

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE MUSLIMS' LORD'S PRAYER.

AT one time, before I had studied the Koran deeply, I used to wonder why the Christian Lord's Prayer did not appear in the Muslims' Sacred Book, since the beautiful prayer, Divinely inspired and given to the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, contains nothing but humble supplication to the Almighty. More mature consideration of the question pointed out the reason, and I give the following as the generally accepted form of the Muslim prayer which takes the place of the Christians' Lord's Prayer :—

“Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures ; the Most Merciful ; the King of the Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship, and of Thee do we beg assistance ; direct us in the right way, in the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, not of those against whom Thou art incensed or of those who go astray.”

For the benefit of all those who wish to understand the full beauty and comprehensive strength of this prayer, I now give in full an article written by my dear Brother in Islam, Khwaja Kamal ud Din, for he is, what I regret to say I am not, a brilliant Oriental scholar :—

## THE MUSLIM LORD'S PRAYER.\*

*All praises are due to Allah (God), who is (Rabbul-Aalameen) the creator and sustainer of*

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\* *Editorial Article*, “Islamic Review,” October, 1913.

*the whole universe ; who (Rahmant) confers on us bounties without our deserts and supplies things indispensable, creating them even before we feel their need ; who (Raheem†) rewards our actions manifold ; who requites the deeds, being the Lord of the day of reckoning.*

*Thee, O Lord, we adore ; Thee alone we worship, and from Thee alone we solicit help.*

*Guide us, O Lord, into the path which leads straight to Thee.*

*Guide us to walk in the footsteps, and tread on the path of those persons upon whom have been Thy blessings and favours.*

*Save us, O God, from the ways of those who slight the right path after being shown it, and incur Thy wrath.*

*Save us also, O Lord, from the path of those who, fallen into errors, have gone astray and not reached Thee.*

*Be it so, O God.*

With these seven verses quoted above the Book of God opens. They are recited by Muslims several times daily in their five prayers. How ennobling and energising they are ; how invigorating each word and every verse ! What a splendid vista of hope is opened before our eyes ; what a spirit of independence and freedom it infuses into our minds ; what a boundless progress and unlimited advancement it promises ; what a wise caution against anything which may incur the wrath of the Almighty, and

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† In all the English translations of the Quran the two words *Rahman* and *Raheem* have been translated "the most compassionate and merciful." It is a wrong rendering, and does not convey the real meaning.—Ed.

what an effective check against what may lead one astray!

Before the advent of Islam, the notion of the Deity entertained by man was somewhat hideous. Divine wrath, when once excited, could not subside but with human or animal gore, which was shed from time to time at the sacred altars in India, Greece and Rome. The patriarchs of the house of Jacob had often to raise their arms against those who had offended the God of Israel. Villages were burned and crops destroyed; animals killed and property damaged; even children, women and men of age were not spared, and this all to appease the angered Jehovah. That special attribute of Divine mercy, which under Pauline teaching found its epiphany in the grace of the blood, could hardly, one may say, redeem and vindicate the Most High. One who condemns the whole race for the sin of one, one who cannot forgive sin without compensation, and one with whom good actions without particular faith carry no weight, is not a love-inspiring and lovable God. Such notions are not creditable to their originators, nor add a whit of glory to All-merciful God, and were never taught by Jesus Christ. They are incompatible with that boundless compassion and mercy which the Lord of the Universe showed in creating things before we came to existence, but so necessary to our existence, and hence in compensation of nothing. One who has been so merciful, and in reward of nothing, cannot His compassion in forgiving our sin be shown without atonement? Man needed a very high notion of Divine blessings and of mercy, unconditional and unmerited, which notion could actuate him to obey unreservedly his Creator and Benefactor more out of love and gratitude than out of fear and avarice; it should assure him of His

unlimited blessings, which have already been conferred, and which further await his good actions; and the opening verses of the Quran came to supply it. The first three Divine attributes given in the text quoted above open our eyes to our Creator, our Nourisher and Sustainer—the God of mercy, of love, of affection, of countless bounties, and of unlimited blessing—who creates everything for our sustenance and development without our deserts and in compensation of nothing; this is the idea which the word *Rahman* in the original conveys, and which has been wrongly translated “Most Compassionate” in all English translations of the Quran. He is *Raheem* who gives thousand and one rewards for every good action of man, leave alone that with Him actions are nothing when unattended with certain dogmatic faith. The fourth attribute in the verse under discussion is very instructive: *Malike yaumiddeen*, the Lord of the day of reckoning. He will reward every good deed, but He may or may not punish sinners. He is the Lord and not a slave, and therefore not bound under the hard and fast code of justice in forgiving sin against Him.

