The Significance of Prayer



Hazrat Dr. Zahurul Hassan Sharib Gudri Shah

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Announcement

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The Significance Of Prayer

To–day, I want to talk to you about a topic, which has a great bearing on life, When we are sorry and sad, or when we undergo some hardship, or when we suffer some loss, or when we are bereaved or deprived of some comfort, or when we are sick, or when we are in search of some solution of some problem, confronting us, we like to open our heart and confide our burden to someone, whom we think, as our well–wisher, or as one who is capable of solving our difficulty, or as one, who can console us and extend to us his sympathy.

We feel in our life minor disappointments, frustrations, and vexations, which by no standard can be assessed, judged, pronounced or termed as crises.

A crisis in life leads us to believe that in order to overcome the crisis, we should think and act wisely.

Any wrong step at the crucial moment will be unwise. It is necessary, hence, that we should be willing and prepared to re-adjust our thinking, mode of behaviour and style of functioning

This means that we must act in a different way, and do something, different from what we were doing before.

In order to break the knot of difficulty and in order to overcome the besetting storm it is imperative and necessary that we should in all earnestness give up the old ways

of living, change the trend of thinking, the mode of acting the style of functioning and the mode of behaviour.

The world is, indeed, a place of suffering. It is said to be a valley of tears. It is a place where misery looms large and where moans, groans and shrieks are heard. It is an abode of trials and tribulations.

We are tired travellers in this world. We know that pain and suffering are in store for us.

Dismay, despair, defeat, frustration, censure, abuse, persecution and harrassment await us in the journey of life.

Life to a mystic is like climbing a mountain. To climb a mountain means that one has to face many hardships, bear many troubles, and undergo many rigours. On the way, there are many and varied, narrow and rough paths. There are shades to be met with of course, but they are slippery.

The glimpse of awful crevasses is heart-rendering. The terrible storms are terrifying. The biting cold is dangerous. The bewildering fog and the darkness accompanying, it is, undoubtedly, very discouraging.

But the mystic like an apt mountaineer experiences all of them, and is happy and content to do so.

In the journey of life, we have to walk on thorns. Everybody has his own thorns, and everybody has his own thistle;

How can the thorns be turned into roses, that is the problem

The men of the world adopt wordly means, but the mystics do not rely upon wordly means. They take to prayer. They pray for themselves and they pray for others.

What is prayer ? Prayers is the intercourse of human souls with God. Prayer is our private talk with God. In prayer, we confide our secret to God and implore and seek His Assistance.

The mystics treat prayer as a means of giving new life-varied and abundant, affording ample and infinite opportunity of self-development.

It is in prayer, that we are close to God. We place our worries and cares at the feet f our Master

By seeking and receiving Divine Energy and Grace, we put a new and living zest in life, which slowly, but surely, transforms and changes us.

Any progress made in prayer marks a milestone in our onward march towards the increased closeness with God and increased perfection towards love.

God speaks to man in different ways. He speaks through intuition and inspiration. He speaks through revelation. He speaks through nature.

We, in prayer, pour our heart to Him. Prayer is the opening of the heart to God.

Prayer is the title of the book of Solutions. It is a preface to the book of Good Living. It is a students, preparation, for his examination. It is as soldiers wearing arms for the battle.

Prayer has been defined by **H. More** as ;—

"Prayer is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; not figures of speech, but earnestness of soul."

The mystics hold that an individual should ceaselessly and constantly pray so much so that life may itself become a perennial prayer. The reason they give is that an individual is ever in want. His wants make his life a constant want. Such being the life, we should ever pray.

According to the mystics, God is interested in the sincerity of prayer and not in anything else. Prayer may be in the nature of an oratory filled with the choicest words like a, ring studded with nine precious gems. God does not look at the length of our prayer nor at the dimensions of prayer, nor at the method or system of our prayer but as I have said, at the sincerity with which the prayer is offered.

There are four types or degrees of prayer. Firstly, there is the ordinary prayer, secondly, there is the mental prayer which we call meditation. Thirdly there are the immediate acts, and fourthly, there is the simplicity. In the prayer of simplicity the depths of the unconscious are opened to God.

The mystics hold and affirm and declare that God is Omnipotent and Omnipresent. He knows all things and He hears all things. He is continuously, constantly, vigilantly and ceaselessly working for His Creation. We are nothing but small, insignificant half grown spirits.

The Grace Abounding of God Almighty is, in fact, creating, guiding, illuminating, teaching and inspiring us.

A mystic, as a person, who prays, serves as a link, a wire, and a connection between the Grace of God, anxious to reach to the people, and the people of the world desiring and requiring the Grace of God.

