

असतो मा सद्गमय
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय
मृत्योर्मा अमृतङ्गमय

Lead me from the unreal to the Real;
Lead me from darkness to Light;
Lead me from death to immortality.

EXPERIMENTS WITH PRAYER

VOLUME 1

Edited by
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MMC SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
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PRAYER IS ENERGY

Prayer is the most powerful form of energy one can generate . . . Prayer like radium is a source of luminous, self-generating energy . . . In prayer, human beings seek to augment their finite energy by addressing ourselves to the Infinite source of all energy. When we pray, we link ourselves with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe. We ask that a part of this power be apportioned to our needs. Even in asking, our human deficiencies are filled and we arise strengthened and repaired . . . Whenever we address God in fervent prayer, we change both soul and body for the better.

— Alexis Carrel

A MATTER FOR EXPERIMENT

The electrical wizard Stinmetz said the greatest discoveries of the twentieth century would be in the realm of the spirit. He is right—and ONLY those who pray will make these discoveries.

You cannot put a pin through prayers nor hold them under a microscope, nor dissect them on an operating table. Each of us must go into the laboratory of his own soul, try most of his experiments alone, and exchange notes with other men who are trying similar experiments. Since there is but one witness to the inner experiment, it is liable to faulty observation, faulty memory and unconscious distortion. Words may not mean to the reader what they meant to the writer of the experience.

Some results can be seen by all men. If prayers are miraculously answered, if divided wills become integrated, if bad men become saints, if the lame walk, or the blind see, we have external evidence which is plain to us all. We need to devise better tests to show what results come from praying for others at a distance. The evidence on this question is verifiable. All doubts will be ended not by argument but by experimentation under test conditions.

— Frank Laubach.

Why this book ?

I believe in possibilities ;
I believe in the possibilities of prayer :
prayer makes available another energy—
the *ātmic* energy,
an energy more potent than atomic energy.

Any resource-utilisation is an art—
you need knowledge, skill, discipline, and habit,
to avail of any resource in a big way.
This *ātmic* energy resource-utilisation
is no exception.

The modern leader
needs all the resources he can command
to do a fair professional job.
He will do well
not to deny himself this one,
whatever the ' good ' reason.

Prayer has a place in the leadership armoury,
irrespective of the level or functional
area of leadership.

I use the word ' technique '
in a general sense, not in a technical sense.
Prayer is not only a technique—
it is much more than a mere technique
The word ' technique ' is used in the sense
that there are tested ways of
going about the job.

Since 1954 I have been commending
to my ' students '
prayer as a potential ' technique '
to utilise resources,
in particular, human resources.

Teachers and preachers exhort us to pray ;
so do many excellent books.
As it happens, there is
too much general exhortation,
and too little practical instruction.
**Since prayer is action,
know how on the practice of prayer
is all important.**

it is by a systematic study
of the man who prays,
says Alexis Carrel,

that we shall learn
in what consists
the phenomenon of prayer,
and its effects.

Some leaders like Gandhiji have observed
their own prayer behaviour
and given expression to it.
Others have observed
the prayer behaviour of some and reported.

Some of their writings have been **edited**
and presented in operational form
in the following pages.

In the future volumes,
other recorded experiments on prayer
will be presented.
I will appreciate
if the readers would bring to my attention
items that deserve to be made accessible
to a wider public.

The author takes the opportunity to thank
the copyright holders
for giving generous permission
to reproduce the extracts
from the writings of the great men.

Those of us in India are fortunate ;
we have a cultural tradition of prayer.
The opportunity here is
more one of refining our technique
than having a faith and forming a habit.
Let us not deny ourselves
this natural advantage.

10 October 1970 }
Bombay

N H. ATTREYA

A Life of Prayer : Some glimpses

GANDHIJI

Once in a while, a section of humanity gets the good fortune of having in their midst a great man of prayer, who is also a man of words. We, in India, had the fortune not so long ago.

Gandhiji practised the art of prayer for over five decades. Through spoken or written words, he shared his experiments with and experiences of prayer.

Since the aim of this book is to serve as an operational guide for those who wish to become adepts at the art of prayer, the editing of Gandhiji's experiences and expositions has not taken the chronological approach.

The extracts are from the published writings of Gandhiji.

To Gandhiji, prayer was "the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening".

And literally so.

At one of the hectic Congress Working Committee sessions, which went on till past midnight, Gandhiji got tired and, out of sheer exhaustion, went to sleep.

Within a few minutes thereafter, he got up quivering. Those nearby wondered why. Gandhiji murmured: "I forgot to pray before I called off the day".

After prayer, he went to bed — only to get up at his usual 3-30 in the morning to start the 'next' day.

According to Gandhiji, "prayers must not be delayed for anybody on earth. God's time never stops",

At a time when getting an appointment with the Viceroy of India was a Himalayan task, — and it is very difficult to visualise it today — Gandhiji received a note one day informing him of an appointment for him with His Excellency the Emperor's representative in India. The time given to him happened to clash with his evening prayer time. Gandhiji politely replied: "That happens to be my hour with God. Can you suggest another time please?"

He had unreserved faith in the power of prayer. When, during Mahatma's 21 days' fast undertaken in September 1924 for bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity, the doctor, noticing the extreme weakness of Gandhiji, at the end of twelve days of the fast, spoke to him about the perishing of the body. Gandhiji, with a smile gleaming in his eyes like sunshine, answered simply. "You have forgotten the power of prayer".

2. A Personal Testimony

Gandhiji was on his way to London to attend the Round Table Conference. On the ship, a congregational prayer was led by him and a post-prayer talk became a daily feature. One day, one of the passengers, a musalman youth, requested Gandhiji to give a personal testimony on prayer, "not a theoretical discourse but a narration of what he had felt and experienced as a result of prayer". Gandhi obliged.

"Prayer", said he, "has been the saving of my life. Without it I should have been a lunatic long ago. My Autobiography will tell you that I have had my fair share of the bitterest public and private experiences. They threw me into temporary despair, but if I was able to get rid of it, it was because of prayer. Now I may tell you, that prayer has not been part of my life in the sense that truth has been. It came out of sheer necessity, as I found myself in a plight when I could not possibly be happy without it. And the more my faith in God increased, the more irresistible became the yearning for prayer. Life seemed to be dull and vacant without it. I had attended the Christian service in South Africa, but it had failed to grip me. I could not join them in prayer. They supplicated God, but I could not do so, I failed egregiously. I started with disbelief in God and prayer and until at a late stage in life I did not feel anything like a void in life. But at that stage I felt that as food was indispensable for the body, so was prayer indispensable for the soul. In fact, food for the body is not so necessary as prayer for the soul. For starvation is often necessary in order to keep the body in health, but there is no such thing as prayer-starvation. You can not possibly have a surfeit of prayer. Three of the greatest teachers of the world — Buddha, Jesus, Mohammad — have left unimpeachable testimony that they found illumination through prayer and could not possibly live without it. But to come nearer home, millions of Hindus and Musalmans and Christians find their only solace in life in prayer. Either you believe them or vote them down as liars or self-deluded people. Well, then, I will say that this

lying has a charm for me, a truth-seeker, if it is 'lying' that has given me that mainstay or staff of life, without which I could not bear to live for a moment. In spite of despair staring me in the face on the political horizon, I have never lost my peace. In fact, I have found people who envy my peace. That peace, I tell you, comes from prayer. I am not a man of learning but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer. I am indifferent as to the form. Every one is a law unto himself in that respect. But there are some well-marked roads, and it is safe to walk along the beaten tracks, trod by the ancient teachers. Well, I have given my practical testimony. Let every one try and find that as a result of daily prayer he adds something new to his life, something with which nothing can be compared."

A Conversation on Prayer

Atheists, agnostics and advaitins used to call on Gandhiji and discuss the subject of prayer, knowing that he was no theorist. Of the discussions recorded with meticulous care by Mahadev Desai, one deserves the attention of every student of prayer.

Dr. Fabri: Can the Divine Mind be changed by prayer? Can one find it out by prayer?

Gandhiji: The Divine mind is unchangeable, but that Divinity is in everyone and everything — animate and inanimate. The meaning of prayer is that I want to evoke that Divinity within me. Now I may have that intellectual conviction, but not a living touch. And so when I pray for Swaraj or Independence for India, I pray or wish for adequate power to gain that Swaraj or to make the largest contribution I can towards winning it, and I maintain that I can get that power in answer to prayer.

Dr. Fabri: Then, you are not justified in calling it prayer. To pray means to beg or demand.

Gandhiji: Yes, indeed. You may say I beg it of myself, of my Higher Self, the Real Self with which I have not yet achieved complete identification. You may, therefore, describe it as a continual longing to lose oneself in the Divinity which comprises all.

Meditation or Imploration?

Dr. Fabri: And you use an old form to evoke this?

Gandhiji: I do. The habit of a lifetime persists, and I would allow it to be said that I pray to an outside Power. I am part of that Infinite, and yet such an infinitesimal part that I feel outside it. Though I give you the intellectual explanation, I feel without identification with the Divinity so small that I am nothing. Immediately I begin to say: 'I do this thing and that thing', I begin to feel that someone else, some Higher Power has to help me.

Dr. Fabri: Tolstoy says the same thing. Prayer really is complete meditation and melting into the Higher Self, though one occasionally does lapse in imploration like that of a child to his father.

Gandhiji: Pardon me. I would not call it a lapse. It is more in the fitness of things to say that I pray to God who exists somewhere up in the clouds; and the more distant He is, the greater is my longing for Him and I find myself in His presence in thought. And thought, as you know, has a greater velocity than light. Therefore, the distance between me and Him, though so incalculably great, is obliterated. He is so far, and yet so near.