These four attributes given in the opening verse of the Quran are not a chance glorification, but the verse was inspired to reveal the true character of all other attributes of God, and eradicate from the human mind all wrong notions which existed before. They created erroneous beliefs and formulated false enervating dogmas. Then comes the next verse as follows:—

“THEE WE WORSHIP, O GOD, AND FROM THEE  
WE SOLICIT HELP.”

What a spirit of independence and freedom. We must not look to any individual for help. We must not approach others for favours. We must keep up

our pertinacity of character, and should not be subservient to any man, but to our God, because all other men are our equals. We have been given an equal chance with all others. The world and the bounties of God are also open to us. If other people have become superior to us in rank and status in any respect it is not a gift, but an acquisition and development of things within our reach also. What is accessible to them has not been sealed against us.

The very idea of the unity of God which this verse inculcates leads to the idea of the equality of men. If the Quran creates such a strong belief in the unity of God and kills all polytheistic tendencies in human mind, it is not because He is 'a jealous God.' Such an attribute we do not find in our sacred Book. Our God is too great for that. The idea of the unity of God serves another purpose. It creates an ennobling sense in us. It teaches that the whole universe is either equal or subservient to us. From time immemorial till now, man has adored the elements of Nature—from fetishism to man-worship. This was an impediment to his progress in natural sciences and a check to his personal advancement. He needed elevation, and the idea of the unity of God came to his help. With one stride all his other deities became either his ministers or his equals. In the first case he tries to find ways to make the elements of Nature subservient to his needs, and this is the foundation of all his scientific discoveries. In the other, he aspires to emulate his objects of worship, and becomes regenerated. Muslims lost everything when this noble idea of the equality of men became weakened in them. One who demands from man an allegiance which destroys equality wishes to become our God, and a Muslim cannot give countenance to it. This one idea, call it unity of God or the equality of man, creates all healthy

and noble ideas of democracy, socialism, and universal brotherhood. It alone can stand responsible to make our world a millennium.

The next verse is very comprehensive and energising. In it we invoke Divine guidance to learn the

#### PATH OF THE BLESSED.

We are longing to know the ways which may enable us to become recipients of the blessings of God. Can you imagine anything nobler and higher, anything more desirable and worthy of possession, than what the wide scope of the words "Divine blessings" does include? The verse opens to you anything and everything worth having. If we are taught by God Himself to approach Him with such a prayer, will He grudge us His favours if we tread the right path? The very fact that this prayer is a Divine revelation shows His willingness to shower upon us all that one can imagine—art, science, culture, civilisation, wealth, power, rule, piety, righteousness, and high spirituality, in short, everything enviable in the world.

Thus our Lord's Prayer suggests to us the way which leads to our regeneration, and enables us to receive the Divine blessings. It informs us of those conditions which when present are sure to invite and utilise Divine help; and the very first verse is lucid enough to enlighten us on this secret.

God has created the whole universe for the evolution of mankind. We invoke His mercy in helping us to accomplish this grand design. But we are taught to address Him as *Rahman* and *Raheem*. These attributes, as stated before, disclose two distinct kinds of mercy: One reveals itself in creating things so necessary for our life and further progress, the other comes to make our actions fruitful. The

former creates things which we cannot create ourselves, but which are indispensable for us as material to work upon ; the latter crowns our exertions with ample success when the created material has been utilised. The function of the one ends where that of the other begins. They are correlative, no doubt, but the latter only follows human actions, and does not work unless man has himself worked out what he finds in the Nature created under the former kind of mercy. And does not the whole of Nature reveal these two Divine attributes so aptly put in the Muslim Lord's Prayer? The earth and everything in it, the atmosphere, the sun, the moon, the stars, and, in a word, every atom in Nature has been created by God to help us, to sustain us, and to serve us ; but they do not work to our advantage unless we make the first move. Let us apply to them, and they are at our service, and our exertion, insignificant as it may be, gets an unlimited reward. Take the case of a scientist : his business is not to create things ; his sole work is to combine or separate things already created. Everything existed before, but a move from him, and wonderful results are achieved ; even the single grain cannot be produced without the cumulative functions of the various ingredients of Nature, but they all remain in abeyance, and no sooner does a farmer go to his field than every atom begins to perform its respective function. This great lesson is brought before our mind several times daily when we say our five prayers. We are reminded of God, Who is *Rahman* and *Raheem*. He is bountiful in creating the things so indispensable for our sustenance and progress, but His bounties are of no avail if we are inactive and do not use them. As *Rahman* He is equally merciful to all mankind, but as *Raheem* His mercies are confined to those who care to benefit

themselves by His mercies of the first kind. You wish to be the master of the world, God is ever willing to respond to your prayer : He will help you in this, your special demand ; but bring special fruits, make special efforts—first deserve and then desire is true everywhere. Ponder also over the order in which these two sentences have been put in our prayer : “Thee we worship, and from Thee we ask help.” First “worship” and then “help.” Help comes only to those who worship first, and remember that the word ‘*Ibadat*,’ which in the text stands to convey the idea of worship, also means to do our best to work out all the gifts of God. One who slights His bounties and does not apply himself to them properly has, under the teachings of Islam, hardly realized the true Quranic conception of worship. To neglect things created is to insult their Creator.

