the ancient historical Maizbhandar Shahi Jame mosque, what he thought about the importance of *salat* in spiritual upliftment and ensuring the advancement of society and coexistence. He responds,

Modern science has improved a lot in today's world. Civilization is progressing, but the main element of civilization is people. If people are not physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy, then this civilization will not sustain itself for long. Therefore, there is a need for coordination between the external and internal worlds. I strongly believe that *Salat* can help to balance our external, internal, and spiritual worlds (Alam, Bosirul. Interview. Conducted by Mejbaul Alam Bhuiyan. 2023).

Miss Kabita, a psychologist, expressed her thoughts based on her practical experience working in various communities.

Salat, Zikir, and forgiveness; Taqdeer belief; patience; and surrender to the Almighty—these actions free men from mental turmoil. Regular attention to religious matters brings peace of mind (Kabita. Interview. Conducted by Mejbaul Alam Bhuiyan. 2023).

Togawa Masahiko, professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS), who has visited Maizbhandar sharif on behalf of the 'Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA) for research purposes, met with Syed Irfanul Hoque, who is *Nayeb Sajjāda nashīn* of Gausia Ahmadia manzil at Maizbhandar sharif in September 2023. I interviewed Masahiko Hoque and asked him why he thinks people come to Maizvander Sharif now, and what its contribution to humanity in the world is. In response,

I first visited Maizbhander Sharif 25 years ago, and today, I return. And I was charmed by its communal spirit, secularism, and inclusivity. Maizbhander is a Sufi center, but along with it come Chakmas, Hindus, Buddhists, and people

from different cultures. When I came to Orsh, I saw a combination of people from different cultures that overwhelmed me. In addition to Fatikchori, Raozan, and Hathazari, I visited the Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim communities to further our research objectives. They also come to Maizbhandar in groups and accept other religions easily. There is tolerance among them. There are people from all places. I want to show the world the beauty of humanity's coexistence through our research (Masahiko, Togawa. Interview. Conducted by Mejbaul Alam Bhuiyan. 2023).

Conclusion

What prayer do ye know? Unfortunate! From whose hand did you free your hand? (Hossain, *wilayat* 230). This conversation occurred with Syed Aminul Haq Farhadabdi and Gausul Azam Maizbhandari. Hossain mentions this spiritual experience with Syed Golam Rahman Maizbhandari in his *Belayote Mutlaka* book to illustrate the inner meaning of *salat*²⁰. “Mufti Mawlana Syed Aminul Hoque of Farhadabadi once told me,

On one Friday I came to Hazrat Aqdas. When it was Juma prayer time, I finished my ablution in the pond and came back. Hazrat Mawlana Shah Sufi Syed Golam Rahman (Q.) came before me and took my right hand under his left arm and locked it in his hand. He was absorbed in spiritual intoxication and started pacing and was singing some gazals.

²⁰ ফরহাদাবাদ নিবাসী মুফতী মওলানা সৈয়দ আমিনুল হক ছাহেব (রঃ) একদা আমাকে বলেনঃ

“কোন এক জুম্মাবারে আমি হজরত আকদাছের খেদমতে হাজির হই। নামাজের সময়, সামনের পুকুরে অঙ্কুরিয়া উপরে উঠিয়া আসিলে হজরত মওলানা শাহ্ ছুফী সৈয়দ গোলাম রহমান (কঃ) ছাহেব, আমার সামনে আসিয়া আমার ডান হাত খানা তাঁহার বাম বগলে চাপিয়া হাতের কজা নিজ হাতে আবদ্ধ করিয়া ভাব বিভোর চিত্তে গজল পড়িতে পড়িতে পায়চারী করিতে থাকেন। ওদিকে মসজিদে খোতবা প্রায় শেষ হইয়া আসিতেছে শুনিয়া তাঁহার হাত হইতে নিজ হাত কোন প্রকারে মুক্ত করিয়া নামাজে গিয়া হাজির হইলাম। নামাজ সমাপনের পর পূর্ণঃ হজরত কেবলার খেদমতে হাজির হইলে তিনি আমার উপর চটিয়া যান এবং বলিতে থাকেন, “তুই কি নামাজ জানিস! কাহার হাত হইতে নিজকে মুক্ত করিলি কমবখত!” আমি ভীত হইয়া ক্ষমা চাহিলাম।” মওলানা রুমীর মছনবী মনে পড়িল। অল্পক্ষণ “একলহমা” আউলীয়ার সঙ্গ, শতবর্ষ এবাদত হইতে শ্রেষ্ঠ

I could hear the Friday sermon was about to end. I struggled to free my hand from his grip and attended the prayer. After finishing the prayer, I again attended to Hazrat Qebila. He was angry and started shouting at me, ‘What prayer do ye know? Unfortunate! From whose hand did you free your hand?’ I was scared and asked for forgiveness. I remembered what Mawlana Rumi said, A moment with the friends of Allah (Subhanahu ^oa[’]Ta[’]la) is better than the hundreds years of selfless obedience (*ibadat*) (Hossain, *wilayat* 230).

The role of *salat* is immense in achieving spiritual excellence and ensuring social progress. *Salat* is not only a religious ritual, but its inner form is more comprehensive, far-reaching and influential than the external form of *salat*. Therefore, Syed Delawor Hussain highlighted the beauty of *salat* as follows, this form of worship is a wonderful gift of Prophet Muhammad Mustafa Ahmad Mojtaba (Peace Be ^o Upon Him.). Such a perfect universal all-round beautiful system of worship was not practiced before. Its invocation method is also completely universal and melodically meaningful. It is equally cautionary for those seeking salvation (Hossain, *belayat* 144). In today's world, religious conflict has taken a serious shape. Lack of peaceful religious coexistence is clearly observed. Where the fundamentals of religion are peace, harmony, love, kindness and humanity, we see religious strife and discord. And now we can see the penetration of various social crimes in the social system. The youth of our society are losing their religious values and are indulging in various vices. To deal with such a situation, it is necessary to spread the basic education of religion and make everyone aware about it. Religious conflict can be avoided and peaceful coexistence possible if the spiritual development and social development aspects of the Islamic prayer system are properly followed.

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