

PRAYER

Some of you, dear readers, may be wondering how a subject like “Prayer” can be discussed in a column on Positive Thinking! Let me crave your indulgence a bit and request you to go on reading.

Prayer is a fine example of Positive Thinking. It embodies hope, optimism and positive energy. The great medical genius Dr Alexis Carrel (1873–1944) once said: “Prayer is the most powerful form of energy that the human mind can generate..... In prayer we augment our finite minds with the infinite source of all energy... It cannot happen that one can pray, even for a single moment, without producing some good result”. (Dr Carrel was a French surgeon, biologist and eugenicist, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1912).

Yes, Prayer is a great and time-honoured means of practical positive thinking. Psychologists say that there is an element of auto suggestion also in prayer. But let us stick to simple prayers here.

What is prayer? It is simply an ardent request from the bottom of our heart to God for His mercy, His blessing, and His help.

There are, of course, many varied forms of prayer. One can pray for success in an examination or interview, or for cure of an ailment, or for removing poverty etc etc. These are specific personal prayers. There is nothing wrong in such personal requests. Jesus Christ said that one must be a child in heart to be admitted to the Kingdom of God. We humans are children before God, the Father. A child can ask his father for anything, even for petty toys!

But there are more serious prayers. For example, consider the Serenity Prayer of Reinhold Niebuhr. This famous prayer begins thus: :

**“God grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change
The Courage to change the things I can
And the Wisdom to know the difference!”** What a beautiful prayer!

Then we have the Prayer of St Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

Finally, let us have a look at the sublime prayer of the ancient Indian rishis. The Rg Veda extols the following prayer:

“A no bhadra kratavo yantu viswatha:” (Let Noble thoughts come to us from every side!!)

If this prayer is answered, we do not need any other prayer!

Tailpiece: *A story goes like this: A man and his wife were on a tour around Beverly Hills, California, USA. They passed a magnificent bungalow.*

The man remarked: *“Wow! That’s a fabulous place! I can never own such a house. Never! I cannot even dream of owning anything like that!”*

And God listened and said: *“Well, then you probably won’t ever!”.*

In this example you see negative thinking—the very reverse of positive thinking!

Prof. C.G.R. Nair