

## MAN – THE PRAYING ANIMAL.

1. Of the myriad conception of God, that God is He without Whom nothing can be, is one conception. In this general conception is involved the divine attributes of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence; a particular statement of which is found in the Biblical expression ‘we live and move and have our being in Him.’

2. Such being the case, is left to man, or is he bound, to work for his good, either earthly or heavenly? That man has aspirations is a fact, be they for the good things of this world, or other worlds, or of spiritual blessedness. (Earthly abundance goes by the name of *manushy-ananda*, the pleasures of paradise by the name of *dev-ananda*, and spiritual bliss by the name of *Brahm-ananda*.) Man’s aspirations are in the direction of one or the other of these. How are they to be secured? Is it by self-effort, by vicarious help, or by the God’s Grace?

3. The doctrine of Grace discounts self-effort. (We will leave the subject of ‘vicarious help’ for the present.) The doctrine of Grace is compatible with the conception of God as stated above, viz that he is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, and therefore related to man as the Sovereign Savior, asking nothing from him in return. If there is to be any self-effort on the part of man, which may be supposed to attract God towards him and eventually save him, such a process would naturally conflict with the attributes of God such as those stated viz., omniscience and omnipotence. Accepting therefore that Grace is the sole means of man’s salvation, what would be the consequence?

4. The consequence would be that man’s effort would be superfluous, and may even mar the full effect of God’s Grace. And therefore all self-effort ought to cease. This, in a word is resignedness to God’s will, and complete surrendering oneself to His pleasure or dispensation of his fate in whatever way that may best appear to His Divine omniscience. This is called the way of *Prapatti* or *Saranagati*.

5. All nature outside us seems to be a demonstration of this fact of resignedness. Looking at the mineral world, we see all self-effort absent; looking at the vegetable world, it appears to us that its progress from seed to flower and fruit is a natural process from which anything like self-willed effort for such progress seems to be absent; and looking at the animal world, and recognizing therein only effort made towards self-preservation, eating and procreating, there is absence, certainly, of any effort towards effecting its own salvation. But coming now to man (-is he not an animal?-), we see he has self-consciousness developed in him. The question is whether self-consciousness demands self-effort towards salvation?

6. But, the doctrine of Grace stated above, discountenances self-effort on the part of man for salvation. As a self-conscious entity, he has effort, and effort corresponding with the nature of his aspiration, - which is three-fold as stated above (para 2). But, if he would leave to God and His omniscience to do what He may think proper, he (man) need not try, only for his salvation but as well for his earthly or heavenly (*svarga*) delights. This would mean that man

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need not unnecessarily concern himself about his own welfare, knowing that God undertaken to do all that for him (man). In short man need not aspire at all.

7. When, then, man has not to aspire; but if aspiration means hope, and hope is wishing, to cease to wish mean to cease to pray to a Higher Being? Prayer is another word for wishing for something. If there is nothing to be prayed for, neither prayer is necessary, nor is there any place for a Granter of prayer (God in our case). But according to the Doctrine of Grace, there is the Granter, granting blessings without prayer. (Prayer is here the mental counterpart of what we meant to express by self-effort. Mental effort is first; there after bodily effort follows suit). Granting blessings (of any of the three kinds stated in pare 2) without prayers for the same on the part of man, is but consistent with the Divine Attributes, named above, omniscience &c. Where is then place for prayer? Is man to pray? If he is to pray, what is he to pray for? We have said above that as God does all for him, there is nothing he has to pray for. What is he then to pray for? Nothing? But if so is he to pray, or is he not to pray?

8. Our Visishtadvaita saints tell us that man *ought to pray*; but his prayer should take the form. ‘Thy will be done, not mine’\* [\* Says *Jitanta Stotra* (Rig-Veda-Khila): ‘*Yad hitam mama Devesa! tad ajapaya Madhava!*’] This kind of mental attitude while allowing man prayer, allows God’s mercy to act in its infiniteness.