Again, consider the very words “from Thee we ask help.” You do not ask God to do anything for you ; you solicit His help simply. In these words of prayer you do admit that you have already begun to do your utmost ; you are doing what lies within your powers, and now you come to His door for His help. Thus

“GOD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES,” IS AN  
ISLAMIC IDEA.

The next verse again confirms the same principle, and explains the nature of the help we invoke.

#### GUIDE US INTO THE PATH OF THE BLESSED.

We invoke Divine guidance in adopting the right and straight path. Here again we declare our willingness to tread the path. We do not ask God to do something on our behalf. We are taught to

express our willingness to traverse the course leading to Divine blessings. To reach the goal, of course, there are various ways, crooked and straight, long as well as short. We solicit God to show us the straight way, which must be short as a matter of course. One who is not willing to make the move, one who loves idleness and hates work need not approach God and knock at His door. He is marked for destruction, as the door is opened to those only who, before knocking, have shown their readiness to work and ask guidance to regulate their exertions.

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Here is a

#### GREAT MORAL LESSON FOR MUSLIMS

as well as for others, in this prayer. It is in reality the secret of success in every human endeavour. This is the way to walk humbly with God and receive His blessings. The Muslims of the early days took this Divine hint. They began to exert themselves to their utmost, and could achieve within a score of years what others could not do within centuries. They received new inspiration in every prayer. It renovated them and brought all their latent faculties into action; fresh life at every moment, and unlimited therefore was their reward. But the case with the present Muslims is quite different. Their ancestors enjoyed the blessings of God and left a splendid heritage to them. Its abundance blinded the coming progeny, who forgot to be keenly alive to the path which could bring them to those blessings. Our lip prayers invoked the path of the blessed, the path of our forefathers, the path carved by them under Divine guidance, but we neglected and slighted it. And now what is our present attitude towards prayer? One who has neglected all the

good chances opened to him, one whose every energy has been sapped through idleness, one who hates work and is in complete subjection to lassitude and inertia, and has begun to reap the fruits of his abuse of life, he at once thinks of Divine favours and hastens to say his prayers. What a mockery! What a shameless farce! We call our God "*Rah-bul-Aalameen*"—the Creator of the universe; of course, He has created everything for our benefit; we call Him "*Rahman*" decidedly He has shown special mercy in supplying us all the things necessary for our sustenance and growth, but they require handling. But how can it befit our lips to address Him with the name of Raheem, "one who has to reward our actions manifold," when we have done no action? How can we have the courage to say "Thee we worship and from Thee we ask help" when there has been no exertion on our part? Where is the work, where are the actions in which we ask His help? Why call Him to guide us into the path of the blessed, if we have no mind to tread it?

It is no prayer, it is mockery; and we should be prepared to suffer the consequences. Brother Muslims! There is no delay in making amends. What was achieved by the early Muslims can possibly be our acquisition. Knock at the door and it shall be opened. To knock is your action, and to open is the work of God; but the move should come from you. Consider the whole trend of this prayer, how ennobling, inspiring and energising! and yet a sort of blight has everywhere overtaken the race to which these electrifying words were first revealed.

Instead of firmness of resolution and purpose, instead of strength of will and character, instead of height of aspiration and ideal, everywhere lassitude, enervation and degradation. Those to whom the secret how to reach the top of the ladder of civiliza-

tion had been first revealed are going down, down to the bottom. But why, is there no remedy, no salvation, no strong embankment to face and divert this terrible inundation of inertia? Though the self-assertive policy of the nations in Europe and the inhuman, wretched philosophy of the survival of the fittest, which has incited its believers to sap all the juice of life everywhere, and to adopt various means, active or passive, to enervate others, are chiefly responsible for demoralisation in the East; yet the fault, as far as the Muslim nations are concerned, lies with themselves. They could have baffled all degenerative agencies if they had kept these Divine injunctions before their minds.

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I might, for the sake of brevity, have taken excerpts from this article, but, had I done so, it would not have been possible to do justice to the article or its accomplished writer. One point, possibly of no especial moment—since the Great Prophets of Nazareth and Arabia were so at one with God, and so faithfully delivered His messages to mankind—is that the Christian Lord's Prayer asks for "daily bread," whilst the Muslim prayer merely begs for guidance in the right path. This might give rise to misconceptions. Of course, the "daily bread" refers not only to food but that spiritual sustenance which we can only obtain from God, our Comforter and Sustainer.

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