



ATTRIBUTES OF
GOD

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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Translated by:
Prof. Farida Khanam

Edited by:
Dr. Naghma Siddiqi
Dr. Maria Khan

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e-mail: info@goodwordbooks.com

Centre for Peace and Spirituality International

1, Nizamuddin West Market, New Delhi-110013

e-mail: info@cpsglobal.org

www.cpsglobal.org

Goodword Books

A-21, Sector 4, Noida-201301

Delhi NCR, India

e-mail: info@goodwordbooks.com

www.goodwordbooks.com

Center for Peace and Spirituality USA

2665 Byberry Road, Bensalem, PA 19020

e-mail: kkaleemuddin@gmail.com

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Foreword



The Quran tells us about the best names of God, *asma-ehusna*: “God has the Most Excellent Names. Call on Him by His Names and keep away from those who distort them.” (7:180). That is, think of God in terms of these perfect divine attributes, rather than by such names as people have themselves concocted.

Man by his very nature lives in total helplessness, whereas God, because of being the Creator, the Lord, is All-powerful, compensates for man’s helplessness. As such, it is but natural that man should call upon Him on all occasions. For this purpose man is aided by his knowledge of God’s great attributes.

All these names of God, in fact, relate to man. Whenever man is in need of divine succour, he makes reference to these names. Whenever any feelings awaken within man of his helplessness or of his servitude, or he has any kind of negative emotions, these divine names immediately give him some word which guides him. With these guiding words he gets connected with the Lord of the World just as by dialling a number on the telephone, one immediately gets connected with the desired person.



The beautiful names which God has chosen to introduce Himself to man—*asma-e-husna*—are such as will open the gate of mercy to man. God's beautiful names tell us what the meeting points between God and man are. It is through these meeting points that man may achieve closeness with God.

Wahiduddin Khan

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The Attributes and the Great Name of God



The Quran tells us: “God has the most excellent names.” (7:180). This has been mentioned at three other places in the scriptures. “His are the finest names” (17:110). “His are the most excellent names” (20:8). “His are the most excellent names” (59:24). Here, “names” have the extended meaning of attributes, that is, all the best attributes inhere specifically in God.

How many divine attributes are there? We learn from a hadith that they number 99. Some scholars say there is a greater number, i.e., about one thousand (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 2, p. 269). But the issue of number here is relative to the limitations of the human vocabulary. The words in human language are finite, while the being of God is infinite. God’s attributes are, therefore, in reality unlimited. The ninety nine best names are, as it were, a major sampling of God’s infinity of attributes.



The Ninety Nine Names of God



There is a tradition which has been recorded in different books of Hadith. According to Sahih al-Bukhari: “Abu Hurayra has recorded that the Prophet of Islam observed—God has ninety nine names, one less than a hundred. Those who have counted these words will enter Paradise.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2736)

In this tradition of the Prophet, reference is made to the enumeration of the best names of God. This realization must be at a conscious level rather than at the level of counting the beads on the rosary.

These names of God are, in actual fact, different aspects of the attributes of God. When a person reflects on the existence of God and His creations, various aspects of God appear to him and he is able to understand these different aspects of God. Conscious realization of these aspects is what is meant by enumeration of God’s names. Those who attain the realization of God in this way will undoubtedly go to Paradise, because Paradise is, in actual fact, the reward for the realization of God.

The term ninety nine in the tradition is purely symbolic. In reality, it means that there are countless names or attributes of God. Imam Razi in his commentary has quoted the opinions of certain religious scholars—“God’s names amount to five thousand.”



(*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 1, p. 36). But the truth is that God has innumerable names.

In the tradition, the number of God's attributes (*asma-e-husna*) is put at ninety nine. By studying the Quran, the scholars have discovered these, name by name. But these names do not denote the countless attributes of God. All these names, in fact, relate to human beings. The truth is that when the feeling of servitude awakens within man and God's consciousness becomes a reality then, naturally, different kinds of spiritual feelings arise within him. Naming the divine attributes, in fact, is an appropriate way of expressing these divine feelings.

For instance, a person reflects on his own existence, which is indeed an example of the best of moulds (95:4). He reflects on nature, in which everything is astonishingly a model of perfection. He reflects on the earth and the sky, and finds no defect in them. (67:3). This thinking and observation create experiences for a person. He spontaneously feels that he should have the words which are appropriate to express these sublime feelings. At that time, the Quran, in exact accordance with his desire, gives him these words: "Glory be to God, the Best of Creators." (23:14)

Formless God?



Divine attributes have in actual fact been enumerated to counter deviation, as has been mentioned in the Quran (7:180). Deviation has occurred mostly in philosophy. In philosophy God is conceived of as a Being without attributes. It is under the influence of this philosophical concept, that some have developed the concept of a formless God. The famous German philosopher, Friedrich Hegel (d. 1831) has expressed this as ‘world spirit’. Another philosopher has called God an ‘abstract idea’.

According to this philosophic concept, God has no permanent and separate personality and it is without attributes. That is to say, He is like ‘gravity’ or ‘cosmic rays’. The Quran has mentioned God’s names to refute this philosophic deviation, rather than purely to specify the divine names.

In philosophy, God has not been conceived of as a Creator, but rather that all the phenomena of creation are manifestations of God Himself. This is without doubt an abstract philosophic construct. It is obvious that in the universe diverse phenomena are to be found. This being so, it is baseless to conjecture that such a God, who is free from all kinds of attributes, may appear in the diverse forms of creation. Such contradictions prove



that this concept of God is only a matter of philosophic conjecture. It has no scientific base in fact.

God and Scientific Study



In present times, consequent upon the scientific study of nature, the philosophic concept of God has been in effect rendered baseless. Today scientific study shows that in the universe there is perfect meaningfulness. This kind of meaningfulness could not be possible unless the Creator had a mind. Therefore, in science, without taking the name of God, it has been accepted that the one who has brought this universe into existence is an intelligent designer. (For details, see: *Al-Risala*, 'Science and Theology', September 2007).

The truth is that the concept of God is interwoven in human nature, with diverse divine attributes. In scientific study, although the universe is, ultimately, different manifestations of the same unit, the atom, this atom astonishingly takes the form of different and opposite kinds of meaningful things. Both human nature and the external objects of the universe testify to the fact that there are great differences and diversities at the cosmic level and that at the same time in all these different elements of the universe there is an extraordinary harmony. In such a situation, the human mind desires to be able to conceive of God as having



diverse attributes. The great names of God in the Quran answer this question.

The Great Attributes of God: The Answer to the Quest of Nature



A study of the great attributes of God shows that all these names of God are an introduction of God to man. Psychology has proved that man is by birth a seeking animal. By instinct he wants to find a superior being who will compensate for all of his shortcomings, and become the focus of his feelings and emotions.

The great attributes of God are indeed the answer to this question. These names of God are not a representation of the most superior God in any absolute sense. They rather introduce God in His relation to man. Therefore, when a person comes to know of these divine attributes with their full meaningfulness, he all of a sudden discovers that superior God that he had been seeking all along.

