

How to Gain Īśvara's Grace in Our Daily Life

This article, written by N. Anantaraman, is based on a talk by Swāmi Dayānanda Saraswati at the Bharatiya Temple of Troy on August 28, 2005. Some published lectures of Swāmiji were consulted when preparing the article, but it has not been corrected by Swāmiji.

To be at the right place at the right time is not in our hands. Between the cup and the lip there are always many slips. One's whole life is a percentage game, like baseball. We do not call the shots. There are many known variables as well as hidden variables in life over which we have no control. Whatever can go wrong will generally go wrong. Faced with this predicament, the self-conscious human being recognizes his or her helplessness. If one then finds oneself in a favorable situation, one cannot but recognize and acknowledge something unknown which shaped the situation in one's favor. That something is Īśvara's grace. Grace is known in Sānskrit as *anugraha* or *kṛpā*, and the source of grace is accepted to be Īśvara (the Lord) by those who recognize that there is grace in one's life.

It is grace that keeps us going. In fact, grace works overtime to keep us all going and retain our sanity in this unpredictable world. You see the green traffic light and drive on, assuming that the other fellow saw the red light. This assumption is purely rooted in grace, because you have no basis to make such an assumption. It is pure trust. The other fellow may be seeing many lights, because he had one too many Lights—Bud's Light. How do you know that even after having seen the red light he won't drive through it?

There is a wise saying:

उद्यमं साहसं धैर्यं बुद्धिः शक्तिः पराक्रमः ।
षडेते यत्र वर्तन्ते तत्र देवस्सहायकृत् ॥

*udyamam sāhasam dhairyam buddhiḥ śaktiḥ parākramah
ṣadete yatra vartante tatra devassahāyakṛt*

“God will help those who display the six attributes of initiative (entrepreneurship), enthusiasm, courage, intelligence, strength, and valor.” The point here is that, in addition to the six human attributes listed, one more thing is needed for success—and that is Īśvara's grace.

But grace is not something that God distributes to some chosen people. It is something that we earn as a result of our actions (*karma-phala*) performed either in this birth or in a prior birth. It is something we have to tap. God, of course, is very much present in it as *karma-phala-dātā*, the one who gives the results of actions. The laws produce the result of action, and those laws are not separate from Īśvara. Grace is like underground water in that we have to tap it, and the tapping is done by action alone. Grace is always there. It is a possibility, like any other possibility. There are many things that are manifest, surfaced, in this

universe. There are also many potential possibilities lying there for us to tap. Grace is one such potential possibility.

We earn grace in one of two ways:

- By daily prayer (*nitya-karma*), which is essentially a religious appeal to control the hidden variables of life. Prayer is the effort of a religiously pragmatic and objective person to control the existing probabilities that are not conducive to him or her.
- By reaching out to do something to help another person, to help the community, to help other living organisms in this world. Reaching out in such ways is called *pūrta-karma*, which is different from the simple *karma* that is centered on oneself or on one's small family. It is *vāpi-kūpa-taḍākādi devatāyatanāni ca*: providing a place for harvesting water, *vāpi*; a public well, *kūpa*; a pond for animals, *taḍāka*; even a temple for common worship, *devatāyatana*. It is providing a place where food is given, *annapradhāna*; a resting place for wayfarers, *ārama*; and schools and hostels, etc. All these *pūrta-karmas* earn grace—and we need a lot of grace.

We do not know which *karma* produces which grace. Nor do we know when we did the *karma* that earns the grace. What we can do is to recognize a situation where we have got the opportunity to do something beneficial. Don't fritter away our energy, our resources, the money we have earned. Identify a worthy cause, reach out and be bigger than we think we are. That is how we grow. That is how we earn Grace.