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News and Notes

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July, 1937.

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The Story of Aslam Khan and Family.

A MIR Khan, father of Aslam Khan, was a very strict Sunni Mohammedan, belonging to the Chisti Dervish Order of Sufis. He was an assessor in the Judge's Court, but so prejudiced against the English, that he refused to allow Aslam Khan to learn any English. When Aslam Khan was a babe in arms, the family which consisted of the father, mother and older sister, made the pilgrimage to Mecca. The father was a stern and severe man and always obeyed the Maulvis implicitly. His mother was refined, loving and merciful, always helping the poor and needy in the village. She too, was very faithful about her prayers. Aslam Khan had been the favorite child of both father and mother, for he was obedient and did not get into scrapes as did his younger brothers. However, he admits that he went to the extreme in having singing parties and wasting much money on them in his young manhood. His father always kept a good horse or two for himself and Aslam Khan, and his three brothers always had horses of their own. He is a good horseman and has run many times in the tent pegging contests at melas and fairs. His brothers wasted a great deal of money gambling at the races and on fighting cocks (partridges) and hunting hawks (*shikra*).

A boyhood chum of Aslam Khan's father, who, after having been in Government employ as assistant tax collector, had become a Christian, in 1919 came back as a Padri Sahib and lived in the village for a short period. He gave Aslam Khan a Persian Bible which he read, chiefly with the idea of raising objections to baffle the Padri Sahib. About this time the Rev. Mr. Dugdale, an English missionary, was preaching in the bazaar. Aslam Khan took the lead in raising questions and arguing. They discussed many theological questions and in the end, Aslam Khan taunted Mr. Dugdale with the criticism that 'no one does truly live a really Christian life anyway.' The young men, at

the end of the discussion, were so excited that they would have killed the missionary then and there; but, Aslam Khan, who really felt a deep respect for him, protected him and went with him until he was sure he was safe. Their definite plans were to murder him if he ever returned; but, so far as Aslam Khan knows, he never returned. The answer the missionary gave to the taunt that no one now-a-days lives a Christlike life, was, 'There is a missionary by the name of Robertson, living in Mardan. No one can deny he is living a Christlike life.' So, Aslam Khan made three visits to this missionary, twice staying all night with him, for the particular purpose of studying his life. The only real demand the missionary made on him was, that he should get up early in the morning and be with him while he had his devotions. His prayers were a revelation to Aslam Khan. He saw there was no formalism but living communion with God. In reality, in his daily life the missionary was a true follower of the lowly Nazarene.

About this time, a new Maulvi came to the family mosque and with his advice Aslam Khan began to collect and read books on religion; in all, over 173 books were purchased. Before this time he had only been interested in novels. One day, in the bazaar he was in a shoe shop, owned by an Armenian Christian. Seeing some books on a shelf, he asked if he might have them to read. But the man refused to let him have them saying, if any one found out he was passing on Christian books he would be boycotted and driven out at least, if not killed. But he did give Aslam Khan a list of books and the address where they could be purchased. Aslam Khan then ordered the books and began reading them. Most of them were so vigorous in their attack on Mohammed, that his reaction was only anger. One or two, he appreciated, but especially '*Asmari Shirm*' (Sweet first fruits).

Aslam Khan's father died in 1929 and, as the oldest son, he immediately set about settling the estate, and his share of the property was definitely registered in his name in court. His love and respect for Christ had deepened until one day he was riding on the train from Peshawar to Rawal Pindi, when in the same compartment, he was talking with Qazi Mohammed Yusuf, President of the Ahmadiya Group of Peshawar he was so affected by what the Maulvi was saying, that such love and respect as he had had in his heart for Christ was all but gone, when God sent Dr. W. T. Anderson, United Presbyterian missionary, on to this train and into this compartment. As soon as Dr. Anderson saw the Maulvi he laughed outright, and, those of us who knew Dr. Anderson, do well remember his contagious laugh. It was quite evident they were old acquaintances. Aslam Khan became quite thrilled, for he, too, knew who Dr. Anderson was and so thought, 'Now I'll see a good fight.' The Maulvi hurled his railings on Christ. But Dr. Anderson's answers were so good and so straightforward that the Maulvi was thoroughly subdued. Ordinarily, people had said, no Christian could stand up before these Ahmadiyas. So Aslam

Khan says, 'My faith was again revived and grew stronger, for which I thanked God.' He then, in front of this Maulvi, bought a New Testament from Dr. Anderson, which he still has and cherished.