For instance, one of the divine names is *Al-Ghani*, that is, “Self-Sufficient,” a Being who does not need anything from others, but rather has the power to fulfil the needs of everyone. This feeling is indwelling, consciously or unconsciously in every human being. Later, when a person learns that one of God’s attributes



is that He is self-sufficient, he immediately realizes that he has discovered the God he had been searching for all along. This is the reality which is expressed in this verse of the Quran: “O men! It is you who stand in need of God—God is self-sufficient, and praiseworthy.” (35:15)

Similarly, there is another feeling which is found in all human beings, consciously or unconsciously, and that is, everyone feels that he or she is a creature who is in need of sustenance. Sustenance means all those things on which human lives depend.

At all times an individual feels himself to be in need of many things—water, food, air, oxygen and light, etc. In this world, all these things are available in abundance and in the right proportions.

Man, by nature, wants to know who that Being is who provides for all the things he requires, without demanding anything from him. Man wants to fully acknowledge this superior Benefactor and with profound feelings of gratitude he wants to surrender himself before that Being. Here it is the great attributes of God which guide him.

One of the names of God is *Al-Razzaq*, the Giver. When a person discovers God as the Giver, he feels, all of a sudden, that he has found the answer to his desire. This is the reality which has been expressed thus in the Quran: “It is God Who is the great Sustainer, the Mighty One, the Invincible.” (51:58)

Every person has yet another need. The present world in which an individual has to lead his life has been created in such a way that no one can live here

in an ideal way. Under the influence of desires and wishes, individuals repeatedly make mistakes. In these situations a person thinks of how he might save himself from the feeling of guilt and how it might be possible to purify his soul. Here again, he finds the source of solace in the divine attributes.

As we know, one of God's names is *Al-Ghaffar*, the Forgiver. It is in this concept of the Forgiver that one's mind finds solace. The following verse of the Quran guides us: "God says, 'O My servants, who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of God's mercy, for God surely forgives all sins. He is truly the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.'" (39:53)

Connecting with God



All the divine names mentioned in the Quran, give us points of reference for reflection and pondering. With these names we find definite guidance with which we may arrive at a concept of the divine Being, of the Being of God, and thinking of the attributes of God, we may establish a specific intellectual relationship with the Divine Being. It is this relationship which is called God-realization.

This is why the Quran tells us about the best names of God. It also tells us: "God has the Most Excellent



Names. Call on Him by His Names and keep away from those who distort them.” (7:180). That is, think of God in terms of these perfect divine attributes, rather than by such names as people have themselves concocted.

What is God? God, in one respect, compensates for our helplessness. Man by his very nature lives in total helplessness, whereas God, because of being the Creator, the Lord, is All-powerful. As such, it is but natural that man should call upon Him on all occasions. For this purpose man is aided by his knowledge of God’s great attributes.

All these names of God, in fact, relate to man. Whenever man is in need of divine succour, he makes reference to these names. Whenever any feelings awaken within man of his helplessness or of his servitude, or he has any kind of negative emotions, these divine names immediately give him some word which guides him. With these guiding words he gets connected with the Lord of the World just as by dialling a number on the telephone, one immediately gets connected with the desired person.

Calling out to God with His Names



It is a fact that a human being is a truth-seeking animal by nature. Very soon, there awakens within him a feeling that some superior being must exist who will



grant him the light of guidance. At that time he calls out, “O God of guidance, grant me guidance by Your special mercy.”

In this present world, man repeatedly faces such situations, in which he feels himself helpless. At that time, under the influence of his latent feelings, he wants to call upon a superior being. Then of the best names he finds a divine name of the superior being such as relates to that particular situation in which he finds himself and with that in mind, he calls out: “O God, You alone are my helper, help me in all ways possible.”

A human being cannot think in an abstract way. Because of his mental make-up a person always requires words, by which he may bring concepts to mind. The same is true of God’s names. These names do not denote the name of God in the absolute sense. They say only those names which we require as human beings. It is as if these divine names are to fulfil human needs, rather than to describe the higher reality that is the divine being.

Asma-e-husna means attributes of God’s names, but these divine names are not in the absolute sense an introduction to God, they introduce God in relation to man. *Asma-e-husna*, in actual fact, give a person a point of reference for remembrance of God (*zikr*) and prayer (*dua*). For instance, if one needs food one may call upon God in these words—“O *Razzaq*, the Giver of food, provide me with food (*rizq*).” Similarly, when a person feels helpless, he may express himself by saying: “O *Qadir*, the All-powerful God! Compensate for my helplessness.”

Not Mysterious



The general concept regarding *asma-e-husna* is that they are some mysterious words. It is believed that some miraculous effect is hidden in these words, just as in the chants (*mantras*) of magicians, and that our task is only to remember them and recite them repeatedly. And then mysteriously we will receive miraculous benefits. This is what people think of divine names.

But this kind of concept of God's names is totally baseless. *Asma-e-husna* are in no sense mysterious words. They represent a known and meaningful reality. Divine names are without doubt a great blessing for man. But there is nothing mysterious about it, rather it is a blessing which can be fully explained rationally.

Asma-e-husna indeed are the known doors of God's mercy. These doors have been opened as we learn from the Quran that man may discover them and passing through them may reach the mercy of God in this world. *Asma-e-husna* are like the good gates of the divine mercy. They are the means of connecting us to God. They are like a God-given key to *ma'arifah*, or God-realization, which awaken our hearts and minds and take us from darkness to light.



Asma-e-Husna (God's Best Names)



If a book were to be written giving the history of communication, it would include the role of the pigeon who took messages to people, the telegraph, the telephone and the mobile phone. On reading the book, whether or not the reader fully understands the language of the book, if he had not already seen that pigeon, telegraph, telephone or mobile phone, he would not be able to understand the reality of these things. Any such book is informative for one who has some prior knowledge of these things, but for one who is poorly informed, this book will be little short of a mystery.

The same is true of God's beautiful names. God's good names have been mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith, but just a reading of these names in the Quran and the Hadith does not suffice. In spite of being mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith, all these names remain poorly understood. One can know the reality of these names, only when one has acquired the knowledge of these things through one's own discovery. Without personal discovery, these names will be mere formalities, rather than a treasure house of the realization of God.



Calling upon God with His Greatest Name



Regarding *asma-e-husna* a question asked by people is: “Has God one proper name (*ism-e-aazam*) or has God one main or great name? If that is so, what it is?” Different traditions have been recorded in the Hadith about *ism-e-aazam*. We give below two traditions by Imam Ahmad:

1. Anas ibn Malik narrated that, once the Prophet of Islam heard someone saying: “O God, I beseech You. All praise is for You. You are the object of worship, You have no partner. You have done great favours to man. You have created the earth and the heavens without any model. Greatness and Honour are Yours.” On hearing this, the Prophet of Islam said: “You have called God with *ism-e-aazam*, when He is called in this way He will certainly answer your call, and when He is asked for anything in this way He grants it.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 12205).

2. Abdullah ibn Buraida narrates that, the Prophet Muhammad heard someone say: “O God, I beseech You. I bear witness that You are God, there is no other person worthy of worship. You stand alone, You are self-sufficient. You have not given birth to anyone nor



have You been born to someone. You have no equal.” On hearing this, the Prophet observed: “He has made a request to God with *ism-e-aazam*, if something is asked for with *ism-e-aazam*, He certainly grants it. And when the prayer is prefixed by it, He certainly accepts it.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 22965)

In both the traditions along with the name of Allah there are other names with divine attributes. This shows that *ism-e-aazam* cannot be just one name. Had it been one name, the prayer of the Prophet’s Companion would also have mentioned only one name. But there are several names of God in this prayer (*dua*). In spite of this clear indication, regarding *ism-e-aazam* to be only one main name of God, and making every effort to find that name, is without doubt a mistake.