My prayer not on a Different Level:

Dr. Fabri: It becomes a matter of belief, but some people like me are cursed with an acute critical faculty. For me, there is nothing higher than what Buddha taught, and no greater master. For, Buddha alone among the teachers of the world said: 'Don't believe implicitly what I say. Don't accept any dogma or any book as infallible.' There is for me no infallible book in the world, inasmuch as all were made by men, however inspired they may have been. I cannot hence believe in a personal idea of God, a Maharaja sitting on the Great White Throne listening to our prayers. I am glad that your prayer is on a different level.

Gandhiji: Let me remind you that you are again only partially true when you say prayer is on a different level. I told you that the intellectual conviction that I gave you is not eternally present with me. What is present is the intensity of faith, whereby I lose myself in an Invisible Power. And so, it is far truer to say that God has done a thing for me than that I did it. So many things have happened in my life for which I had intense longing, but which I could never have achieved myself. And I have always said to my co-workers it was in answer to my prayer. I did not say to them it was in answer to my intellectual effort to lose myself in the Divinity in me. The easiest and the correct thing for me to say is: "God has seen me through my difficulty".

Karma alone powerless

Dr. Fabri: But that you deserved by your Karma. God is Justice and not Mercy. You are good man and good things happen to you.

Gandhiji: No fear. I am not good enough for things to happen like that. If I went about with that philosophical conception of Karma, I should often come a cropper. My Karma would not come to my help. Although I believe in the inexorable Law of Karma, I am striving to do so many things: every moment of my life is strenuous endeavour, which is an attempt to build up more Karma, to undo the past and add to the present. It is, therefore, wrong to say that because my past is good, good is happening at present. The past would be soon exhausted, and I have to build up the future. I tell you Karma alone is powerless. 'Ignite this match,' I say to myself, and yet I cannot if there is no co-operation from without. Before I strike the match, my hand is paralyzed; or I have only one match and the wind blows it off. Is it an accident or God or Higher Power? Well, I prefer to use the language of my ancestors or of children. I am no better than a child. We may try to talk learnedly and of books, but when it comes to brass tacks—when we are face to face with a calamity—we behave like children and begin to cry and pray and our intellectual belief gives no satisfaction.

Did not Buddha Pray?

Dr. Fabri: I know very highly developed men to whom belief in God gives incredible comfort and help in the building of character. But there are some great spirits that can do without it. That is what Buddhism has taught me.

Gandhiji: But Buddhism is one long prayer.

Dr. Fabri: Buddha asked everyone to find salvation for himself. He never prayed, he meditated.

Gandhiji: Call it by whatever name you like, it is the same thing. Look at his statues.

Dr. Fabri: But they are not true to life. They are 400 years later than his death.

Gandhiji: Well, give me your own history of Buddha, as you may have discovered it. I will prove that he was a praying Buddha. The intellectual conception does not satisfy me. I have not given you a perfect and full definition, as you cannot describe your own thought. The very effort to describe is a limitation. It defies analysis and you have nothing but scepticism as the residue.

Be humble

Dr. Fabri: What about the people who cannot pray?

Gandhiji: 'Be humble!', I would say to them, 'and do not limit even the real Buddha by your own conception of Buddha.' He could not have ruled the lives of millions of men that he did, and does today, if he was not humble enough to pray. There is something infinitely higher than intellect that rules us and even the sceptics. Their scepticism and philosophy do not help them in critical periods of their lives. They need something better, something outside them that can sustain them. And so, if someone puts a conundrum before me, I say to him: 'You are not going to know the meaning of God or Prayer, unless you reduce yourself to a cipher. You must be humble enough to see that in spite of your greatness and gigantic intellect, you are but a speck in the universe. A merely intellectual conception of the things of life is not enough. It is the spiritual conception which eludes the intellect, and which alone can give one satisfaction. Even monied men have critical periods in their lives; though they are surrounded by everything that money can buy and affection can give, they find at certain moments in their lives utterly distracted. It is in these moments that we have a glimpse of God, a Vision of Him who is guiding everyone of our steps in life. It is prayer.'

Dr. Fabri: You mean what we might call a true religious experience, which is stronger than intellectual conception. Twice in life I had that experience, but I have since lost it. But I now find great comfort in one or two sayings of Buddha: 'Selfishness is the cause of sorrow', 'Remember, monks, everything is fleeting.' To think of these takes almost the place of belief.

Gandhiji: That is prayer.¹

1. *Harijan*, Aug. 19, 1939

Prayer Practices :

Readers of Young India used to ask Gandhiji questions on ashram practice. To one of them, he replied at length detailing what they did at the group prayer sessions and why they did what they did and how the practices got evolved.

if insistence on truth constitutes the root of the Ashram, prayer is the principal feeder of that root. The social (as distinguished from the individual) activities of the Ashram commence every day with the congregational morning worship at 4-20 to 4-45 a.m. and close with the evening prayer at 7 to 7-30 p.m. Ever since the Ashram was founded, not a single day has passed to my knowledge without this worship...

The time for morning worship was as a matter of experiment fixed at 4, 5, 6 and 7 a.m. one after another. But on account of my persistently strong attitude on the subject, it has been fixed at last at 4-20 a.m. With the first bell at 4 every one rises from bed and after a wash reaches the prayer ground by 4-20 .

Then again we have to take a decision on certain questions. Where should the prayers be offered ? Should we erect a temple or meet in the open air ? Then again, should we raise a platform or sit in the sands or the dust ? Should there be any images ? At last we decided to sit on the sands under the canopy of the sky and not to install any image .

At the morning prayer we first recite the shlokas (verses) printed in **Ashram Bhajanavali** (hymnal), and then sing one **bhajan** (hymn) followed by **Ramadhun** (repetition of Ramanama) and **Gitapath** (recitation of the Gita). In the evening we have recitation of the last 19 verses of the second chapter of the Gita, one **bhajan** and **Ramadhun** and then read some portion of a sacred book.

At the evening prayer we recite the last 19 verses of the second chapter of the Gita as well as sing a hymn and repeat Ramanama. These verses describe the characteristics of the **sthitaprajna** (the man of stable understanding), which a Satyagrahi too must acquire, and are

recited in order that he may constantly bear them in mind .

Repeating the same thing at prayer from day to day is objected to on the ground that it thus becomes mechanical and tends to be ineffective. It is true that the prayer becomes mechanical. We ourselves are machines, and if we believe God to be our mover, we must behave like machines in His hands. If the sun and other heavenly bodies did not work like machines, the universe would come to a standstill. But in behaving like machines, we must not behave like inert matter. We are intelligent beings and must observe rules as such. The point is not whether the contents of the prayer are always the same or differ from day to day. Even if they are full of variety, it is possible that they will become ineffective. The Gayatri verse among Hindus, the confession of faith (kalma) among Musalmans, the typical Christian prayer in the Sermon on the Mount have been recited by millions for centuries every day; and yet their power has not diminished but is ever on the increase. It all depends upon the spirit behind the recitation. If an unbeliever or a parrot repeats these potent words, they will fall quite flat. On the other hand, when a believer utters them, always their influence grows from day to day. Our staple food is the same. The wheat-eater will take other things besides wheat, and these additional things may differ from time to time, but the wheat bread will always be there on the dining table. It is the eater's staff of life, and he will never weary of it. If he conceives a dislike for it, that is a sign of the approaching dissolution of his body. The same is the case with prayer .

Aspects of Prayer

Gandhiji wrote on prayer from time to time in the columns of Young India and Harijan. What appeared in print of course pale into insignificance compared with what used to take place in his daily post-prayer speeches. He touched practically on every conceivable aspect of prayer.

Why I Pray

What I am relating is not a fairy tale. I have not drawn an imaginary picture. I have summed up the testimony of men who have by prayer conquered every difficulty in their upward progress, and I have added my own humble testimony that the more I live the more I realize how much I owe to faith and prayer which is one and the same thing for me. And I am quoting an experience not limited to a few hours or days or weeks, but extending over an unbroken period of nearly 40 years. I have had my share of disappointments, uttermost darkness, counsels of despair, counsels of caution, subtlest assaults of pride; but I am able to say that my faith — and I know that it is still little enough — by no means as great as I want it to be has ultimately conquered every one of these difficulties up to now. ¹

There are numerous phenomena from which you can reason out the existence of God; but I shall not insult your intelligence by offering a rational explanation of that type. I would have you brush aside all rational explanation and begin with a simple child like faith on God. If I exist, God exists. With me it is a necessity of my being, as it is with millions. ²

I am giving you a bit of my experience and that of my companions when I say that he who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together, but not a single moment without prayer. For without prayer, there is no inward peace. ³

There is an eternal struggle raging in man's breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he who has not the sheet-anchor of prayer to rely upon will be a victim to the powers of darkness. The man of prayer will be at peace with himself and with the whole world;

the man who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable. Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and repose in our daily acts. ⁴

A heart-full prayer is undoubtedly the most potent instrument that man possesses for overcoming cowardice and all other bad old habits. ⁵

Prayer is like any other action. It bears fruit whether we see it or not, and the fruit of heart prayer is far more potent than action so-called. ⁶

Prayer is the most potent instrument of action. ⁷

No act of mine is done without prayer. Man is a fallible being. He can never be sure of his steps. What he may regard as an answer to prayer may be an echo of his pride. For infallible guidance man has to have a perfectly innocent heart incapable of evil. I can lay no such claim. Mine is a struggling, striving, erring, imperfect soul. But I can rise only by experimenting upon myself and others. ⁸

On all occasions of trial, He (God) has saved me. I know that the phrase 'God saved me' has a deeper meaning for me today, and still I feel that I have not yet grasped its entire meaning. Only richer experience can help me to a fuller understanding. But in all my trials of a spiritual nature, as a lawyer, in conducting institutions, and in politics — I can say that God saved me. When every hope is gone, 'when helpers fail and comforts flee', I experience that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. ⁹

1 *Young India*, Dec. 20, 1928.

