

Prayer

The devotee can well pray for and ask from the Lord the gift of such a peace, as well as the virtues (*sat-gunas*) necessary for their growth. Why, the aspirant has only this one thing as capital for earning any goal: prayer.

Some people may have some doubts related to this. Of what avail is prayer? Will the Lord gratify all that we ask for in our prayers? He gives us only what, according to Him, we need or deserve, is it not? Will the Lord like to give us all that we ask for in our prayers to Him? Under such circumstances, what is the use of prayer? Of course, all these doubts can be resolved.

If the devotee has dedicated everything —body, mind, and existence— to the Lord, He will Himself look after everything, for He will always be with the devotee. Under such conditions, there is no need for prayer. But have you so dedicated yourself and surrendered everything to the Lord? No. When losses occur, calamities come, or plans go awry, the devotee blames the Lord. Some, on the other hand, pray to Him to save them. If you avoid both of these, as well as reliance on others, if you place complete faith on the Lord at all times, why should He deny you His grace? Why should He desist from helping you? Men do not rely fully and unswervingly on the Lord.

Therefore, though you have to be the agent and the instrument doing everything, keep on praying with devotion and faith. Faith is the product of peace, not of haste and hurry. For the acquisition of the grace of the Lord and the resulting awareness of the reality, the quality of peace is the prime need.

Every aspirant is aware of how Droupadi, through her *dharma* and peace, deserved the grace of the Lord. Though her husbands were mighty heroes and far-famed monarchs, she sought refuge in Lord Krishna, feeling that all others were of no use. But Prahlada did not seek refuge under similar circumstances. At birth, he had surrendered all to the Lord. He knew that the Lord was ever by his side and that he was ever by the side of the Lord, so he had no need to call out to Him for protection. Prahlada was unaware of anything except the Lord; he could not distinguish between one function of the Lord and another. So, how could he pray for protection, when he did not know that He was being punished? For all such God-intoxicated and dedicated souls, prayer is unnecessary.

But until that stage is reached, prayer in an attitude of peace is essential for aspirants. Prayer with this attitude will promote equanimity in enjoyment (*sama-rasa*). The Lord can be prayed to by means of recital of the name of God, continual repetition of the name of the Lord, meditation, or devotional singing. In every one of these, the chief item is the divine name. That is why Krishna spoke in the *Gita* of recitation of the name.

When repetition of the name is done, it is better to recite aloud and make it devotional singing. This will inspire the gathering. If devotional songs are sung in a sweet voice, people will be drawn toward the Lord. Gradually, it will develop into love for God, and His grace will follow in due course. One should patiently wait for that grace.

Even for being blessed by the Lord's grace, one must have peace and await patiently. Only serenity succeeds in bringing about the result of spiritual practice. Add this lesson to the practices you are engaged in, night and day, and to the following *mantra* for peace:

From untruth, lead us to truth
From darkness, lead us to light
From death, to immortality

Asatho maa sadgamaya

Thamaso maa jyothir gamaya

Mrityor maa amritham gamaya

The meaning of this *mantra* is given variously by different people, some elaborately, some succinctly. Here is the real meaning of the *mantra*. The first prayer is: “Oh Lord, when I am deriving happiness through the objects of this world, make me forget the unreal objects and show me the way to permanent happiness.” The second prayer is: “Oh Lord, when the objects of the world attract me, remove the darkness that hides the all-pervading *Atma*, which every such object really is.” The third prayer is: “Oh Lord, bless me through Your grace with the immortality (*Paramananda*) that results from the awareness of the effulgence of the *Atma* that is immanent in every object.”