A mystic has surrendered himself to God without strings He is, thus, capable of working on a supernatural level, for he imbibes and transmits the Saving and Enabling love, the will, and the emotional drive, He can, undoubtedly by, his prayer and love and concern change and transform another person into a better mould, and take him up, and lift him into a different atmosphere, which is, indeed, God's atmosphere.

The prophets have prayed.

Prophet Adam prayed thus ;—

"O our Lord ! we have wronged ourselves-and if Thou dost not forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall surely be of those who are lost."

Prophet Abraham prayed ;—

"Lord ! receive it from us, verily, Thou art hearing

and dost know, Lord ! and make us too resigned unto Thee, and of our seed also a nation resigned unto Thee, and show us our rites, and turn towards us, verily, Thou art easy to be turned and merciful. Lord ! and send them an apostle from amongst themselves to read to them Thy signs and teach them the Book and wisdom, and to purify them; verily, Thou art the mighty and the wise.

And **Prophet Moses** prayed thus ;—

"My Lord ! expand for me my breast; and make what I am bidden easy to me; and loose the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech; and make for me a minister from my people,— Aaron my brother; gird up my loins through him, and join him with me in the affair; that we may celebrate Thy praises much and remember Thee much. Verily, Thou dost ever behold us."

Prophet Job submitted to his Lord ;—

" As for me, harm has touched me, but Thou art the most merciful of the merciful ones."

And **Prophet Dhu'nnu** submitted thus ;—

"There is no god but Thou, celebrated be Thy praise ! Verily, I was of the evil doers !"

And **Prophet Zackariah** prayed ;—

"O Lord ! leave me not alone; for Thou art the best of heirs."

The mystics lead a life of Union. The purified soul of the mystic is a reward for his self-abandonment. The glowing and glaring new beauty and reality have given

him fulness of life and a creative quality, which is developed further by way of suffering and prayer.

He, at last, finds himself so sunk, so united and penetrated in Divine life and Divine beauty that he comes to lead this type of life with freedom, easy in original and simplicity.

The mystics are fond of this metaphor :—

"I live in The Ocean of God, as a fish in the sea."

By this, they mean a life of full satisfaction, of deepest desires, a life of expansion of mans, spiritual possibilities, a life of union and a life of conscious abiding in God."

Mystical life, in fact, is a life of contemplation, meditation and of prayer. Meditation is continuous and constitutes prayer.

Courage, devotion and single mindedness have their own reward. They constitute a training in detatchment. The power of the mystic grows with concentration. **Lord Sri Rama** says thus :—

".....life means happiness to those who have found peace in the knowledge of reality."

It means that the hotel life level, with its attendant comforts and conveniences, should be renounced and, we should set our face instead towards detatchment, not for personal ambition and joy, but driven by the inward urge towards perfection, and austere reality.

Prophet Muhammad stresses the importance of remembrance of God in these words :—

"There is a polish for everything that taketh awey

rust, and the polish for the heart is the remembrance of God."

He enjoins us :—

"Pray to God morning and evening, and employ the day in your avocations."

The Holy Prophet prayed thus :—

"O Lord ! keep me alive a poor man, and let me die poor; and raise me amongst the poor."

Once the Prophet prayed thus :—

"O Lord ! grant to me the love of Thee: grant that I love those that love Thee; grant that I may do the deeds that win Thy love; make Thy love dearer to me than self, family or wealth."

Guru Nanak Ji enumerates the five prayers and lays down :—

"There are five prayers, five times for prayers and five names of them.

The first should be truth,
The second what is right,
The third charity in God's name,
The fourth good intentions,
The fifth the praise and glory of God.

He has offered his prayer in these words;

"Neither chastity nor truth nor wisdom
Do I the ignorant wretch have in life O Lord !
Nanak, therefore seeks humbly the refuge of those who forget Thee not"

And he asks in his prayer :—

"Give me the mind, O dear, that forgets Thee not;

Give me the wisdom that I meditate on no one
but Thee.
And I praise Thee with every breath,
And seek no other but the Guru's refuge, O dear.

On the other occasion he prayed thus:—

Powerless am I, O Lord, to describe what Thy
Execellence be,
Sacrifice am I a myriad times to Thee,
That what pleaseth Thee is the only good done,
O, Thou eternal ! the formless one.

Prayer may be in the nature of adoration, supplication or invocation.

In prayer, we open our heart to God, as we do to a sincere and loving friend. In prayer, we put before God our daily needs,

Let us, also, pray to God that He may give us fresh supplies of strength, patience, perseverance and constancy to face and overcome difficult times and trials, and, aiso, seek and implore. His Enabling Grace to perform to the best of our ability and to the utmost of our capacity the duties, assigned to us as human beings.

