

MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI

THE PRAYER
AND THE
THREE WAYS TO SUCCESS

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— Publishers

“Surely We have given thee abundance of good. So pray to thy Lord and make a sacrifice. Surely thy enemy is the one cut off (from good).” (108 : 1-3) This shortest surah of the Holy Quran is known as *Kausar*. It means abundance of good. It is pointed out here as to how one could achieve abundance of good. To make a mention of the highest good and to point out the way of its attainment is one of the great achievements of the Holy Quran.

There are three verses in this surah : first and last verses consist of a brief sentence, while the middle one contains two. In the first verse it is said : انا اعطيتك الكوثر : (surely We have given thee, O Prophet, abundance of good) and in the last ان شانك هو الاثر — thy enemy who is out to crush you, will himself be obliterated and deprived of all good. In the middle verse there are two commandments in two short sentences فصل لربك وانحر ‘pray to thy Lord’ and ‘make a sacrifice’. These are, so to say, the two ways of attaining abundance of good.

Aim of Religion and means to attain it

In this surah, the real aim of religion as also the way of its attainment are both briefly laid down. The religion is described therein to aim at introducing abundance of good in the world. It should, however, be noted that not only the lexicographers but also the early commentators of the Holy

Quran have taken *Kausar* to mean abundance of good. On being questioned as to the meaning of *Kausar*, Saeed bin Jabir stated : "God the Great bestowed upon the Holy Prophet all good in abundance." When some one pointed out to him that *Kausar* was a canal, he replied that it was a canal and over and above that it was secular and religious good. In *Lisan al-Arab*, under *Kausar*, it is laid down that in respect of 'good' one is given that which is beyond one's computation. It is a matter of fact that no Prophet was so instrumental in diffusing 'good' in the world as the Prophet of Islam. And so every Muslim can attain abundance of good through prayer and sacrifice.

Apparently, in this surah, the Apostle of God (peace be upon him) alone is addressed. But it should be remembered that in this address every follower of the Prophet is also included. In the Holy Quran, second person singular invariably means not only the Apostle of God but every follower of his — a fact which is further elucidated by the commandment that prayer and sacrifice are incumbent both on the Prophet and his followers. In other words, it amounts to this : God has granted man through His revelation abundance of good which he can acquire through prayer and sacrifice. And it is through prayer and sacrifice alone that one occupies such an exalted position as cannot be attained by any other means. In these two commandments which throw open to man paths of success, Divine bounties are obtainable by God's guidance towards the means of their

attainment. And thus God has opened the doors of *Kausar* for the Muslims to gain access to it.

Prayer : fountainhead of human progress

The world has, after a long spell of experience, admitted that no nation can progress without making sacrifice ; and the more the individual members of a nation possess the spirit of sacrifice, the more it progresses. In the Holy Quran, however, sacrifice is subordinated to prayer, and we find it mentioned in the very beginning of the Holy Quran. All this indicates that, in the matter of attaining abundance of progress, prayer must necessarily precede sacrifice. How prayer constitutes a means of human progress and why it should precede sacrifice, is only made known to the world by the Quran. Let it be made clear here that the abundance of good or the high stage of progress to which prayer guides begins from this very life.

Sacrifice is an act and apparently the attainment of good or progress depends upon human action, *i.e.* man will reap whatever he will sow, and it is a principle which is mentioned in the Holy Quran itself : "Man can have nothing but what he strives for" (53 : 39). All human actions are the outcome of man's thought and desire, no matter whether the actions are good or bad. If we look carefully, we find that man commits no act without the desire for it. There is some motive behind every act of man. But motives actuate man to bad acts and vice versa. A person murders a

lonely wayfarer. This act is the outcome of a sordid motive of his. Another person, when he finds a fellow being in trouble, is filled with the noble desire of alleviating his suffering even at personal discomfort. Thus every human act is the outcome of some desire and in his actions man is a slave to his desires. A man whose mind is occupied by a low and sordid motive, falls a prey to bad acts while one who entertains high, noble thoughts performs good deeds. It, therefore, follows that all human progress depends on the suppression of low and sordid motives, and the attainment of high and noble desires, and it is the prayer that paves the way for it.

Importance of prayer

Before I state as to how this object of noble thought is accomplished, I wish to point out that the Quran and the Prophet alone have drawn our attention to this matter. Says God in the Holy Quran : "Keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force)" (29 : 45).

Prayer is a means of elevating man to a much higher place. In fact, the creation of lofty ideas raises man to heights of progress. It is for this reason that prayer is considered to be the best means of man's salvation : "Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers" (23 : 1, 2).

According to a hadith, prayer has not only been likened to a stream which purges a man of all sorts of pollution but also it has been char-

racterised as *Miraj-ul-Momin* (highest evolution of a true believer). It is, so to say, a means of his elevation to the highest point. The command of God enjoining prayer is also connected with the "Ascent" of the Prophet, *i.e.* on the occasion of the "Ascent" the Prophet was ordained to say prayers.

