

Swamí Bodhananda Saraswatí: On Prayer



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There is provision in this universe, a manifestation of infinite creativity, for fulfilling our natural desires, provided we establish the right kind of connections and create the right kind of attitudes. What are the natural desires? Desire for a child, desire for comforts, desire for wealth...all these desires are legitimate and can be fulfilled.

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Prayer is a way of invoking the intervention and blessings of God in the fulfillment of man's natural and legitimate desires.

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A proper prayer is one that doesn't transgress the dictates of *dharma* (righteousness).

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Prayer is our response to uncertainty and uncertain outcomes. If there is no uncertainty in life, in our desire-fulfilling enterprises, there is no need for prayer.

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Fear can induce prayer. Uncertainty can induce prayer, because fear and uncertainty are a recognition of our limitations. And to recognize our limitations, we also must recognize, unconsciously, some greater power.

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When we pray we are invoking intervention and blessings, a new energy that can help fulfill our desires.

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When you put forth adequate, personal effort within the limits of *dharma*—along the righteous path—then alone do you have the right to pray.

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There is no rule that prayer has to be a formal and fixed. Prayer can be flexible, innovative and extemporaneous.

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When you work and pray, perhaps you gain an attitude that this result is not important for you, or you may experience a certain uplift. That has to come naturally, not by an artificial effort.

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You have to make adequate personal effort and the rest can be filled by prayer, meaning by God's intervention.

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As long as actions are meant for higher achievements, all of them are prayers.

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The prayer can also change one's attitude. Prayer has the potential of lifting us above the need for fulfillment of a particular desire. That is another advantage of prayer.

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One can be taught that desires and their fulfillment are not important. Furthermore, even if you fulfill them, they may not be lasting. Even if they last they may not give you true fulfillment. But for that state to be truly assimilated the person should pursue his desire with prayer. Because prayer introduces a higher entity which will work this magic on him, that he may get rid of the desire or see the limitations of the desire.

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Prayer is a recognition that human beings alone cannot accomplish tasks, they need the cooperation of nature and the natural forces, which we call gods.

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There is a difference between *mantra* and prayer. Mantra reflects the very structure of the creation, and reveals the various levels of relationships that exist in creation.

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Mantras are more effective than prayers. When a person prays he only puts forth a supplication. Whereas, when someone chants a *mantra*, he or she commands the energy fields.

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Mantra reflects the structure and relationship between various energy fields. By chanting the mantra, we commune with these structures.

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The Hindu scriptures are full of prayers addressed to various gods who are in charge of the universe and universal functions.

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When we chant the mantra, we invoke gods and communicate our needs.

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When we chant a specific mantra, the attention of the intended god is turned towards us and vibrations communicate our intentions. These vibrations we create become both the medium and the message.