9. Prayer they tell us further, is what distinguishes man from other parts of creation, and it is his natural birth right. Prayer is, *chetana-kriya*, or a duty that naturally falls to the lot of thinking man. Prayer is *raga-prapta* they say, or what is a spontaneous outburst of a human heart feeling towards its Maker. Prayer is a natural accompaniment of a self-conscious being; and man being self-conscious, he is a praying animal distinguishing him from the non-praying brethren of his *animal* family. If physiologically man is characterized as the ‘laughing animal’ religiously he is distinguished s the ‘praying animal.’

10. This leads us to extend our conception of God beyond that which involved only omniscience, omnipotence and omnipotence. The extended conception is, for our present purposes, the inclusion of the Attribute of love\* on the part of God. [\* This love is symbolized as Sri in Vaishnava Theology, and never is a discourse on Vedanta begun by Ramanujacharya without referring to this love (*Sriyahpatih*, vide Proem to Bhagavadgita for example, English-translate by me).] Grace is the highest spiritual love conceivable. Prayer connotes the relation of love between the praying man and prayed God; and this relation is natural (*raga-prapta*.)

11. If the relation of love implied by prayer is natural how comes the element of hate? For in as much as love presupposes a subject, and an object of love, and the process of love between them, when we find in the world both God-lovers and God-haters, we have to explain the unnatural hating element in the latter as contradistinguished from the loving element in the former which has been said to be natural. If it is in the man’s nature to love God, and is in Gods’ nature to love man, how comes hate?

12. Now, either God hates or man hates. But God cannot hate, for if he does, what can possibly be His motive for the same? Hate is the result of a desire not satisfied; and in order to hate, God must be supposed to have desire. But let us extend now our conception of God a little

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further than already stated (paras 1 and 10), so as to include all-satisfiedness or all-fullfilledness (*purna-kamatra* or *avapta-samasta-kamatra*), an Attribute implying no unfilled desire whatever in the God-head. And therefore, when there is no motive for desire, there can be no hate. We find an illustration for God's love, and loving for love's sake, in the love of a mother for her child, from which (love) all motive for desire (or return) is absent, and hate has no existence. Again if God can hate, he is no God. Only a Perfect Being is God, and as to hate is to be imperfect there cannot be hate in a Perfect God. Unless God is perfect in all Auspicious attributes [*kalyana gunah*] and free from Inauspicious attributes [*heya-pratyanika*], He will not be eligible for the position of a Diffuser of Grace. The Infinity of Auspicious Attributes antidotal to evil, is the summation of all Divine Attributes culminating in Perfection.\* [\* Hence the discourse in the Vedanta on what is known as the '*Subhaya linga*,' and Ramanuja never opens a discourse on the Divine without reference to God's Perfection first (vide for example Proem to Sri Bhagavadgita, English Translated by me).] Hence the element of hate is not on the side of God, - God, according to the conception postulated above, being Perfect.

13. Then, hate is on the side of man? But it has been said to be unnatural, in as much as it has been stated (in paras 9, 10 & 11) that to love God is natural in man (*raga-prapta*). How then comes this unnatural hate on the part of man? Hate is no other than sin. How comes sin? This leads to the inquiry of the origin of sin but as that forms no part of the object of this paper; let us reserve that question for separate treatment.

14. To sum up. It is unnatural for man to hate God. To love Him is natural, tell our Saints. This relationship of love makes a man to pray. He prays for nothing. To pray is but the duty of an intelligent creature like man. To pray is what makes him human, distinguishing him from the kingdom of mere animal. Prayer is thus a matter of duty, making the possession of intelligence blessed, and not a barter used for buying God's grace. God's grace does not submit to such conditions, but comes naturally from His all-sufficient, loving, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and perfect character. Prayer is thus a spontaneous expression of the natural love of man for God, asking for nothing; and Grace is the spontaneous expression of the natural love of God for man, asking for nothing.

15. Love is *Bhakti*. The Upanishads teach this. One Upanishad (*Taittiriya*) describes God as Love and Bliss (*Rasovai soh. Anandam Brahmeti cyajanat*).

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