The truth is that *ism-e-aazam* is not just one great name, but is rather a great state or feeling. In the above prayer the Companion did not repeat some words by rote, but rather in a great state of emotion, some particular words fell from his lips, and this is what is meant by calling upon God with *ism-e-aazam*. *Ism-e-aazam* relates in actual fact to spiritual or divine feelings. Calling upon God with such words as are full of feelings is calling upon God with *ism-e-aazam*.

Prayer in One's Mother Tongue



The previous hadith mentions the prayer of a Companion. The Prophet of Islam said that this prayer was a prayer with *ism-e-aazam*. Since this prayer was said by the Companion in the Arabic language, people consciously or unconsciously regard that a prayer with *ism-e-aazam* is one which is done in the Arabic language, and a prayer not said in the Arabic language is not the prayer of *ism-e-aazam*.

But this thinking is not right. In its reality, the prayers said by the Companions, were in their own mother tongue, rather than in the Arabic language. Associating prayer with the Arabic language, is an unnatural concept. *Dua*, or prayer, is another name for the feelings of the heart, rather than just any linguistic sequence. The Quran tells us that “each Prophet was sent in the language of his own community.” (14:4). The same is true of *dua*. Just as the calling of people to God is done in the language of one's own community, *dua* is also said in the mother tongue of the individual.

If prayer were associated with the Arabic language alone, and if the prayer in Arabic language were regarded as superior prayer, this would amount to nullifying the actual spirit of prayer. Prayer is not just the repetition of certain words. Prayer means calling upon God or praying



to God with one's heart and mind, and such prayer will always come to one's lips only in one's mother tongue.

Prayer that Brings you Close to God



Dua is not something technical. It is an external expression of an internal tempest. When a person discovers God in all His glory and greatness, then, while thinking of God, his feelings become so intense that he deeply realizes the presence of God; he feels as if he has reached the vicinity of God. When he undergoes this tumultuous experience, this in the hadith is described thus: “Man remembered God in his solitude and, with the intensity of emotion, tears well up in his eyes.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 660) This hadith speaks of a person who thinks of this world as a testing ground, and deeply realizes the eventuality of death and the Day of Reckoning. Then he undergoes these spiritual feelings, when he keenly feels the fire of hell, and is able to see the eternal scenes of Paradise in his imagination. When he undergoes the deep experience of the remembrance of God, and becomes oblivious of everything else, all else besides God becomes totally unimportant in his eyes.

In such tumultuous moments he experiences a tempest in his heart and mind. In his eyes an ocean of tears well up in fear of God. When he stops thinking



and only has a heightened sense of feeling, the divine nature latent within him finds words in the form of tears. In such tempestuous moments, whatever a person utters from his lips is genuine *dua*, or prayer. It is this *dua* which is *dua* with *ism-e-aazam* and such a *dua* is always in one's own mother tongue, rather than in any other language.

Prayer from the Heart



Once I happened to meet a person, who told me that he had been seeking the answer to a question for the last ten years, but he had not yet succeeded in finding it. I asked him what his question was? He said, "I want to know what *ism-e-aazam* is?" *Ism-e-aazam* means a prayer that invokes God's greatest name. He told me that he had read many books, he had met many religious scholars and saints, but he had not yet received any satisfactory answer to the question. He said, "Now I have come to you. If possible, please give me the answer and ease my tension."

I said, "Your anxiety is purely self-induced. You have supposed that *ism-e-aazam* is like a mantra, that is, a magic formula. Now you want to know that mantra, but this will never happen."

I said that *ism-e-aazam* is not the name of some words but is rather the name of some state or feelings. The



prayer said from the heart is prayer with *ism-e-aazam*. It is in actual fact the feeling of your own heart which makes a prayer a prayer of *ism-e-aazam*. No human word has the power to become God's *ism-e-aazam*, because it cannot encompass the unlimited being of God.

I said that there was once a person just like him. He was in search of some treasure. He found that this treasure was kept hidden in a palace on the peak of some mountain. And the gate of this palace was locked. This lock did not open with any key, but with a magic formula. Now he went in search of that mantra. He went on seeking and finally reached a place where he met a sadhu who knew this magic formula.

He requested the sadhu to tell him the mantra. The sadhu told him what it was. The sadhu said that, the mantra was "sim sim". Then the sadhu told him to go to a particular mountain top where he would find the palace with its gate locked and then, in front of that gate, he had to say: "Khul ae sim sim, khul ae sim sim" (Open, O sim sim, Open, O sim sim) and then the lock would open. The seeker then set off. After a long journey, by the time he reached the palace gate, he had forgotten the mantra. He stood in front of the gate, and uttered somewhat similar sounding words like tam tam, dum dum, bum bum. But the gate did not open. Then he came back to the sadhu again. The sadhu told him that the mantra was wrong, that was why he could not unlock the gate. Now he had to go again and say, "sim sim". This time the man learnt it by rote and again traveled to that place. Now he stood in

front of the palace gate and said “khul ae sim sim”, and immediately the door opened.

Many people regard *ism-e-aazam*, a kind of magical word, but this is wrong. Indeed *ism-e-aazam* is not a name you will find in a dictionary, it is another name for the internal state of a person. Whenever any true servant of God prays to God with sublime feelings from the heart, he receives the support of angels. At that time, particular spiritual words come to his lips. That is what it is to pray with *ism-e-aazam*. This kind of *dua* is guided by divine inspiration and the *dua* which is said with divine inspiration will definitely come straight from the human heart.

The Prayer which God Accepts



The real *dua*, or prayer, comes out of one's entire being, rather than from just the utterings of some words. It is a fact, that the seeker or one who asks from God, is never deprived. But asking does not mean just the repetition of certain words. The real asking is that in which man's entire being becomes a part of it. If someone says: “O God! Accept me,” but does things which are not acceptable to God, then that is a proof that his request was not sincere.

If a child asked his mother for bread, it is not possible that his mother would place a burning coal in his hand.



God is the most compassionate of all to His creatures. It is not possible that you ask God for a humble heart (*khashiyat*) and that God would instead give you hardheartedness, if you ask God for remembrance of Him, it is not possible that God would grant you forgetfulness of Him, if you want your sole concern to be the Hereafter, and then God grants you love of this world, if you want true religiosity from God it is not possible for God to give you a soulless religiosity. If you ask God for truthfulness, it is not possible that God would cause you to lead your life in the darkness of misguidance.

If in your life the thing that you desire the most is absent, this is a proof that you have not so far asked God for it. If you have to buy milk and you go to the market with a sieve then even after spending money you will come away empty handed. Similarly, if you keep repeating the words of prayer with your lips, but your real being gets diverted to something else then it would be right to say that neither had you asked nor had you received, for one who seeks finds. It cannot be said of the Lord of the universe that He treats His people in such a way that when on Doomsday a person comes face to face with God, he looks at his Lord with intense regret (*hasrat*)—and says: “O God, I asked You for something but you did not give it to me.” By God, that is impossible, that is impossible, that is impossible! The Lord of the universe comes near you morning and evening with all His treasures and calls out: “Who is there? If you seek, I will give it to you.” But those who

want God's blessings and remain forgetful, then how can you blame the Giver?