Once a missionary Miss Sahiba came to his zenana ; sang and prayed with the women and Aslam Khan sat in an adjoining room, unseen, in order to hear what she had to say. He liked it all.

Abdul Qayum, his son, was also reading the Bible during these days but from a very critical view-point. Many of the questions Abdul Qayum put before his father, he could not answer, though he was really beginning to believe that Christ was the only Saviour. He says that during those days of searching he could see nothing of the attractive or Christlike in the sweeper Christians nor in the English officials. But now he freely admits that there are some, no doubt, among the poor and ignorant, as well as those in high official circles who are sincere followers of the Christ.

Aslam Khan had varying experiences with missionaries during the next few years. Some were so busy with their routine work that they could find no time for him. Others doubted his sincerity and therefore gave him no time. Others, again, were very considerate and tried earnestly to answer his questions.

It was in the latter part of June, 1936 that we met Aslam Khan at the big Mohammedan mela near Roorkee. He was the acting business manager for the Head or (Sheikh) of the Chisti Dervish Order. This party consisted of about fifty leading men from all parts of India. The Sheikh himself lives in Ajmir, the most sacred place for this particular order, the place near Roorkee being second in importance. I was selling Scriptures in the main street of the mela grounds one evening and, Abdul Qayum, having bought a Gospel according to Luke went to his father and told him there was a missionary at the mela selling Scriptures, for Abdul Qayum knew his father always liked to meet and question missionaries. His first question when he came to me was 'Can you give me the Gospel of Jesus Christ? I do not want Luke's or any one else's.' A crowd immediately collected and the street became obstructed so we invited him to step aside, out of the crowd, or, better still, to come to our bungalow. He then said he would come two days later, when the mela would practically come to an end. He came with his son, Abdul Qayum and a nephew. We talked for three hours or more and he accepted much that we said but still was not satisfied. He stayed with us that night, and the next morning we took him in our car to Saharanpur to see Rev. Abdul Haqq, a convert from Mohammedanism and now a professor in the Seminary. Aslam Khan put his questions and we sat back and listened for nearly two hours to the most thorough exposition of our doctrines that I have ever heard. His two main questions were 'Explain the Trinity' and 'How can Christ be Divine?' As Padri Abdul Haqq developed his line of thought, all Aslam Khan had to say was 'Perfectly true' or 'Right and proper.' The Padri

Sahib's explanations and the prayers that followed completely broke down all the doubts that remained in his mind. He now says, 'I do not know how or what took place in my heart but I do know that in reality, from then on, Jesus Christ is my SAVIOUR.' He spent most of that night in Roorkee in prayer for guidance. The next morning he went alone to Hardwar and while on the trip, he lost his pocket-book, containing the money for his railway fare back to his home. This upset him very much and his son rebuked him, saying, 'You are being punished by God for going so mad over Christianity.' His answer was, 'No it is just a temptation that Satan is throwing in my way to try me.' He was helped in the purchase of a ticket to Delhi where he stayed until money was sent him from home.

When he arrived back in Peshawar, the family Maulvi came, asking about the mela, but he talked more about Christ than he did of the mela, so the Maulvi went out and told the village people that Aslam Khan had come back with some very strange ideas. Aslam Khan then proceeded to send out a general invitation to all the big Maulvis and chief men, not only of his village, but of other neighbouring villages. It was a large assembly and took the form of a meeting for him to give a report of the mela, he being recognized as their delegate, for he held the position of the '*Maqaddam*' or head of their local Chisti Order. As was the custom, he prepared a feast for this assembly, and, as the guests arrived, before they crossed the threshold, each person placed his hands in blessing on the head of the two *dhumba* (fat tailed sheep) that were to be killed. After the feast, about 2-30 p.m., they began the discussions. First, they took up the question, 'Which, the Bible or the Koran, gives us the true way to God?' Aslam Khan quoted John 14:6, 'Jesus saith unto them I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man come unto the Father, but by me.' He then challenged them to show where any one else made such a claim. But the Maulvis made no attempt to answer this challenge. Other questions came up, such as: 'Has the Bible been superseded by the Koran?' Aslam Khan answered, quoting verse after verse from the Koran, which say the Bible is good, reliable and worthy of study. He also said 'If the part that comes from the Bible were taken out, nothing worth while would be left.' They went away cursing him, and immediately sent out a '*fatwa*' (edict) calling him a '*kafir*' (apostate). The edict in part said 'He has come home with Christian ideas, so everybody beware and have no dealings with him.' His relatives were most bitter and at every opportunity rebuked and abused him. His servants and tenants began to rebel at the instigation of his brothers. The harvest was just over and his rents were due but he was able to collect nothing. One neighbour, to whom he had loaned his gramophone, cursed him, and told him to claim it in court if he wished and that he would not get it any other way. Aslam Khan's brothers were backing the people in their treatment of him. Abdul Qayum, his son, and his wife were continually nagging him and trying to persuade him to turn

back, especially after they failed to get their rents. They repeatedly asked, 'Now what are we going to eat?' Even the servants stopped bringing grass for the horse and buffalo.