Individual and collective progress

There are admittedly two phases of human progress: his individual progress *i.e.* the attainment of perfection as an individual and the other is his collective progress, *i.e.* progress as a nation. A man cannot live alone in this world, on the other hand he is bound to lead a corporated life. It, therefore, follows that individual progress is not of any value without collective progress, and, in the absence of individual progress, the progress of a nation is hardly worth the name. Nation is tantamount to the 'whole' and the individual a part thereof. A nation is like a chain while individuals constitute its links. If the links are weak, the chain will automatically be weak, and if the links are strong, but are not strongly interwoven, the chain even then will be of no use, however strong the links individually may be. It is, therefore, admitted on all hands that man's progress is incomplete unless and until he progresses both individually and collectively. Prayer paves the way for yet another progress and the attainment of these three is subject to the suppression of low and sordid motives and the acquisition of laudable and noble thoughts.

Acquisition of noble aspirations

Undoubtedly, there also exist other means of suppressing sordid motives and developing high aspirations in man. This end is also partially achieved, to a certain extent, by sound training, good education and suitable environments. Prayer is the means by which this end is gained to its perfection, the reason being that in prayer man's mind becomes conscious of the existence of 'Allah the Great'. Here, he feels that he is in the presence of his Allah and nothing stands in between. In case a man's mind is fully conscious of the presence of Allah his (*i.e.* man's) nature is thrown open to him in all nakedness and all such curtains as obstruct the light of his nature are removed. Human nature and its creation are most intimately connected, to which the Quran has referred in these words : "Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit" (32 : 9) *i.e.* God elevated man to a point of perfection and infused His spirit in him. The light of human nature therefore exhibits itself at its height only when man's mind becomes conscious of the existence of God. Without this consciousness the light of nature acquires no radiance, and the greater the consciousness the brighter is the light. All the means of creating this consciousness in its perfection are embodied in prayer. Man indulges in the prayer to God not only through his tongue and singing songs of His Greatness but also adopts such physical gestures as conform to what he utters, and theory combined

with practice produces an extraordinary effect on the mind.

Chief utterance in prayer

The most repeated utterance in the prayer is *Allah-o-Akbar*, i.e. 'God is Great'. With this begins the prayer. It means that on entering the Divine Court, man professes that all greatness sinks into insignificance before God. If, by appearing before a great man or a king, a man's mind can be, and certainly is, occupied by a feeling of greatness, then by appearing before God the Greatest of all, the feeling of His Greatness will surely crop up in man's mind. Again in the course of prayer when man changes positions — at times he bows down and at times he rubs his forehead on the ground in a most submissive manner — each time the words 'Allah is Great' escape his lips and the feeling of Greatness of Allah becomes more and more intensified.

Prayer creates a feeling of Greatness of Allah

For the first time, after uttering the words 'Allah is Great', when man stands with his hands folded and adopts a reverential attitude he commences his prayer with the following words : "Glory to Thee, O Allah ! and Thine is the praise, and blessed is Thy name, and exalted is Thy majesty, and there is none to be served besides Thee. I seek the refuge of Allah from the accursed devil."

Human mind is so constituted that if it is once impressed by the greatness of a certain ob-

ject it never thinks otherwise of that object. Those who are convinced of the greatness of their religious leader never run counter to his commands. Similarly those who are impressed by the greatness of a ruler would never act against his orders. Islam has inculcated a mode of prayer which impresses the Greatness of Allah on one's mind. The external gestures of bowing down, prostrating and sitting in a reverential attitude are designed to inspire men with the Greatness of Allah. Again, the division of prayer into five times in the course of day and night brings home to man repeatedly this feeling of the Greatness of Allah. When man busies himself with some task the underlying idea in diverting his attention to the remembrance of God is that he may have the feeling of that greatness when he reverts to that task.

Preference to individual progress

I have already remarked that prayer paves the way both for individual and collective progress. In the matter of prayer, however, collective progress is subordinated to individual progress. After impressing the Greatness of Allah on the mind, the opening of the prayer indicates the point wherefrom individual progress begins and the ending of it marks the climax of individual progress. Right in the midst of prayer, when man adopts an attitude of extreme humility of prostrating, there lies the way of the attainment of individual progress. There are several reasons for attaching so much importance to individual greatness. In the first place, the real object of

man's birth is fulfilled only by the attainment of individual perfection. The object referred to is 'Union with Allah' which concerns only man's own individuality. The question of collectiveness does not arise in the matter of 'Union with Allah.' Besides, the advantage of virtuous acts only accrues to man's own self and the punishment of evil deeds too is inflicted on him alone. He who does not exert himself, cannot attain to a position of eminence by obtaining the support of others. Nor can he seek protection of others when he is subjected to any punishment. In a description of Doomsday, therefore, it is pointed out that neither wife nor parents, nor offspring, nor riches will be of any avail. Man's first responsibility to Allah will be his personal responsibility.