Prayer that Can Change Destiny



According to a hadith: 'Only *dua* can change God's decision'. (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2139) God has established the system of this world on the basis of cause and effect, and then God has given human beings total freedom. Now a person acts as he pleases and the good or evil results ensue either in agreement with or in opposition to the system of cause and effect set up by God. My belief is that this system is absolute.. For no one can the system be set at naught.

In this matter, the only exception is that of *dua*, or sincere prayer. When a person prays to God and given that God grants his prayer, then at that time God intervenes in the system of cause and effect and paves the way for a person according to his prayer to Him. This means that *dua* changes God's decision (*qaza wa qadar*).

But *dua* is not just the repetition of certain words. Even if these prayers consist of verses from the Quran or from the traditions learnt by rote, it cannot be effective. To change the system of predetermination (*qaza*) such *dua* is required as comes straight from the heart, in



which the entire existence of an individual is involved, and his whole personality is shaken to the core.

Another condition for the acceptance of this kind of *dua* is that the one who is praying has so purified himself intellectually that his thinking has risen to the same plane as divine thinking. Such a person will ask God for only that which is acceptable to Him. He will not say such prayers to God as are not in accordance with the way of God.

An Example of the Prophet's Prayer



All the prophets of God have said their prayers with *ism-e-aazam*. For instance, when on the occasion of the battle of Badr the Prophet of Islam looked at the battlefield, he saw that the enemy army was very strong as compared to the army of the believers. The believers lacked in weaponry, as well as were very small in number as compared to the enemy army. On seeing this inequality, the Prophet was emotionally very disturbed. In total helplessness, he fell down in prostration before God. At that time, he uttered these words: “O God, if You destroy this group of believers, You will never be worshipped on the earth.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 208). This *dua*, in respect of Prophet's godly feelings (*rabbani* feelings), was a *dua* with *ism-e-aazam*, which was



accepted in the full sense. With the help of God the weaker group defeated the stronger group.

The prayer with *ism-e-aazam* is not peculiar only to the prophets. This prayer can be granted to every servant of God. Anyone who turns to God with sublime godly feelings in all sincerity, with full faith, may be granted the blessing of the prayer with *ism-e-aazam*. It can be recognized that on the occasion of such prayer, a person feels that his whole existence has bathed in the divine light. At that time he starts speaking such words as he may never previously have thought of. In history, there are many servants of God who have been granted the blessings of prayer with *ism-e-aazam*.

Prayer with Tears



Chapter 9 of the Quran mentions some believers who, on the occasion of the Tabuk campaign (8 AH), because it was a general call, wanted to serve in this campaign. But they had not enough money to prepare for this long journey. So they came to the Prophet for help, but the Prophet excused himself. This incident has been described in the Quran in this verse: “Nor [does any blame] attach to those who came to you to be provided with mounts, and when you said, ‘I can find no mounts for you,’ they went back, and tears welled up



in their eyes with sadness, since they could not find any way to contribute.” (9:92)

These Muslims could not take part in the Tabuk campaign, but according to one of the traditions of the Prophet, they were credited with having participated in this campaign. While coming back from this campaign, the Prophet said about them to his Companions: “There are some people in Madinah who were with you, whatever path you traversed, whenever you spent some of your money, or whatever valley you crossed, they were with you.” (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, Hadith No. 2508)

This was a great reward which the believers of Madinah received, that is, being rewarded for participation in the action without their having participated in it. When I think about it, I feel that they received this unique reward because of their *dua* with *ism-e-azam*.

I feel as if they must have prayed in these words with tears welling up in their eyes in solitude: “O God, the reward that You have given to others because of Your attribute of being just, give us that reward because of Your being merciful. The reward that You have given to others because of their deeds, give us that reward as a result of our prayers. What You have given to others because of deservation, give us that because of our asking for it. What You have given to others because of their ability, give us that because of our helplessness. What You have given to others because they are strong believers, grant us that because of our being weak in physical strength, because Your messenger has told us that ‘even the weak believer has goodness in him.’”

Between God and Man



The beautiful names which God has chosen to introduce Himself to man are such as will open the gate of mercy to man. God's beautiful names tell us what the meeting points between God and man are. It is through these meeting points that man may achieve closeness with God. Then, if the spirit of God's servant is very great, this enables him in his prayer to God to make use of a great name of God and in so doing make divine closeness possible, just as by switching on an electric switch, the bulb immediately lights up.

There is nothing mysterious about this. The truth is that this is a law of nature, which we can understand by studying the relationship based on feelings and emotions between human beings themselves.

Prayer and Super Prayer



There are two kinds of calling upon God, or prayer. One is to utter some specific words in the simple sense and then ask God for something. The other is



that which may be called super prayer. This is the kind in which the suppliant prays in such a manner that it becomes a personal issue for God himself, just as it was a personal matter for the caller. Where the first type of prayer is traditional, the second type of prayer is creative. The former type of prayer can be called making a request, whereas the latter may be called invoking God, for example: “Almighty God was invoked by his call.”

This is the difference between simple prayer and prayer taking the great name of God. Prayer may be of a general kind but prayer taking the great name of God is a super prayer. For a better understanding of this matter, we give an example below.

An Example of Super Prayer



This example relates to a child who lived in Rampur, a city in U.P. (India). The child said to his father, “Please buy me a bicycle.” The father’s income was not sufficient for him to be able to afford to buy a bicycle, so he ignored the request. The child used to ask for a bicycle repeatedly, and the father repeatedly rejected his request. Finally, one day he scolded his son: “I have told you I cannot buy a bicycle. Don’t talk to me about it again, otherwise I’ll beat you.” At this, the child’s eyes filled with tears. He remained silent for some time.



Then, in tears, he said: “You are my father. If I don’t ask of you, then whom should I ask?” These words really touched his father. All of a sudden he was moved and said: “All right, son, I’ll buy you a bicycle. I’ll do it tomorrow.” As he spoke his eyes also filled with tears. The next day he arranged for the loan of some money and got a bicycle for his son.

The son had apparently just uttered some words, but as he did so, his whole being had become one with his words. These words meant that, he had totally surrendered himself to his guardian. These words brought him to the point where his son’s request became as great an issue for the guardian as it was for the son. The words of the son brought the father face to face with the idea that if he did not give his son a bicycle, his fatherhood would be in question.

This incident leads us to understand what kind of prayer (*dua*) it is which attracts God’s mercy to the caller. These are not words learned by rote. This prayer is one into which the caller has poured his whole being. When the caller weeps with helplessness, this cannot be borne either by the heavens or the earth. When a person becomes so close to his Lord that “the taker” and “the Giver” come on to the same plane, this is the moment when his prayer is not just a word out of the dictionary, but it is expressive of the caller’s whole personality. At that time, God’s blessings are showered upon the servant. Both the servant and the Lord become well content with one another. The All-Powerful embraces the all helpless.

The above incident illustrates both kinds of prayer. On the first occasion, when the child asked his father just to buy him a bicycle it was an ordinary prayer but, later, he cried and said, “You are my father. If I don’t ask you, then whom should I ask?” When these words were spontaneously uttered by the child, it was like a super prayer. The words of the first kind of prayer did not influence his father, but the second kind of prayer just melted him. He was moved. He became so influenced that he was ready to buy the bicycle, even if he did not have enough money.

