

Three Modes of Prayer

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The universal perception of every individual is that I am a different, limited and insignificant being. Everybody feels he has been cornered by events in life and he is in a corner. When one observes everybody around, there are some areas common but lot of differences. Even a *vaidya*, *ayurvedic physician*, classifies people in to three constitutional types.

Even though everybody feels this way, nobody can accept this feeling or happy about it either. Hence everybody is in a fighting mode all the time, to be happy.

We feel joy when being 'included' or 'get connected' to the whole. We want to be part of a group. If somebody does not recognize and say hi, that is a reason for unhappiness. If we look at our day to day life instances, the sense of limitation make us suffer and the elimination of this sense of limitation gives us *Ananda*, joy.

Every action is driven by this need, to get connected to the whole. In other words to remove the feeling of separation. This is the secret of the motivation behind any discipline of study or any *seva*, social service. There is joy in helping somebody in distress. One crosses the sense of limitation at one's level of identification, whether it is home, community or the whole nation as in the case of Mahatma Gandhi. The larger the perimeter of one's identification, the more sensitive I am, to my fellow beings. According to pujya Swami Dayananda, even though an increased sensitivity is considered a virtue, unless it is accompanied by increased accommodation it can create havoc. For example a learned musician is one who is more sensitive to the subtleties of music, which means he recognizes all the wrong notes also. Only

with accommodation he will be able to withstand the *apasrutis* he comes across.

So if 'getting connected' or 'to be included' by some action is the secret of happiness. What shall I do, to feel happy all the time? Because any action is limited, a limited action can produce only a limited result. Also, why does one feel the urge to get connected all the time?

While the identifications are at relative levels, according to Vedanta, it is possible to have an absolute identification. An identification with the whole, all the time irrespective of the situation. Swamiji asked us to think whether we are really helpless or really limited, as we feel. Is it possible that we assumed a separation?

The sense of isolation can be removed by the understanding that there is no real separation as well. For the broken iceberg, is there a cause of separation from water? It just needs to know that all the time it is water. So this is what the Veda say, one is happy by nature, one is not limited by anything, you are the limitless!

If that is so why do I not see this fact? Well, it is a question of understanding. For any understanding to take place, one needs preparation, preparation of mind. That is why one goes to school and then to college.

In his second part of the lecture, Swamiji expanded on this theme. Isolation is not acceptable at all and brings suffering. Any act of bridging this isolation brings acceptance. The sense of limitation, individuality, can be resolved at 3 vedantic levels of manifestation; *Viraat Purusha*, *Hiranyagarbha* and *Brahman*. The *viswan*(perceiver of the countless names and forms of the world,

vividha pratyaya gocharam) needs to be connected to *Viraat Purusha* (the totality of all the creation). The indweller of the body *antaryami* to *hiranyagarbha*. At the absolute level one needs to understand there is only Brahman, '*Ekamevadvitiam brahma*'.

Sleep is a pleasant experience because there is no sense of limitation in sleep. The more I resolve my isolation more happy I am. Usually whenever we understand our limitation we seek help, as in the use of a microscope to see microbes. We use glasses to see, if we are shortsighted or longsighted. We use telescope to observe faraway things.

Similarly we seek help, when we understand our limitations in our ability or resources. But when everybody around is limited in their capacity to help whom shall we turn to? Swamiji drew the example of Arjuna seeking help from Lord Krishna here. After all we are all warriors like Arjuna fighting our own individual battle.

Acceptance of the limitation is also the key for seeking help. Limitation is a fact and one needs to accept it. But constant complaint about it does not help. According to Swami Dayananda, seeking help is intelligent living. This is what a scientist does when he uses a microscope to see micro organisms.

We need the help from the being who has all the wealth and all the knowledge. Prayer is the means to seek that help; establish connection to the Lord who is *sarvajna* and *sarva saktiman*. Here Swamiji introduced a nice riddle. One may say if the Lord is all knowing, he must be aware of my limitation and need. Then that all merciful Lord should help me, without me asking for help. The answer lies in our understanding of the Lord. Lord as the author of all laws of the creation, dispenses the result according to the laws all the time. Hence in the vision of the Lord, everything is '*sthane*', in place and appropriate. There is nothing out of order in

the vision of Lord. If me the individual want a particular result, it is up to me to make that request and appropriate effort.

In our tradition, *sanatana dharma*, lord has many forms as Venkateswara, Mahaganapati etc. Every form represents lord and helps me to act out my prayer to that lord who is free from all forms. One acts out his love towards a child or a friend by a hug. Every emotion, even anger, needs to be acted out properly. Hence helplessness also needs to act out. Without a name and form I cannot establish connection to the lord. Hence prayer itself is possible in 3 ways, *kaayikam*-physical, *vaachikam*- verbal and *manasikam*- mental.

Kaayikam is elaborate pooja with many materials according to the prescribed steps. *Vaachikam* is stotra or stuti, praising the lord or recognizing his glories. We have so many stotra and sahasranama for different forms of the lord each high lighting different aspects of lord. Seeing the lord in different aspects helps to understand the nature of the lord. Constant and repeated chanting helps the mind to keep the vision of lord in the mind all the time. Hence chanting helps the mind to become single pointed, attain *eka-agrata*.

Chanting also could be done in three different ways, *Vaikhari*-chanting aloud, so that I and others hear; *Upamsu*- chanting low, so that only I hear. And the last is *manojapam*-chanting mentally; It is said that *upamsu* is more efficacious than *vaikhari* and *manojapam* is more efficacious than *upamsu*.

The third mode of prayer is *manasikam*, mental prayer or meditation, dhyanam. Absorption or staying in understanding of the lord. Without going through the other modes of prayer the mind will not become prepared to stay in meditation. Hence all other forms of prayer are in preparation for this final step.

Here some might ask, Swamiji I have been praying and praying but nothing happened, prayer did not give any result! We have seen prayer is an act, a karma, and just as any karma, it should produce a result according to the laws of karma. Because the law comes from Bhagavan, lord. So I ask you what was your *sankalpa*, what you wanted when you prayed. Did you had a specific thing, wanting from Bhagavan? If you were confused about what you wanted from Bhagavan, then how can he give anything. He sees only your confusion and cannot determine what you wanted. So it is important to have clarity of what we need in any prayer. If we are not clear, it is better to ask for clarity of what we need or even say "Oh Bhagavan I am not able decide what I need, so please give what is good for me". If we are in need it is certainly right to ask Bhagavan, without the request he can not give. That is why before any pooja we do a sankalpa clasping our hands, making our resolve.

Do we need anything from Bhagavan every time we pray? We may not; Prayer could be appreciation of the glory of the lord as we saw in *stuti*. It could be staying in understanding of the lord also. The other modes of prayer helps me to address my area of want, deficiency and prepares the mind. The final step helps me to see the non difference between me and the lord. That is the ultimate end¹.

Aum tat sat

¹ Summarized by Suresh Nair