In prayer, we are close to God. Prayer, in fact, takes us to God, We go to God in prayer. God does not come to us in prayer.

Family prayer or public prayer is good. indeed. But we cannot minimise the importance of secret prayer, as it affords an opportunity to pour out our heart in secret before God.

In secret prayer, we avail ourselves of an opportu

-nity afforded to us to pray in seclusion. When we offer secret prayer, then the soul is free from excitement and the surrounding influences. Secret prayer offered calmly, but ferverently, will reach God. The calm and simple faith enables the soul to have conmunion with God.

To a mystic, prayer is a privilege, and communion with God is a source of great joy.

The question arises as how to pray. When we offer prayer, we should hope and expect that God is hearing with attention our prayer; and that He will, without an iota of doubt, answer our prayer.

The door is already open. Where js the neccessity of knocking at the door ? We should not hesitate. Let us enter through the door and gather to our advantage the rays of Divine Grace, which is enough and sufficient to keep us in good stead, and to strengthen and sustain us in conflict with the forces of evil led by Satan. In prayer, we should express our need of help from Him, Who has promised His help to us.

In order to recieve God's blessings. it is necessary, that our heart should be open having no doubt and fear. Let us not allow Doubt and Fear to sit in the Court of our heart. Doubt and Fear are great enemles of Faith, And, whosover is an enemy of Faith how can he be a friend of the mystic ?

When praying, we should have no iniquity or pride in our heart, We should not cling to any known sin.

In prayer we should approach God with a spirit of dependence and helplessness, and place our wants

before Him in simple, clear and short language, couched in humble trusting faith.

Let us be penitent when praying. Faith, of course, is an important element of prevailing prayer. Lord Jesus Christ directed his disciples:-

"What things soever you desire when ye pray, believe that ye recieve them, and ye shall have them."

Sincere prayer, brings us close to the mind of the Infinite.

When praying, let us realise, that, His Hand, bestowing Grace and Biessings, is upon us in love abounding and pitying tenderness. Let us also feel His visible touch.

In order to grow in faith and experience we should ever pray. In order to recieve what we want to get, we should exhibit perseverance in prayer, We should wait and watch.

Peter exhorts believers to be "sober, and watch unto prayer."

Saint Paul directs ;—

"In everything by prayers and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God."

Whatever we want to get for ourselves, we, should be prepared to give the same to others. Suppose we want to be f r-given, we must then forgive others for their mistakes of omission and commission. In case, we ask mercy and kindness, we should exhibt the spirit of toleration, love and forgi- veness in our heart.

We should avoid any selfish motive in prayer. We should pray for ourselves. we should pray for other too. We should pray for humanity at large.

Prayer to be comprehensive should not be one sided. In placing before God our wants and our requirements, we should also praise. Hmi for His Grace Mercy and Blessings, and thank Him for the fundness, that we have been recieving from Him,

Praise and prayer go together,

In prayer we may place before God our pr blems our joys, our sorrow, and our dreams and our devotions, our cares and our worries,"

When praying it is better to say ;—

"In the name of and for the sake of Thy loving friends grant my prayer".

Lord Jesus Christ refers to this aspect of prayer in these words—

"Ye shall ask in my name, and I say unto you, that I will pray the Father for you for the Father himself loveth you,"

On another occasion he said ;—

"I have chosen you that whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it to you."

When should we pray ? There is no fixed time for prayer. Pray whenever you like. Pray at any place you like Pray at an any time you like. Pray for yourself if you like. Pray for others if you like.

A prayer which is offered for another person in his absence, is soon accepted.

It is better it you pray at the time of sunrise, or at the time of sunset, or after midnight, say, between three and five in the morning. We may, also pray in the stillness of tne night.

It is not wise to pray all the time, ignoring the

worldly duties assigned to us. We need not retire to a mountain or a cave. We should be in the sunshine of life and pray. It is better if we take a middle course. Let us be in the mountain and in the multitude. If you pray all the time your prayer will become a formal routine having no emotional drive.

As regords the question, where to pray, I say that every place is good for prayer. But it is better if we may pray at holy places like a mosque, a church or a temple, the tomb of some saint or at the retreat of some saint

Prayer enables the soul to fly to God. But meditation leads the eye to see God.

The drive of devotional life should be a constant and ceaseless self-giving to God.

According to **Coleridge** ;—

"He prayeth well who loveth well,
Both man and bird and best.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

Our prayer is heard. Coleridge says ;—

Saints will aid if men will call
For the blue sky bends over all.

