

The Way To Commune with God

In January 2002, I visited a place called Nirmal Hriday (Tender – Hearts) - a home for dying destitutes run by the Mother Teresa Foundation in Kolkatta. I was touched to the core by the selfless services rendered by the volunteers to the terminally ill. I found that they pick people up dying on the roads in Kolkatta and provide them not only refuge till their departure but also shower love, care and affection. One of the volunteers said, that “we are really doing no great thing but just are serving the suffering humanity – prayer indeed. I saw ‘prayer in action’ for the first time. Prayer until then to me was reciting a few hymns – the meaning of which I hardly ever knew. From childhood, I am a regular visitor to temples. I used to close my eyes, fold my hands, stand before the idols, in supplication and pray – er – ask things / favors for me. I was begging rather than praying. During my 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 could be service to the humanity – as it is said “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.”

## **Prayer And Ego**

By such service we submerge and cleanse our ego and become pure. Purity of heart is a pre-requisite for prayer. It reminds me of a prayer event of two friends, one of whom prayed for conferment of wealth so that he could help the poor, whereas, the other friend, prayed that let no body be poor. Prayer by the first person, though intended for the well being of the poor, is full of ego, whereas the prayer of the second person is devoid of ego with total purity of heart. Until we harbour ego, we cannot surrender and unless and until we surrender, we deprive ourselves of love, faith and devotion – the trio on which the quality of prayer rests.

## **How do we pray?**

Questions may often arise in our mind, as to how do we pray? And what will make God to answer our prayer? For prayer to be effective or answered, it is not important how long we pray, but how intensely we pray. Intensity of prayer comes from the heart overwhelmed by emotions. Prayer without emotions is blabbery, whereas prayer packed with emotions does not need any verbalisation for, He is omnipotent and omniscient Who knows all your intend, spoken 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 stunned by the answer given by 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 was well received, rather than that of a priest who prayed more from his mind than from his heart, in other words, usage of intellect rather than emotion laden prayer. But then generating emotions in prayer is easier said than done. How does one go about it. Let me give you a simile. We human beings have launched many communication satellites whose signals are beamed across the globe. In order to receive these signals and strike a communication link, we need to adjust the frequency and/or wavelength of our handset (mobile). Some receive messages / images in colour, others in Black and White. The quality of communication depends upon the quality of the handset, that is, whether or not it is capable of receiving colour images, how it is programmed and so on. If we switch off the handset, we cannot receive any communication / message whatsoever, notwithstanding the fact that signals of the message are already in the atmosphere. But, remember, there is no flaw in His communication. We only need to fine-tune our receiving set to match His wavelength and frequency in order to strike a link for communication. This can be

done through love, faith and devotion, wherein faith and devotion make for proper programming and love acts as a battery to supply power, which will keep the receiving set turned on all the time. To understand this let us look closely at the structural components of prayer, namely, love, faith and devotion.

### **Prayer and Love**

Love is the driving force behind the entire universe. It is the supreme energy divine. See what happens when you fall in love. You praise that person, you like that person and love every action of him, isn't it? If this be your mental state in respect of love on the material plane, think how would you feel if you strike a loving relationship with the divine. When you do that you do experience unity with the divine. Temptations to ask material benefits would cease altogether. The family of Narendra (Swami Vivekananda's name before he attained Sainthood) was in utter penury. Sri Ramkrishna Param Hansa asked him to ask something for his family when he went to the temple to pray before Goddess Kali. However, each time Narendra countered the idol of Kali, he clean forgot to ask as he got surrendered to the Goddess in love and devotion. Once our heart is saturated with love we develop devotion and unflinching faith in God.

**Prayer and Faith**

Indeed, faith can move mountains provided it is total and complete. Our faith cannot be so shaky that a small adversity could put us off from the chosen path of prayer and God. I remember during examination season I used to visit temple regularly and spend more time than in normal days for, I believed that it was necessary to secure His grace. If only my faith was total, I would not have behaved in this fashion, rather I would experience Him on every moment of my life. We must not forget that God puts us on trials not to impair but to improve us. According to Gandhiji, “ When all forsake you, God is always with you.” Once we develop this unflinching faith and loyalty, we are ready to fight any battle of life as it comes, as someone has beautifully said,

“Without Thee, I cannot succeed ,  
And With Thee, I cannot fail.”

**Prayer and Devotion**

With love and faith in our heart, we surrender which leads to devotion. Devotion is prayer at the apex. With devotion you are in constant communion- a state of bliss and you communication with God become complete. Sri Ramkrishna with

his total devotion reached upto this level. He could go trance at will and comeback to material world as easily.

At this stage, words / language have no significance. It is a communication from heart to heart.

### **My Prayer to God**

I am alive to the fact that I have miles to go and the journey has just began as far as quality of my prayers are concerned. Prayer to me is a source of strength and inspiration, Swami Chinmayananda had said, “ Prayers does not necessary change things for you, it changes you for things.”(Emphasis supplied). A few months back, my mother suffered from a stroke, which partially paralyzed her communication skill. Naturally, I was very upset. I prayed intensely for her recovery and I found improvement in her speech within a few days but more than this a realisation dawned on me that this deficiency at least would propel her to get detached from the material world and push her near Him, as this would force her to turn inward. Incidentally, she is devoted to Lord Krishna. Prayer changes our outlook towards life and makes us vibrant and positive. Earlier I used to trade off with God, i.e. to do Pooja or perform austerity with a view to seeking a favour in return. Realisation of my folly made me change my prayer saying that, “I do

not knows what is good on bad for me, you are my Master and I am your slave; do bestow on me what is good for me and not what I desire.” When a parent refuses to give chocolate the child feels bad but as he grows up he would thank his parent for saving his teeth from dental cavities. Likewise, when we become wiser, we would thank God for all that he deprived us in our best interests, as whatever He bestowed on cannot but be good for us. It reminds me of a wonderful prayer here.

When I asked for strength	-	God gave me difficulties which made me strong;
I asked for Wisdom	-	And God gave me Problems to solve to get wise
I asked for Prosperity	-	And God gave me Brain and Brawn to work my way up
I asked for Enthusiasm	-	And God gave me challenges to meet to make me enthusiastic

Though I received nothing in the manner I desired,  
yet I got everything I needed to lead my life.

My prayer was answered, Thank God.

**Finale**

After my visit to spiritual retreat at Simultala, I changed the focus of my prayers. I realized how important it is to pray for those millions who suffer silently in this world. Until then I was counting my problems rather than blessings. Upon realisation of my folly, my prayers became “thanks giving”.

Today, I thank God for everything that He has given to me and I have no complaint about things I am deprived of. A sense of gratitude has filled my heart, as a lamp of light engulfs a room when lit. The recess of our heart need to be lit, which is why the common prayer line “oh, God, lead me to light!”

However, let me confess that this realisation is still momentary and not lasting as the day wears off I am overwhelmed by desires and negative feelings, which I struggle to overcome with His aid, help, support and patronage, which will always be forthcoming.

I am conscious about my shortcomings and would like to reach a plateau where prayer becomes a way of life and a refrain, not just one of the daily rituals as hither to.



Prayer thus empowers communion with God, which is the purpose of life in our quest of the unknown. So be it.

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