Collective Progress

Collective progress is, in the first place, impossible without individual progress and if there is a semblance of collective progress, it cannot be enduring. In case the individual members of a nation are weak, the nation itself will be weak, and if they are strong, the nation will be strong. If the members of a nation do not possess virtue in their individual capacity, it does not become a source of good but a source of destruction for others. A nation's progress in the political sphere is defective in so far as it totally ignores individual good. Those nations, therefore, that have made political progress their chief concern, no matter whether they belong to Europe or

America or Africa or Asia, ultimately become a source of destruction not only for the world but also for themselves. Islam has first insisted on man's reforming his individual self and unless the individuals are reformed, the nations' strength would lead not to any good but to harm. The fact that the Muslims of the world are today blindly following other nations and are doing their utmost to gain political power is leading them to the same abyss in which other nations have fallen.

First step towards individual progress

After a description of the greatness of Allah and His Praise, the *prayer* commences with the proposition of what the first step of human progress is. In all those prayers, therefore, which precede the *Fatihah* and which are included in the Prophet's traditions, man makes a confession of his weaknesses and prays for rising above them. It should be borne in mind that Islamic prayer is a prayer in its entirety. Before mention is made of that particular prayer which is connected with the forgiveness of sins, it may be pointed out that prayer does not mean repetition of certain words but rather it is the creation of an earnest desire in one's heart. It is, in fact, a desire which rises from the heart and the words which escape one's lips are only a vehicle of giving expression to that desire and this vehicle is employed because it lends force to the said desire. It is true that the Omniscient Allah is fully aware of the desire that occupies a man's heart. What is the use of prayer,

then ? — We pray to Allah not that He might be acquainted with our earnest desire but that a force be lent to our earnest desire. All the powers which have been ingrained in man grow weaker if they are not brought into use by means of limbs. The more these powers are brought into use by means of limbs the more they grow. External powers and the power of man's heart are one and the same. When a man expresses the earnest desire of his heart by means of his tongue, his desire acquires a force. If we express our desire in the presence of others it is possible that it may sound as a mere show and this element of show might weaken the desire. On the other hand, when we express this earnest desire to our Lord in solitude, our nature brightens up and our natural desire acquires force. This is a radical change which takes place in our inner world. But we acquire a force from outside also and it is Divine force which illuminates man's heart. Prayer does not constitute an earnest desire of the heart alone, it is also invoking the help of the Lord. Many people down here perhaps do not understand this point. But it is a fact that Allah does help man when he invokes His help and this glaring truth is amply borne out by the lives of all those great men whom a major portion of the world acknowledge as their religious divines.

Beginning of the Prayer

In connection with the Islamic prayer, first of all, a prayer is taught the introductory lines of which are : "O Allah ! Who are the King, none is to be served but Thee"!

In these lines there is a mention of the absolute power of Allah the Great which He exercises over the creation.

This is followed by a reference to the relation between Allah and man : (Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant.) This relation points out that when man considers himself to be a slave of Allah (and a servant is bound to give as wide as publicity to the name of his Lord as possible and to treat his belongings as those of his Lord), the Lord sustains His servant to the utmost degree. Further the prayer runs as follows : I have been unjust to myself and I confess my short-comings, so forgive Thou all my short-comings, for none forgives the short-comings but Thou ”!

This is, so to say, the real prayer. This is the same earnest desire which is sought to be created in the heart of man in the beginning of prayer so that he may make a confession of his short-comings, drawbacks and try to rise above them and seek the help of Allah in getting rid of sins and failings.

There is another similar prayer : “O Allah ! Keep me as apart from sins as East is apart from West. Cleanse me, O Allah, from sins as a white cloth is washed of dirt. Wash off my sins, O Allah! with water, snow and hails”.¹

In *prayer* the first and foremost desire is that

In this connection, snow and hails are metaphorically used to mean that God may forgive man in such a manner that it may bring him comfort and solace and guard him against the burning sensation which is the necessary result of sin.

man should "not commit sin." The first earnest desire which *prayer* is calculated to create in man is that he should not commit sin. His higher self and sins should be poles asunder. He should be as free from sins as a white cloth is cleaned of all dust and dirt. If he has ever committed any sin, Allah, out of His grace, may wipe it out.

The first stage in the progress of human soul is that it should be free from sin. Man cannot make progress unless his soul is free from all sins. The Holy Quran has repeatedly drawn attention to this fact thus : "He is indeed successful who purifies himself" (91 : 9). When a man is absorbed in this prayer, his heart is seized with the earnest desire that he may remain immune from aggression, sin and impiety, immoral practices and sordid motives. For the attainment of this object, not only he makes a personal effort and endeavour to keep himself away from sins and launches a campaign against the devil but Allah also helps him because he betakes himself to Him with this earnest desire.

