

What I Pray For

By Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj

Whenever I go to the Samadhi (tomb) of Bhagwan Ramana in Sri Ramanasramam, I pray for only three things:

1. A pure mind 2. Total renunciation 3. Intense devotion

I elaborate below on these three points and also as how to achieve it from practical view point.



In 2008, at the holy shrine, Sri Ramanasramam

I. A Pure Mind

Purity of mind means effacing all impurities of mind – the impurities which have been gathered like dust since previous births as latent tendencies and conditioning; mainly extreme attachment to some and enmity or hatred with some others. It may also include lust, anger, jealousy, envy etc. These are not inherent in us but have come as impressions of actions in course of our life. These impurities mar the vision of our self or God who is always with us. The main way to remove them is by intense and continuous prayers to the supreme Lord to remove these impurities; also whenever anger, lust etc assail us the best way is to quickly get out of the place where that event takes place and to engage oneself in some physical exercises or walking etc. Regarding hatred, it is even much stronger than love. The following story will illustrate this point. An extremely rich and young lady went to a supermarket to purchase things. While getting down from her car, a mad stray dog bit her on her legs but she did not bother about it and went in the shop and selected several articles. While doing so she suddenly started feeling dizzy. When it came to her mind that it might be due to the dog bite, she immediately rushed in her car to the house of her family physician whose residence was 30 km away. The doctor, after examining her declared apologetically that the poison of the mad dog had got into her blood stream and gone to the head and as a result she would be soon enough barking like a dog and may bite other people too. He also said that as she is very rich, she might like to prepare her will distributing her large fortune among her friends and relatives whom she loved a lot. As there was not much time left, he gave her papers and a pen to write her will. The lady went on writing for nearly an hour. When she was questioned about the doctor as to what she was writing for such along time she replied – “Sir, I am writing the names of all the people whom I would like to bite when I behave like a dog, lest I should not forget any one of them.” This is

the power of hatred. Whenever we hate anybody, the moment we are conscious of it, we should try to be extra kind towards them in future dealings and also pray to the Lord for their welfare and to take away all the ill will in our heart against them.

II. Total renunciation

In our deep sleep we are not aware of the world, we are not conscious of the wife or husband or children lying by our side, the bed and pillow on which we sleep and the A/C and the fans functioning in the bedroom or even of our own body. This is because the mind which is responsible for the relationship established with the other people and things in the room is no longer functioning but is asleep. It is the mind which establishes relationship or ownership of things, the relationship of a father or a mother to children, teacher with his disciples, etc. As this mind sleeps, it completely cuts off all relationships with the objects of the world. It is the like and dislike or love and hatred in the relationship which is responsible for thinking about them instead of remembering God. If this cut off from all relationships is practiced while conscious in the waking state itself, it is called Renunciation. It is not necessary that we should throw the articles in the dustbin; we only have to cut off our nexus with the worldly objects which we may like or dislike. No doubt we continue to love all persons alike but to avoid irresistible temptations, we should always keep a wall between us and other persons of either sex to avoid intimacy with close relatives like wife and children, friends etc., in case our goal is to realise the self or the Lord. To cite an instance of such total renunciation, I remember an anecdote in the life of Late Swami Sri Chandrashekharendra Saraswati (Parmacharya) who was the 100 yr old Pontiff of Kanchi. He was always extremely moderate and frugal about his food. In one of his tours when he camped in a village, his cooks served him one tablespoon full of cooked spinach leaves which was the normal quantity he used to take everyday of any vegetable. When the server found that it was quickly finished. Hedared to put another tablespoon full of the spinach. As this was also consumed quickly with great trepidation and hesitancy, he put a third tablespoonful of spinach, which was also consumed. The server is very happy and he did not dare to offer anything more. He repeated it the next day too with equal success. When he repeated it on the third day, the Sankaracharya questioned his server as to how it was that everyday he was preparing spinach and serving him. The server then told him how he found that the Acharya had a special liking for it as he consumed all the three tablespoon of it. The Acharya simply nodded his head. From the next day morning, inexplicably, he went on complete fasting and refrained from taking even drinking water. The people around him were perplexed at this act of Acharya, they naturally presumed that this fasting was in explanation of and disapproval of some acts or offences which people around him have committed. On the third day of the fast, they approached the pontiff and told him - "Revered Swami ji, please tell us as to what offence we have committed, which has prompted you to resort to fasting?"