2 " Sep. 24, 1931

3 " Jan. 23, 1930

4 " Jan. 23, 1930

5 " Dec. 20, 1928

6 *Harijan*, June 29, 1947 p 215

7 " April 14, 1946 p 80

8 *Young India* Sep. 25, 1924

9 *My Experiments with Truth* (1945) p. 63.

And to what God

God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know. To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality.¹

God is not some person outside ourselves or away from the universe. He pervades everything and is Omniscient as well as Omnipotent. He does not need any praise or petitions. Being immanent in all beings, He hears everything and reads our innermost thoughts. He abides in our hearts and is nearer to us than the nails are to the fingers.²

... is there one God for the Mussalmans and another for the Hindus, Parsis or Christians? No, there is only one Omnipotent and Omnipresent God. He is **named variously and we remember Him by the name which is most familiar to us**. It may be Ishwara, Allah, God, Khuda, Rahim, Razzak, Ahuse Mazad or Rama³

God may be called by any other name so long as it connotes the living Law of Life — in other words, the Law and the Law giver rolled into one.⁴

He and His Laws are one. The Law is God. Anything attributed to HIM is not a mere tribute. He is the attribute. He is Truth, Love, Law and a million other things that human ingenuity can name.⁵

Nature of Prayer : The Logic

It is inherent in man, imperfect though he be, ceaselessly to strive after perfection. In the attempt, he falls into reverie. And, just as a child tries to stand, falls down again and again and ultimately learns how to walk, even so man, with all his intelligence, is a mere infant as compared to the Infinite and Ageless God. This may appear to be an exaggeration, but is not. Man can only describe God in his own poor language. The Power we call God defies description. Nor does that Power stand in need of any human effort to describe Him. It is man who requires the means whereby he can describe that Power which is vaster than the ocean.

If this premise is accepted, there is no need to ask why we pray. Man can only conceive God within the limitations of his own mind. If God is vast and boundless as the ocean, how can a tiny drop like man imagine what He is? He can only experience what the ocean is like, if he falls into and is merged in it. This realization is beyond description. In Madame Blavatsky's language, man, in praying, worships his own glorified self. He can truly pray who has the conviction that God is within him. He who has not, need not pray. God will not be offended.

But I can say from experience that he who does not pray is certainly a loser. What matters, then, whether one man worships God as Person and another as Force? Both do right according to their lights. None knows, and perhaps never will know, what is the absolutely proper way to pray. The ideal must always remain the ideal. One need only remember that God is the Force among all the forces. All other forces are material. But God is the Vital Force or Spirit, which is all-pervading, all embracing and, therefore, beyond human ken.⁶

There can be no manner of doubt that this universe of sentient being is governed by a Law. If you can think of Law without its Giver, I would say that the Law is the Law-giver, that is God. When we pray to the Law we simply yearn after knowing the Law and obeying it. We become what we yearn after. **Hence, the necessity for prayer.**⁷

1 *Young India*, March 5, 1925

2 *Ashram Observances in Action* p 35

3 *Harijan*, April 28, 1946

4 „ Ap. 14, 1946

5 „ Feb. 16, 1934

6 „ Aug. 18, 1946

7 *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, p 227.

The Objective

The object of prayer is not to please God who does not want our prayers or praise, but to purify ourselves, to make us better men and women.¹

Prayer does for the purification of the mind what the bucket and the broom do for the cleaning up of our physical surroundings... No matter whether the prayer we recite is the Hindu prayer or the Muslim or the Parsi, its function is essentially the same, namely, purification of the heart.

There is nothing more potent in the universe than God's name. If we enthrone Him in our hearts and keep Him there always, we shall know no fear and lay for ourselves rich treasure in life.²

Prayer exerts an influence over ourselves; our soul becomes more vigilant, and the greater its vigilance, the wider the sphere of its influence. Prayer is a function of the heart. We speak aloud in order to wake it up. The Power that pervades the universe is also present in the human heart. The body does not offer it any obstruction. The obstruction is something of our own making, and is removed by prayer.³

The process of self-purification consists in a conscious realization of His presence within us. There is no strength greater than that which such realization gives.⁴

What is Prayer and What is Not

Prayer means asking God for something in a reverent attitude.....It seems to me that it is a yearning of the heart to be one with the Maker, an invocation for His blessing.⁵

Prayer is not an asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is a yearning of the soul to merge in the Divine Essence.⁶

Prayer is either petitional or in its wider sense is inward communion. In either case the ultimate result is the same. Even when it is petitional, the petition should be for the cleansing and purification of the soul, for freeing it from the layers of ignorance and darkness that envelops it. He, therefore, who hungers for the awakening of the divine in him must fall back on prayer. But prayer is no mere exercise of

words or of the ears. it is no mere repetition of empty formula. Any amount of repetition of Ramanama is futile if it fails to stir the soul. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart. It must be in clear response to the spirit which hungers for it. And even as a hungry man relishes a hearty meal, a hungry soul will relish a heart-felt prayer. And I am giving you a bit of my experience and that of my companions when I say that he who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together but not a single moment without prayer. For without prayer there is no inward peace...⁷

Prayer is further paraphrased as self-purification. When we speak out aloud at prayer time, our speech is addressed not to God but to ourselves, and is intended to shake off our torpor. Some of us are intellectually aware of God, while others are afflicted by doubt. None has seen Him face to face, We desire to recognize and realize Him, to become one with Him, and seek to gratify that desire through prayer.

This God, whom we seek to realize, is Truth. Or, to put it in another way, Truth is God. This Truth is not merely the truth we are expected to speak. It is that which alone is, which constitutes the stuff of which all things are made, which subsists by virtue of its own power, which is not supported by anything else but supports everything that exists. Truth alone is eternal, everything else is momentary. It need not assume shape or form. It is pure Intelligence as well as pure Bliss. We call it Ishwara because everything is regulated by its will. It and the Law it promulgates are one. Therefore, it is not a blind law. It governs the entire universe.⁸

1 *Harijan* - May 26, 1946

2 *From Prayer Speech* - Nov. 30, 1944

3 *The Diary of Mahadeve Desai* - p. 232, July 17, 1932

4 *Harijan* - May, 24, 1946

5 *Young India* - June 10, 1926, p. 211

6 *Harijan* - July 8, 1933

7 *Young India* - Jan. 23, 1930, p. 25

8 *Young India* - Jan. 23, 1930, p. 25

Ashram Observances in Action - p. 35

To propitiate this Truth is prayer, which in effect, means an earnest desire to be filled with the spirit of Truth. This desire should be present all the twenty-four hours. But our souls are too dull to have this awareness day and night. Therefore, we offer prayers for a short time in the hope that a time will come when all our conduct will be one continuously sustained prayer.

Forms of Prayer — Individual Prayer

I hold that individual prayer is a prelude to collective, as the latter, when it is effective, must lead to the individual. In other words, when a man has got to the stage of heart prayer, he prays always, whether in secret or in the multitude.⁹

Group prayer

It becomes a man to remember his Maker all the twenty-four hours. If that cannot be done, we should at least congregate at prayer time to renew our covenant with God. Whether we are Hindus or Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians or Sikhs we all worship the same God. Congregational prayer is a means for establishing the essential human unity through common worship. Mass singing of **Ramadhun** and the beating of **tal** are its outward expression. If they are not a mechanical performance but are an echo of the inner unison, as they should be, they generate a power and an atmosphere of sweetness and fragrance which has only to be seen to be realized.¹⁰

Anything that millions can do together becomes charged with a unique power... I am here to testify that when it is sung in tune to the accompaniment of **tal**, the triple accord of voice, the accompaniment and thought creates an atmosphere of ineffable sweetness and strength which no words can describe.¹¹

The object of our attending prayers is to commune with God and turn the searchlight inwards so that, with God's help, we can overcome our weaknesses. Even if there is only one pure man, the rest would be affected by that one man's purity. I go further and maintain that even if we all had our weaknesses but came to the (prayer) meeting with the intention of removing them, our collective effort made from day

to day would quicken the progress of reform. I, therefore, appeal to you to sit absolutely quiet with your eyes closed, so as to shut yourselves off from outside thoughts for a few minutes atleast.¹²

Facilitating Factors—Time for Prayer

I agree that, if a man could practise the presence of God all the twenty four hours, there would be no need for a **separate time for prayer**. But most people find this impossible. The sordid everyday world is too much with them. For them the practice of complete withdrawal of the mind from all outward things even though it might be only for a few minutes everyday, will be found to be of infinite use.¹³

Place for Prayer

It depends upon our mental condition, whether we gain something or do not gain anything by going to the temples. We have to approach these temples in a humble and penitent mood. There are so many Houses of God. Of course, God resides in every human form, indeed in every particle of His creation, everything that is on this earth. But since we, very fallible mortals, do not appreciate the fact that God is everywhere, we impute special sanctity to temples and think that God resides there. And so, when we approach these temples, we must cleanse our bodies, our minds and our hearts, and we should enter them in a prayerful mood and ask God to make us purer men and purer women for having entered their portals.¹⁴

Preparation

People come together for prayers in order to obtain peace, to hear God's name and to recite it. Therefore those who come should reatly attune themselves even at the start from their homes.¹⁵

The Real Temple

God is not in temples, but in the heart of man.