He wrote to us a number of times. In one of my letters I sent an introductory note to a missionary lady in another city, because he wanted his wife and daughter to receive Christian instruction. He went to see her but the interview was not satisfactory.

He was away from Peshawar about three weeks. When he returned the opposition was stronger than ever. With all the rebuffs, insults and persecution, both outside and in his own home, God gave him a spirit of patience and trust that enabled him to stand it all and not lose his temper, as he says he would certainly have done before he made his surrender to the Master. He then collected a little money from some Hindu debtors and left for Lahore.

In Lahore, after being rebuffed by some Christians, he finally met Rev. Sultan Mohammed Paul, who patiently listened to his story and then comforted and advised him. He said he thought it would be better for him to go back and try his best to win his wife. Aslam Khan could not see it that way so he went to Amritsar. He had been advised to see Canon Bannerji but the Canon was away and he had to wait a month for his return. When he did finally see him, he was very sympathetic but he, too, advised him to go back to his family, if at all possible. He went to the hotel room and spent most of the night in prayer, still not feeling that he was ready to go back. God answered His prayers, even before they were uttered, for the family were then on the train, and the next evening they came to him in Amritsar. It is true, their purpose in coming to him was to persuade him to come back home. They brought a message from his brothers saying, that they, too, were ready to forgive him. His answer was, 'I'll not go until I have been baptized as a Christian.' He finally answered his wife's entreaties thus, 'You may leave me if you like. I will not marry another. You are my wife and these are my children. I am ready to sign over to you all my property, if you so wish. You may go back and you can live in comfort.' After this, Abdul Qayum and the oldest daughter, who is about sixteen years old, were convinced of his integrity and began to side with the father. They said to their mother, 'Father is not mad. He surely has something in his heart that is beyond our comprehension, when he will leave even us, and all we have, for IT.'

When I asked Abdul Qayum when he began to trust in Christ, he said, 'It was in Amritsar. One night, while they were talking, father said, "We will pray and test God's guidance. If the Sahib writes back with these comforting words, from one of Paul's Epistles, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," then we must be convinced that God is guiding in all this." And, continued Abdul Qayum, 'When the next letter came and my father opened

it, those very words were there and I was convinced.' When he told me about this, I immediately looked up my copies of letters written to them and found that I had sent that precious verse to comfort them. God had surely guided me in writing those words. They stayed in Amritsar for over a month. Aslam Khan himself, and the children were sick during this time. The wife had brought some money with her when they came to Amritsar, which was used up for house rent, food and medicines. When they finally decided to come to Roorkee they had nothing left and had to sell some jewellery to buy their railway tickets.

We were out in camp when the family arrived in Roorkee and our Padri Sahib came out to tell us they were there. I made a trip to Roorkee that very day and made arrangements for them to come and spend several days with us in Camp. On Sabbath, the 27th December I baptized the Khan Sahib, his wife and five children. It was such a joy to have the whole family come into the Fold. It is true that the wife came to her husband in Amritsar with the idea of persuading him to come back to his family but the Holy Spirit had worked so wonderfully in her heart, that she too, in such a short time surrendered her life to Jesus Christ. The story of what they, as a family, have gone through during the last year, is one that grips your heart, and makes you praise God that there are those to-day who suffer intensely for the Faith that is in them. One certainly admires the heroism of this woman. It was 16 miles to the train. They had never seen a train, and, trembling with fear lest they might be pursued and possibly murdered or kidnapped and doomed to a worse fate, they made their way to the train. She says the brothers would not have stopped short in their persecution until they had killed one after the other of her children before her eyes, and after that killed her. The mother was so worried she was crying in the railway station when a woman she did not know came to her and inquired why she was crying. Then she told her story; that she was going to her husband, that she had never ridden on a train and didn't know how to buy a ticket or where to sit when she did get on the train. Then this woman said, 'I am going on the same train and whatever I do, you do. You just follow me.'—an angel in disguise sent by God to her with her five children.

