



## **Religious Gatheka – Hazrat Inayat Khan**

### **4. The Manner of Prayer**

There are three kinds among those who are in the habit of offering prayer.

There is one who by praying fulfils a certain duty which he considers as one among all the duties of life. He does not know to whom he is praying, he thinks to some God. If he is in the congregation he feels out of necessity, to do as the others do. He is like one among the sheep who goes on, he does not know where and why. Prayer to him is something that he must do because he is put into a situation where he cannot help it. In order to fall in with the custom of the family or community, and in order to respect those around him, he does it as everybody else. His prayer is mechanical, and if it makes any effect it is very little.

And the second kind of person who offers his prayers is the one who offers the prayers because he is told to do so and yet is confused if there is any God, if his prayers are really heard.

He maybe praying and at the same time confusion may be going in his mind: “Am I doing right or wrong?” If he is a busy man he might think: “Am I giving my time to something really profitable or am I really wasting it? I see no one before me, I hear no answer to my prayer.” He does it because he was told by someone to do it or because it might bring him some good. His prayer is a prayer in the dark. The heart which must be opened to God is covered by his own doubt, and if he prayed in this way for a thousand years it is never heard. It is this kind of soul who in the end loses his faith, especially when he meets with a disappointment, and he prays, and if his prayer is not answered, that puts an end to his belief.

Then there is a third person who has imagination which is strengthened by faith. He does not only pray to God but he prays before God, in the presence of God. Once the imagination has helped man to bring the presence of God before him, God in his own heart is wakened. Then before he utters a word it is heard by God. When he is praying in a room he is not alone, he is there with God. Then God to him is not in the highest Heaven but next to him, before him, in him. The Heaven to him is on earth and the earth for him is Heaven. No one to him is then so living as God, so intelligible as God, and the names and forms before him are covered under Him. Then every word of prayer he says, it is a living word. It does not only bring him blessing, but blessings to all those around him. It is this manner of prayer which is the only right way of prayer, and by this manner the object that is to be fulfilled by prayer is accomplished.