9 *Harijan* — Sep. 26, 1946

10 „ — March 3, 1946

11 „ — April 7, 1946

12 *From a Prayer speech* — June 27, 1945

13 *Harijan* — April 28, 1946, p. 109

14 „ — Jan. 13, 1937

15 *From a Prayer speech* — May 6, 1946

But if man has installed the ego in his heart, what room is there for poor God? I use the word 'poor' advisedly, for by turning Him out of our hearts, we reduce God to that state. It is our duty to know ourselves. If God is within us, we have to go deep within ourselves to find Him.¹⁶

Ego to Go

It is the ego in man that has to go if he is to find God. If the will to find God is there, then all thought of 'mine' and 'thine' must go. The whole outlook on life will then become different. All work will, then, be undertaken not for oneself, but for all.¹⁷

Purity :

The prayers of those whose tongues are nectared but whose hearts are full of poison are never heard. He, therefore, who would pray to God, must cleanse his.¹⁸

Readiness to help :

Prayer to God to enable one to relieve the suffering of others must mean a longing and a readiness on one's part to labour for it.¹⁹

Attitude to Suffering :

Only he who is prepared to suffer can pray to God.²⁰

Humility :

I have not the slightest doubt that prayer is an unailing means of cleansing the heart of passions, But it must be combined with the utmost **humility**.²¹

Meditation :

True meditation consists in closing the eyes and ears of the mind to all else except the object of one's devotion. Hence the closing of eyes during prayers is an aid to such concentration. Man's conception of God is naturally limited. Each one has, therefore, to think of Him as best appeals to him, provided that the conception is pure and uplifting.²²

Form :

He is a personal God, to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied in those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply **is** to those who have faith. He is all things to all men.²³

No Retreat :

Success does not always attend the very first effort at such real living prayer. We have to strive against ourselves, we have to believe in spite of ourselves, because months are as our years. We have, therefore, to cultivate illimitable patience if we will realize the efficacy of prayer. There will be darkness, disappointment and even worse; but we must have courage enough to battle against all these and not succumb to cowardice, There is no such thing as retreat for a man of prayer.²⁴

Faith :

Prayer is an impossibility without a **living faith** in the presence of God within.²⁵

God answers prayer in His own way, not ours. His ways are different from the ways of mortals. Hence they are inscrutable. Prayer presupposes faith.²⁶

A man of prayer must know no disappointment, because he knows that the times are in His hands who is the Arch Planner and does everything in His good time. A man of prayer, therefore, waits in faith and patience always.²⁷

If you would ask Him to help you, you should go to Him in all your nakedness, approach Him without reservations, also without fear or doubts as to how He can help a fallen being like you. He who has helped millions who have approached Him, is He going to desert you? He makes no exceptions whatsoever, and you will find that every one of your prayers will be answered. The prayer of even the most impure will be answered. I am telling this out of my personal experience. I have gone through purgatory.²⁸

16 *From a Prayer speech - Oct. 1, 1946*

17 " - Feb. 1, 1946

18 *Young India - Sep. 29, 1925, p. 331*

19 *Harijan - April 28, 1946, p. 111*

20 *Young India - Oct. 23, 1924*

21 *A - pp. 51-52*

22 *Harijan - August 18, 1946, p. 265*

23 *Young India - March 5, 1925*

24 " - Dec. 20, 1928

25 " - Dec. 20, 1920, p. 420

26 *Harijan - Dec. 24, 1938, p. 315*

27 " - June 29, 1947, p. 215

God's Will

There is really only one prayer that we may offer :

"Thy will be done!"

Someone will ask where is the sense in offering such a prayer. The answer is: Prayer should not be understood in a gross sense. We are aware of the presence of God in our heart, and in order to shake off attachment, we, for the moment, think of God as different from ourselves and pray to Him. That is to say, we do not wish to go where our wayward will may lead us, but where the Lord takes us.²⁹

Some Questions and Answers

One item that used to figure frequently in the correspondence columns of Young India and Harijan was prayer. Gandhiji used to answer patiently even the most 'absurd' questions.

How to and whom to Pray ?

"Often, Sir, do you ask us to worship God, to pray but never tell us how to and to whom to do so. Will you kindly enlighten me?" asks a reader of Navajivan.

Worshipping God is singing the praise of God. Prayer is a confession of one's unworthiness and weakness. We may worship or pray to Him by whichever name that pleases us. Some call Him Rama, some Krishna, others call Him Rahim, and yet others call Him God. All worship the same spirit, but as all foods do not agree with all, all names do not appeal to all. Each chooses the name according to his associations, and He being the In-Dweller, All-Powerful and Omniscient knows our innermost feelings and responds to us according to our deserts.

Worship or prayer, therefore, is not to be performed with the lips, but with the heart. And that is why it can be performed equally by the dumb and the stammerer, by the ignorant and the stupid. He, therefore, who would pray to God, must cleanse his heart. It is faith that steers us through stormy seas. That faith is nothing but a living, wide awake consciousness of God within.

How is the heart to be cleansed to this extent?"

I have, therefore, suggested the Religion of Service as the means. God of Himself seeks

for His seat the heart of him who serves his fellowmen. That is why Narasinha Mehta who "saw and knew" sang, "He is a true Vaishnava who knows to melt at other's woe." Such was Abu Ben Adam. He served his fellowmen, and therefore, his name topped the list of those who served God.³⁰

True Mediation

A Correspondent writes:

"You say that the rule should be that during prayers, everyone should sit with closed eyes and think of nothing but God. The question arises as to how and in what form we have to think of God?"

True meditation consists in closing the eyes and ears of the mind to all else, except the object of one's devotion. Hence the closing of eyes during prayers is an aid to such concentration. Man's conception of God is naturally limited. Each one has, therefore, to think of Him as best appeals to him, provided that the conception is pure and uplifting.³¹

Meaning of 'Inner voice'

Q: Does the "Inner Voice" mean the "message of God"?

A: The "Inner Voice" may mean a message from God or the Devil, for both are wrestling in human breast. Acts determine the nature of the voice.³²

Faith transcends reason

Q: What counsel do you give to the young men who are fighting a losing battle with their lower selves and come to you for advice?

A: Simply prayer. One must humble one-self utterly, and look beyond oneself for strength.

Q: But what if the young men complain that their prayer is not heard, that they feel like speaking to brass heavens, as it were?

A: To want an answer to one's prayer is to tempt God. If prayer fails to bring relief, it

28 *From a Prayer speech - June 17, 1946*

29 *The Diary of Mahadev Desai - May 19, 1932, p. 118*

30 *Young India - Sep. 24, 1925*

31 *Harijan - Aug. 18, 1946*

32 *Young India - Feb. 13, 1930*

is only lip-prayer. If prayer does not help, nothing else will. One must go on ceaselessly.

Q: The difficulty with our youth is that the study of science and modern philosophy has demolished their faith, and so they are burnt up by the fire of disbelief.

A: That is due to the fact that with them faith is an effort of the intellect, not an experience of the soul. Intellect takes us along in the battle of life to a certain limit, but at the crucial moment it fails us. Faith transcends reason. It is when the horizon is the darkest and human reason is beaten down to the ground, that faith shines brightest and comes to our rescue. It is such faith that our youth requires, and this comes when one has shed all pride of intellect and surrendered oneself entirely to His will.³³

Belief and unbelief

Q. Sir, whilst you start with belief in God, we start with unbelief. How are we to pray?

A. There are certain things which are self-proved and certain things which are not proved at all. The existence of God is like a geometrical axiom. He may be beyond our heart grasp. I shall not talk of the intellectual grasp. Intellectual attempts are more or less failures, as a rational explanation cannot give you the faith in a living God. For it is a thing beyond the grasp of reason. It transcends reason. There are numerous phenomena from which you can reason out the existence of God, but I shall not insult your intelligence by offering you a rational explanation of that type. I would have you brush aside all rational explanations and begin with a simple childlike faith in God. If I exist, God exists

I am only asking you to restore the belief that has been undermined. In order to do so, you have to unlearn a lot of literature that dazzles your intelligence and throws you off your feet. Start with the faith which is also a token of humility and an admission that we know nothing, that we are less than atoms in this universe. We are less than atoms, I say, because the **atom** obeys the

laws of its being, whereas we in the insolence of our ignorance deny the law of nature. But I have no argument to address to those who have no faith.

Once you accept the existence of God, the necessity for prayer is inescapable. Let us not make the astounding claim that our whole life is a prayer and, therefore, we need not sit down at a particular hour to pray. Even men who were all their time in tune with the Infinite did not make such a claim. Their lives were a continuous prayer, and yet for our sake, let us say, they offered prayer at set hours, and renewed each day the oath of loyalty to God. God of course never insists on oath, but we must renew our pledge every day, and I assure you we shall then be free from every imaginable misery in life.³⁴

Repetition of Prayer

Ceresole: This repetition of one and the same thing over and over again jars on me. It may be the defect of my rationalist mathematical temperament. But, somehow, I cannot like the repetition. For instance, even Bach's wonderful music fails to appeal to me when the text 'father, forgive them, they know not what they do', is repeated over and over again.

Gandhiji: But even in mathematics you have your recurring decimals.

Ceresole: But each recurs with a definite new fact.

Gandhiji: Even so, each repetition, or japa as it is called, has a new meaning, each repetition carries you nearer and nearer to God. This is a concrete fact: and I may tell you that you are here talking to no theorist, but to one who has experienced what he says every minute of his life, so much so that it is easier for the life to stop than for this incessant process to stop. It is a definite need of the soul.

Ceresole: I quite see it, but for the average man it becomes an empty formula.

Gandhiji: I agree that the best thing is liable to be abused. There is room for any amount of

33 *Young India* — March 21, 1929

34 „ — Sep. 24, 1931

hypocrisy, but even hypocrisy is an *ode* to virtue. And I know that for ten thousand hypocrites, you would find millions of simple souls who find their solace from it. It is like scaffolding, quite essential to a building.

Ceresole: But, if I may carry the simile a little further you agree that the scaffolding has to be removed when the building is complete?

Gandhiji: Yes, it would be removed when this body is removed.

Ceresole: Why?

Gandhiji: Because we are eternally striving after perfection. God alone is perfect, man is never perfect.³⁵

Prayer and Intersession

Q. What is your method of worship?

A. We have joint worship morning and evening at 4-20 a.m. and 7 p.m. This has gone on for years. We have a recitation of verse from the Gita and other accepted religious books, also hymns of saints with or without music. Individual worship cannot be described in words. It goes on continuously and even unconsciously. There is not a moment when I do not feel the presence of a Witness, whose eye misses nothing and with whom I strive to keep in tune. I do not pray as Christian friends do. Not because I think there is anything wrong in it but because words won't come to me. I suppose it is a matter of habit.