From this example we can understand the difference between a general kind of prayer and a prayer taking the great name of God. The general kind of prayer is just the uttering of some words, but prayer taking the great name of God is super prayer. Such prayer moves God Himself. According to a hadith the prayer of the oppressed one goes straight to heaven. The gates of heaven are opened for it. God Almighty says about the prayer of such a person, “By My honour, I will certainly fulfil his prayer, in due course.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 8043)

The difference between prayer and super prayer is not that of wording. It is rather the difference in the inner spirit of the suppliant. In actual fact, it depends on the inner or internal condition of the caller, whether the prayer which he utters will become a super prayer or only a general prayer.

Exemplary Supplication



There are two kinds of prayers, examples of which are given below.

One is the standard type of prayer which can be had in book form and learned by rote, then repeated at the appropriate times. For instance: “Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the fire.” (*The Quran*, 2:201). This manner of prayer is an example of traditional supplication. Then there is the example of a superior form of prayer. About 3,500 years ago an idolatrous king, the Pharaoh, ruled in Egypt. The Prophet Moses came to the world in those days and conveyed the message of monotheism to the Egyptians. The Pharaoh himself became a dire opponent of Moses, but his wife, Aasiya bint Mazahim, believed in Moses and was influenced by his call to accept monotheism.

In ancient times, this was a matter of immense gravity. It was an age when people had to follow the religion of the king. In those times, following the state religion was symbol of political loyalty. Anyone who did not believe in the state religion was considered a rebel and was punished as such. Today we live in an environment of religious freedom but in ancient times, for thousands of



years, the system of religious persecution was prevalent throughout the world.

It was against this background that the Pharaoh gave the command to have his wife Aasiya executed. The Quran tells us that at that time Aasiya said this prayer to God: “My Lord, build me a house in nearness to You in Paradise.” (66:11)

When we look at this prayer of Aasiya in this context, it is like saying. “I sacrifice my seat in the palace of a worldly king. O Lord, give me a better seat in your neighborhood in the world Hereafter.”

Scholars have commented: “How good is this prayer!” (*Safwah at-Tafaasir*, vol. 3, p. 412)

This prayer was without doubt a creative one. Aasiya bint Mazahim had two alternatives: either the life of the palace adhering to the idolatrous religion of Pharaoh, or the monotheistic religion of God—which would lead to her being brutally killed. At that time Aasiya’s realization of God had ascended to such a level that she took no time in deciding that, for the sake of truth, she must abandon the temporary palace of this world and opt for the eternal Paradise of God, even if she were to be executed as the price for her choice.

Looked at against this background, Aasiya bint Mazahim’s prayer was without doubt a superior prayer. It was immediately accepted. According to a tradition, before her death the angels showed her the palace she was to be given by God in Paradise. Therefore, Aasiya gave up her life with her face reflecting happiness, contentment and peace.

Aasiya bint Mazahim's prayer is recorded in the Quran. It is not just the prayer of an individual but is rather an exemplary supplication of universal application. The truth is that every man and woman should pray like this. All men and women have to pass through this stage. All men and women must each say at the level of sacrifice, "O God, I sacrifice my worldly things for the sake of Your religion, so that in the next stage of life You give me a better reward." These are the men and women about whom it will be proclaimed on the Day of Judgement that they forsook the temporary Paradise for the sake of God and now enter into the superior Paradise of the Hereafter, so that they may live in happiness and comfort eternally and never have to suffer from any kind of mental or physical discomfort.

True Prayer: A Living Experience



It is only by the grace of God that one may pray, taking the great name of God. Such grace is bestowed only upon one who experiences the greatness of God before setting himself to pray. Taking the great name of God in prayer has no mystery about it. It only means that the suppliant, being a seeker after truth, has found the truth in the form of God and then his state is described in the Quran as "one who was dead, to whom We gave



life, and a light whereby he could walk among people.” (6:122)

Verse 33 of chapter 41 of the Quran asks a rhetorical question about such a human being as lives in the remembrance of God: “Who speaks better than one who calls to God and says, ‘I am surely of those who submit.’” That is, he is one who remembers God all the time, thinks of God all the time and experiences glimpses of God at every moment. On extraordinary occasions, he gives vent to his latent spiritual feelings in a torrent of words. At that time, he starts calling on God in inspired words of a special kind. This is taking the great name of God in prayer. It is the inspiration of a righteously prepared mind.

An Incident Relating to a Virtuous Lady



As mentioned above, Pharaoh’s wife Aasiya, daughter of Muzahim, secretly believed in the religion of the Prophet Moses. When Pharaoh learnt of this, he became incensed and commanded her execution. At that time Aasiya said this prayer which has been set forth in the Quran: “My Lord, build me a house in nearness to You in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his misdeeds. Save me from all evil-doers.” (66:11)



This is a prayer which is fully imbued with the spirit of *ism-e-aazam*, the greatest name of God. In some traditions, it has been recorded that when Aasiya said this prayer, before her death she was shown her home by the angels in Paradise which she was to be awarded in the Hereafter. (Al-Qurtubi, vol. 18, p. 203)

It is certain that this prayer of Aasiya did not come out of her lips all of a sudden but rather reflected the experiences she had undergone in her life. Prior to this prayer, she had become a prepared or realized personality. She lived even before this prayer in the remembrance of God. This was why when she came to know of the utmost cruelty of Pharaoh, these *rabbani* (divine) words came out quite naturally from her lips.

A Historical Example



Sultan Abdur Rehman An-Nasir (d. 961), once ruled Andalusia (Spain). He built a very grand palace at Cordova, which took twenty five years to complete. This palace was four miles long and three miles wide. It was named 'Az-Zahra'. But because of its being extraordinarily large, it came to be called *Madinatuz-Zahra* (the city of Az-Zahra), instead of the palace of Az-Zahra.

Sultan Abdur Rehman An-Nasir was greatly interested in building monuments. He established this



royal colony in the name of Az-Zahra and built grand palaces in it. During their construction, the Sultan was so preoccupied that for three Fridays in succession he was not able to reach the mosque for the Friday prayer. On the fourth Friday, when the Sultan reached the Jama Masjid, Qazi Munzir (d. 966) preached the sermon in his presence and, without naming him, he strongly criticized the King.

Qazi Munzir recited those verses of the Quran in which there were warnings about worldly constructions and about being oblivious of the Hereafter. For example, “Do you build monuments on every high place in vanity, and erect castles hoping that you will live forever? When you lay hands upon anyone, you do so as tyrants. So fear God, and obey me.” (26:128-131) “Who is better, he who founds his building on the fear of God and His good pleasure, or he who builds on the brink of a crumbling precipice, so that his house is ready to fall with him in to the Fire of Hell? God does not guide the wrongdoers: the buildings which they have built will never cease to be a source of deep disquiet in their hearts, until their hearts are cut to pieces. God is All-knowing and Wise.” (9:109-110)

Moreover, Qazi Munzir recited a number of traditions to the same effect and explained them. In his sermon, although he did not name the King, everyone who was saying his prayers in the mosque knew who was targeted by such strong criticism.

Everyone finds it difficult to take criticism but when criticism is voiced in a public gathering, it becomes intolerable. Furthermore, this criticism was done by an

underling and the target was the ruler. When a ruler listens to criticism by his servant, his ego is affected. The religious people as well as others may fail to control themselves, but the Sultan, the ruler controlled himself although he had greatly disliked this criticism. But he did not utter a word in the mosque and left the mosque quietly.

