



Prayer Moves You, as Faith Moves Mountains!

“Prayer does not necessarily change things for you, it changes you for things.” - Swami Chinmayananda

“If you are a true Hindu, you must attend today's *Maha Aarti*”, exclaimed my friend. What is that? I asked him. He said we are going to have a huge gathering for *Aarti* to Goddess Kali at Kalbadevi Road. But that will block pedestrian and vehicular traffic, isn't it? I queried. He answered: “*Maha Aarti* is a befitting reply to Muslims who pray on the street during *Namaaz*.” I was stunned. Well, needless to say that my friend went ahead, to attend the *Maha Aarti*. This incident happened during the worst ever communal riots that Mumbai witnessed in January 1992

following the serial bomb blasts. That set me thinking: Is "prayer" a matter of public performance? Cannot God hear invocations without high pitch rituals? Can we at all call such act as prayer? If not, pray, what is Prayer?

Prayer is a personal communion with God –the Supreme Being!

During a spiritual retreat at Simultala, I understood the true meaning of prayer. I learnt that prayer is not merely reciting hymns or visiting temples but it is a means of devoted communication with God. And one of the channels of communication may well be service to the humanity:– say, "*Manav Seva is Madhav Seva.*"

To quote Mother Teresa "the fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace."

To me prayer is, but a personal subtle link with the Divine. Each person has an intimate relationship with Him, as we all have descended from Him. In that sense, prayer is a private affair.

Congregational Prayer has its own impact

Congregational Prayer is in the nature of a "Mass" or "Namaaz" or a public prayer. It is said that thought is energy. When likeminded people congregate and pray together it has a great impact. It creates powerful positive energy vibrations which compel the universal entity called God to accede to the request of the mass, subject of course to the demand being ethical. Therefore, a prayer without self interest and for the benefit/welfare of fellow beings cannot go unanswered.

From childhood, we are taught to participate in congregational prayers. We begin our day with a mass prayer at school. In

temples, we do group prayers or sing *bhajans* together. In a mosque, we pray as a member of the congregation. In a church, we have a "mass" on Sundays and on other festive days as well. In MILT, we begin every meeting with a silent prayer. Thus, public prayer is not uncommon. But the fact remains that, even in the case of a congregational prayers, it is imperative that each one has to strike an individual bond - communion with God.

How do we strike a Communion with Him?

Just as a river flows towards the sea to submerge therein, so also we, as souls, are all journeying towards our ultimate merger with the "United Whole", of which we all are parts infinitesimal at that. Each one of us has to develop our own channel of communication with Him. If we accept the truth that there is no flaw in His communication, He being omni-potent, we only need to work on ourselves to level up to correspond with Him. To give you a simile, a Satellite Transponder of a television company beams uniform signals across the country. But, some receive coloured images, whereas others receive images, in black and white,

depending upon the configuration of the receiving set. Thus, the quality of reception depends naturally upon the quality of receiving set. The teacher teaches the whole class of student but the taught can assimilate only to the best of their individual capacity or capability.

Similarly, His communication is alike to a sage and a criminal. It is just that the receiving set of the criminal is not attuned to receive His signals. If our instrument is not up to the mark, howsoever good the transmission may be we will receive distorted communication. If only we learn the art of tuning our faculty i.e. our mind/intellect, we can receive flawless communication from Him.

How do we attune our Instrument?

For fine-tuning, the instrument we must work on all aspects of our personality, namely, Body, Mind and Intellect. Indeed at the physical level, we must remain fit by regular exercise, as health is wealth, without which mind and intellect cannot be efficient. It is difficult, though not impossible, to control our mind and intellect.

Mind and Intellect being subtle bodies; we must handle them subtly. Emotions, Contemplation and Meditation are the members of the trinity which would help us to fine-tune our receiving instrument.

Let us examine them in detail:

Emotions

An Emotion laden prayer is an Invocation to God and His Grace!

The question often arises in our mind, as to how we should pray? And what would make God to answer our prayer? Prayer, whether private or public, is not that important, but how we pray is relevant and important. For prayer to be responsive, the duration of prayer is not important, but how intensely we pray. Intensity of prayer comes from the heart over-laden with emotions. Prayer without emotions is blabbery, whereas prayer packed with

emotions does not need any verbalization, for, He who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent knows all that you think, want or desire verbalised or otherwise.

A small boy in a Church was reciting alphabets – A,B,C,D. The presiding priest offered to teach him how to pray but was shocked to hear the answer of the boy who said, “I know not complex hymns or words, though I know that they all are composed of alphabets, and God being omnipotent, can understand my alphabets and He can compose a prayer for me of His choice. Needless to say that the prayer of that child would be well received, rather than that of a priest who prayed more from his mind rather than from his heart. In other words, usage of intellect cannot constitute prayer if not accompanied by emotional upsurge.

