

HELPLESSNESS AND SEEKING HELP

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

You cannot manage a situation unless you know exactly what is happening. The inner responses are allowed to happen for want of a proper insight and knowledge. You want to have the capacity to manage every happening properly so that you do not deliver yourself into the hands of likes and dislikes, into the hands of anger, frustration and its roots. You are working towards that capacity.

I am absolutely helpless in the event of a reaction. I seem to have no power over this anger. Please understand that it takes a lot of courage to accept helplessness. Unless I have the courage to accept helplessness I can never grow out of it. I will not seek help even if it is available. It is like the man who was an alcoholic. When someone asked him, "Why do you take alcohol every day?" he replied, "I am not an alcoholic. I can give up alcohol any day." This response is more from the alcohol than from the person. A man who wants to give up alcohol has to first accept the fact that he has no power over alcohol.

Similarly, I must know intimately that I have no power over my anger, my sorrow, depression, and frustration. Some people advise, "Don't get depressed". Very often religious teachers become advisers. Nobody seems to really understand what is going on. A person does not choose to get depressed; it just happens. Equally that person cannot choose not to be depressed. There is no point in advising someone not to get depressed. When we advise someone not to get angry, he gets angrier because it is not that a person wants to be angry. Anger happens. We need to realise that we have no power over anger, over sorrow, over mechanical thinking

because they are mechanical. If we had control over them, we would not have them in the first place. If we understand this, a way out opens up for us.

When I am helpless in controlling my reactions, I can approach the Lord for help because everybody else is in the same situation as I am. I am sad and another person is also sad and two sad persons coming together do not make a happy lot. If a drowning person gets hold of another drowning one, both get drowned in the process. Therefore, this popular prayer on these lines is very relevant here: "O Lord, I am helpless. Please give me the maturity to accept gracefully what I cannot change, and the will and effort to change what I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

All of our problems are because we refuse to accept facts and very often we worry about things we cannot change. We do not know what can be changed and what cannot be. If we knew that, we could spare our efforts and divert our energy. Our efforts can gain a direction. We can pray.

The basis for any form of prayer is the acknowledgement of our helplessness and then seeking help. Prayer is born naturally when I realise my helplessness and recognise the source of all power, all knowledge. If both of these are acknowledged, prayer is very natural. If everything is in order I need not pray. All prayers have their fulfilment in keeping everything in order.

When I need help, I seek help from any person I can. When the helplessness is in terms of my incapacity to let go of my past or to let the future happen without my being apprehensive, then a person like myself

cannot help me. I have to go to the source from where such help is possible. That source is the Lord whom I can invoke through prayer.

I intimately realise that I am a victim of my own past. As a victim of my past, I cannot but be apprehensive about the future. I become worried. I become cautious. I become frightened of my future. To deliver myself into the hands of the Lord, I deliver myself to the order that is the Lord. The Lord is not separate from the order and the order is not separate from the Lord. My past then becomes part of the meaningful order of my personal life. The future unfolds itself in keeping with the same order, an order that includes my previous *karma*, if there is such a thing.

As a child I had no will of my own. I was in the hands of my parents, my elders, my teachers, and other adult members of the society. As a child, I saw that I was absolutely helpless. My knowledge was limited and my perception was never clear. I was insecure. I was learning with a small mind, with meagre information, without any wisdom at all. Naturally, I made conclusions about the world and myself. These conclusions formed the basis for my interpretation of the events to come. In the process, these interpreted events definitely seem to confirm my conclusions

Look at the helplessness. As an adult I cannot remove the conclusions I made as a child and therefore I become a victim of my own past. Whom should I blame? I cannot blame myself nor can I afford to blame the world. Blaming does not help me let go, the past being retained. It is one thing to acknowledge the mistake of others but quite another to hold on to them and to retain my fears and anger. I have to eliminate all forms of blaming in order to be free of my past.

I may have valid reasons to blame. I see those reasons and I let go of my past. By allowing my blaming to continue, I allow the past to continue. If I was a victim of the

behaviour of my elders, by blaming them now I continue to be a victim. I understand all of this, but still I am helpless. "O Lord, help me. Help me accept gracefully what I cannot change. Let me be free of blaming anyone, including myself. I cannot blame myself for what happened to me nor can I blame others because others themselves have yet others to blame. O Lord, help me accept gracefully what I cannot change. Blaming means that I want to change the past. I want my past to be different. How can it be? O Lord, help me accept gracefully what I cannot change. I let go of my resentment, anger, and dissatisfaction by accepting gracefully what I cannot change. O Lord, perhaps what I went through was meant to happen. Perhaps it was all in order.

O Lord, all the years of pain, struggle and groping seem to have paid off, for I pray and by this prayer everything has become meaningful. My pain, my past, has resulted in my coming to you to seek help. Intimately, I acknowledge my helplessness. I seek your help, your intervention, to make me accept what I cannot change. I cannot change what has happened, nor can anyone else, not even you. Intimately I acknowledge the fact that what has happened cannot be changed.

O Lord, help me accept totally what I cannot change—my mother's behaviour, her omissions and commissions, my father's neglect, his anger, his indifference, his lack of care, his mishandling, his mismanagement, his drinking, the fights between them, the confusion at home, my being left alone, not fondled, not cared for, not loved. Perhaps, I was wrong, but this was how I felt.

O Lord, I cannot change what has happened. Please help me accept gracefully what I cannot change. I do not want to bury the past, nor do I want to forget the past. I cannot. I just want to accept the fact, accept the past. Gracefully, I accept the past. I even begin to see an order in all of this, for do I not pray now? I have come to be objective. I see some order here. Please help me accept gracefully what I cannot change."