

Commentary on PRAYER

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I shall presume to discuss the general lines of the meaning of prayer and the essence of prayer in this system of Sahaj Marg.

We all know that prayer has been the most efficacious way by which one could approach God. And it is invaluable in the ordinary practice of all religions. There are all sorts of prayers, all kinds of prayers, and these prayers of all sorts and kinds are admitted as valid by several religions. Therefore in our ordinary life we are expected to pray even for the material things of this world, as well as for the fulfillment of our very cherished desires. We are also sometimes praying for the establishment of dharma in this world, and prevailing of the righteous conduct over unrighteous conduct. Lastly there are prayers for the ultimate emancipation of man from the bondages of this world. These four kinds of prayer may be said to be of the artha, kama, dharma and moksha varieties, in the technical language of our country.

In all religions people do pray. The second question,

which usually crops up, is to whom are we to pray for these benefits. Normally any man of discernment would ask a man who can give wealth to give wealth; ask one who can grant your desires to grant your desires; ask one who can protect dharma to protect dharma; and ask him who can grant liberation for liberation. This discernment is very evident in our country, especially in Hinduism. Therefore, we have had gods of wealth to whom we have prayed; gods of kama to whom we have prayed; gods or protectors of dharma to whom we have appealed; and gods who can grant liberation.

So, so long as those four people were distinguished there are four ultimate gods for these four purposes. But the concept of one God began to develop in our minds, and we thought that artha, which is wealth, or power which is got from any god, if it is not capable of producing dharma or liberation, is self-defeating and capable of causing misery. So also if you ask for desires which will not promote dharma or emancipation, we are in pretty great difficulties of misery. Similarly when dharma has been asked for without its capacity to give you moksha as freedom, well we said it is not worthwhile.

So ultimately it became important that liberation should be the ultimate thing to determine our choice of artha, or

choice of kama, or choice of dharma. Naturally, then, we wanted the person who can give us ultimate liberation to be in charge of the three other portfolios in life. And so we wanted one God to whom we could appeal to give us freedom whilst granting us wealth; give us freedom whilst granting our desires; and to give us freedom whilst granting our dharma, or preservation of righteousness. That is why the idea of one God to whom we can go and ask for these things became very dominant.

We passed then from what is called polytheism to monotheism. The concept of one God who can give all the four, regulated by the fundamental principle of liberation became, I think, the cardinal principle of our own Hindu religion and tradition.

Now there are so many institutions and men who can cater to these things by appealing to the one God. But what happens is, in life, that the ultimate motive for liberation seems to get dimmed as men, even when they go to that One God, are anxious to ask for the lower but not for the higher also. That is why one of the great dictums of a great saint was "seek ye the kingdom of God first, and all things shall be added unto you."

So firstly seek the kingdom of freedom, moksha. Then you will find that every other thing will naturally follow from it, namely righteous wealth and righteous power, righteous enjoyment of love and desire, righteous enjoyment of dharma-God in this universe. So firstly it becomes incumbent on us to seek the ultimate being. That is why whenever we go to a god we ask for the ultimate reality or freedom, or moksha. And then we are sure the other things would follow.

There have been, of course, some people who in their anxiety to promote only liberation have asked us to deny the other three things and say I want only liberation. I do not say that it is wrong. All that I say is that they want us, as a practical expedient process, to deny the lower so that they can show their anxiety to get the higher. In many cases, as I may put it, it appears to me that it savours of a kind of mental hypocrisy, and therefore I would rather have a definite frankness with the Divine in asking for liberation. A liberation that includes everything, rather than excluding everything; Because ultimately we know that there is a sense of liberation when we get a little moderate wealth; a sense of liberation when we experience the fulfilment of legitimate desires; a sense of freedom when we get legitimate order or government. Excessive government is always dangerous, and therefore dharma may be an

excessive government. So we want liberation in government, as we want liberation really, ultimately. That gives us what is called a graduated growth of expansion of our consciousness when we feel that we are growing in freedom, rather than growing in bondage. Obviously you will realise that the second one is a self-contradicting proposition! Growing in bondage!