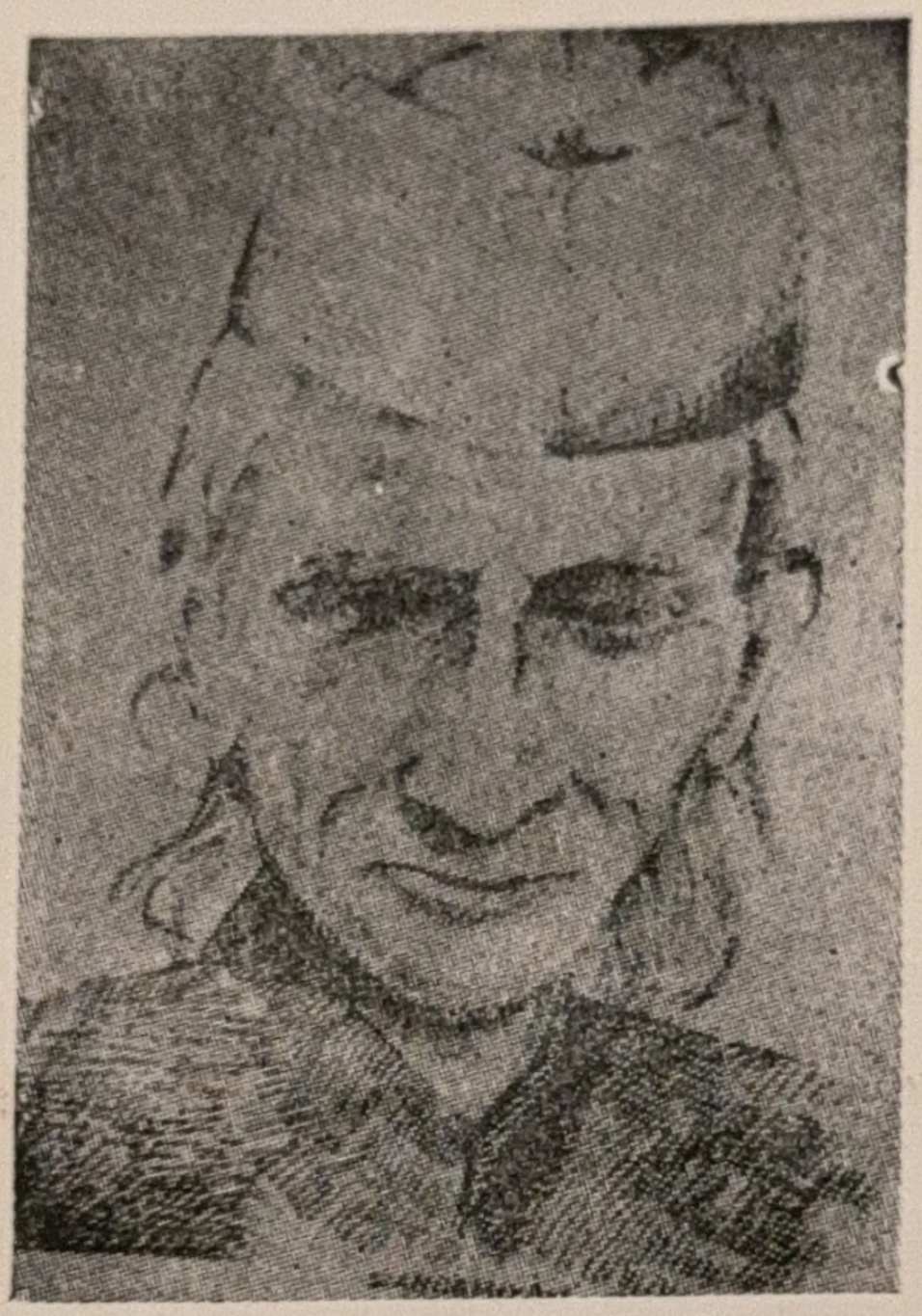
Prayer is of great consequence Tennyson observes thus ;—

More things are wrought by prayer then the world dreams of.
What are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain

If knowing God, they lift no hands of prayer..
Both for themselves and those who call them friends.

If we may act foolishly and forget God in the midst of our various distractions, let us pray, in all humility and sincerity, that God may not forget us.

Prayer is our privilege giving us joy, But we should not be unmindful of the duty, which we should also perform.



Hazrat Dr. Zahurul Hassan Sharib

better Known as

Sharib Gudri Shah Baba

M A,LL B; Ph. D

This sketch of Zahurmiyan is carried out by Mr. **Jamil Uddin** M.S.M. an English disciple of **Hazrat Sharib Gudri Shah Baba.**

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