Q. Is there any place for supplication in your prayer?

A. There is and there is not. God knows and anticipates our wants. The Deity does not need my supplication, but I, a very imperfect human being do need His protection as a child that of its father. And yet, I know that nothing that I do is going to change His plans. You may call me a fatalist, if you like.

Q. Do you find any response to your prayer?

A. I consider myself a happyman in that respect. I have never found Him lacking in response. I have found Him nearest at hand when the horizon seemed darkest - in my ordeals in jails, when it was not all

smooth-sailing for me. I cannot recall a moment in my life when I had a sense of desertion by God.³⁶

Proof

PRAYER is the greatest binding force, making for the solidarity and oneness of the human family. If a person realized his unity with God through prayer, he will look upon everybody as himself. There will be no high, no low, no narrow provincialisms or petty rivalries. There will be no invidious distinction between a touchable and untouchable, a Hindu and a Mussalman, a Parsi, a Christian or a Sikh. Similarly there would be no scramble for personal gain or power between various groups or between different members within a group.³⁷

I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction, But they have the same source. I cannot, therefore, detach myself from the wickedest soul nor may I be denied identity with the more virtuous. Whether, therefore, I will or not, I must involve in my experiment the whole of my kind. Nor can I do without experiment. Life is but an endless series of experiments.³⁸

A final word

*Begin therefore your day with prayer, and make it so soulful that it may remain with you until the evening. Close the day with prayer so that you may have a peaceful night free from dreams and nightmares. Do not worry about the form of prayer. Let it be any form, it should be such as can be put into communion with the divine. Only, whatever be the form, let not the spirit wander while the words of prayer run out of your mouth.*³⁹

Grateful acknowledgement is hereby made to the Navjivan Trust for permission to reproduce these extracts from Gandhiji's writings.

35 *Harijan* — May 25, 1935

36 " — Dec. 24, 1933

37 " — March 3, 1946

38 *Young India* — Sep. 25, 1924

39 " — Jan. 23, 1930

ALEXIS CARREL

— *Scientist & Nobel Laureate*

Preface

The author is neither a theologian nor a philosopher..... This study of prayer is a very brief summing up of innumerable observations gathered during the course of a long career among the most diverse people..... His experience as a surgeon, as a doctor, as a physiologist, the studies in the laboratory to which he devoted himself for many years on the regeneration of the tissues and the healing of wounds, have enabled him to appreciate at their true value certain curative effects of prayer. He speaks only of things which he has himself verified or which he knows from men capable of honest and precise observations. He has preferred to be incomplete rather than to cite facts insufficiently proved. Above all, he has striven to remain on the solid ground of reality. To speak of prayer to the men of today seems at first sight to be a quite useless endeavour. Is it not, however, indispensable that we should know all the activities of which we are capable? For we cannot leave unused one of these powers without great danger to us and our

The extracts are from Dr. Carrel's book PRAYER. (Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., London, 1947)

The book seems to be out of print and out of stock and is certainly a rarity as far as the Indian reader is concerned. The editor, therefore, has taken the unusual liberty of reproducing extensive extracts from Dr. Carrel's book in the belief that it will serve the significant purpose for which the Nobel Laureate wrote this piece.

descendants. The atrophy of the sense of the holy and of the moral sense reveals itself as harmful as the atrophy of the intelligence. These lines apply therefore to all — to unbelievers, as well as to believers.

Definition of Prayer

Prayer seems to be essentially a tension of the spirit towards the immaterial substratum of the world... In general, it consists in a complaint... Prayer represents the effort of a man to communicate with an invisible being..... Far from consisting in a simple recitation of formulas, true prayer represents a mystic state when the consciousness is absorbed in God. This state is not of an intellectual nature. ...This God, so approachable by him who knows how to love, is hidden from him who knows only how to understand. Thought and word are at fault when it is a matter of describing this state.

How to Pray

To pray, it is only necessary to make the effort of reaching out towards God. This effort must be affective and not intellectual. For example, a meditation on the greatness of God is not a prayer, unless it is at the same time an expression of love and of faith Whether short or long, whether vocal or only mental, prayer should be like the conversation of a child with its father..... In fine, one prays as one loves, with one's whole being.

Form of Prayer

As to the form of prayer, it varies from the short aspiration towards God, upto contemplation, from the simple words spoken by a country woman before the Calvary at the cross road, up to the magnificent Gregorian chanting under the arches of the cathedral. Solemnity, grandeur and beauty are not necessary to the efficacy of prayer..... Our most humble words of supplication and praise seem as acceptable to the Master of all beings, as the most beautiful invocations. Formulae mechanically recited are in some wise a prayer, even as the flame of a Church candle. It is sufficient that these inert formulae and this material flame should symbolise the flight towards God of a human being. One prays also by action. ...The best way of communing with God is without doubt fully to

accomplish His will. And doing God's will manifestly consists in obeying the laws of life, as they are inscribed in our tissues, our blood and our spirit.

Substance of Prayer

Prayers, which rise like a great cloud from the surface of the earth, differ from each other as much as the personalities of those who pray. But they consist of variations on two main themes: distress and love. It is entirely legitimate to implore the help of God to obtain what we need. Yet it would be absurd to ask for the gratification of a whim or for what our own effort would procure. The importunate, obstinate, aggressive petition is heard. A blind man, seated by the way-side shouted his supplications more and more loudly in spite of those who wanted to silence him.

"Thy faith hath made thee whole", said Jesus, who was passing that way. At its loftiest, prayer ceases to be a petition. Man lays bare to the Master of all things, that he loves Him, that he thanks Him for His gifts, that he is ready to accomplish His will, whatever it is. Prayer becomes contemplation. An old peasant was sitting alone in the back pew of an empty church. "What are you waiting for?" he was asked. "I am looking at him", he answered, "and He is looking at me." The value of a technique is measured by its results. Every technique of prayer is good which draws man nearer to God.

Where and when to pray?

Where and when to pray? One can pray any where. In the road, in a car, in a railway carriage, in the office, in the school, in the factory. But one prays better in the fields, the mountains and the woods, or in the solitude of one's own room. . . . But whatever the place of prayer, God only speaks to the man who has established calm within himself. Inward calm depends at the same time on our organic and mental state and on the milieu in which we are plunged. Peace of body and spirit is difficult to obtain in the confusion, the bustle and the dispersion of the modern city. There is need today of places for prayer, preferably churches where the townspeople can find, if only for a brief moment, the physical and psychological conditions indis-

pensable to their inward tranquility. It would neither be difficult nor costly to create thus little islets of peace, attractive and beautiful in the centre of the uproar of the city. In the silence of these refuges, men could, in lifting up their thoughts to God, rest their muscles and their organs, relax their spirit, clarify their judgement and receive the strength to support the hard life under which our civilisation crushes them.

It is when prayer becomes a habit that it operates on the character. It is necessary therefore to pray frequently. "Think of God more often than you breathe," said Epictetus. . . . Very brief thoughts or mental invocations can hold a man in the presence of God. All conduct is then inspired by prayer. Thus understood, prayer becomes a way of life.

Effects of prayer

Prayer is always followed by a result if made under proper conditions. "No man has ever prayed without learning something" wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. Nevertheless prayer is looked upon by modern men as a useless habit, a vain superstition, a remnant of an uncivilised existence. In truth, we are almost completely ignorant of its effects.

Nevertheless, the habit of prayer, though exceptional amongst the whole population, is relatively frequent among the groups that have remained faithful to the ancestral religion. It is within these groups that it is still possible today to study its influence. Among its innumerable effects, the doctor above all has the opportunity of observing those we call psycho-physiological and curative.

Psycho-Physiological effects

Prayer acts on the spirit and on the body in a way which seems to depend on its quality, its intensity and its frequency. It is easy to perceive the frequency of prayer, and to a certain extent its intensity. Its quality remains unknown, for we have not the means of measuring others' faith and their capacity for love. Yet, the way in which he who prays lives can enlighten us on the quality of the invocations he puts up to God. Even when prayer is weak and consists mainly of mechanical recitations, it exerts an effect on the behaviour. It strengthens at the same time the sense of the holy and the moral

sense. In the centres where prayer is wont to be made, there is a certain persistence in the sentiment of duty and of responsibility, less jealousy and wickedness, a certain kindness toward others. It appears manifest that with equal intellectual development, character and moral value are higher among individuals who pray, even in a mediocre way, than among those who do not pray.

When prayer is habitual and really fervent, its influence becomes very clear. It is slightly comparable to that of an internal secretion gland, as for example the thyroid gland or the suprarenal gland. It consists in a kind of mental and organic transformation. This transformation operates in a progressive way. One might say that in the depths of consciousness a flame is kindled. Man sees himself as he is. He discovers his egoism, his cupidity, his errors of judgement, his pride. He bends himself to the accomplishment of moral duty. He endeavours to acquire intellectual humility. Thus there opens before him the Kingdom of Grace... little by little an inward appeasement is produced, a harmony of the nervous and moral activities, a greater endurance in regard to poverty, slander, worries, the capacity for enduring without enfeeblement the loss of dear ones, pain, illness, death. A doctor who sees a patient give himself to prayer can indeed rejoice. The calm engendered by prayer is a powerful aid to healing.

However, prayer must not be likened to morphia. For it leads, at the same time as to tranquility, to an integration of the mental activities, a sort of flowering of the personality. Sometimes heroism. It stamps its believers with a peculiar seal. The purity of the glance, the tranquility of the bearing, the serene joy of the expression, the virility of the conduct, and when necessary, the simple acceptance of the soldier's or martyr's death, betray the presence of the treasure hidden in the depths of the organs and the spirit. Under this influence, even the ignorant, the backward, the feeble, the poorly endowed make better use of their intellectual and moral forces. Prayer, it seems, lifts men above the mental stature which belongs to them by their heredity and their education. This contact with

God impregnates them with peace. And peace radiates from them. And they carry peace wherever they go. Unhappily there is at present in the world a very small number of people who know how to pray in an effective way.