When he reached home, the Sultan said to his elder son, Al-Hakam, "Today Qazi Munzir has hurt me greatly. Now I have decided never to say my prayers behind him." Al-Hakam said: "Whether Qazi Munzir is the Imam or not, since you have appointed him, it is in your power to depose him and replace him with another Imam, who does not dare to make such insolent remarks." On hearing this, the Sultan became angry. He scolded his son and said: "Woe to you, is it possible for one who is in error (referring to himself) to dispose a virtuous man like Qazi Munzir who has so many qualities, just for his own happiness? This can never happen."

"Since I was hurt by his harsh words, I have decided not to say my prayers behind him. Now it is my desire that I should atone for this oath that I have taken never to say my prayers behind him. Indeed, Qazi Munzir in our lifetime, and in his lifetime will keep leading the prayer." Therefore, Qazi Munzir continued to lead the Friday prayer even after the death of Abdur Rehman An-Nasir, his son did not depose him either. (*Tarikh Quzaat al-Andalus*, p.70)

The above-mentioned incident has a great lesson in it. It shows what qualities are desirable for a person if he has to pray to God so that He accepts his prayer.

If the prayer is accepted by God its role is only fifty per cent, while the spiritual capability of the person who prays has a fifty per cent role in it. This spiritual capability existed in both Qazi Munzir as well as in Sultan Abdur Rahman. That is why one great dua by Sultan Abdur Rehman was accepted by God.

Prayer at Difficult Moments



During the rule of Sultan Abdur Rehman An-Nasir of Andalusia, Spain was afflicted by a drought. Mere survival became very difficult. The Sultan sent an important person to Qazi Munzir to request him to lead the *Istasqa* prayer (the prayer to God to give His blessing of rain). The *Salaatul Istasqa* is a prayer, consisting of two units, performed during the time of drought to ask God for rain. Qazi Munzir asked the messenger of the King: “What was the Sultan himself doing when he sent me the message about prayer?”

The messenger said, “I have never seen him more God-fearing than on this occasion. He is very disturbed. He is in solitude. I have seen him lying prostrate on the ground. His eyes were wet with tears. He acknowledged his sins and he was saying to God in prayer: ‘O God, my forehead is in Your hand (he had prostrated himself with his forehead on the ground). Will You punish the people for my sins?’”



On hearing this, Qazi Munzir felt relieved. He said to the messenger: "Go with rain, certainly it will rain today, because when the ruler of the earth bows in supplication, the Ruler of the Heaven will certainly show mercy." And so it happened. By the time the messenger reached home, rain had started falling. (*Al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh*, vol. 7, p. 347)

Drought takes place on the earth, so that the dryness of eyes may be replaced with tears. The clouds thunder in the skies, so that people's hearts may tremble with the fear of the Lord. Heat becomes intense so that people may be reminded of the fire of Hell.

Such events have a deep relation with the *asma-e-husna* and *ism-e-aazam*. If such events develop spiritual feelings within a person, he is granted the blessings of being able to call God the Lord of the world with the greatest prayer.

Invoking God's Infinite Mercy



By the grace of God, I have frequently had significant experiences. On December 30, 2006, I went to Lodhi Gardens with certain CPS members. It was in the nature of a spiritual outing for us. On this occasion, a *dua* came out of my lips, which as I understood it was a *dua* of *isme-aazam*.



When we reached the Lodhi Gardens I asked one of my team members, “When you entered the garden what was your first impression, or feeling?” People mentioned different experiences, then I said that when I entered this beautiful garden, I felt as if I was looking at Paradise from a distance. This beautiful garden for me became a distant introduction to Paradise.

Then I said with tears in my eyes: “O God, when You have brought me to this imperfect paradise, then by Your grace, help me to enter the perfect Paradise also.” I added “O God, my companions and I are the least deserving candidates for Paradise. If you, in spite of our total lack of merit, give us entry into Paradise, then this event would be akin to a new expression of Your attribute of mercy. The whole earth and the heavens and all the angels will be surprised to know that the ocean of God’s mercy was so vast that even such undeserving people as us could not remain deprived of God’s boundless mercy. How boundless was Your mercy that it enveloped even the most undeserving!”

You Have Been Granted Your Request, Moses



It was probably 1962. I had the opportunity to attend an important function in Anjaan Shaheed, a town in Azamgarh. Many Muslim scholars were present on



this occasion. I had not been informed in advance that I had to address the gathering. Then quite without warning a group of people took me on to the stage and asked me to speak. There was no avoiding this. It was perhaps the first occasion when in the matter of making speeches that I experienced total helplessness. Earlier I had addressed gatherings repeatedly, but all these addresses had been in the form of reading out papers. Had I known in advance about this programme, I would have written an article to be read out on that occasion.

But this time I faced a situation in which I had to speak compulsorily without any prior preparation and I had to speak extempore. At that time, all of a sudden I started getting ideas about what to say.

I just remembered God and, in a frenzied manner, I started speaking. I began my speech with these words: There are many stories of prophets recorded in the Quran but these are not just historical stories. They have a lesson for our present life. One of these incidents, or stories is that God commanded Moses to go to the court of the tyrant king of Egypt and call upon him to accept monotheism.

The Prophet Moses said to God, “My breast is constricted and my tongue is not fluent.” (*The Quran*, 26:13) Then by the grace of God Almighty, he prayed, “My Lord, open up my heart and make my task easy for me, loosen the knot in my tongue, so that they may understand what I have to say.” (*The Quran*, 20:25-28)

I said that when Moses called upon the All-hearing (*Al-Basir*) and All-seeing (*As-Sami*), his call went straight

to the divine throne and then God said, “You have been granted your request Moses.” (20.36)

Then, still in a frenzied state, I said that this event was not just a story from the past. This event was a living reality even today, just as God is ever present. Today also if a servant of God calls and says, “O God my breast is constricted and my tongue is not fluent, then again, his call will reach God, the All-hearing, the All-seeing, and he will be answered thus: ‘O my servant, the request you have made has been granted.’” As I said this, my eyes filled with tears. Then I went on speaking and kept on speaking at length, albeit extempore.

This event was like a breakthrough for me. Subsequently, I stopped writing everything down and started speaking extempore. Later, I participated in many national and international gatherings, conferences and delivered long speeches. It was undoubtedly the miracle of the *dua* on the occasion of the gathering of Anjaan Shaheed.

As I understand it, this *dua* was one with “*ism-e-aazam*”. Earlier I had been unable to speak extempore. But after this experience, I was able to address audiences. This can be explained only by believing that my prayer had been heard by God.

Be a Playback Speaker For Me



When I was travelling in some western country, I was invited to address a gathering, but I had not been told about what kind of audience it would be. I was just told that the audience would be composed of educated people. Due to some misunderstanding, I thought that the audience would be composed of people from India and Pakistan and, therefore, I could speak in Urdu.

When I reached there in the evening, I saw that many people were sitting in a big hall. On inquiring about them, I was told that they were all English speaking people, and that I would have to address them in English because they did not understand Urdu. For me this news was like a bolt from the blue. Earlier, I had read only prepared papers in English. I had never spoken extempore in English in any gathering.

Very perturbed, I went to a side room and locked the door. Then I performed my ablutions and said two unit of prayer *salatul hajah*. This is a prayer which is said to ask God for something. When I raised my hand to my eyes they were so full of tears that it was as if a tap had been turned on.

