

Saumiyyat:
Commentaries on the Prayer Saum
of Hazrat Inayat Khan
by
Murshid Samuel L. Lewis
(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
the Only Being, United with All the Illuminated Souls
Who Form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

Praise Be to Thee:

Praise is something that should be enunciated, announced, carried on the outbreath (Nasoul). Self-praise can be one of the worst of evils. The devotee should not imitate the orthodox who, although verbally praising a supreme Being, imply self-virtue.

Most Supreme God:

The grander the being to whom the praise is offered, the greater its value, both to the devotee and to the world. Yes, we may praise others, may appreciate, and the more inclusive those praised the more valuable. When praise reaches its utmost, it is offered to the **Utmost**.

Of course, there is another aspect when the heavens, so to speak, do the praising. The word "Mohammed" indicates that. But there also can be human beings praised by others. The word ahmed signifies that.

This indicates that Sufis accept a Deity, and in their inner and outer studies and sciences they tell what they can and realize what they can concerning this Deity.

Omnipotent:

This is the English equivalent to Allah-ho-Akbar. All the words and epithets we use in English have their correspondences in Hebrew and Arabic. There is a general modern tendency to Anglicize rituals and sacred phrases. Along the same lines, therefore, the Sufi Message is offering prayers and devotions in the English language. In The Thousand and One Nights it is constantly repeated, "There is no power nor might save in Allah." We can learn this by feeling Allah with our inhalations and exhalations. When we appreciate Allah, we become stronger physically, emotionally, mentally and in all aspects of life.

Omnipresent, All-pervading:

This is in accord with the teachings of Saint Paul: "In God we live and move and have our being." According to the Sufi teachings, the Divine Being is in and out and around us and everyone. This may be hard to conceive. One way to appreciate it is through the development of our knowledge of breath. Scriptures, but not always orthodoxies, verbalize the importance of breath. Mystics realize the importance of breath. Our consciousness is related to our breathing. Especially those who

develop in the science of mysticism find this to be true.

The Only Being:

Sufis are not the only ones to proclaim this. It is also taught by some schools of Vedanta and by inference in the deeper aspects of Mahayana Buddhism. In modern times there have been many schools and teachers who verbalize that God is the only being, and then go on from that making it seem unimportant. Here Sufis definitely differ from all those who proclaim the avatarship of some person hidden or outstanding. All such teachings take man away from an appreciation of his own potentialities—that God made man in His image. If God made man in His image, then everyone in a certain sense is a reflection of divinity; everyone has the potentiality of divinity.

Sufis also teach tauhid, but the various aspects of Godhood are explained in diverse places, both in the literature and inner teachings.

Take Us in Thy Parental Arms:

As one advances in mysticism, the emphasis is not so much on God the mother or God the father. One generally finds that those schools of religion and devotion who emphasize or overemphasize the importance of either God as mother or God as father also indulge openly or covertly in self-praise. We can call God mother, we can call God father, and we will not be wrong. Certainly God has all those merits we see in the mother and all those virtues we behold in the father. In the Hadith it says, “Allah loves His Creation more than a mother loves her offspring.”

Whatever be our outlook it is most wonderful when one can feel the parenthood of God, either as mother or father or both. One will feel a sense of protection, one will feel a sense of security.

Raise Us From the Denseness of the Earth:

Although in the prayer we are beseeching and we make the proper movement, this alone does not take us above materiality. True, it is a first step. One can rise above materiality by the refinement of breath, by loving devotion, by self-effacement, by kindness and consideration to others, and by many means, especially when one follows the law of renunciation.

Thy Beauty Do We Worship:

This phrase is very much in danger of becoming a source of illusion unless it is put into practice, unless it has an actual effect on the awakened consciousness. Sufis actually find beauty everywhere. There is a saying that the Sufi finds Allah in every leaf of the tree and every stone of

the ground. While this is poetic, it can be realized when the heart feelings are awakened and one actually experiences joy in the daily life in small or large affairs, in all small or large beholdings.

To Thee Do We Give Willing Surrender:

This is the most elusive matter. The term “Muslim” is supposed to mean one who surrenders, although more literally would mean a pacified person. One meets multitudes of Muslims who say they surrender and they have not the slightest idea of the meaning of the word “surrender.” The Apostle has said: “Praise God in times of prosperity and surrender to Him in times of adversity.”

To surrender means to remove the ego. It does not mean blindly saying “yes” to everybody but to remove one’s own ego by boosting that of others hardly adds to the light in the world. No doubt one must learn to control the ego of others. In the end, as we might find in the higher Buddhist teachings, to become empty also means to become full.

We must, however, learn to subdue self-assertion and this is more easily attained by the refinement of breath.

Most Merciful and Compassionate God:

This means rahm, the root of the word rahman and rahim, which we translate as compassion and mercy, though both come from the same philological root. The common devotee does not see Allah in this aspect. But if we are to follow the apostle, this is the most prevalent aspect. The other aspects have often been emphasized by the orthodoxy of various faiths. They may place severity, justice, judgment, power, or what we call the Jelal aspects of God in the first place. Or they may go to the opposite extreme, as we can see in Hinduism and some aspects of other religions and place the Jemal aspects in first place.

The Idealized Lord of the Whole Humanity:

Different religions have used different words and have argued and even warred over this. This subject is discussed at length in the literature, and in the *Unity of Religious Ideals* in particular.

Thee Only Do We Worship:

This is almost a repetition of an earlier phrase, that we are attracted by beauty. It means we are attracted also by thought, by name and form and by that which is above and beyond name and form. Indeed, worship itself is of value to the deepest part of man, to the functions of the soul itself.