Until you tell us, we also intend to go on fast from now onwards sine die.” The pontiff laughed and told – “no, none of you have committed any offence, it is I who is the culprit. I had a high opinion of my sense of renunciation and that my tongue could not be tempted by any delicacy. When my attendant told me that I had taken two additional tablespoons of spinach besides my normal quota of only one tbsp I was aghast and wanted to teach a lesson to my tongue and the mind by resorting to fasting for a few days, so that they will be wary and will abstain from such temptations in future.” This is an instance of total renunciation.

III. Intense Devotion

The two main hindrances or impediments to God realisation are the impurities of the mind and the attraction or repulsion towards the different worldly objects whose thoughts occupy our mind. Once they are eliminated, concentration on and constant remembrance of God will be facilitated. The God realisation will happen only by intensely clinging to the Lord through meditation and prayers. God does not want that he should be one of the many objects of love. We have to love him solely. To realise the Lord, He should be our only goal and it should never be diluted or modified. This process should not come after elimination of our impurities etc. as the process of elimination may take along time and even several births. If only we grasp the feet of the Lord tightly with all our impurities and pray to Him, all the impurities will vanish by themselves. For this purpose we should have intense love for this goal. Even if we are unable to love the Lord, the only goal, let us pretend with hypocrisy that we love the Lord very much. By repeating this process again and again, a day will come when we will really begin to love the Lord from within the heart. This very act of loving the Lord solely from the heart is intense devotion. This very love for the Almighty will be able to blast and blaze the trail for leading towards God-realisation.

Many people are of the opinion that they should choose an environment conducive towards their sadhana or spiritual practice. This is a myth as the environment in which you are placed is all pre-destined by the actions of our previous births and we have no choice in the matter. We have to grit our teeth and do our sadhana even amidst a highly unfavourable environment, otherwise we will lose our way. In days of yore, Bharata, a king left his palace and went into a forest for doing his spiritual practice. In order to help a destitute deer child, he brought it to his hermitage. His attachment to the deer grew to such an extent that he left all the worship of God and meditation and spent all his time with the deer including the time of his death. As a result he himself was born as a deer in his next birth. He thus lost the chance of his liberation or God-realisation. At the same time, a contrast is given in Srimad Bhagvatam where ‘Prahlada’ resorts to constant remembrances of God and meditation and not caring for the intimidations and threats perceived from his father who hated the Lord and resorted to various cruel measures to put his intransigent

son to death. Naturally, he was freed from the torture of his father and got darshan of his Lord Narasimhan in due course. There is no credit in going to a lonely spot in the Himalayas and claiming that one has got over his temptations for delicious food articles which cannot be obtained in those regions. We should sit near a sweet shop and do our meditation without being attracted towards the sweets. We should be capable of concentration and meditation in the midst of crowd making a lot of noise by talking to each other. When once we reach an advanced sage of Sadhana, the entire environment transforms in our favor.

*Madhu vata ritayate madhu ksharanti
sindhavah, madhveerna santvoshadhih
Madhu naktamutoshasi, madhumatparthivam rajah
Narayana Upanishad*

“All the winds which blow (easterly, westerly, etc.) are all quite conducive. All the rivers give us sweet water. May all the vegetables be honey like and sweet. May the might be sweet (conductive) and May the meanings be also sweet. May all the dust of the Earth be sweet and honey like (carrying no allergy whatsoever).” Our only duty is to love the self or God intensely and to do meditation irrespective of good or bad environment and not to plan for a conducive time or place.

****Hari OM ****