Weeping, I said to God that I was totally helpless and I had to represent an Omnipotent God: “O God, if You command, even the stones will speak out and convey



Your message. If You command, even the trees will break their silence and will address mankind. If You command, the earth and the heavens will say what man should have spoken. But, O God, because of the law of test You will never do this. Therefore, now You have no other choice but to help a helpless man like me. Your help should be so great as You have never given anyone before.

O God, in the name of all Your good names, I pray to You to become a playback speaker for me. You speak and I will repeat. Speak in a silent language, and I will repeat Your words. O God, if I do not speak on this occasion, it will be like fleeing from the battlefield, and if You do not help me today, this announcement (of calling people to God) will not be made in a way that is most desirable for You. O God, it is a moment when neither do I have a choice nor do You. O God, this is the moment when the total helplessness of man and the Omnipotence of God, the Creator, have arrived at one level. In such a situation, neither can I renege nor do You have the choice to ignore me.”

After saying these prayers, I came out and sat on the speaker’s chair in the hall. The whole hall was full of people and I was the only speaker. I started speaking in a frenzied manner, and, for about an hour, I continued to speak in English. The whole speech was extempore and fluent. At the end of the speech, I asked the audience if anyone wanted to ask a question. But no question came from the audience. Later someone told me that the audience had been so mesmerized by my language that they just did not dare to ask a question.

After this experience, my life quite unexpectedly entered upon a new phase, that is, I started speaking in English extempore. Speaking in English, giving interviews in English, making speeches in English, all these things had earlier not been a part of my life. Now they became part and parcel of my life and, by the grace of God, this situation still continues.

It was in 1947, when India gained its freedom that I started learning English. But I got no encouragement from anyone. My cousins laughed at me. At that time I was about 30 years of age, so everyone laughed at how I could think of learning a new language at that age. As a matter of common experience, they were right. But by divine succour everything is possible, for I believe, the prayer I made above was without doubt, a prayer with *isme-aazam* and it is due to the miracle of this prayer that something unexpected became a reality.

Islamic Literature in the Modern Idiom



Professor Muhammad Mujeeb (1985) was one of the three pillars of Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. The others were Dr. Zakir Hussain (1969) and Dr. Abid Hussain (1978). Professor Mujeeb was highly educated. He had an extraordinary command of the English language and had read the literature of the orientalisists in detail.



It was in 1970 that I met Professor Mujeeb on the campus of Jamia Millia. Professor Anwar Ali Khan Soz (1987) was with me at that time. In the course of the conversation Professor Mujeeb said in his inimitable style: “Maulvi Sahab, do you know that in this day and age Islam is being represented by Jewish scholars?”

What he wanted to point out was that in modern times a new style or idiom had been created. But that Muslim scholars had failed to produce Islamic literature in this new style and this task had been performed by educated Jews. They wrote books on various aspects of Islam in the modern idiom, although in many of these books Islamic teachings have been presented in a distorted form. But because in style they are in the modern idiom, educated people who wanted to study Islam in the English language often studied these books written by Jewish scholars.

I listened intently to Professor Mujeeb. I did not answer him but on hearing what he had to say a tempest was stirred up in my mind. I came home silently and began to pray day and night saying, “O God grant me the ability to present to the world Your religion in the modern idiom. Help me to prepare literature on Islam in the modern idiom.”

I often pray with specific reference to some incident.

In this matter, too, I did likewise. After India's independence the Zamindari abolition act was implemented in Uttar Pradesh. Under the national government the new law was based on the principle, that whoever tilled the land, owned the land.

My family hailed from Azamgarh in UP. My family was one of the big landlords of the area. Most of our lands had been given to farmers to cultivate and then they paid some agricultural rent (*lagaan*). Now, according to the law of the Zamindari abolition act, the landlord (Zamindar) could get his land back only if the farmer who was tilling that land put it in writing that he was willing to relinquish the land.

Most of our land was with the farmers. All these farmers were Hindus. The manager of our land was also a Hindu named Bhau Ram. Bhau Ram was the most loyal employee of our family. He launched a campaign to get all the farmers who were tilling our land to give up their claim to the land in writing. Bhau Ram worked day and night to get these affidavits. It was exceptional that all our land was thus saved.

In those times Bhau Ram was in a frenzied state. He used to say to us: *Babu jimdaari mein dagh na lage*. (Zamindari should not become tainted, that is losing a piece of land was unacceptable). With reference to this incident, I began praying to God. I used to cry and say, “O God, Your religion too is getting tainted. Your religion is not being presented in the modern idiom which can address modern minds. Please grant me the ability to remove any stain from Your religion by presenting Islam in the modern style. With a perturbed mind and eyes full of tears, I used to pray day in and day out and I used to work hard to prepare myself.”

In those times I was so restless that once I went to the Delhi Public Library, where I started reading books in the reference section of the library. At that time my

absorption was so great that I did not even take a seat. I would just stand by the side of the bookshelves and read books one after another. At that time the weather was very cold and I caught a chill and fell ill. Then I had to take rest for about two months.

Today, I pen these lines, I can say that by the grace of God, I have written books on almost every Islamic subject, which, in a contemporary style effectively introduce Islam to the educated. Scholars both in the East and in the West have acknowledged this.

Now people are feeling the importance of such literature to the extent that they have devoted their lives to spreading this literature throughout different parts of the world. There are some American educated Muslims who have voluntarily placed all my books and the *Al-Risala* monthly magazine on the internet. Now in any part of the world anyone can read my writings both in Urdu and English.

There are also some Egyptian Arabs who are putting my books on the internet. Now, by the grace of God, my Arabic books can also be accessed on the internet everywhere. Moreover, in India, a whole team has devoted itself to this mission. In this way, this work is spreading fast at a global level. Certain educated people have attached such great importance to this literature that on their own initiative they have included my programme in Urdu and English and my speeches on television.

The coming into existence of this Islamic literature in a contemporary style was indeed an extraordinary



event for such a powerless person with no resources. The only way that this happening can be explained is that a prayer (*dua*) with *ism-e-aazam* came to my heart with great fervour and God accepted it. It was in this way that it became possible for me to introduce Islam in modern times—an event which, at the outset, had seemed unthinkable for an individual like myself.

Asking from God in Utter Helplessness



It was October 24, 2006. It was the day of Eid. I had gone to a New Delhi mosque to perform my Eid prayer. There I was sitting in a corner in the mosque. And with tears in my eyes, I was praying with great feeling and emotion, I was reminded of a tradition, which is mentioned thus in a hadith: “When the Eid day comes, God takes pride before the angels, and He says: “O My angels, what is the reward for these people who have performed this act?” Then the angels say: “O My Lord, the reward is that they should be fully recompensed for their actions.” God says, “O My angels, My Servants, men and women have discharged their duties and they have come calling upon me with *dua*. By My Honour and by My Majesty, by My Glory, by My High Position, I will certainly listen to their call.” Then God says, “Go back home, I have given you salvation and I have



converted your bad deeds into good deeds.” In this way, they came back with their sins forgiven.” (*Shu‘ab al-Iman*, al-Bayhaqi, Hadith No. 3444)

I was reminded of this hadith and while thinking about this hadith I was moved that God was giving great rewards to people today, but these rewards were for those who had done some good deed and I had no such good deed to my credit.

