

# Two ritual gestures and their religious significance

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## Abstract

*Religious experiences of the human spirit are implemented, in an inevitable way, due to body-soul connection, at the level of the dynamics of corporeality. Gestures in religious rites are a key issue for the believer who sits in front of the Deity to supplicate and adore. Among the most common religious gestures are kneeling and putting the hands together in a vertical position. Far from being simple positioning and posture without any symbolical meaning, they express intense inner feelings of the human emotionally and mentally directed from the profane dimension towards the endless extensions of the sacredness in a total approach of worship and mystical confession.*

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Often, the kneeling and putting the hands together are signs expressing the beginning of the prayer. But, beyond the symbolism, they reflect very intense spiritual experiences of the soul of the one who prays. It is these experiences that we will try to analyze briefly but deeply.

In general, the kneeling announces an act of subordination, a submission. It is the recognition of a higher authority and you conform to its decisions. To conform means to take an imposed contour set from the outside for a certain part of your existence, or even for the whole of it. But the frameworks that constrain your existence are applied over its dynamics; they come from the area above the exteriority, they come from above. Thus, the height of your personality is ignored, more exactly, you lose from its height. The kneeling reflects namely through corporeality the decrease mentioned here. But kneeling in front of the Deity is of an entirely different order, it cannot express the loss in height of the spirit; the Absolute Being, on the contrary, giving height, more exactly, endless raising to all

those who invoke its presence. Then, what does the kneeling in front of the Deity symbolize, beyond being just a sign of the beginning of the prayer? Believer's soul experiences a multitude of states belonging to the profane dimension. He is always projected from such a state to another; he is in a movement that permanently changes the shots of the embodied sequence of his existence. This disturbing dynamics of the inability to sit still brings the spirit of the believer to the state of collapsing in front of the Deity. Being tired, exhausted from walking around the world and vainly looking for a full consolation, he cannot keep any more the existence in the pride of freedom of action and experience. He recognizes, therefore, the fatigue of running through the maze of the worldly life, crashing into the weary worship of the Deity and transposing, at the level of corporeality, this fundamental fall by the gesture of kneeling.

Looking further to the one who prays thus knelt, we see that, like the peasant that gathers, in the middle of the autumn, the fruits of the field by placing them together to ponder the outcome of the long effort to acquire before harvest, this believer, after having confessed existential fatigue of the wandering far from sacredness, collects the fruit of his spirit in front of the Deity. He calls, from the dissipation to the voluptuousness of the profane, the deeds and the thoughts that come back, listening to this call, to the one who committed them. Putting the hands together reflects here, beyond being just a sign of the beginning of the prayer, the bringing of the believer to himself, meeting his immortal image. This dual meeting allows the occurrence of the confession, the confession to the Absolute Being. The one who prays, his eyelids over his eyes in order to return him to his interiority, looks at himself and, addressing the Deity, whispers all the right or wrong choices of his spirit.

Only this summarizing of a global perspective on the conduct with which he experienced the moments of his life, summarizing fully reflected by the gesture of putting the hands together, allows the believer to be, in his individual prayer, the celestial chronicler of his own terrestrial adventure.

Thus, kneeling and putting the hands together, far from being signs of the beginning of the prayer, by the evidence that symbolizes them, refer to the deep areas of the believer's religious feelings, areas where the fatigue of the soul is replaced by the apothotic supplication of the Deity and the total confession to the Absolute Being. Making this route between the transience and the bliss of the timelessness, the one who prays hopes to reach, in the transcendental end, the unquenchable peace of his being, settling in the serenity of his own lighting like the saints in the incensed rest of the icons.