In January a telegram came from Peshawar that the mother of Aslam Khan had a stroke. The family went back to Peshawar and found the mother very low indeed. She recognized her son but could not speak. Nobody said anything about what they had been doing, and three days after their return the mother died. Aslam Khan asked his brothers to make the funeral very simple, and do nothing but what was required in the Koran, but they paid no attention and went to the limit in feasting and paying out money to the Maulvis and Fakirs. In the end, Aslam Khan has to pay all the bills. When the neighbouring women came in to see his wife, pretending to sympathize with her, they really were trying to persuade her to come back to Moham-

medanism. She said little or nothing to them but reported everything to him at night.

About a week or ten days after Aslam Khan's mother died, the brothers called a meeting to discuss what should be done about his becoming a Christian. They decided in this meeting that if they could get rid of him they could probably win the rest of the family back. One of the brothers promised to pay Muzaffara (a former servant of Aslam Khan's, now working for one of the brothers) the sum of Rs. 270/- if he would kill Aslam Khan. They told him they would guarantee that he would not suffer for it. There was a man in this meeting who turned out to be a true friend. He came to Aslam Khan after the meeting, in the night, and reported their discussions. It so happened that the English Superintendent of Police was on tour, camping near by. So, next morning, Aslam Khan went to him. As headman of the village it was his duty to see that all arrangements for the Police Officer's accommodation had been properly attended to. He made this the excuse for a visit but took the opportunity to tell the Officer how he had become a Christian and that an attempt was to be made on his life. Being told nothing could be done, he felt there was no hope for him in his own country. He returned to his house and about the middle of the afternoon, saying nothing to any one, he left. He went out of the house, alongside the family mosque, on the road where he usually took his evening walk about this time. Muzaffara was leaning over the low wall when he came in sight. Muzaffara had his face wrapped in such a way, so as to expose only his eyes but his former master knew him at once. Aslam Khan says, 'On seeing him there and knowing he was waiting for me, the first thought that came to me was, "I'll run him down, for my horse can easily jump that wall and be on to him before he can do anything." Then the thought came, "No, what can he do? I am in God's Hand."' So he calmly proceeded along his way. When he reached a point opposite him, a little over twenty feet away, Muzaffara fired. The first bullet hit the horse in the head. The next went through Aslam Khan's hat as he was falling with the horse. And Aslam Khan says, 'As I saw him stand there with the gun pointed at me, I felt a strange trust come to me and again the thought came "What can you do? I am in God's Hand."' The assailant, thinking he had shot him, ran off. Aslam Khan got up from the fall unhurt, and started off on foot for the Railway. He walked part way but was able to get a conveyance for the latter part and reached Peshawar about 2-30 a.m. He found a man at the station by whom he sent word to his people that he was going to Bombay. This was the only word they received from him for several months. He felt that his family would not be persecuted so much if he stayed clear away and did not even write. But, as it turned out, with their outspoken witness to Christ, it left them without even his comfort and advice. The next morning the police came and tried to persuade Abdul Qayum to tell whom he suspected. This he refused to do although he was quite sure he knew.

Everything possible was done to win the mother and Abdul Qayum back to Mohammedanism. The mother's brother managed to get the smaller boy and girl to come to his house. The elder brother had a great deal of trouble and worry to get them back home. They tried to make the elder girl's marriage arrangements but Abdul Qayum kept making excuses and managed to hold them off.

The friend who finally came with them to Roorkee helped the family a great deal. Even though living in Peshawar and running a restaurant of his own, every day or two he managed to go out to see them and when he went back to the city would take clothing and other things of theirs and store them in his house.

One day, while Abdul Qayum was in Peshawar to get his mail, (he had been writing to me quite frequently) he was called by a well-known lawyer, who is a real estate and land agent, to come and see if this was his father's signature on the power-of-attorney which he had received. Abdul Qayum recognized that it was. He also signed it, for there was some property in his name and the mother had property in her own name and she, too, was asked to sign it. We again see God's Hand in this, for this paper had just arrived in Peshawar from Aslam Khan, who knew nothing of their plans to leave within the next day or two, and now all the property was placed in the hands of a responsible agent.

In making arrangements for the family to leave their village Abdul Qayum was clever enough to get the carriages to come out from Peshawar City and had them drive into a field, alongside of the house, which was on the edge of the village. He himself went back another way and entering the house from the front. He told the family to go out get into the carriages and start off in the opposite direction, as though they were not intending to go to Peshawar, while he, himself went on the main road to Peshawar alone. They left their village about 4 o'clock, and after circling around, they turned into another road back to Peshawar, arriving there about 8 o'clock. The friend, who had their things stored came to the Station bringing them about 9-30. He then decided to come with them and is in Roorkee. He, too, is seriously considering becoming a Christian.