Then I was reminded of another incident regarding Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan (1898), founder of the Aligarh Muslim University. He once visited a Muslim Nawab for a donation for his then planned Muhammadan College (now Aligarh Muslim University). The Nawab Sahab was against some of Sir Sayyad’s ideas and he refused to meet him. But Sir Sayyad was not deterred. He knew that in the evening the Nawab Sahab had an outing in his horse-drawn carriage. At that time, the beggars would line the road in front of the bungalow. Nawab Sahab used to give something or the other to everyone.

Sir Sayyad reached there in the evening and, sitting with the beggars, he turned his cap upside down like the bowl which beggars keep before them. The Nawab Sahab came out as usual in his horse-drawn carriage. Then he saw Sir Sayyad sitting in the line of beggars. At this the Nawab Sahab was quite shocked. He said, “Sayyad, how is it that you are here?” Sir Sayyad replied: “Nawab Sahab, if you cannot give me a donation, you can give me alms.” The Nawab Sahab was moved at this. He got down from his carriage and took Sir Sayyad to his home. He gave him a large donation for the College.

Referring to this event I said, “O God, if I don’t deserve anything on the basis of my actions, then grant me Your reward as alms for, in the Quran, You have said that just as the one who performs a good deed deserves a reward, similarly one who asks for something is also held deserving of reward. If You give not only to the person who has done something, but also to the person who is just making a request, then certainly I can hope that You will treat me accordingly.”

I think that this is also an example of a *dua* with *ism-e-azaam*, which God granted that I should do by His grace and mercy. So far as my experience goes, *dua* with *ism-e-azaam* is not at all a repetition of words, learned by rote and neither is it a *dua* which one can think of in advance. This kind of *dua* is a direct blessing from God and it is like an inspiration which comes to one’s mind all of a sudden.

Asmaul Husna: 99 Names of Allah



Arabic	English Translation
1 Ar-Rahman	The All-Compassionate
2 Ar-Rahim	The All-Merciful
3 Al-Malik	The Absolute Ruler
4 Al-Quddus	The Pure One
5 As-Salam	The Source of Peace
6 Al-Mu'min	The Inspirer of Faith
7 Al-Muhaymin	The Guardian
8 Al-Aziz	The Victorious
9 Al-Jabbar	The Compeller
10 Al-Mutakabbir	The Greatest
11 Al-Khaliq	The Creator
12 Al-Bari'	The Maker of Order
13 Al-Musawwir	The Shaper of Beauty
14 Al-Ghaffar	The Forgiving
15 Al-Qahhar	The Subduer
16 Al-Wahhab	The Giver of All
17 Ar-Razzaq	The Sustainer
18 Al-Fattah	The Opener
19 Al-Alim	The Knower of All



20	Al-Qabid	The Constrictor
21	Al-Basit	The Reliever
22	Al-Khafid	The Abaser
23	Ar-Rafi	The Exalter
24	Al-Mu'izz	The Bestower of Honors
25	Al-Mudhill	The Humiliator
26	As-Sami	The Hearer of All
27	Al-Basir	The Seer of All
28	Al-Hakam	The Judge
29	Al-'Adl	The Just
30	Al-Latif	The Subtle One
31	Al-Khabir	The All-Aware
32	Al-Halim	The Forbearing
33	Al-Azim	The Magnificent
34	Al-Ghafur	The Forgiver and Hider of Faults
35	Ash-Shakur	The Rewarder of Thankfulness
36	Al-Ali	The Highest
37	Al-Kabir	The Greatest
38	Al-Hafiz	The Preserver
39	Al-Muqit	The Nourisher
40	Al-Hasib	The Accounter
41	Al-Jalil	The Mighty
42	Al-Karim	The Generous



43	Ar-Raqib	The Watchful One
44	Al-Mujib	The Responder to Prayer
45	Al-Wasi	The All-Comprehending
46	Al-Hakim	The Perfectly Wise
47	Al-Wadud	The Loving One
48	Al-Majid	The Majestic One
49	Al-Ba'ith	The Resurrector
50	Ash-Shahid	The Witness
51	Al-Haqq	The Truth
52	Al-Wakil	The Trustee
53	Al-Qawiyy	The Possessor of All Strength
54	Al-Matin	The Forceful One
55	Al-Waliyy	The Governor
56	Al-Hamid	The Praised One
57	Al-Muhsi	The Appraiser
58	Al-Mubdi'	The Originator
59	Al-Mu'id	The Restorer
60	Al-Muhyi	The Giver of Life
61	Al-Mumit	The Taker of Life
62	Al-Hayy	The Ever Living One
63	Al-Qayyum	The Self-Existing One
64	Al-Wajid	The Finder
65	Al-Majid	The Glorious
66	Al-Wahid	The Unique, The Single
67	Al-Ahad	The One, The Indivisible

68	As-Samad	The Satisfier of All Needs
69	Al-Qadir	The All Powerful
70	Al-Muqtadir	The Creator of All Power
71	Al-Muqaddim	The Expediter
72	Al-Mu'akhkhir	The Delayer
73	Al-Awwal	The First
74	Al-Akhir	The Last
75	Az-Zahir	The Manifest One
76	Al-Batin	The Hidden One
77	Al-Wali	The Protecting Friend
78	Al-Muta'ali	The Supreme One
79	Al-Barr	The Doer of Good
80	At-Tawwab	The Guide to Repentance
81	Al-Muntaqim	The Avenger
82	Al'Afuww	The Forgiver
83	Ar-Ra'uf	The Clement
84	Malik-al-Mulk	The Owner of All
85	Dhu-al-Jalal wa-al-Ikram	The Lord of Majesty and Bounty
86	Al-Muqsit	The Equitable One
87	Al-Jami'	The Gatherer
88	Al-Ghani	The Rich One
89	Al-Mughni	The Enricher
90	Al-Mani'	The Preventer of Harm
91	Ad-Darr	The Creator of The Harmful



92	An-Nafi'	The Creator of Good
93	An-Nur	The Light
94	Al-Hadi	The Guide
95	Al-Badi	The Originator
96	Al-Baqi	The Everlasting One
97	Al-Warith	The Inheritor of All
98	Ar-Rashid	The Righteous Teacher
99	As-Sabur	The Patient One

The Quran tells us: “God has the most excellent names.” (7:180). Here, “names” have the extended meaning of the best attributes that inhere specifically in God. Traditions tell us that they number 99, which are a major sampling of God’s infinity of attributes. These best names of God, *asma-e-husna*, in actual fact, are different aspects of the attributes of God. When a person reflects on the existence of God and His creations, various aspects of God appear to him and he is able to understand these different aspects of God. Conscious realization of these aspects is what is meant by enumeration of God’s names.

All the divine names mentioned in the Quran, give us points of reference for reflection and pondering. With these names we find definite guidance with which we may arrive at a concept of the divine Being, and thinking of the attributes of God, we may establish a specific intellectual relationship with the Divine Being. It is this relationship which is called God-realization. Those who attain the realization of God in this way will undoubtedly go to Paradise, because Paradise is, in actual fact, the reward for the realization of God.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader and peace activist. Having founded *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International*, he was internationally recognized for his contributions to world peace. He authored over 200 books dealing with Islam’s spiritual wisdom, the Prophet’s non-violent approach, religion’s relation with modernity and other contemporary issues. His English translation of the Quran is popular because its language is simple, contemporary and easily understandable.

Cps International
centre for peace & spirituality

www.cpsglobal.org
info@cpsglobal.org

Goodword

www.goodwordbooks.com
info@goodwordbooks.com