Bowing and prostrating

After this preliminary stage which is calculated to create an earnest desire in the heart to free the soul from all sins, and which is the foundation of progress, the real stage of individual progress is the one at which an earnest desire to attain to a position of sublimity and exaltation occupies human mind. In prostration, man bows before

Allah and in extreme humility falls to the ground. He places his forehead on the ground and there is no greater form of extreme humility than this. In a state of prostration the words which are often repeated are as follows : "Glory to my Lord the Great"! In bowing, the words which are often repeated are as follows : "Glory to my Lord, the Most High"! Apparently there is no prayer here, rather there is a confession of the sublimity and exaltation of Allah. The fact, however, is that the nature of the relation between Allah and man is such that when man makes a confession of the sublimity and exaltation of Allah, not only by the tongue but also by physical gestures, the Divine qualities are reflected in his mind as well. Divine qualities are boundless but a limited reflection of those qualities is cast on the limited human mind. It is, of course, essential that human mind should be susceptible to them and, in order to acquire this susceptibility, man makes a confession of the sublimity and exaltation of Allah by his tongue on the one hand and bows and prostrates before Him on the other. The deeper the voice of confession emanates from human mind, the deeper the impression he receives from his Lord.

It is not merely a proposition of philosophy but a fact of human experience that greater a man has bowed down before Allah the more elevated position he has gained. A voice emanating from the heart is like a ball which bumps with the same force with which it falls on the ground. The deeper this voice will rise from the heart the

higher it will go and catch a reflection of the effulgence of Allah. But it should also be remembered that by the addition of the words : 'My Lord' in connection with this sublimity and exaltation, a humble entreaty is also introduced. When a man bows down before Allah with the words that his Lord is exceedingly Sublime, he professes His Greatness on the one hand and makes the following entreaty on the other in an humble manner with the words that Allah Who sustains him is leading him to the attainment of perfection by steady progress : O Allah ! Thou art the Lord of sublimity, save me from a state of helplessness and raise me to a position of eminence! When Thou, O Allah, art my Sustainer and the Master of sublimity, save me from a state of helplessness and raise me to a position of eminence ! When Thou, O Allah, art my Sustainer and the Master of Sublimity, how can I, who am Thine ward, remain in a state of baseness ? It is a fact that greater is the Sustainer the better in effect grows the object He sustains. The more expert is the manufacturer the more excellent is the article manufactured. Why can not a work of art executed by the Lord of sublimity and exaltation, which is also His masterpiece, attain excellence and eminence ?

Prayer is food for soul

As has already been said, facts about *prayer* are not a just philosophical discussion but an outcome of human experience. In his teachings which the Apostle of Allah imparted to his followers, Prayer

occupies the most important place. In the Holy Quran, after a belief in the unseen, there is a direct reference to the saying of prayer which has been characterised as food for the soul : "The sustenance of thy Lord is better and more abiding" (20 : 131). Similarly it points out : "Seek assistance through patience and prayer" (2 : 153). It also holds *prayer* as an instrument for the suppression of low and sordid desires. "Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil" (29 : 45). It points out the way of achieving religious and secular success : "Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayer" (23 : 1, 2). Whether we examine the training-ground of the Companions of the Holy Prophet which was none other than mosque or look into their conduct of life in which *prayer* gained precedence over every other thing during the hours of day and night, we find that *prayer* alone was the chief source of comfort and peace for them.

What a position of sublimity and exaltation man attains through *prayer* ! Allah, through *prayer* alone, has elevated the Muslim nation to a position of sublimity and exaltation which no other nation of the world has attained at one and the same time. This is a fact which is admitted by the world so much so that Europe which on the one hand portrays the Prophet of Islam in a biassed manner, admits on the other, that of all the religious leaders Muhammad (peace of God be upon him) possesses the most successful per-

sonality and the revolution which he brought about could not be caused by any other person of the world.

The Arabs were a most illiterate, depraved and backward nation in the whole world. But in twenty-three years' time they attained to a position of greatness so as to dominate the whole world within a century. On the moral and religious side also, they became a foremost nation of the world and earned the title of "World teachers". They acquired this position of sublimity and greatness through *prayer*. They were not given any lesson except one of *prayer*. No school or college was established to guide them to *prayer*. They were not helped to promote trade nor improved methods of agriculture were taught to them. They took their cue from Islam only, and thus attained to a position of greatness and sublimity.

Difference between Sublimity and Exaltation

There is a difference between the recitation at the times of prostrating and bowing. In prostration there is a mention of the sublimity of Allah while in bowing His exaltation is on the lips. A manifestation of the Greatness of Allah is traceable in men by the elevation of their worldly status while that of His exaltation by their rising above sordid motives or by their pious religious and moral standards. Men of such standards attained greatness and enjoyed exalted positions in the world too. They achieved worldly power

and worldly riches. But neither the love of wealth nor the worldly power made them so arrogant as to encroach upon the rights of others or to exterminate them. They grew opulent, but love of riches never turned them blind. They became kings but as such they continued toiling like labourers. These two qualities that one should attain worldly greatness and should also rise above the low and sordid motives, hardly combine in a single individual. The Companions of the Holy Prophet of Islam, however, combined in them both these qualities at one and the same time. On the one hand, the nations of the world submitted to their secular power and, on the other, people bowed before their high moral character. Thus, sublimity and exaltation were simultaneously combined in them because their hearts vibrated with these words.

Again, sublimity and exaltation differ so far as their attainment is concerned. In every *rak'at* of *prayer* bowing occurs only once while prostration occurs twice. This illustrates that worldly greatness is of secondary nature as compared with religious sublimity. The attainment of sublimity is easy while that of exaltation is difficult. People can acquire sublimity by human efforts but exaltation is not attainable except by establishing contact with Allah. Only that greatness is laudible which combines itself with twice as much desire for the attainment of spiritual exaltation.