Curative Effects

It is the curative effects of prayer which in all epochs have chiefly attracted the attention of men. Even today, among people who pray, one speaks fairly frequently of healings obtained in answer to supplication addressed to God and His saints. But when it is a matter of illnesses susceptible of spontaneous cure, or from the help of ordinary medications, it is difficult to know which has been the real agent of healing. It is only in the cases where all therapeutics are inapplicable or have failed, that the results of prayer can be surely proved. The medical board of Lourdes has rendered a great service to science in demonstrating the reality of the cures. Prayer has sometimes, so to speak, an explosive effect. Patients have been cured almost instantaneously of affections such as lupus of the face, cancer, kidney troubles, ulcers, tuberculosis of the lungs, of the bones or peritoneum. The phenomenon is produced nearly always in the same way. Great pain, then the feeling of being cured. In a few seconds, at most a few hours, the symptoms disappear and the anatomic lesions mend. The miracle is characterised by extreme acceleration of the normal processes of healing. Never has such an acceleration been observed up till now in the course of their experiences by surgeons and physiologists,

For these phenomena to take place, it is not necessary for the patient to pray. Little children still unable to speak and unbelievers have been cured at Lourdes. But near them, some one prayed. Prayer made for another is always more fruitful than when made for oneself. It is on the intensity and the quality of the prayer that its effect seems to depend. At Lourdes miracles are much less frequent than they were forty or fifty years ago. For the sick no longer find there the atmosphere of profound contemplation which formerly reigned there. The pilgrims have become tourists and their prayers inefficacious,

Such are the results of prayer of which I have a sure knowledge. Alongside these, there is a multitude of others. The history of saints, even of modern saints, mentions many marvellous cases. It is unquestionable that most of the miracles attributed, for example, to the Cure d'Ars, are veridical. This mass of phenomena introduces us into a new world, the exploration of which has not begun and will be fertile in surprises. What we already know for certain is that prayer produces tangible effects. However strange this may appear, we must consider as true, that whosoever asks receives, and that the door is opened to him who knocks.

Meaning of Prayer

To sum up, everything happens as if God listened to man and answered him. The effects of prayer are not an illusion. One must not reduce the sense of the holy to the anguish experienced by man before the dangers which encompass him and before the mystery of the universe. Nor must one make simply of prayer a sedative, a remedy against our fear of suffering, of illness and of death. What then is the meaning of the sense of the holy? And what place does nature itself assign to prayer in our life?

...To succeed, life must be led following invariable rules which depend on its very structure. We run a grave risk when we allow to die in ourselves some fundamental activity, whether it be of the physiological, intellectual or spiritual order. For example, the neglect of the development of the muscles, of the bodily frame and of the non-rational activities of the spirit among certain intellectuals is as disastrous as the atrophy of the intelligence and of the moral sense among certain athletes. There are innumerable examples of prolific and strong families which produce only degenerates or die out, after the disappearance of ancestral beliefs and the cult of honour. We have learnt from hard experience that the loss of the moral sense and of the sense of the holy in the majority of the active elements of a nation leads to the downfall of that nation and its subjection to the foreigner. The downfall of ancient Greece was preceded by an analogous phenomenon. From all the evidence, the suppression

of mental activities required by nature is incompatible with the fulfilment of like.

In practice, the moral and religious activities are bound together. The moral sense vanishes soon after the sense of the holy. Man has not succeeded in building, as Socrates desired, a moral system independent of all religious doctrine. **Societies in which the need for prayer has disappeared are generally not far from degeneracy.** That is why all civilised peoples – unbelievers as well as believers – must be concerned with this grave problem of the development of every basic activity of which the human being is capable.

For what reason does the sense of the holy play such an important role in the fulfilment or life? By what mechanism does prayer operate upon us? Here we leave the domain of observation for that of hypothesis. But hypothesis, though risky, is necessary to the progress of knowledge. We must remember, first of all, that man is an indivisible whole composed of tissues, organic liquids and of consciousness. He is not therefore entirely contained within the four dimensions of time and space. For consciousness, if it dwells in our organs, at the same time extends beyond the physical continuum. On the other hand, the living body which seems to us independent of its material environment, that is to say of the physical universe is in reality inseparable from it. For it is intimately bound to this milieu by its incessant need of the oxygen of the air and the foods provided by the earth. Are we not permitted to believe that we are plunged into a spiritual milieu which we could no more do without than the material universe, that is to say the earth and the air? And this milieu would be none other than the Immanent Being, in all beings and transcending them all, whom we call God. **Prayer could then be considered as the agent of natural relations between consciousness and its own milieu.** As a biological activity dependent upon our structure. In other words, like a normal function of our body and of our spirit.

Conclusion

To sum up, the sense of the holy takes on, in relation to the other activities of the spirit, a

singular importance. For it puts us in communication with the mysterious immensity of the spiritual world. It is by prayer that man reaches God and that God enters into him. Prayer appears to be indispensable to our highest development. We should not look upon prayer as an act in which only the weak-minded, the beggars or cowards indulge, "It is a shameful thing to pray" wrote Nietzsche. In fact, it is no more shameful to pray than to drink or to breathe. Man needs God as he needs water and oxygen. Joined to intuition, to the moral sense, to the sense of the beautiful and to the light of intelligence, the sense of the holy gives to the personality its full flowering. There is no doubt that fulfilment of life demands the integral development of each of our activities, physiological, intellectual, affective and spiritual. Spirit is at the same time reason and sentiment. We must therefore love the beauty of science and also the beauty of God. We must listen to Pascal with as much favour as we listen to Descartes.

ROSALIND RINKER

—Writer, missionary and evangelical worker

Conversational Prayer

Quietly, reverently and with a sharp consciousness that Another was with us, we began to converse with Him about our friends. All the "padding" of unnecessary prayer-language slipped away. We spoke face to face, feeling certain that He cared for the ones we brought to Him. There seemed to be no need of the final Amen at the close of each prayer. We were just talking with Him and each other, I spoke, and she spoke, and we waited for Him to reply in that still, small voice within our hearts.

This was not a new technique we had stumbled upon. It was too natural and too familiar to be new. Perhaps it was merely an unexpected turning back to the kind of childlike communion with Him which God intended in the first place. The term "conversational prayer" is not an unusual one. Neither is it original. I've found many groups of young people and adults using this direct, honest approach to God. Yet the word conversation needs a fresh defining.

What is conversation?

It is a method which should provide communication between two or more people. To understand conversational prayer, it will be a great help if we get the following four points about real conversation clearly in our minds.

1. When we converse, we *become aware*. Aware of the other person, his rights, his privileges, his feelings, and if we converse long enough, his total personality.

2. Good conversation implies that we must take turn about and do it gracefully. When one person does all the talking we call it (if we are polite) a monologue.

*This brief extract is from the author's book: **Prayer: Conversing with God.** (Pyramid Books, New York, 1968) — Reproduced with permission.*

3. Finally, it should be clear that to converse *we must all pursue the same subject*, and pursue it by turns. We are, in a sense, the listening and speaking members of a team. We have agreed to agree upon our subject of conversation, and to do this each one must decide what is relevant and important at the moment,

4. To carry on a conversation of any significance or interest, each person must use his memory to recall, his patience to wait, his alertness to jump in, his willingness to get out, and above all his capacity to hold back the disruptive. In other words, *he should be in tune*.

How does all this apply to prayer?

Let me tell you a true story.

Several years ago while I was visiting San Diego State College in California, Ray Williamson, president of the Christian student group, invited me to attend their daily prayer meeting. Later, as we walked across the campus the following conversation took place between Ray and me.

"Is there any special method you follow in your prayer meeting?" I asked.

"Yes, there is," replied Ray. "I usually start, and then the person next to me prays, and we go on around the circle until everyone has prayed."

Ray said a little latter :

"Ros has a few keen ideas for us, and I know they will help us have a better prayer meeting." Briefly I spoke to them.

"Instead of going around the circle today, let's remember consciously that *the Lord Jesus is right here*, in the center of this circle with us. He promised 'Where two or three are gathered, there am I.' Let's *speak* directly to *Him*, simply, honestly, just as we talk to anyone in whom we have real confidence. Let's say 'I' when we mean I, and 'we' if we mean the whole group.

Another important thing is to *pray by subjects*. If someone starts to pray for Joe Blow. two or three of the rest of you feel perfectly free to

pray for him, too. Be direct and simple. Then let's wait a moment before introducing a new name. The spirit will guide us. You can each pray four or five times if you want to, but let's keep to one subject at a time, and pray back and forth. As we open our hearts, the Holy Spirit will guide us concerning who to pray for, what to pray for and when to pray."

"Now remember, the Lord is here, We are speaking to Him. Pray in short sentences, and then let someone else have a chance. He will guide us."

There was silence.

I prayed first. "Lord Jesus, thank You that You are here. You said You would be and all of us want to thank You, and worship You. (Pause) Guide us now, as to whom we should pray for first."

Ray took it up: "Lord I want to pray for Tony, that Italian boy in my swim class. He's my buddy, and I've been wanting to talk with him about You, but I haven't done it yet. Please help me."

A young man across the circle took it next: "Why, Lord, I hadn't any idea Ray was in Tony's swim class. I've already talked to him about You. Bless Ray real good, and give him faith and courage and love for Tony. And help us to work together now."

A girl in the circle gasped audibly. "Oh, how wonderful!" Her spontaneous prayer continued. "Lord, I sit right *next to Tiny* in an English Lit. Class, and I've already lent him my HIS magazine. I was just wishing Tony knew some real Christian guy who'd talk to him. Why, isn't this wonderful! I had no idea that both Ray and Ted knew Tony!"