A friend at Rawalpindi helped them on their way.

Now, to go back to the movements of the father when he escaped. Instead of going to Bombay, in order to avoid being followed, he went to Calcutta and visited his mother's brother, a rich fruit merchant and honorary magistrate. But he had heard of Aslam Khan's becoming a Christian, and, though he did him no personal harm, he rebuked him, and immediately made it plain that he was not welcome. So he left for Rangoon, where he stopped at a Mohammedan hotel. While in Rangoon he saw a lawyer and had the power-of-attorney properly made out, which providentially reached Peshawar at just the right time. Abdul Qayum had asked to inspect the envelope, in which this power-of-attorney had been sent, and, finding it was from

Rangoon, he sent a telegram to the Mohammedan hotel, of which he knew just saying the family were going to the Sahib. Aslam Khan understood this, and he too immediately started for Roorkee. The family arrived in Roorkee on Saturday and he arrived the following Tuesday. It was a wonderful reunion for the family, coming from the two extremes of India and meeting in Roorkee. In Matthew 10: 34-35 Christ has portrayed very vividly what this family has given up and the cross they are bearing. But they have, and hold to the promise that was very strikingly brought to them, I Cor. 2: 9. And so they go on in faith, believing that God has great things in store for them.

JOHN C. TAYLOR.

Obituary.

Friends of Rev. L. E. Browne, D.D., formerly of the Henry Martyn School of Islamics, will be deeply grieved to hear of the death of Mrs. Browne. We extend our most sincere sympathy to Dr. Browne and his family and pray that they may have the precious comfort of our Lord in their sorrow.

Love in the Quran.

God's love for man denied: Sur. v. 21.

God's love for workers of righteousness: Sur. c. 6ff ii. 191, 222, iii. 128, xvi. 25, xxii. 39, v. 17, 46, 94.

God loves those who love Him: Sur. iii. 29.

God loves not evil-doing: ii. 201, 277, iii. 29, 50, 134, xxviii. 77, iv. 41.

God loves those that fear: iii. 70, ix. 4.

God loves the patient: iii. 140.

God loves the trusting: iii. 153.

Surah v. 59. 'O ye who believe, whoso is turned away from his religion, God will bring (instead) a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble to believers, haughty to unbelievers, strenuous in the way of God, fearing not the blame of him who blames. That is God's grace! He gives it unto whom He pleases, for God both comprehends and knows.'

"What is meant by the love of Allah for his creatures? That He does love them is plain from divers passages in the Quran (e.g., ii. 160, 222, lxi. 4 and many traditions). 'Love' is a word applied first to human relationships, and secondly to Allah. But when the words are so transformed, the meaning is always changed. They can never mean the same thing in man and in Allah. In man, love is an inclination of the soul to something that suits it that is lacking in it and from the gaining of which it expects profit and pleasure. All that is impossible in Allah, the Perfect, the Unchanging, who can con-

template nothing but Himself and His own acts as there is **nothing** else in existence. Love then in Allah means :

1. The removal of the veil from the heart of the creature **that** he may see Allah ;
2. The giving power to the creature to draw near to Allah ;
3. Allah's willing this from all eternity.

For Allah's love of a creature is from eternity inasmuch **as** it is related to His eternal will, which requires that the creature in **question** should be given the power to follow the path that brings him **near** to Allah. But his love is, in time, in relation to the action which **draws** away the veil. So there is no change in Allah or drawing **near** by Allah or supplying a lack in Allah. These terms apply **only** to the creature. And the signs of Allah's love are the trials which **come upon** creatures. If any one loves Allah and is sorely tried, he may **know** that Allah loves him and is drawing him near through these trials." (D. B. MACDONALD).

Prayer.

LET US PRAY for Aslam Khan and his family and especially that guidance may be given to him and his friends with regard to his **immediate** future.

PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED for the Secretary in his tour in Hyderabad during July.

New Member.

Rev. P. Thorne, Methodist Chaplain, Quetta, Baluchistan.

NOTICE.

Please note the Editor's change of address.

Any notification of change of address, names of new members or remittance of subscriptions etc., should be sent to the Superintendent, Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, India, and *not* to the Secretary of the League. The annual subscription to the League is Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od).

Matters of interest to members of the League, items of news and requests for prayer should be sent (if possible, early in the **month**) to the Honorary Secretary :—

Rev. J. W. Sweetman,
Lal Tiba, Landour,
Mussoorie, U.P., India.