

Khushu' Series: Introduction

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- One of the prerequisites amongst the many forms of etiquette required in salat is that of humility. A true spiritual salat requires humility in order for one to ascend to the spiritual levels of heaven, one after the other, in one's ascension (mi'rāj). As the tradition states: الصلاة معراج المؤمن
- Khūshū' is tantamount to a perfect form of humility that is blended with or arises as a result of either (i) love of Allah or (ii) fear of Allah. In (i), this may be compared to the humility one expresses towards one's spouse-to-be, a week before the marriage. In (ii), this may be compared to the humility one expresses towards a Leader or president when in their presence.
- In the former, one is constantly recalling and perceiving the other party's attributes of 'Beauty' which ultimately leads to one's humility (uttering statements such as "I'll do anything for him/her"). In the latter, one is constantly recalling one's neediness before the other party and perceiving the other party's attributes of 'Majesty' (uttering statements such as "please help me...i need you for this/that...").
- In the former, with practice, once it becomes second nature and incorporated within you, one experiences a sense of 'mental agitation' – not being able to control oneself, as if one is infatuated; ultimately, by continuing along the path with steadfastness, one acquires tranquillity of the heart (story of Prophet Ibrāhīm, in 2:260, is depicting this particular route open to us all).
- In the latter, fear remains as the pivotal feature of one's life. Prophet Yaḥyā lived by this code of practice. Imam Sadiq (alayhis-salaam) was asked: "Prophet Jesus would always smile whilst Prophet John would always cry. Which is better for us?" "The way of Jesus (alayhis-salaam)", came the reply.
- In general, one has to acquire a knowledge of and a firm determination towards (i) the shariah (after all, sinning is on a par with distancing oneself from Allah whereas we want to have humility and be submissive to Him in ṣalāt), (ii) the noble ethical traits (which are difficult and ego-breaking to accomplish) and (iii) loving Allah alone. Love towards x thing (other than Allah) is detrimental to one's journey. It's not a sin and you may even acquire heaven, but it's a minimum as far as what one can achieve, spiritually. In short, the heart can only be occupied with one source (see 33:4).
- The contamination of one's soul by vicious ethical attributes (esoteric pollutions) is much worse than the exoteric. Hence, struggle against the esoteric pollutions is of much more significance. Why? because the cause and root of the exoteric pollutions is in fact the esoteric pollutions. The sufis claim

that “that which can be extrapolated from the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt is the fact that the inner pollutions will cause a more severe punishment and chastisement in the Hereafter” (see tradition later).

- All actions that are related to the ṣalāt are either directly or indirectly assigned to enhance, promote and stimulate one’s humility. At first this may seem as an academic procedure or drill but with time, the hope lies in the fact that it becomes incorporated within. After all, if it remains with-out, it may act as one extra veil you have created for yourself vis-à-vis your journey of acquiring unity with your Lord.
- These actions may be classified as: (a) preliminaries of ṣalāt (such as ṭaharah [wūḍū etc.], clothing, time and place...), (b) directly preceding actions to the ṣalāt (such as the athān and iqāmah, qīyām and intention) and (c) actions and formulae within the ṣalāt.

(Note: This series is based off of notes from a workshop that Dr. Sekaleshfar gave)