

## **My Spiritual Work & Practice - A 'story'!**

In all the discussions people have about their Spiritual Practice and their Work and what any of this means and how to integrate Work and Spiritual Practice, this particular story (adapted from the novel, *“Round the Bend”* by Nevil Shute), informs one of the main foundations of my ‘working’ spiritual practice. I first read the story at the age of 15 and have read it many times since then, so it has stayed with me – in the background – until I came to live and work at the Findhorn Foundation spiritual community for 17 years and when I started to practice meditation and/or prayer in this way. I am not much of a meditator, nor a “Sanctuary”, or a “Church” person, or even a ‘religious’ person. Where I live and work in the Park, in the Community, in Moray, in the sand dunes, in the gardens, on building sites, and in my work as a therapist, in my relationships, and in my life – these are all my Sanctuary, my Holy Places, my Place of Work – and of my Place of Worship, and walking around here and when I am working with clients, this story lies behind how I meditate, or worship, or work, or pray.

*There is a legend that the Prophet Mahomet, Blessed-Be-His-Name, having been given the main doctrines of the Moslem faith by Allah (or God) then met Moses. Moses asked Mahomet how many times God had required the Muslim people to pray to Him daily, and Mahomet said, “Fifty times”. Moses told him that this was impractical; that he had tried it with the Children of Israel and he had never succeeded in getting anyone of them to pray fifty times a day. He said that Mahomet should go back to God and humbly beg Him that this number of prayers that God wanted each day should be reduced. Mahomet did so, and in coming back from speaking to the Presence, he met with Moses again, and told him the number had been reduced to forty prayers per day. “That is still too much”, said Moses. “The people will not pray so many times. You must go back and ask Him to reduce it further.” Urged by Moses, it is written that the Prophet went back to God until the number of prayers was reduced to five each day. And still Moses said, “Do you think you can exact five prayers a day with your people? By Heaven, I have been through this with the Children of Israel, and it cannot be done. Go back and ask Him (as I have done) to reduce it yet again.” But the Prophet said, “No, I will not go back. I have asked His indulgence already until I am ashamed. My people are not Israelites, and they shall worship Him five times a day.” And that is the reason – the story goes – why every Believer (of Islam) has to say his prayers to God five times a day.*

*However five times a day is the minimum number of prayers per day; the number was brought down to be within the power of the ordinary person. But we – here, now – are not like that. We are people of understanding and of education and on whom are laid different responsibilities ... and God will demand much more from us than from those people of old. From people like us, the full tally of fifty prayers a day will be demanded: Five of them must be made in public (or in private), according to the ways that you know within the Muslim faith, but these are the bare minimum.*

*From people like us, another forty-five prayers are rightfully demanded. And this is how to make them. Forty-five prayers a day may seem a lot to you. They did to Moses. Yet forty-five more prayers a day was the commandment of God, and God is All-Seeing, and All-Knowing, and All-Merciful. He would not command that you should do more than you can perform. You can pray to God an extra forty-five times a day quite easily, and I will tell you how.*

*Every time you do something, you can ask the person in charge of you to see if you have done it well, but they can only see what is to be seen. There are many things hidden from them, but nothing is hidden from the All-Seeing Eye of God. God, the All-Knowing, knows whether you have done well or ill; or badly or conscientiously. If you ask Him humbly, in prayer, to tell you, then He will tell you whether you have done well or ill; poorly or carefully; with love – or with bitterness – in your heart. You will know this in your heart, after a moment of prayer. Doing it that way you will then have a chance to do the job again, if it needs it, and then you can try to do it better. Or you will have the chance to realise that you do not know enough and so you will have to ask someone and to learn how to do it better. God is All-Merciful and He will not hold any bad work or mistake against you ... especially if He sees you striving to do it right. This way, the work that you do is thus guided by God.*

So, with every piece of work that you do, pause for a moment at every stage (before starting, when you have finished up for a second, and turn to Mecca (if you want to), and bow your head slightly and fold your hands, and humbly ask the All-Seeing God to put into your heart the knowledge of whether the work – that you are about to do, or that you have been doing, or that you have just done has been good or ill, right or wrong, and/or has been done in the right way. Then you stand for a few moments (usually no more than half a minute) with your eyes cast down, thinking of God and of the job, and then God will put into your heart the knowledge of good or ill. So if the work is good, you can proceed in peace, and, if it is ill you have the chance to correct it or you may do it over again, or ask for help so that you can do well before God.

If you do this, you will soon find that you are praying to God at least forty-five times a day or more – as He directed the Prophet in the first instance. Moses and Mahomet were quite right to get the tally reduced, because the people of those days were nomads and camel drivers: their lives were much simpler. But you, here, now are now more educated and dedicated to doing much more skilled work in the world, and thus being so much closer to God. God will therefore require more of you; and you are worth much more, because people look to you to see how good work can be done. And now I am telling you that this sort of ‘Good Work’ can only be done with the help and power of the All-Knowing God, and so this is how to do it.

Maybe, we can all learn something from this story!

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