And Towards Thee Alone Do We Aspire:

This single sentence symbolizes all that is found in *The Inner Life*, *The Purpose of Life* and Sufi teachings in general. In the spiritual life all aspiration is godward. This does not mean we entirely abandon earthly ambition; it means that earthly ambition is not separate from our divine aspiration. Or, as is said in *Gayan*, "It is through the hand of man that God works out His intended purpose in nature."

Open Our Hearts Toward Thy Beauty:

These two operations are really one. When hearts are opened, beauty is beheld. When beauty is beheld, it helps open the heart.

Illuminate Our Souls With Divine Light:

It is only divine light which can illuminate the soul. There are other degrees, shades, and types of light on the physical, subtle, and spiritual planes. They may illumine the bodies of man, but the light of the soul is beyond this. In the book, *Health*, various grades and types of healing are explained. In the brochure on Metaphysics various states of consciousness are explained. When these are understood, the devotee will recognize all the grades and types of light, their functions and purposes in the universe.

O Thou, the Perfection:

Jesus has said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect." This perfection is beyond conception. It indicates that that is the end and aim of life. It is the completion.

Of Love, Harmony, and Beauty:

Perfection without attributes is an Allah without attributes. It can become a lifeless ideal. But reality is never lifeless; reality is always all-inclusive. This all-inclusiveness is also super-conceptual. It has attributes; reality has attributes. And we have offered as part of the message of the new age: love, harmony, and beauty, therefore.

All-Powerful Creator:

This suggests that creation is connected with Divine Might. In the Qur'an it is said, that Allah offered the word "kun," and this very sound or word suggests power and knowledge in the Indo-

Germanic languages. There is also the same idea here that can be found in the deepest considerations of Allah-ho-Akbar, that kinetic energy arose from potential energy.

Sustainer:

According to the Hindu religion God manifests as Brahm, the Creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Shiva or Maheish, the Destroyer or Assimilator. Mystics ultimately see God in all these aspects together. God is the One Who creates, sustains, and transforms.

Judge, and Forgiver of Our Shortcomings:

These two actually go together, although there are separate words and even separate attributes. It has been a mistake to have a God who is always judging and condemning people to some form of hell. But it is also a mistake to devitalize forgiveness. Forgiveness without substance is also a creation of man's ego. Forgiveness and repentance go together, and those who hold that man should or can forgive without their being any repentance are as deeply in error as those who over-emphasize judgment with its condemnations.

Lord God of the East and of the West:

While Qur'an declares that the light of God is neither of the East or West, the Islamic religion has often crystallized divinity to the Ka'aba in Mecca. This itself is nothing but a form of idolatry. Allah is everywhere and in everything. No doubt there are greater accumulations of Baraka in shrines and holy places, but Allah is everywhere even more than the light of the sun can be everywhere.

Of the Worlds Above and Below:

The apostle has declared, "Holy Qur'an was given in seven dialects, and each has its inner and outer meaning. This sustains the declaration that Islam, like all the faiths before it, declares there are seven planes in the universe. These are also explained in the deepest Sufi metaphysics as well as in the wisdom teachings of all faiths.

Man is not the lowest. In Hinduism there are a number of grades of beings below man and a number above man. As consciousness is expanded, not in imagination, but in actual awakening, one becomes aware of these planes. They have been created by the light of God operating in many manners. Some of these manners can be unfolded if one studies deeply physical light in all its manifestations.

And of the Seen and Unseen Beings:

This follows from the above. In the Qur'an the jinns and angels are mentioned mostly; in other literature, other beings. These beings are not created by man's imagination, but they do affect it as well as all aspects of consciousness.

Pour Upon Us Thy Love and Thy Light:

Now we come to the prayer of beseeching. It is not wrong to request favors from the universe. But if we are to rise above the denseness of the earth, we beseech those favors which are above the denseness of the earth.

Give Sustenance to Our Bodies, Hearts, and Souls:

This is a continuation of the above. It is love, light, and life which sustain all aspects of personality.

Use Us for the Purpose That Thy Wisdom Chooseth:

This is, of course, a variation of the Christ's "Thy will be done on earth." This subject is also discussed in *The Purpose of Life*. But there is the interpretation that in a certain sense the human being is the soul awakening. And in this sense it is God coming to life in God.

And Guide Us on the Path of Thine Own Goodness:

When there is guidance there is goodness. This is different from man's goodness. Man's goodness arises when things are done to his satisfaction. God's goodness arises when the soul awakens, when the heart responds to the Voice which is constantly coming from within.

Draw Us Closer to Thee:

Which is to say by rising beyond egoicity we become aware of the Voice; by becoming aware of the Voice which emanates in and from the heart we draw closer to God; God in this sense draws closer to us.

Every Moment of Our Life:

This here and now, not in some imagined eternity, not in a distant or not-so-distant future. The

Christian prayer says, "Lo, God is here." Zen Buddhism declares: "Now!"

Until in Us Be Reflected Thy Grace:

The Grace is always reflected in us. We are not aware of it. All of Hazrat Inayat Khan's original lectures were on this subject, but they were never published. They were secluded away. That is one of the reasons his work was stymied and stifled.

Thy Glory:

This is reflected in light and magnetism as we become aware of it in, out, around, and through us.

Thy Wisdom:

This is prajna in Sanskrit. Unlike the European word which is vague, prajna has a most definite meaning: immediate apprehension of what is, what is to be done, what we are to be, and what we and everyone else are.

Thy Joy:

This needs no comment. All efforts in music, dance, art, and devotion are making not only individuals but all of mankind aware of it. and Thy Peace:

This is beyond these. It is beyond movement and yet it is not absent in movement. It is a living stillness; it is living non-action. It is the stimulus within everything.