I prayed, Lord, "Lord, guide Ray and Ted very definitely. Show them the next step. Show them what you want them to do tomorrow. Help them show your kind of love to Tony in some definite way."

Ray couldn't wait any longer. He spoke up, and to the whole group. "Say, isn't this great! Hay, this is really neat!"

FRANK C. LAUBACH

— *One of the great Christian seers and prophets of our time.*

Intercessory and flash prayer

One Easter morning I entered a church in Bombay, a total stranger and sat in the rear pew. The sermon was hopelessly bad, and, I, who had come to receive an Easter blessing was exasperated, I said to God: "I atleast will help these cheated people." I began to pray in silence at the back of their heads, one at a time. To my astonished joy every person, almost the moment I prayed, either turned, or bowed his head, or looked toward the ceiling, or shook his head, or passed his hand over the back of his head. I have never before nor experienced such a one-hundred-per cent response.

Another day, I was looking at a man sitting by an open window half a block away. I shot a rapid fire of prayer at him, saying three or four times a second: "Jesus, friend, — Jesus is coming to you." In thirty seconds that man put his head in his hands and bent down over his desk, as though in prayer.

*These extracts are from the author's book: **Prayer: The mightiest force in the world.** (United Society for Christian Lecturer; London 1955). Reproduced with permission.*

A third day, I was on a train praying at the back of a woman's head with a picture of Hoffman's "Boy Christ" in my hand, when she suddenly turned around and said: "What the world needs is more religion." "Are you a missionary?" I asked her. "No," she said, "my husband is the conductor." "You must be a very religious woman," I said. "No," she replied, "I am a Methodist, but I don't do much at it." "Then why," I asked, "did you say the world needs more religion?" "I don't know," she replied, "but I just felt like talking about it."

Something of this kind is an everyday occurrence with us who pray for everybody we meet. It never happens unless we are praying.

Once we start cultivating intercessory prayer skill, we need not feel helpless... It is true only a small group of men is making plans for peace and taking the decisions for prosperity; it is true that only a few hundreds can reach their ears; but it is equally true that the humblest of us can pray. Millions of us can pour an incessant white light of prayer upon local, national, or international leaders everyday. We can thus lift the heads of those leaders toward God so that they will hear Him.

We can do more for the world with prayer than if we could walk into White House or the Kremlin and tell those men what to do — far more! If they listened to our suggestions, we should probably be more or less wrong. But what God tells them, when they listen to him, must be right. It is infinitely better for world leaders to listen to God than for them to listen to us...

The formula which would express "our helping God" is this:

My friend is closed toward God but open toward me. By prayer for him I open toward him and God. Then God speaks to him through me. My friend feels a desire for God and open toward him.

This is exactly what we do when we talk to our friend about God, or preach at him from a pulpit, or talk to him over the radio, or write him

a letter about God, or send him a Bible. The same thing happens when we pray, because the mind is a "mental radio". Many of us, because we believe this, pray with great faith—and when there is great faith there are great results.

We are needed as channels between God's power and the world's need. The more we think about self, the more we block the channel between God and His world. The more we eliminate self, the wider becomes our channel of blessing to others. Men's refusal to help others unless they get praise or profit is God's "Bottleneck" as He strives to bring in the Kingdom. God's greatest need is more than unselfishness, it is selflessness, wide-open channels for His love.

There is a well-known fable of heaven and hell. In hell they sit on both sides of a table, but their arms are straight and stiff, so that they cannot get the food to their mouths. In heaven they sit around the same kind of table with the same straight arms, but with one difference—they feed one another across the table. That table is not true of heaven and hell, but it is true of our earth now. All hunger is because we are too selfish to feed one another. Our thoughts and even our prayers have been too self-centered.

Methods in prayer

Pray with pencil and paper at hand. When God sends a thought, write it down and keep it visible until it can be carried into action. Pray for individuals by name. Vital prayers always suggest things to be done.

. . . One need not leave home nor neglect one's business. Everybody in every ordinary day has hundreds of chinks of idle wasted time which may be filled with flash prayers ten seconds or a minute long.

The thousands of people who travel, those who sell goods wholesale and retail, insurance men, government officials, soldiers, could make an immense contribution to human progress if they prayed for the strangers around them.

Some of us who travel much have hundreds of

days when we can sit behind people in tramcars, trains, stations, restaurants, concerts or lectures, and pray at the backs of their heads with our eyes open to see how many of them show signs of being aware.

A railway station is one of the best places in which to experiment if you have minutes or hours to wait for trains. Fix your eyes on any object you choose, and from that still position try to send a "mental radio field" around in all directions. One seems to "warm up" and gather strength exactly as a radio does when we turn it on. Some of us talk to God about the hopes He has for all the people about us. We send the "still, small" pressure of prayer toward one person at a time, whispering to God or to them, and watching to see who seems to hear and respond. Only those who try such experiments ever faintly imagine what good prayer in a railway station can do.

Some of us, while reading newspapers, pause for a second over the names of world leaders in print and whisper: "Lord, may this man be hungry for Thee." Or we simply breathe the word "Jesus" and the man's name together. This will not delay our reading more than a second, and we may be doing great good by holding Jesus and that man together in prayer, even for one second.

It is beautiful to acquire the habit of whispering "Jesus" at every person who comes to memory. This has a splendid retroactive effect upon ourselves, for it begets love instead of the spirit of criticism. It is a good corrective for that unlovely tendency we have to disapprove of others. The more unattractive people are, the more we need to love them and pray for the ideal they can, by God's help, become. Forget the man as he is, and think vividly of the man he ought to be — and your thought at once begins to force itself into reality.

Far from making one tired, this prayer for others is the finest tonic I know. When you are utterly tired from work or study, walk out into the street and flash prayers at people. Your nerves will tingle with the inflow from heaven. Prayer "is twice blest. It blesses him that gives and him that takes."

Lord, use my prayer—to help these people I am passing — to look up to Thee—to be hungry for Thy voice—to long to do.

They will—to hear Thee speak—to obey Thy voice—to do Thy will.

Prayer and action should be wedded. Prayer is weak until we do all we know to help in other ways.

Fix your thoughts upon what ought to come to pass, and not upon the things you dislike. Let the things we oppose die of neglect. For we help everything we think about — even when we are thinking against it!

The praying—and thinking—of nine people out of ten is too feeble, like a very low-grade broadcasting station. By persistent training we can make our thoughts and prayers louder and to reach much farther. Nobody, I think, has yet described any special technique for making our thoughts shout and our prayers broadcast far. That there is a direct relation between intensity and out-reach is suggested by the fact that so many people get messages at a great distance when their dear ones are frightened or in an accident.

Moreover, people do not like to be reproved in prayer. If others fail in this experiment, possibly one reason may be that they try to convey ideas disagreeable or irrelevant to the receiver. So if you want your prayers to get by the suspicious guards of other man's unconscious minds, pray for the highest dream you have, and leave out the negatives. Jesus' prayers were all positive.

If sympathy and confidence are the "catalytic agencies" necessary for subconscious minds to venture to tune in, then prayer experiments ought to be far superior. People would certainly feel more confidence and eagerness to "turn on their mental receiving sets" if we were praying for their welfare than if we were using them as guinea pigs. Prayer would be the best imaginable key to unlock the defensive suspicion with which people shut themselves from others who are not very near and dear to them.

If people reveal no response we cannot con-

clude that they are unaware. It may be because they repress their impulse to respond. All of us are aware of being gazed at but repress any response unless we are definitely interested, or unless we trust the person gazing at us. We instinctively "play safe". This is why people often do not speak to us when we pray for them (or for that matter, when we say 'good morning' to them). Frequently they betray their awareness by some such response as putting their heads in their hands as in prayer, looking upward and closing their eyes, sighing, looking around, rubbing the back of their heads with their hands, getting up and walking about, shaking their heads sidewise or up and down, a sudden quick jerk as if they had been spoken to.

People who are busy reading or talking seem not to respond. That is understandable. All of us have seen how two broadcasting stations, having the same wavelength, interfere in our radios. Thoughts can do the same. It is the people whose minds are unoccupied and who are asking, "What next?" who will respond, and often with a quick sharp look of recognition or curiosity.

Some people fail to make full use of prayer opportunities because they think they must assume a special position. It is not essential in stand, to praying to close or raise the eyes, to kneel or fold the hands or lower the head, nor to make the slightest change of position. However, these customs are all helpful if one is accustomed to them. Some positions are valuable for relaxation of mind and body. But you must never postpone flash prayers until you can find a prayer stool or a chance to close your eyes.

If you feel you have cheated yourself in the past by not having a technique in prayer, and if you wish to discipline yourself to this form of prayer, it is simple — so simple that a child can do it. You may say silently with each breath, "Jesus", while you look at the people you meet, trying to help Him reach them. If you think of something else important enough, say it, but if not the word "Jesus" with every breath is enough. There will never be a more blessed, higher thought broadcast over the world. Do not strain, for that produces discord.

HAROLD SHERMAN

—Author of

*YOUR KEY TO HAPPINESS**

Yes, God answers prayer — if you know how to prepare your mind to receive. In your consciousness there is a point where your own thinking leaves off and the Intelligence that is God begins. Therefore, in order for you to knowingly receive guidance and protection from God you must develop the ability to sense this point of contact, in consciousness, with Him.

**The extracts are from the author's book :
How to use the Power of Prayer
(Fawcett Publication Inc. New York 1962)
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How is this done ?

I discovered a way during my experiments with Sir Hubert Wilkins. These long-distance telepathy experiments, as you may know, were conducted under scientifically controlled conditions, at a time when we were separated by some three thousand miles. Sir Hubert was in the north polar regions and I, acting as receiver of his thoughts, was in the study of my New York City apartment.

The experiments demonstrated, as has been proved many times before and since, that under certain conditions — requiring relaxation of body and mind — it is possible for man to communicate mind to mind.