Prayer intervening the postures of prostration is a prayer in which Allah's help is invoked for progress.

Again, there is a recitation in the form of prayer intervening the postures of prostration : “O Allah ! grant me protection and have mercy on me and grant me security and guide me to the right path and grant me sustenance and set right my affairs and exalt me” !

This recitation contains the following words also: “O Allah! guide me and exalt me” denoting a desire for the attainment of the highest point a man can aspire to. Those who take the word *Rafa'* as it is used in connection with prophet Christ to mean that he was lifted to the Heaven should think over this word in the present context. Elevation is the earnest desire of the heart of every Muslim. Similarly exaltation does not represent a high position in term of body ; nor does elevation mean that one is bodily removed from this earth to heaven. Exaltation and elevation both are used in a spiritual sense.

As stated above, *prayer* opens with the earnest desire on the part of man for his individual progress and ends with the same desire — a fact which seeks to prove that the individual progress of man is the be-all and end-all of all progress.

Final prayer

The following is the final prayer : “My Lord! make me keep up prayer and from my offspring (too), our Lord ! and accept my prayer. Our Lord! grant me protection and to my parents and the believers on the Day when the reckoning comes to pass” (14 : 40, 41).

The lesson given in this prayer is that when man concludes his *prayer*, his mind should be occupied with the earnest desire that he should persevere in the path of *prayer*. This is not all. He also desires that his progeny should also observe *prayer*. This desire is so genuine and sincere that the acceptance of the prayer offered is particularly emphasized upon inasmuch as *prayer* constitutes the very foundation of all virtues. Yet another desire is added on to it : Our Lord ! grant me protection, and to my parents also all the true believers.

Posture of standing during prayer

The other kind of progress for which *prayer* paves the way is collective progress. This invocation which is recited in the posture of standing is held to be an integral part of *prayer*. For individual progress the postures of prostrating and bowing are particularly meant inasmuch as this kind of progress can only be made if man prostrates and bows before Allah. If, however, man fails to create this mood of prostrating and bowing, his progress leads him to degradation. The posture of standing is particularly made the basis of collective progress because this kind of progress creates in man the desire for the power of steadiness. High morals which are the very foundation of individual progress are not achieved without adopting an attitude of humility and prostration. On the other hand, the formation of an organised body depends upon perseverance and steadiness. It should, however, be made clear

that man is not at all debarred from invoking the blessings of God for collective progress while prostrating. Man is free to say any prayer to Allah for any kind of progress any time provided it emanates from his heart. But *prayer*, as it is, contains certain recitations which conform to certain physical movements. These movements are more suited to progress, individual or collective, and the recitation and movement of limbs go together. It is given in the Tradition of the Holy Prophet that, while prostrating, man should invoke as many prayers to Allah as he can, because it is then that man is very near to Allah.

An important prayer during the posture of standing is the *Fatiha*, with which the Holy Quran opens and which, let the Muslims alone, is held even by the non-Muslims to be a prayer of a very high order. It is divided into four parts : The first part opens thus : “(All) Praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds” (1 : 2). Allah extends His spiritual patronage to the whole world. Allah’s patronage is in a physical form. But the patronage which is particularly mentioned here in the Holy Quran relates to the guidance of mankind because the real object of the Holy Quran is to guide mankind and help them attain human perfection. By characterising Allah as the Lord of the Universe, it is implied that the Holy Quran is not meant for the guidance of a particular nation only but also for the guidance of the entire human race. The Holy Prophet, therefore, remarked, simultaneously with the

revelation of the Holy Quran, that he had been sent by God for the guidance of both the Arabs and the Persians and it was his conviction that the human race will eventually attain perfection, of course gradually, as is implied by the word "Allah will extend His spiritual patronage to human race as He had been extending it in physical form."

Spiritual and physical patronage

Some people cherish the idea that if God had sought to extend His spiritual patronage to mankind, why did He not create spiritual awakening in the whole world all at once by sending His Apostle? This wrong notion is the result of lack of knowledge. God has gradually doled out to man the means of his physical progress. Water, air, fire, electricity, atom, etc. were in existence in the world since its creation. But man has been gradually bringing them under his control. It has taken thousands of years to complete the process. Even now no one can say that man has become fully conversant with the forces of nature and has gained a complete control over them. He has, on the other hand, yet to achieve a great deal in this direction. He has discovered many of the hidden secrets and has yet to explore many more. The spiritual perfection is far more difficult than to be acquainted with the physical laws of nature. The Divine patronage demanded that there should be a gradual process and a reference is made to this reality in the Holy Quran. Allah will certainly lead mankind to spiritual perfection, but

just as it had taken very long to attain to physical perfection, spiritual perfection also will be achieved in a gradual manner. Of course, Allah laid down laws of the development of spiritual perfection, first by sending Prophets to different nations and lastly, by sending the Holy Prophet with the Holy Quran for the whole world. But a long time is needed to become conversant with these laws so that mankind may benefit from them after having understood them.

