

Text of the speech delivered by
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on the release of
IN THE SANCTUARY OF THE SOUL
organized by
Yogoda Satsang Society of India
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It gives me immense pleasure to be associated with release of the book 'In The Sanctuary of The Soul – a Guide to Effective Prayer'. I must have done some good deeds and earned some *punya* in the past which have ripened and given me this opportunity of performing the sacred function of dedicating this small but great book to humanity. I have spent 45 years of my life as a lawyer and as a judge dealing with laws - the laws of the world, with all sincerity and devotion. Little had I thought that I some day would have the privilege of releasing a compilation of universal laws formulated by Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda; the laws that will inspire people of all faiths to tap their own inner resources and find the peace, joy, love and wisdom which we all seek.

All the efforts made by all of us in being here this evening, for a common purpose, would be amply rewarded as we will have the privilege of listening to Swami Shradhanandaji on 'Secrets of Effective Prayer' as also Swami Gokulanandaji who will guide us by giving valuable practical tips on how to lead a life to experience the real pleasure and purpose of being born on the earth as a human being. I have enjoyed and enriched myself by reading his book 'How to overcome Mental Tension' to which printed title he has added in his own hand 'with blessings: from Gokulananda'. Ever since March 17, 2001, for me, it has ceased to be just a book; for me, it is a practical lesson titled 'How to overcome Mental Tension with blessings from Swami Gokulananda'. I am beholden to him. The book does not contain any medical prescription; it sets out in a scientific way certain rules formulated on yoga and spirituality which enable people of all age groups to unburden themselves.

In the Foreword to that book, Swami Lokeshwaranand says referring to Swami Gokulananda – "He is a monk to whom people of all age-groups come to unburden their minds. Why? It is difficult to say why."

Answer to this 'why', I found in an anecdote.

Once the gopikas of Vrindavan were lifting heavy pails of water, while their cowherd friend, Krishna, stood by and watched. He made no move to help them. The gopis marked His strange indifference. However, a little later when they wanted to remove the pails from their heads and place them on the ground, Krishna rushed to help them. Asked why, He replied that His task was to help human souls unburden themselves, not assist them in adding burdens.¹

Today I will have the honour of presenting to Swami Gokulanandji the first copy of 'In the Sanctuary of the Soul'. I am thankful to Yogoda Satsang Society for giving me this unique opportunity.

Albert Einstein, the great Scientist, has once made a very potent observation. He said- "Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and, I am not sure about the universe".

Life is full of strange paradoxes. A recent article in a magazine² narrates six such paradoxes which occur in the life of each one of us. Just see.

Is not it strange how Rs. 20/- seems like such a big amount when you donate it to temple but such a small amount when you go shopping?

Is not it strange how 2 hours seem to be long when you are at a place of worship and how short they seem when you are watching a good movie?

Is not it strange how difficult and boring it is to read one chapter of a book on religion or spirituality but how easy it is to read 100 pages of a popular novel?

Is not it strange how we need to know about an event in a temple 2 weeks before the day so we can include it in our agenda but we can adjust it for other events even in the last minute?

¹ Speaking Tree, Why Krishna Watched as Gopis Lifted Water, Shammi Paranjape, TOI, 18.08.2006.

² Wisdom, September, 2006, p. 21.

Is not it strange how we believe everything that magazines and newspapers say but we question the words in a book on religion or spirituality?

Is not it strange how everyone wants a place in heaven but nobody wants to die?

In the backdrop of such paradoxes I would like to avail this opportunity for inviting you to dwell in 'the sanctuary of soul' by sharing with you a few anecdotes from real life or from our classics and some personal experience of mine to demonstrate how the miracle of prayer as propounded by Swami Paramahansa Yogananda works. Let me revert to the power of prayer. Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda says- "Enter the inner most sanctuary of the soul.....Remember and realise the forgotten image of God within you." (Soul, p.3) Even if you do no more than pray sincerely to Him, His great joy will eventually come upon you. (Soul, p.4)

King Janak, who came to be known as Videh on account of his living like a lotus in the oceanic water of worldly possessions, was having a discourse with a Sanyasi. Suddenly a messenger came to report that fire has broken out in the palace. Sanyasi rushed to the site but King Janak went in Samadhi – deep concentration and remembrance of God. Lo and behold! It started raining. Fire was extinguished. Later the Sanyasi asked Janak of his strange behaviour, remaining calm and cool in such adversity. King Janak said – 'both of us ran on hearing the news. The difference is that while you ran towards outside, I ran towards inside'. It is the change in direction which makes all the difference. Change of direction means reformation of conduct and behaviour guided by spirituality and having firm faith in God expressed in prayers.

Accordingly to Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda the secret of effective prayer is to change your status from beggar to child of God; when you appeal to Him from that consciousness, your prayer will have both power and wisdom. (Soul, p.11). The Divine Power of Its own accord wants to help you; you don't have to coax. But you do have to use your will to demand as His child and to behave as His child. (Soul, p.15)

In a village there was famine. The people collected outside the village to offer prayers. A young boy carried an umbrella with him. Villagers laughed at the boy carrying the umbrella

in a bright dry day. The boy was undeterred. His voice was filled with utter faith when he replied, saying - "if we all really pray it is bound to rain. So I carry the umbrella".

The heart of this child was filled with faith. He knew the effectiveness of prayer. He believed that God listens and answers.

