

The Spiritual Scientist

An Ezine for Those Who Think

Published by VOICE, ISKCON, Pune

GOD ANSWERS KNEE-MAIL



Nowadays almost everyone is accessible on email. What about God? He is available on a very special type of email, which is as old as the human race and which requires no internet. Its knee-mail – mailing prayers from our heart to God while standing on our knees. Almost all the great wisdom traditions of the world urge us to physically express humility while praying. In addition to the kneeling down common in Semitic religions, the Vedic culture recommends prostrating the entire body in panchanga and ashtanga pranamas.

Some people deride rituals as useless show-offs and say that only the inner feeling, bhava, counts. Agreed that consciousness is crucial in communion, but do the externals not affect the internals? Try this exercise: Sit relaxed on an easy chair, put one leg across the other, place your arms behind your head, lean backwards – and now try to feel humble. Almost impossible, isn't it? Our very posture makes us feel bossy. Based on profound understanding of this empirically observable psychophysical science, the Vedic texts prescribed physical activities that facilitate the awakening of divine emotions in our heart. A ritual with spirit becomes spi-ritual.

Most people pray to God when they want something which is beyond their human ability to get. While praying, we often intuitively try to feel and express humility, knowing we depend on divine grace. To receive God's answers to our knee-mails, we need humility – especially in our brain. Many people lose faith in God when their prayers are apparently unanswered; they feel that either God doesn't exist or that He can't fulfill their prayers - or doesn't care to. But are we not presuming that we know better than God what is best for us? This presumption is rooted in a fundamental philosophical misconception that we can enjoy life in this world and that the main purpose of God's existence is to provide and protect our material enjoyment. Of course we do need basic material resources for our existence. But as souls we are essentially spiritual and eternal; whereas everything in this world is material and temporary. Due to this inescapable incompatibility, nothing material can make us truly happy. Often due to our spiritual myopia, we forget this basic fact, but thankfully God doesn't. A mother sometimes withdraws or withholds toys from her child to ensure he doesn't neglect his studies and miss out on a bright career. Similarly God sometimes withdraws or withholds our cherished toys – wealth, love, positions, possessions – to ensure we don't neglect our spiritual growth and miss out on a bright spiritual career in the hereafter. God wants us to be happy in this world too, but not at the cost of our eternal happiness in the next world. A lost child feels so happy when at last he returns home. Then how much more happy will we – the lost children of God - be when God takes us back to our eternal home? God is constantly planning and

endeavoring to provide us this supreme happiness. All we need to do is cooperate with His plan by serving Him, come what may. Therefore when our prayers appear to be unanswered, we can pray to God for the wisdom to accept His plan and the determination to participate in that divine plan.

Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON, would say that the best prayer - the one prayer that will never fail - is the prayer asking for strength to serve God in every situation. When a child calls the name of his parent, a responsible parent immediately provides his real needs. Similarly when we chant the Holy Names of God, especially the Hare Krishna maha mantra, He will immediately provide our real need - the strength to serve Him. When we humbly chant and pray for this inner strength, we will find that God will never disappoint us.