But here is a tremendously reassuring and comforting fact that is not generally realized — there need be no separation between man and God in consciousness ! You can communicate, through your mind, with the mind of God ! This was my discovery : that the same technique I had used for reaching the mind of Wilkins was the most effective method for communicating mind to mind with the God Power within me !

To reach the mind of Wilkins and attune my mind to his, I had to create in my consciousness a strong desire for communication. I had to have the unquestioning faith that I could make this contact. This meant that my own mind had to be freed of all fears, apprehensions and doubts. Once this was done — and I had concentrated my full attention upon Wilkins— completely relaxed, physically and mentally— I could **feel** my mind, on a subconscious level touch Wilkins' mind.

I wish it were possible to convey this feeling in words. Have you ever felt that someone was thinking strongly of you ? It is an unmistakable feeling when it comes, and you are thrilled when you have it proved to you that a loved one or friend was actually thinking of you at the precise moment.

You may not have been able to explain how it happened, but you have had demonstrated to you, in that instant, that thoughts and feelings can be transmitted and received.

When you desire to make contact with the God Power within, have faith that this feeling of closeness to God will come to you. At first, you may only sense it for a fleeting instant, as contact with this God Presence is made. But, with continued meditation, you will be able to "close the circuit" between your mind and God's mind, almost at will. Then is the time when you have had this uplifted feeling, for you to give utterance to your prayer, and picture in your mind's eyes what you desire to come to pass for which you need God's help.

When you are up against difficulty which seems beyond your power to meet or solve, then is the time to get off by yourself and to attempt to quiet your mind and your nerves. Realize that your fears and worries have no power, to solve anything. As long as you give them control over you, you will be powerless to get an answer to prayer.

You must first make your mind receptive by letting go of these fears and worries—by letting yourself be conscious of one great reassuring fact: you are not alone. A part of God, the Great Intelligence, dwells within you. You can call upon this God Power to guide and protect you any time you need, once you put aside the barriers of fear and worry.

The physical attitude you take in prayer is unimportant. If you have been accustomed to praying on your knees and feel natural in this position, then assume it. If you feel more comfortable praying while seated or while lying down, then follow this procedure. Whatever physical or mental positions you have found enable you to relax physically and mentally and to reach a state of deep meditation — that's the method you should use.

In order to pray effectively, you must learn how to harness faith to prayer. When you are by yourself, preferably selecting a quiet time each day when you can sit and meditate, you may repeat the following words, giving deep thought to their meaning, until they become a part of your consciousness: "I fully understand that faith, expressed through prayer, is the deep, unassailable inner feeling that, through God's

guidance and help and my own earnest effort what is right for me will come to me.

"I realize that, to attain an answer to prayer, I must have faith in myself and in God.

"I know that faith is the activator of my God — given creative power and that, to exercise real faith, I must first eliminate all doubts and fears.

"I further realize that, when I pray, I must hold and maintain the genuine conviction that what I desire can and will come to pass — has even now been created in mind—and only awaits the right time to materialize as an actual happening in my life.

"I recognize that only to the degree that I can keep a clear mental picture of what I desire in mind, and support it by my faith, will this picture become a reality."

A wise Gardener prepares the soil before he plants the seed.

One who prays must prepare his mind to receive that which he plants in the form of a prayer . . . You improve your relationship with the God Power within, you find how to attune yourself to it by first eliminating all disturbed thoughts, by putting aside all selfish desires, by asking for the kind of help that can bring only good to you *and* to others.

Imagine yourself as a small local power station that has a connection with the big central power plant any time you wish to switch it on. Instead, you try to get along on just the power you've got within yourself. You haven't realized how much and how easily you could vastly increase this power if you would hook up to it through prayer.

How do you prepare your mind for prayer?

You do it, automatically, at times, when under the pressure of a great emergency. You forget the existence of your physical body: you make your conscious mind, with its ordinary fear and worries, passive; You turn the full attention of your entire being inward, concentrating only upon your need of the moment picturing what that need is and crying out with the deepest feeling: "God help me!" The urgency and the

situation is so great that your call for help goes direct to the portion of God, the Great Intelligence which exists within you, and registers the need with it.

Never God has failed me when I have been really up against it. I haven't bothered God with trifles. I figure God expects a person to do what he can to help himself. But I've never hesitated to go to God for aid when I know I've done my best and I still haven't gotten anywhere.

This co-partnership with God is not a oneway street. Faith is the price you have to pay to get right answers to prayers. It is the one element or force which closes the gap between your own realself and the God Presence within. Faith brings the power of man and the power of God together on the human level so that God can work through man and help man achieve what he wishes or needs.

Faith in prayer must persist, not just while you are praying but until the answer comes. If you permit your fears and doubts to take over and say to you: "But your prayer hasn't been answered yet. How do you know it will be? Time is running out. You've got to do something. What are you going?" Then these fears and doubts will defeat you.

This does not mean you should not keep on trying in every possible way to help yourself, but, after you have prayed for help, you may be inspired to take steps by the God Power which will lead you to the answer you seek.

You can find God as I and millions of others have found him — within your own mind and heart. Jesus tried to make the people of His day understand that the Kingdom of God is within, but few could really comprehend His great message. In the Lord's Prayer, He said again, "On earth as it is in Heaven." But, because most humans lacked inner vision, they looked for a Heaven **outside** themselves, not realizing that Heaven is actually a state of being. When you are in harmony with the God Consciousness within you — you are in Heaven. When your mind and heart and soul are filled with love for your fellow man and for God — you are in Heaven. When Jesus said, "King-

dom is not of this earth". He was referring to that Eternal Kingdom of oneness with God which exists within.

The Great spiritual leaders throughout all times have sought to solve the mystery of God and creation. They have offered varying interpretations but have generally concurred that **love** in its fullest and most unlimited meaning, is the greatest force in the universe, and that through love and love alone it is possible for us to express our feeling for God and sense His feeling for us in return. These spiritual leaders have emphasized, again and again, the individual as well as mankind's needs of love — its power to heal, to protect, to inspire, to attract all manner of good things.

As you know, when Jesus was asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" he replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind," and added that "the second is like unto it — thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".

Kandavar Vindilar (கண்டவர் விண்டிலர்)
Vindavar Kandilar (விண்டவர் கண்டிலர்)

That is a Tamil aphorism. It means:

Those who have 'seen' (God)
will not speak (they have seen)
Those who speak (they have seen)
have not seen (God).

I have not seen.

I am a fellow pilgrim.

I am convinced that to 'know' Reality,
and live in consonance with that Reality
is the thing to do.

My conviction is of an intellectual nature yet.
I am yet to 'know',
in the personal experience sense.

Being a student of mathematics,
I am used to axioms.
I take axioms as ones
that cannot be proved or disproved,
but have to be taken as they are!
I accept axioms and build on them.
This approach to axioms
gives me the conviction
I am speaking of.

Understanding Nature and going with it
makes sense to me.
Conceding Reality as propounded by some
and adjusting to that Reality makes sense to me.

To convert this intellectual assent
to a committed insight, to a way of life,
I adopt prayer as a means.

I learnt from many
and am learning from many more.

Here are some steps I picked up
as I went along.

The inner being to be in resonance
with the immanent being
I should encourage all the factors
that are conducive to it.

N. H. ATTHREYA
Author, lecturer, consultant.

Getting up a little early.
sitting alone by myself,
drawing me out of the surroundings
if only for a few minutes,
uttering the name
that comes naturally to me (Muruga),
to tune myself up —
I find helpful.

To say and mean :
Give me light and the guts to stand by it —
I find helpful.

Before I do a thing,
to say and feel :
Help me to do the thing and the way
that will be helpful to all concerned—
I find this helpful.

When I am not preoccupied,
to think of people and say :
Bless them so that they may look upto
the common source of Light—
I find this helpful.

Before I go to bed,
to say silently :
Give me the humility to review my day ;
Give me the strength to renew myself—
I find this helpful too.

I pray for the habit of prayer—
so that I may move in the direction
of personally realising Reality.

I pray for the courage of prayer—
I feel that knowing what is right
and not doing what is right
is self-defeating.

I have a long way to go—
perhaps it is not a long way in the ritual sense;
but it certainly is a long way
in the spiritual sense.

Sri Aurobindo used to say :
Effort from below and grace from above—
both are needed for salvation.

My effort, faltering effort, is there;
and even in the effort I have to go a long way.
As for grace, I don't deserve it — yet;
I have not done all that I can as well do.

I am praying so that I may play and be
the humble part of Reality.

ON PRAYER

Then a Priestess said, Speak to us of Prayer. And he answered, saying: You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance.

For what is prayer but the expansion of yourself into the living ether ?

And if it is for your comfort to pour your darkness into space, it is also for your delight to pour forth the dawning of your heart.

And if you cannot but weep when your soul summons you to prayer, she should spur you again and yet again, though weeping, until you shall come laughing.

When you pray you rise to meet in the air those who are praying at that very hour, and whom save in prayer you may not meet.

Therefore let your visit to that temple invisible be for naught but ecstasy and sweet communion.

For if you should enter the temple for no other purpose than asking you shall not receive. And if you should enter into it to humble yourself you shall not be lifted.

Or even if you should enter into it to beg for the good of others you shall not be heard. It is enough that you enter the temple invisible.

I cannot teach you how to pray in words.

God listens not to your words save when He Himself utters them through your lips.

And I cannot teach you the prayer of the seas and the forests and the mountains.

But you who are born of the mountains and the forests and the seas can find their prayer in your heart.

And if you but listen in the stillness of the night you shall hear them saying in silence :

Our God, who art our winged self, it is thy will in us that Willeth.

" It is thy desire in us that desireth.

" It is thy urge in us that would turn our nights, which are thine, into days, which are thine also.

" We cannot ask thee for aught, for thou knowest our needs before they are born in us :
" Thou art our need; and in giving us more of thyself thou givest us all. "

— *Kahlil Gibran*