Foundation-stone of collective progress

“Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Master of the day of Requital. Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help. Guide us on the right path : the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray.” (Ch. *Al-Fatihah*)

The very first verse of the *Fatihah* : الحمد لله رب العالمين *i.e.* “Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds” is the foundation-stone of collective progress. When a man recites this verse, his mind becomes wide enough to accommodate the whole of mankind. His outlook does not remain confined to his own self, to his relations and to his own nation and country. In fact, he looks upon the whole human race as one unit. He equally feels for all human beings. He is anxious for the amelioration of all. If he observes Europe or America or Persia or Afghanistan or Pakistan steeped in sin and degradation, his mind revolts at it. He

feels that Allah, Who is the Real Lord of all the creatures and is their Sustainer, may come to their rescue and raise them from this position of degradation to a position of sublimity. Of course as soon as the verse comes on his lips, a spontaneous prayer shoots out from his heart — a prayer which emanating from the hearts of the prophets and the pious, has been the means of the reformation and guidance of innumerable peoples. Here is the prayer : O Allah ! save Thy mankind from moral depravity and degradation and create in them an awakening by means of which they may know Thee Who art their Creator and Sustainer. O Allah ! just as Thou art physically sustaining the mankind, have the mercy to sustain all of them spiritually also. O Allah! the mankind after severing its connection with Thee has not indulged in sin only but is heading to an abyss of destruction by internecine feuds. Have mercy on it ! Illumine the dark recesses of their hearts. Put life into these dead beings by Thy spiritual showers just as Thou reviveth dead earth by rains. Shed the light of Thy spiritual sun in their hearts in the same manner as Thou diffuseth light by the sun on earthly bodies.

Three ways of sustenance

The second part of this prayer is : “The Beneficent, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Requitall”. In the opening sentence there is mention of the sustenance of all mankind while in the next two verses it is indicated as to how Allah’s grace takes place. The first phase of

Allah's providence consists in His beneficence, viz., out of mercy He provides man with means of progress without man's asking for it, such as His sending prophets for the guidance of mankind. The second phase of Allah's providence consists in His giving man a munificent reward for his good actions. "Whoever brings a good deed will have tenfold like it" (6 : 160). Similarly according to a saying of the Prophet, good brings from God a tenfold to a seven-hundred-fold rewards (B. 81 : 33). This is His universal law. By doing one good act, man attains to a very high rank. There is a third phase of Allah's providence. There are some who tread on the path indicated by Allah. There are others who do just the reverse and indulge in sin and aggression. Allah provides them with sustenance. This sustenance, however, is of a different type. It takes the shape of punishment. They are punished for their evil deeds, but this punishment is not inflicted in a spirit of vindictiveness : rather it aims at purging them of all contaminations. This punishment is sometimes meted out in this world, but in full measure it will be inflicted on the Day of Judgment, a day when the virtuous will be admitted to heaven while the evil-doers will be thrown into hell so that they are purified by fire. That is why, according to the teachings of Islam, all the denizens of hell will be taken out and dropped into the "River of Life." In other words, they will be given a new birth and doors of hell will be slammed.

Worship of Allah alone

Now the third part of the *Fatihah* : Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help". In the first two parts there is a mention of Allah and His providence. In the second two there is a reference to a particular class of men whose chief distinction is that they worship the Lord of the worlds Whose attributes are mentioned above. They worship none else. The whole world has thus been divided into two groups. One of those who worship the only Allah and the others either couple the worship of Allah with the worship of those who are others than Allah or do not believe in Allah at all.

"Thee do we serve" specifically refer to that class of men who worship Allah alone and none else. That is, so to say, the group of men who are the followers of the Prophet Muhammad ; while "Thee do we worship" is indicative of their distinct feature. "Thee do we beseech for help" is indicative of an earnest desire of theirs. In other words, they seek the help of Allah in not finding themselves equal to the huge task that lies before them. They are a manifestation of the attributes of Allah as embodied in 'The Lord of the Worlds'. They implore to Allah to extend His providence to other people also. Although the prayer is addressed to Allah by one solitary individual, the use of plural number extends the scope of the prayer so as to include the whole class of the followers of Muhammad of which he is a member. Man be-

comes perfect only when he engenders the spirit of fellow-feeling. In this prayer, therefore, it is inculcated that one should seek the help of Allah not only for himself but also for other members of his class. This is the first stage of collective uplift.

Present condition of Muslims

Here is another fact worth remembering. Today as we take stock of the present condition of the Muslims, our mind shudders at the idea of uttering "Thee do we serve." Does worship mean only this much that one may offer *prayer* any time according to one's sweet will and disobey other commandments of Allah as one likes? Worship implies obedience coupled with humility. Are the Muslims in general obeying Allah and His Apostle today? Are they, as a rule, observers of prayer? Do they visit mosques and bow to their Allah even once a day? Not to speak of the rich, do the poor pay any heed to *prayer*? When such is our condition in the matter of *prayer*, with what face should we invoke the help of Allah for a people who openly defy the commands of Allah; whose object of worship today is worldly riches and power?

