

OUTREACH

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THE ANSWER TO YOUR PRAYERS

When was the last time you prayed to win the lottery? Or the last time you prayed to land a new job? Or the last time you prayed for your favorite sports team to win? It was probably not too long ago. Wouldn't it be great if each and every single prayer was fulfilled exactly according to your wishes?

If prayers seem to go unanswered or if there are no evident changes in the situation after praying, people tend to feel that their prayers are falling on deaf ears. But believe it or not, each prayer is indeed answered by the almighty. The problem is that, the solution God gives us may not exactly align with our expectations.

Once upon a time, a small town was struck by a terrible storm. Local officials sent out an emergency warning stating that the riverbank would soon overflow and flood the town. They ordered everyone in the town to evacuate immediately.

However, a religious and faithful man lived in this town. When he heard the warning, instead of fleeing, he decided to stay and thought to himself, "I am a religious man. I pray every day, so God will surely save me."

His neighbors stopped by his house and said, “We’re leaving and there is space for you in our car, please come with us!”

But the man declined. He told them, “I am a religious man. I pray, so God will surely save me.”

The man stood on his porch watching the water rise up. A man in a small canoe paddled nearby and called to him, “Hurry and come into my canoe, the water is quickly rising!”

But the man again said, “I am a religious man. I pray, so God will surely save me.”

The water rose higher and started pouring into the living room. He retreated to the second floor of his house. A police motorboat came by and saw him at the window. “We will come up and rescue you!” they shouted.

But the man refused, waving them off saying, “Use your time to save someone else! I am a religious man. I pray, so God will surely save me.”

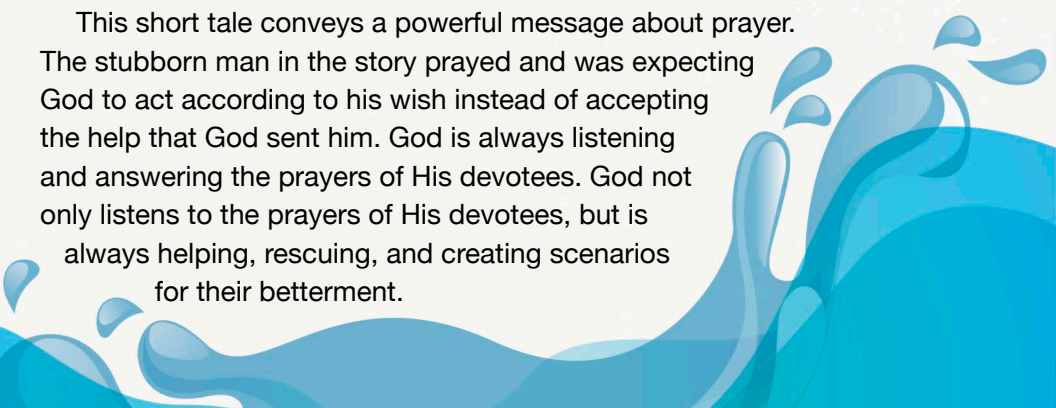
The flood waters rose higher and higher. The man had to climb up to his rooftop. A helicopter spotted him and dropped a rope ladder. A rescue officer came down the ladder and pleaded with the man to come to his senses, “Grab my hand and I will pull you up to safety!”

But the man still refused, folding his arms tightly to his body, “I am a religious man. I pray, so God will surely save me.” The stubborn man refused to budge.

Shortly thereafter, the entire house was submerged and the floodwaters swept the man away causing him to drown. When he reached Heaven, the man stood before God and asked, “I am a religious man. I prayed. I put all of my faith in you. Why didn’t you come and save me?”