Swami Paramahansa Yogananda says- "God is not a mute unfeeling Being. He is love itself. If you know how to meditate to make contact with Him, He will respond to your loving demands. You do not have to plead; you can demand as His child". (Soul, p.9). Each of us is a child of God. Consistently, inwardly, talk to Him; then he cannot remain away from you. (Ibid, p. 5). Pray until He replies to you. Pray unceasingly until you are absolutely sure of the divine contact, then claim your physical, mental, or spiritual needs from the Most High as your divine birthright. (Ibid, p. 62).

A prayer originating from the depth of child like innocent heart brings answer and gives the pleasure of fulfillment.

A devotee accompanied by his little child, he too a devotee, went to a restaurant. The family was not-so-rich. But, the child was trained to thank God before taking his meals. The father ordered for the food and the child commenced taking his meals by offering prayer thanking God. At the end, the child muttered- "How nice it would be, if God can give me an ice-cream after the food; I will thank him once again". All those present around started laughing. An elderly lady could not resist making a comment. She said- "The difficulty with the children of today is that, they do not know how to make prayers. He is asking for ice-cream! I have never done so". The child had tears in his eyes. He said apologetically- "Have I committed a mistake? Would the God be angry with me?" A gentleman sitting on the next table came to the child and lovingly consoled him. The father, affectionate to his son, placed order for one ice-cream. Shortly thereafter, two waiters brought two cups of ice-cream. The other gentleman with sympathy for the child, had also placed order for ice-cream for the child. However, what transpired thereafter made the other elderly lady roll down tears of joy and love for the child. The child had stood up from his table with both the cups of ice-cream in his hands and reached the table of the lady. The child offered one ice-cream to the lady and told her, "This is for you. Though, you never prayed to God for your ice-cream, but I did pray for you as well".

A prayer is not a charter of demands from God. Swamiji says- 'to receive conscious response from God, you must first attain divine attunement with Him. (Soul, p. 117). Say to Lord: 'Please tell me Thy will....Have faith that He knows what you need. You will see that you get much better things when He chooses for you.' (Soul, p. 65). God is live. Take pleasure in doing what He will love to see us doing.

Radha Rani, the beloved of Lord Krishna had a domesticated parrot. Lady Radha taught the parrot to recite 'Radhe-Radhe'. A visitor asked Radhaji- "Do you think yourself to be better than Krishna?" She replied- "By reciting the name of Krishna Krishna, I derive eternal pleasure. But, by reciting Radha-Radha my beloved, my Lord, feels happy. I am interested more in my Lord's pleasure than in mine."

That is the divine Love placed on highest pedestal when the beloved unifies himself with the Lord and the distinction between the two is lost. An Urdu poet describes this form of prayer in these words:

jkth gwa mlesa eSa ftlesa rsjh jt+k gS

;ka ;wa Hkh okg okg gS] ;ka ;wa Hkh okg

okg gSA

Looking at the audience present in this hall and the Saints on dais, I am inclined to divulge and share with you a very personal experience of mine. Firm faith in God and the power of prayers have enabled me to discharge the onerous obligations and perform the duties associated with the office of the Chief Justice of India. While I was in office, a journalist once remarked – "How happy we all and our Nation are. Our President, Prime Minister and CJI – all holders of top constitutional positions are believers and begin their day by remembering God. All the three are teetotallers and vegetarians". In times of difficulty and dilemma, staring at me while taking judicial or administrative decisions His invisible hands have guided me whenever I have totally surrendered to Him. Complicated constitutional issues having far reaching implications have arisen for decision. In all such cases, let me tell you, what I used to do. I would prepare draft of judgement and in the evening place the draft

at the altar of God in Puja. In the morning I would pick up the draft and after remembering His name, start reading it carefully. Several new ideas would come to my mind. Many a times I have only supplemented the already prepared draft with new thoughts and at times completely changed the judgement. On being so finalized, the judgement will be pronounced. After the lapse of a few months, my own judgement on being cited before me would not appear to me to be my own. Often I have wondered who wrote the judgement. Obviously, there used to be someone, who was guiding my hand and putting ideas in my thoughts. I have experienced this touch of divinity. There are moments in everybody's life when he can feel God in conversation with him, listening and communicating. How beautifully Victor Hugo puts it. He says – "There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees". (Les Misérables, Victor Hugo).

There are a few eternal questions haunting the humanity. What is the meaning and purpose of our existence and creation? What is our ultimate aim? Is it possible to achieve perfection, total satisfaction, peace and no problems? Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda found out the solution. His life and teachings show that the inner fulfilment which we seek does exist and can be attained. Yogoda Satsang Society carrying forward the message and mission of Swamiji seeks to achieve the goal by the process of self-realisation through yoga and development of individual consciousness so as to unite with universal consciousness. Yogoda Satsang society, I feel convinced, is neither a concept nor a dogma but a unification of science with spirituality. What are needed are our desire, devotion, determination and dedication to act.

I am thankful to you for listening to me with patience. While releasing the 'Sanctuary of Soul' a book with undreamed of possibilities, as time would tell and testify, I would end by quoting a couplet:

f[k+nerks&rkt+he ls tc rw djsxk bfYrtkA

jgcjs&dkfey rq>s nsaxs lcd ml bYe dkAA

The refuge of the Holy Saints you take,
Service with love and faith unto Them you make;
Realizers of the Great Truth are They,

Immortal Knowledge can give they.
(Makhzane Asrar IV/34)