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What is the purpose of prayers?

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The noblest of you in the sight of Lord is the best in conduct, (49:13). Ye do love the fleeting now and neglect the hereafter (75:20-21).

It is the extraordinary how few people pray. They maybe very good people, even very religious people, but they do not pray. They cannot see the reason for it, and, often, they feel unnatural when they try it! Even believing in God, they still do not ask Him for anything. They contend, either He knows their needs and supplies them regularly or that it is not necessary to ask Him for anything! You just reach out and take for yourself. Why should this be so?

First of all why should God regularly answer our inner wish, even though when we do not get in contact with him? Why should we receive anything with no effort at all? We are not stores, we are organisms; not only we are organism, we are the most highly evolved ones on this earth. Now, living matters receive everything through a process of activity and assimilation, not like water being poured into a cup, but like a hand that reaches out and grabs what it wants, like the plant whose energetic little roots dig and suck for moisture and food.

As to our being able and

reach out and take whatever we want for ourselves, there are lots of things beyond our grasp, which we nevertheless would like to have and which, with help, we could get; we must not be too proud, or too silly, to ask for that help. "We have reason to suppose that all our spiritual requirements are going to be regularly delivered to us free of charge and with our even putting in an order for them. There is another reason for the necessity of prayer, much more urgent than just to enable us to ask for what we want. This mirror of soul, even though we may have turned it upside down, gets dusty and fogged. Prayer cleans it off. This may at first, see strange idea, but if you think about it, it is not strange at all. What do we actually do when we pray?

We think of some one greater than ourselves, our father, our friend, our God; call Him what you will; we realize He possesses all power as He created us and the universe; We remember He loves us; We remember He can help us if He will. Whether our prayers is to ask Him for help, or for a favour, or just to say how wonderful we find His ways; or thank Him for something, it focuses our attention on that unvarying, infinite Pole Star

by which we should set our course. It re-orient us to it, for our compass has been wobbling; it calls us what lies ahead, fixes our attention, if for only a moment, on the eternal values, instead of the continuously fluctuating ones of daily living.

Prayer removes, perforces the dust of the every day life. Even if you say only two words, 'O God', and think of what those words imply, you cannot remain as involved in your problem, as distracted by the hustle and bustle of your occupations or as absorbed in your pleasures or your sorrows, as you were before. And to pray one usually says much more than that. For example: two people are sincerely in love with each other, their love is a beautiful thing; it lifts them above themselves; it brings them an happiness they never had before. It seems to open the door on a better world that they ever know existed.

Gradually, they find their love less beautiful, they see faults in each other, they listen perhaps to the whispers and criticisms of others; their love becomes sullied by a mass of little nagging trivialities. If they do not recognize this fact, they do not make an effort not to lose

the big thing because of the accretion of a lot of small non-essentials and they find their love entirely blotted out; worst still they believe that they never had it.

The vary nature of life in this material world seems to tend to confusion and entanglement, if one is not careful; if one does not concertedly resort out the big values from the little ones. It is much the same with our relationship with God. Details, interminably they pile up; little thoughts, little acts, little feelings, little worries until the sun is no longer reflected in the mirror, until sometimes we forget there ever was a mirror for a sun. Prayer wipes this dust of living off that inner mirror and as the light of the truth of the real eternal values, shines in to it, we find our way clearer. All the muddles we fall in are pushed in to perspective. And we see again what is essential and what is nonessential. More over we can tap the infinite resources our 'Friend' places at our disposal and we draw new strength and confidence to go on with the tasks of life.

If people would see their inner lives as subject to laws they would neither be in the

state of confusion they are at present, nor would they, as is so often the case, find the secret of prayer only to lose it again. Then they realize that God's help was always at hand but they did not solicit it.

However, the tremendous centrifugal force at work in our ultra-civilized lives, so rushed, so full of diversions and problems, will again cast them- if they do not make an effort to prevent it- away from this new inner force they had discovered or rediscovered. "And Lo: it is absolute truth. So glorify the name of thy tremendous Lord". (69:18-37-51-52).

We are, when we come to think of it, very selfish and very impolite in our prayers. Every one asks 'I want this and I want that or take this away and do that for me; we seldom say thank you and still seldom we voice our praise, for all the good things God has done for us. It gets us out of our carping, greedy moods, when we do nothing but grumble and envy these who have more.

Just mumbling absent-mindedly some phrases and calling it praying is not likely to produce any results. Why should it? There is force of inertia to be over-come in every thing; whether it is the effort of stand-

ing up on your own legs before you walk, or collecting your thoughts before you think or pushing hard before you get something moving.

When you pray you have to put something in it, some sincerity, some urgency, some feeling, some insistence in order to get yourself 'tuned in', on that power station you are seeking to contact. It is there all the time but you have to get through it. If you believe it is there, the effort is infinitesimal because your very assurance is a magnet, an automatic tuner. But 'if you do not believe, you will have to learn; step by step. Try just the way one does with a new art. Go on doing it until you begin to get the response. You will open a passage through your own inhibitions, your problems, and your uncertainty to God. It must work because it is fulfilling the laws governing your own soul. The soul must be 'tuned in', consciously, dynamically, to its Creator in order to keep in spiritual health. Call your Lord to remembrance and surely He will remember you, in ways and along paths that respond most intimately to your innermost needs. Prayer during the later watches of the night/ stillness of the night- "O, thou, wrapped up in thy mantle.....!"