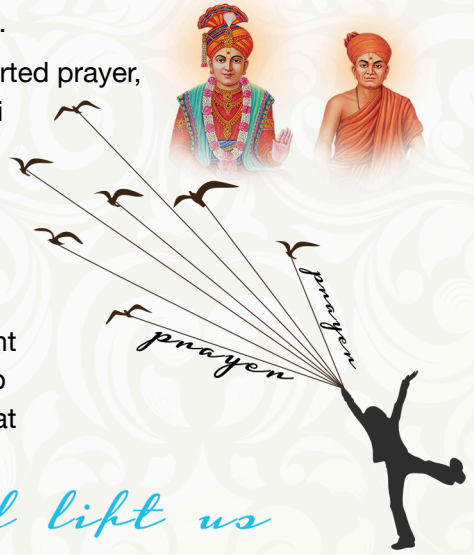
Then God told him, “Son, I tried to save you. I sent you a warning. I sent you a car. I sent you a canoe. I sent you a motorboat. I sent you a rescue helicopter. What more were you looking for?”

This short tale conveys a powerful message about prayer. The stubborn man in the story prayed and was expecting God to act according to his wish instead of accepting the help that God sent him. God is always listening and answering the prayers of His devotees. God not only listens to the prayers of His devotees, but is always helping, rescuing, and creating scenarios for their betterment.



Even after praying, if the situation does not turn in our favor as we expect, it is common to become depressed. At times like these, we tend to blame God or lose our faith. However, God is always assisting His devotees in ways that they may not necessarily expect or understand. It is the duty and responsibility for a devotee to keep faith.

Whenever anyone makes a wholehearted prayer, there is always an ear listening. Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji once said, “Regardless of where you are, if you make a heartfelt prayer, the almighty supreme is always listening. He has numerous ears, one for each of His devotees.” In any situation, it is important to keep faith in sincere prayers and keep an open mind to the unique outcome that God creates for us!



prayers will lift us

Laugh Out Loud

Reaching the end of a job interview, the Human Resources Officer asks a young engineer fresh out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, “And what starting salary are you looking for?”

The engineer replies, “In the region of \$150,000 a year and a generous benefits package.”

The interviewer inquires, “Well, what would you say to a package of five weeks of vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental insurance, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every two years?”

The engineer sits up straight and says, “Wow! Are you kidding?”

The interviewer replies, “Yeah, but you started it.”



It is You that Hears My Prayers

We have all seen people pray. Either at a temple or church, before an exam or an important task, or even after scoring a touchdown or hitting a home run, people have a tendency to pray and acknowledge the almighty. Prayer gives people strength to overcome difficult situations and a way to remain humble in success.

But, when it comes to prayers, almost everyone has a few burning questions: Are my prayers falling on deaf ears or is there a person listening? Who hears my prayers? How do I know someone is listening to my prayers? To answer these questions, let's explore an incident from Rajeshbhai's life.

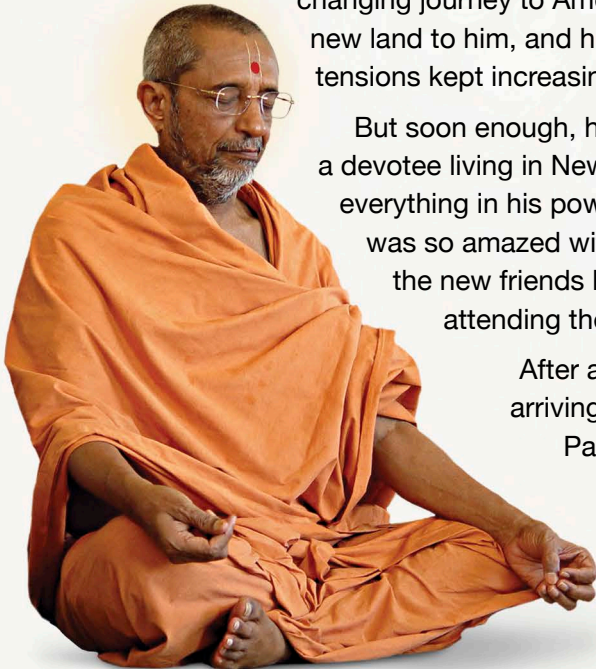
Rajeshbhai Panchal was a youth from Baroda, India. Since his childhood, he had immense faith in Sai Baba. During stressful times he visited the nearby Sai Baba temple to ask for strength. As time passed, Rajeshbhai acquired a student Visa to come to the USA and pursue a Master's degree.