Prayer teaches to invoke help of Allah

The Muslims have a mode of worship that distinguishes them from other peoples of the world. The Muslim nations are not devoid of such individuals as give up work and rush to mosques on hearing the call to prayer, who wake up in the

night, bow before dawn to Allah and shed tears, who sacrifice their all to propagate the name of Allah in the world, who sacrifice their lives to defend Islam against the onslaughts of the infidels, who feel pleasure at heart in obeying Allah and His Apostle. The number of such individuals is, of course, meagre but Allah has the power to immensely increase this number. He is All-Merciful and may forgive the vast number of defaulters through these pious ones.

Many Muslims tread on the right path

In the fourth and last portion of the *Fatihah*, it is sought to create in man an earnest desire not only for himself to tread on the right path but also for all fellow beings to take the right course: Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours ; not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray. (1 : 6, 7).

Just by using the plural number in "Thee do we beseech for help", it is implied that although the prayer comes from one single individual it aims at invoking the help of Allah for the whole community or nation and not for oneself alone. Similarly, in "guide us" the use of plural number refers to the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad wherever they may be on the face of the earth.

What is the right path we desire for ourselves and for others? It is the path of the Prophets and the virtuous who feel for man-

kind, who make every effort to elevate fellow beings and who kneel down before Allah when they find their efforts failing. Everywhere in the world there has been a large number of such individuals whose life-object was to establish others' contact with Allah and thus make their lives sublime. All the Companions of the Holy Prophet were exemplary such. Immediately on embracing Islam, they became keenly anxious to have others partake of this boon of Islam. Even today the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad can attain to this exalted elevation. We should, therefore, pray to Allah to inebriate the present-day Muslims with the same love with which He has been inebriating His virtuous servants heretofore. There have been people in this world who committed excesses and Allah's wrath visited them. There have been others whose evil deeds were not of a serious nature and they escaped punishment in this life. They, however, in the matter of belief considerably deviated from the right path. O Allah! save the Muslims from treading the wrong path!

Recitation of last prayer in Surah Baqar

During the standing posture it is ordained to recite some other portion, long or small, of the Holy Quran along with the *Fatihah*. In this connection special preference is given to the last two verses of *Surah Baqar* in the Traditions of the Holy Prophet. In a tradition of *Muslim* it is stated that it was conveyed to the Holy Prophet

that the *Fatihah* and the concluding portion of *Baqar* are two lights with which no prophet was blessed before. I, therefore, desire that we should always recite these verses together with the *Fatihah*. These are, so to say, complements to the *Fatihah*. These chapters claim preference because of the grand prayer which occurs at their end : "Our Lord ! punish us not if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord ! do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us. Our Lord, impose not on us (afflictions) which we have not the strength to bear. And pardon us ! And grant us protection ! And have mercy on us ! Thou art our Patron, so grant us victory over the disbelieving people !" (2 : 286).

Progress of truth and righteousness

Individual progress is the concern of every Muslim while collective progress relates to a particular section of people or community or the Muslims as a whole. Apart from these, however, *prayer* opens path for a third kind of progress also. This is the progress of the Islamic religion, of truth and righteousness. Progress of an individual or of a community as a whole is incomplete without an earnest desire for the development of truth and righteousness along with it. Just as an individual progress, if not subordinated to collective progress, is imperfect, similarly collective progress not subordinated to truth and righteousness becomes a nuisance to the world. So many nations who failed to subordinate their progress to truth

and righteousness not only proved to be a source of trouble for the world, but eventually became a thing of the past. The fleeting progress of the Fascist and the Nazi parties bears testimony to this observation. They sacrificed all principles on the altar of brute force and wiped all thoughts of truth and righteousness out of existence. It is a fact that all efforts of progress today are concentrated on national progress and the development of the spirit of truth and righteousness is an empty talk. Islam has sought to instil deeply into the hearts of men a real desire for the progress of truth and righteousness or the progress of Islamic faith by means of *prayer*.

Prayers in the sitting posture

The last phase of *prayer*, viz. all the prayers offered in the sitting posture are devoted to the progress of Islam which is another name for truth and righteousness. The earlier portion of this prayer runs as follows :

التحيات لله والصلوات والطيبات السلام عليك ايها النبي ورحمة الله
 وبركاته السلام علينا وعلى عباد الله الصالحين اشهد ان لا اله الا
 الله واشهد ان محمداً عبده ورسوله

“All services rendered by words and bodily actions and sacrifice of wealth are due to Allah. Peace be on thee, O Prophet ! and mercy of Allah and His blessings. Peace be on us and on the righteous servants of Allah! I bear witness that none deserves to be worshipped but Allah, and bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His Apostle.”