So we want to grow in freedom, and the sense of freedom should inform us; and if we ask God to help us, it is because the techniques of the lower thrives, namely a political power, an economic power, or any other hedonistic power, or even excessive police-power or police government, and these cannot promote freedom along with the granting of these things. In this conviction the great people of the past thought of God as the ultimate Being who can grant our freedom on all the levels without giving up the ultimate freedom to which we ought to go and aspire for. So ultimately then, our goal is getting the ultimate liberation because all of us are having a life in terminable condition, which ends. All of us die! And we want freedom from this. We are afraid of the future, as a matter of fact, and we want to be assured that we will not be once again turned into the world of bondage-that we will not be returned to this bondage. So we want freedom also of that level, after death. A feeling of freedom now, and a feeling of

freedom hereafter. This seems to be the natural goal of the vedic rishi who said that Nanyah pantha ayanaya vidyate there is no other path except total surrender to the ultimate Being, and who also said you will experience that freedom even here, Ihaiva bhavati. So this is an ancient aspiration which we have held very dear during the ages.

In our Sahaj Marg we are taking up this concept in its very practical form. Now our prayers, as I told you, have been of all sorts and kinds. So to whom shall we address ourselves? Kasmai devaya havisya videma? As the great veda said it-to which god shall I offer my oblation? Myself and my prayers? And it answers, the Supreme Being, the Purusha. The supreme being one who purifies you; one who exalts you; one who makes you one with himself while sacrificing himself to you, dedicating himself for your emancipation. The one goal of God seems to me, just as my one goal is, that He should lean himself to me, just as I yearn towards Him, that is all. This is the great meaning of the Purusha Sukta. So, in our system, the Sahaj Marg, which is natural to a divine man or one who seeks the Divine light, we firstly offer prayers to the ultimate Being with the one wish that we should be gradually taken to that condition of divine life. Therefore, our prayer, which has come to my Master Sri Ram Chandraji from above as he told me, and also given

in the language in which it has come, in English, is very significant and very helpful. It is simple. It says, I shall repeat the prayer for your reference:

"Oh Master! Thou art the Real Goal of human life.

We are yet but slaves of wishes putting bar to our advancement.

Thou art the only God and power to bring us up to that stage."

This prayer which was given to the Master, which is being used by everyone of the abhyasis before he starts his meditation, puts in a nutshell the essential ingredients of a prayer. I do not want to compare this prayer with other prayers. Forgive me if I don't. But I shall explain this. This shows that the Divine is the Master, is the guru. And He is the goal, which you must attain. The goal, of course, is that state of being. It is not to get his form, but to get that state of being that gives you the essence of an existence and also meaning to your existence. I do not know, how many of you have a sense of existence in you. Suppose I ask, will you please tell me do you exist. Most of you exist because of your

office, or because of your property, or because of something else. What is the meaning of the words 'I am'?

All of us know that we depend on other things and we ourselves are nothing, and by ourselves are nothing. So why are we restless? Because we are trying to be and in trying to be, we are not being ourselves. I am not playing with words. I want you to see the full meaning of what I am saying. The sense of being is very important because none of us has the sense of being but only of not-being. So we want this, we want that, and we want the other! And if we get that, we think we are yet less than others because we measure the quantum of property we have; the quantum of power that we have; where is the sense of being? That is why we are restless. We have no sense of being but we are asking for being. And we are moving in the wrong directions. We ask for wealth, we run after power, run after certain desires thinking that by getting those desires we be. Of course, I leave it to you to find out the instances for yourselves. And then everything is chaos, and we are not having any sense of being in this world or everything is insecure, in a state where everything is going away, slipping out of our grasp, what we hold we lose. Now all this shows that we have no sense of being. And that is why we must get the sense of being. And we are struggling for it. And this is the Master CAN give, because the ultimate reality is, in a

sense, the being of which all these are non-being.

Why do I want God? Just because He can give me this sense of being. And he who cannot give this sense of being but urges us on to another thing, a farther thing, is only a transition, and not being, and not God! That is why the ancient scriptures in our country stated "God is existence and to know him is Satya, Sat-ya! One who creates the sense of being in you is God. That is truth. That is why, the Sanskriti is very nice when he uses the word Satya-'ya' is the 'krit' suffix-making 'Sat' is Reality. Firstly we must earn the sense of reality of being. And that is the goal to which we are moving. Now this sense of being, therefore, firstly announces the essence of our prayer-the goal of my being, of my existence, of my life, is being.