Happy about being granted the visa, Rajeshbhai visited the Sai Baba mandir in Shirdi, India. Rajeshbhai stood in front of the Sai Baba *murti* and prayed, "O Sai Baba, I am quite fortunate to have been granted the visa. When I reach America, where will I stay? I do not have enough money. When in doubt, I always come to you, but in the USA, whom will I go to?"

With that prayer, Rajeshbhai left India in 2008 to embark on this life changing journey to America. This was a completely new land to him, and his academic and financial tensions kept increasing every day.

But soon enough, he met with Chiragbhai, a devotee living in New Jersey. Chiragbhai did everything in his power to help him. Rajeshbhai was so amazed with Chiragbhai's lifestyle and the new friends he had met, that he started attending the local weekly *sabha*.

After a few months, Swamiji was arriving at Haridham temple in Parsippany, NJ. Chiragbhai informed Rajeshbhai that it would be an amazing opportunity to receive Swamiji's blessings and Rajeshbhai enthusiastically



went to Haridham for Swamiji's *darshan*.



At the *sabha* in Haridham, Rajeshbhai had Swamiji's *darshan* for the first time. He felt that Swamiji was a much different saint than any other he had ever met. Rajeshbhai wanted to personally meet with Swamiji, but given the circumstances, it seemed unlikely because there were too many devotees.

Then suddenly, Swamiji walked out of the temple and walked straight towards Rajeshbhai. Swamiji asked Rajeshbhai his name, where he came from, and why he came to the USA. Rajeshbhai explained to Swamiji that he had come from Baroda to pursue his Masters education. Swamiji was happy to hear that and advised that he should study hard.

Then Swamiji paused, and with a divine smile, asked Rajeshbhai, "Before leaving India, what prayer did you make to Sai Baba?"

As soon as Rajeshbhai heard that, he was shocked. He thought to himself, 'Before I left from India, I made a prayer to Sai Baba, but I never told anyone. How did Swamiji know that I prayed to Sai Baba? Could Swamiji be the person listening to my prayers?'

While Rajeshbhai was still in shock, Swamiji asked, "Will you be able to spend two hours a week to attend the local weekly *sabha*?"

Rajeshbhai replied, "Swamiji, I will definitely try." But then, Rajeshbhai realized, 'I don't even have a car. How will I be able to attend the *sabha*?'

At this moment, just as if Swamiji was a witness to Rajeshbhai's thoughts, Swamiji pointed to Chiragbhai and told him, "Whenever Rajeshbhai wants to come for *sabha*, please arrange a ride for him."



Rajeshbhai was overjoyed with this divine and amazing experience with Swamiji. Afterwards, Rajeshbhai told Chiragbhai, "Before I came to the USA, I made 3 prayers to Sai Bapa in Shirdi, India. I never told anyone my prayers, but today, Swamiji reminded me of the prayers I made. I now realize that, regardless of where we are, it is Swamiji who hears and answers our prayers."

In this way, Rajeshbhai experienced the glory and divine personality of Swamiji! We can be in any situation in any part of the world, but Swamiji always listens to our heartfelt prayers. By keeping faith and realizing the true *mahima* (glory) and supremacy of Swamiji, our prayers will become even more meaningful!

Delving into Swamiji's Life

Swamij's divinity and saintliness is such that He spends each moment guiding devotees on a spiritual path and uplifting their souls. Swamiji spends almost all of His day with devotees, and yet the central focus of each of His activities is God. Swamiji is one with God and sees God within everyone. Swamiji's personality, charisma, and divinity are such that countless people have experienced Bhagwan Swaminarayan living through Him.

After spending an entire day with His devotees, Swamiji returned to *Anirdesh* (the house where Swamiji resides in Haridham) for rest. Suhrad Swami prepared Swamiji's bed. As Swamiji lay on His bed, Suhrad Swami massaged His feet. When Swamiji's eyes finally closed, Suhrad Swami quietly exited the room.

