MY TURN
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The Place Of Prayer In Life

Naik, Bharat R. A priest asked a boy: "Do you say prayers every day?" "No sir," replied the boy. "Some days I don't want anything." To a child, prayer means asking God for things. A child's concept of prayer is often carried over to adulthood. People go on asking Him for things, and if these prayers are not answered, they doubt His very existence.

Prayers are readily responded to only when we are sincere, when we make the best use of existing capabilities. Of course, we have to pray to God. After continuous struggle and repeated failure, we realize more than ever how weak we are, and how strong is our attachment to the senses. To eradicate them seems to be beyond mortal power. Then we feel the absolute need of Divine help, guidance and grace.

According to Hinduism, God is beyond good and evil, which belong to the plane of maya. God is Absolute Consciousness and Bliss. He is infinite existence. Creation and destruction, good and evil are only two different aspects of the same energy called Maya-Shakti. The play of these forces depends upon the inherent tendencies (samskaras) of man from repeated births. God is the indwelling witness in all beings. Spiritual life is the discovery of this Soul of all souls. Prayer is a means for this discovery. Prayer takes us nearer to God. God listens to our prayers, but as Sri Ramakrishna has said, the prayer must be sincere. The mind and heart must be made one in prayer. God responds to our prayer in a way which is for our own good.

Prayer is a verbal approach to God. If your prayer is deep and earnest, then God responds. You may pray for anything you want. Persons who are worldly-minded

naturally pray to God for worldly objectives. Contrarily, persons who are spiritually inclined naturally pray for spiritual values. A person cannot be spiritually minded until he realizes the futility of duality in worldly desires. When a person understands this truth, he develops an urge to realize God, to see God. Only then does he pray to the Eternal Companion for spiritual values.

Let us pray for devotion, strength and purity. This is spiritual prayer, the first step towards true meditation. Prayer is an expression of the soul's longing for God. What is important is to feel an intense longing for superconscious realization.

There are different modes of worship to generate devotion. You can convert your secular deeds into a mode of worship by doing your duty with complete self-resignation, by surrendering the ego. Besides the performance of duty with dispassion, you may serve a holy man, make a pilgrimage, offer a flower, incense or light in worship. All of these physical actions prepare the mind for meditation by generating devotion within. Then there are verbal courses - like singing devotional songs or reading scriptures. Repetition of mantras, a concentrated form of prayer, is linked with meditation. You see, spontaneous longing is necessary, not calculated devotion. The Vedic sage declares:

Hear me, O children of Immortal Bliss. I have realized that Supreme Being, the Self-effulgent One, beyond all darkness, resplendent like the glorious sun. By knowing Him alone one goes beyond death.

Svestasvatra Upanishad

What more do you want? Pray fervently right now from this very second with faith. You will attain eternal Bliss.

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