The word التحيات with which the prayer opens is the plural form. Its root-word means "life." It seeks to wish life to others. The other word is الصلوات also in the plural form. It conveys the meaning of "prayer" and *Salat*. التحيات is a "prayer in action" and الصلوات a "prayer in words". In *Salat* man gets so absorbed in prayer that he becomes an embodiment of prayer. The third word is الطيبات which is plural and is used in connection with "a good object, a lawful possession and a righteous person". Here the word represents that which man offers by means of his well-earned wealth. In other words, devotions are in three manners: Those which are offered by words, by different physical postures, and by monetary sacrifices. These three devotions, so to say, are for the sake of Allah. Man's words, his postures and his belongings should be devoted to exalting the name of Allah in the world. We should subordinate our individual and collective progress to this task of elevating Allah and His name. Without it neither an individual nor a community can uphold the cause of justice and righteousness.

Prayer for the Prophet

The second phase of this prayer is: "Peace be on thee, O Prophet! and the mercy of Allah and His blessings!" Peace consists in saving him from all harms. Peace is followed by grace which conveys that Allah may shower His grace upon the Prophet both physically and spiritually. Then comes blessing which seeks to widen the scope of

Allah's favours on the Holy Prophet. This word is used with special reference to the Prophet. Prayer in favour of the Holy Prophet is, in reality, a prayer for the security, promotion and perpetuation of truth and righteousness which was established in the world through him and for the dissemination of which the Prophet lived.

Two eternal lives of the Prophet

“Peace be on thee, O Prophet, ! and mercy of Allah and His blessings.” Here the Prophet is addressed in a manner in which a living person is addressed. He is certainly having his everlasting life and is alive here also because of the truth and righteousness he established. The prayer of Allah's safety upon the Holy Prophet made by every Muslim is conveyed to him through Allah's angels. This prayer, as it emanates from our hearts, creates within us a sincere desire for the protection and propagation of truth and righteousness.

Prayer for safety of Muslim Nation

Then follows the prayer : السلام علينا (peace be upon us, viz., on the followers of Muhammad and upon Allah's virtuous servants). This includes the entire Muslim nation and particularly the virtuous servants through whom Allah's religion is gaining strength, and truth and righteousness are making a headway in the world. *Prayer* is the long and short of Islamic religion. The present prayer is meant for the uplift and promotion of our great religion.

Two Portions of Darud Sharif

Here is another prayer :

اللهم صلى على محمد و على آل محمد كما صليت
على ابراهيم و على آل ابراهيم انك حميد مجيد

“O Allah ! exalt Muhammad and the true followers of Muhammad as Thou didst exalt Abraham and the true followers of Abraham. Surely Thou art Praised, Magnified.”

اللهم بارك على محمد و على آل محمد كما باركت
على ابراهيم و على آل ابراهيم انك حميد مجيد

“O Allah ! bless Muhammad and the true followers of Muhammad as Thou didst bless Abraham and the true followers of Abraham. Surely Thou art Praised, Magnified.”

The last portion conveys the sense of forgiveness and peace while the second signifies an increase in numbers. *Darud Sharif*, therefore, is a prayer whereby Allah is approached to help the Prophet and his followers in their worldly difficulties and to grant them strength to adhere to the principles of truth and righteousness. *Darud* is to invoke the blessings of Allah to increase the numbers of true followers of Muhammad.

Particularisation of Prophet Abraham

The particularisation of Prophet Abraham (God be pleased with him) in the aforesaid prayer throws open to view two historical facts. Firstly, the progeny of Abraham claims an unbroken continuity of the largest number of the virtuous and the pious for hundreds of thousands of years.

Secondly, Prophet Abraham found favour with the people more than any one else. Even today more than half the world professes Prophet Abraham to be truthful. The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims are convinced of his righteousness. Prior to the advent of the Prophet of Islam, Prophet Abraham had a unique personality in the history of the world in the matter of Allah's grace and forgiveness. In the aforesaid prayer, therefore, God is approached to single out the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the matter of His grace and forgiveness and to bless them with such virtuous and pious people as might guide them on the right path in the same manner as He did in the case of Prophet Abraham. Two prayers contained in *Darud* are : (1) may the hearts of Muslims be filled with the light of Islam and (2) may the non-Muslims also partake of this light.

Darud in favour of the Holy Prophet aims at creating a desire in man firstly, that the misfortunes befalling Islam and Muslims may come to an end and, secondly, that the light of Islam may illumine the dark corners where infidelity reigns supreme.

The attainment of progress by the Muslims through *prayer* is an historical fact. Even today what the Muslims need most is the strict observance of *prayer* so that they rise to the highest degree of progress. As a nation the Muslims rose to a position unparalleled in the history of the world. By their message of truth and righteousness

and by their religious zeal, the Muslims superseded all the religions of the world within a century. When a nation becomes a conscientious observer of *prayer*, Allah raises it to the highest pinnacle of secular and religious glory. The contact which the Holy Prophet of Islam established between man and his Creator by means of *prayer* is the foundation-stone of how the Holy Prophet Muhammad is by far the most successful of all the religious leaders of the world. Similarly unique are the conquests of the companions of the Holy Prophet in the world history and the rapid spread of Islam from one corner of the world to the other. Divine laws are unalterable. Even if today Muslims get linked with Allah through *prayer* we can regain our departed glory.