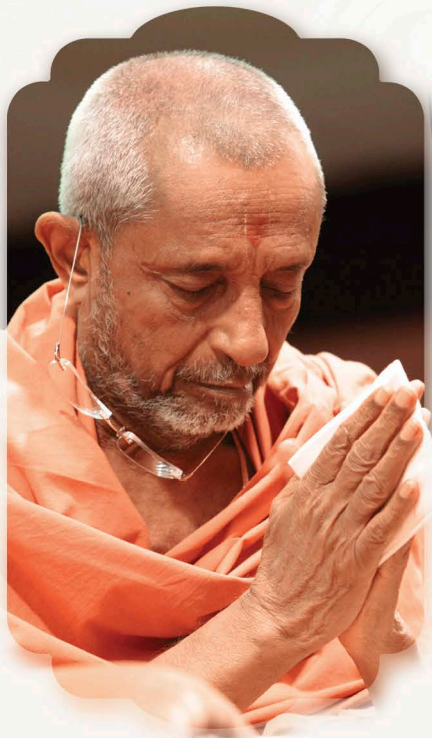
After a few minutes, Suhrad Swami realized that he forgot to put the wireless bell next to Swamiji's bed. So he slowly opened the door and entered Swamiji's room. To his surprise, Suhrad Swami saw Swamiji sitting upright on the bed.

Suhrad Swami folded his hands and humbly asked Swamiji, "Why did you suddenly wake up?"

Swamiji did not immediately respond. Seeing Swamiji in deep thought, Suhrad Swami again asked, "Why did you wake up? What thoughts are keeping you awake?"

Then Swamiji softly replied and revealed three reasons, "I was thinking of Yogiji Maharaj and introspecting. [First] I was introspecting on whether I have wholeheartedly served each devotee with *das-bhav* today. [Second] I was making sure that I fulfilled My responsibilities to the devotees today. And [third], I was making sure that I answered the prayers of all My devotees today."

Only the person who hears our prayers and has taken the responsibility to answer our prayers can say this! Whenever you make a prayer, be assured that someone is definitely listening to and answering your prayers!



BEST TIMES TO MAKE PRAYERS

1. First thing in the morning

Praying in the morning invites Swamiji to stay with you throughout your day.

2. Before starting any task

Praying before starting a task gifts you with God's strength and inner confidence.

3. After achieving success or reaching your goal

A prayer after successful moments in life ensures a humble attitude.

4. At night before sleeping

Asking for forgiveness and praying for the strength to improve yourself tomorrow is the best way to progress forward on the spiritual path to Akshardham.



Cool Fact

The ear is an astounding organ; regardless if we are awake or asleep it is constantly working.

When we are asleep, every sound is heard, but the brain chooses to tune out a majority of these sounds.

In fact, it is impossible to ever stop the sense of hearing. Even in a room that is completely silent, we will begin to hear our heartbeating and the blood pulsing through our ears.

So you can be sure that no matter where you are or what you are doing, any prayer you say will be heard because the ear hears all!



“A prayer is a means to relinquish your own strength and ego, and invite God to give you His strength. If you do not rely on the strength of prayer, God is reluctant to take the initiative to give you inner strength.”

- Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji

Atmiya Yuva Mahotsav 2015

Seva Darshan – Haridham, India



Saints & volunteers are working hard to prepare for AYM 2015.

Atmiya Yuva Mahotsav 2015

Dec 3rd 2014 - Jan 1st 2nd 3rd 2015 - Please register at haridhamnj.org

Atmiya Yuva Mahotsav is fast approaching. As we all know, the dress code for AYM is a cream shirt and gray pants. However, in the evening sessions, there is chance of the weather becoming slightly cold. Hence, wearing a cream colored sweater is acceptable. If you want to wear a sweater of any other color, you are requested to wear it underneath your cream shirt. In this way, we can fulfill Swamiji's vision of having the color cream shine from our body during the AYM assembly!



Atmiya Yuva Mahotsav