Three ingredients of emotions are: (i) Love (ii) Faith and (iii) Devotion.

Love:

Love is supreme divine energy. It is the binding force of the entire Universe. Love exuding from a pure heart, devoid of any selfishness, would compel even the Godhead to descend or accede to the request of His devotee. History is replete with instances of legendary lovers of God. The love of Mirabai forced Krishna to descend and give her *Darshan*. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to speak to Goddess Kali at will, out of sheer abundance of love for Her. Another embodiment of love was Gauranga (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu). Immersed in the ocean of love, he lived and moved about in love. His speech was full of love. He simply radiated love. His touch was a magnetism of love. He sang in love. He breathed in love. He walked in love. He showed how God should be loved. Indeed with unconditional love, purity of heart comes about. And with such love, one develops faith and devotion unto Him. Blessed indeed are those who are devoted to God.

Faith:

Indeed, faith can move mountains, provided it is absolute and total. We must have unflinching faith in Him.

It reminds me of an anecdote: Once upon a time, there was famine in a village. Everybody was worried. All villagers decided to pray together. They congregated in a field. One girl carried an umbrella. Everybody mocked at her, as there was no indication of any rain. Upon asked by a villager, her reply stunned everybody. She said "I am sure our prayers will be answered by God and soon it will start pouring." That's Faith.

We must not forget that no prayer has ever gone unanswered. Many a time we failed to understand that His answers can be in the negative. We would feel bad at that moment but later on, we thank Him for His denial, as that would be found in our interest eventually.

Once we develop this unflinching faith, we are ready to fight any battle of life as it comes, as someone has said beautifully as under: -

"Without Thee, I cannot succeed,

And With Thee, I cannot fail.”

Devotion:

Devotion is but unalloyed love. –Swami Chinmayananda. Love and Devotion go hand in hand. Devotion is prayer at the zenith. In Devotion, one completely surrenders unto His Grace. Narsimha Mehta was a great devotee of Lord Krishna. It is said that when he used to sing *Bhajans* oblivious of his daily chores, Krishna used to do work on his behalf. Such is the power of devotion. If you are a true servant of God, God does as you bid - the greatness of Him in dispensing favours to his devotee.

Contemplation

Contemplation leads to conviction in prayer!

Contemplation includes introspection and retrospection of weeding out of undesirable hangovers and emotions of the past at the mental level. It is like cutting chains to enable the mind to

fly free. Essentially, it involves de-conditioning of the mind from the negative thoughts in order to recondition it with positive thoughts and energy. The biggest advantage of contemplation is that it develops conviction. When one is convinced about the need to relate to Him, one becomes ever ready to pay the price therefore.

Meditation

In Meditation, one Unites with Him!

Prayer and Meditation are inter-related. One helps to make the other more effective. A prayer full of love and devotion before Meditation helps one to dwell deeper in one's consciousness. Then, gradually one is able to remove the roadblocks at different levels of consciousness. However, in order for Meditation to become effective, one needs to get rid of negative stimuli by leading a virtuous life, say being truthful and not succumbing to unethical sensuous desires, greed and the like. The process of Meditation brings about clarity and makes the mind fit to strike a

devotional bond with Him. Meditation primarily calms down the mind. Free from turbulence, one can pray effectively, just as a boy can swim in a river when not in spate.

When our prayer becomes pure His Grace descends, and a clear and uninterrupted communication begins. That's what Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa did – communicate at will with Goddess Kali.

Conclusion

Private or public, prayer is a prayer. Prayer is essentially a private affair but occasionally, congregational prayer may be offered in public interest. It may be in varied forms. Some sing Bhajans in ecstasy, some have dialogues with Him, while others simply surrender unto Him in humble supplication. Prayer may well be for invoking His grace or giving thanks to Him for the shower of His Grace.

Sometimes, we do pray for the well being of dear friends who may be suffering. Such prayers offered individually have undoubtedly an impact and naturally, prayers offered collectively

by friends and well wishers would have a far greater impact and normalcy restored sooner to concerned objects of prayers.

When Aporesh fell off a running train at Simultala and sustained serious injuries, prayers by all Miltonians helped him to recover fast. Indeed, that's the power of prayer.

As Swami Chinmayananda has said prayer prepares you to accept the things or circumstances and not necessarily what you desire. Therefore, let me end the paper by quoting one of my favourite prayers by Reinhold Niebuhr:

O God! Grant me the serenity;
To accept the things I cannot change;
The courage, to change the things I can;
And the wisdom, to know the difference.

Finale

Prayer is a spiritual bridge over which the devout reach the realm of God by devotion to truth and that is the summum and bonum of God.

So be it.

Paper Title:

Prayer Moves You, as Faith Moves Mountains!

Paper Topic:

Prayer: Private or Public

Author:

Mayur Nayak

Chapter:

Mumbai

Number of words:

1975

Reading time in minutes:

15