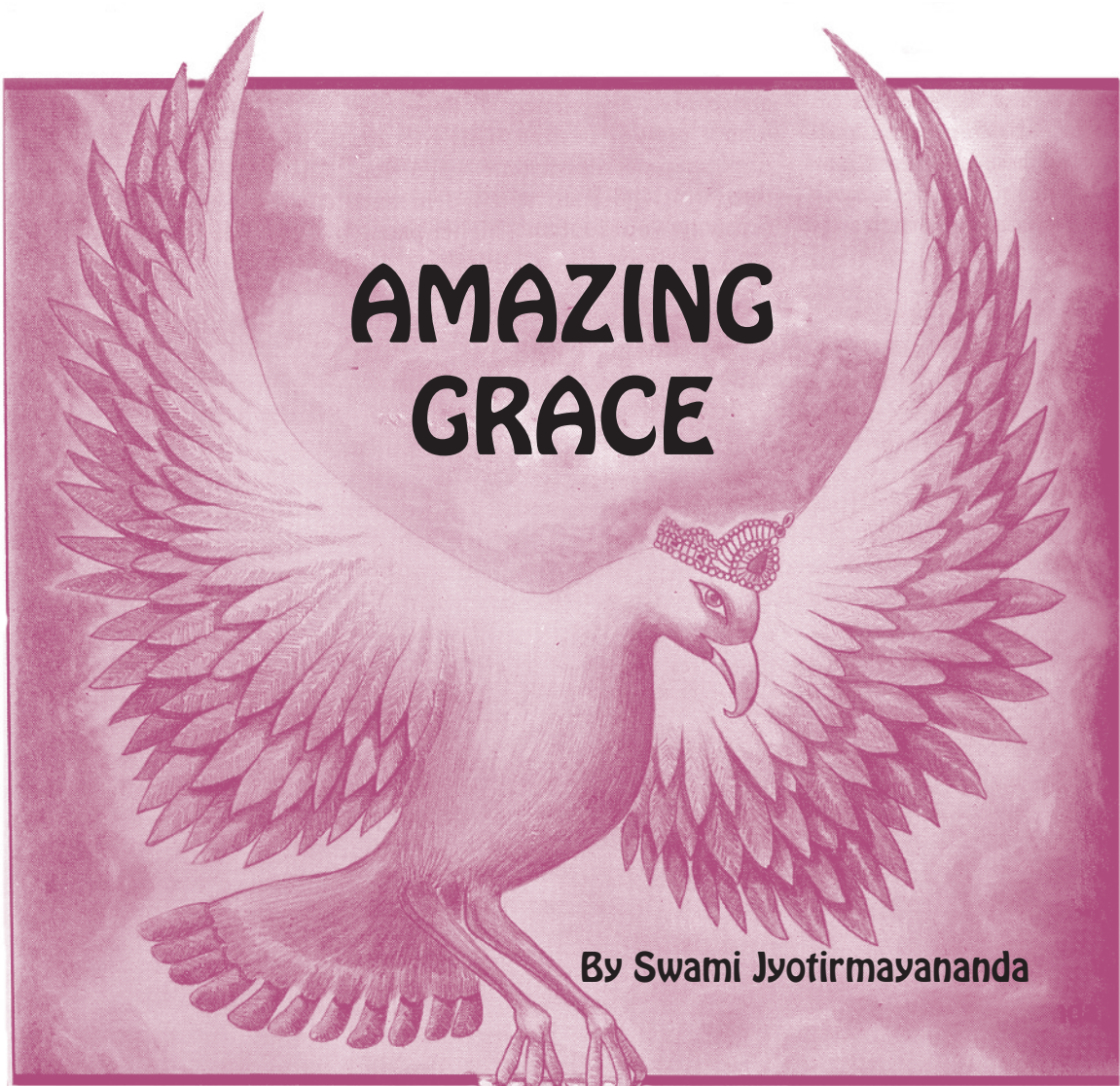




AMAZING GRACE

By Swami Jyotirmayananda

For the vast majority of people, the goal of life is of a material nature, and their self-effort is directed towards acquiring wealth, success in business, fame, name and power.

When your self-effort is directed towards earthly goals, you come under the sway of karma, and you feel that your destiny is regulated by astrological laws. But once you hold God-realization before your mind as your goal, you go beyond the realm of astrology.

You do not have to inquire what the stars say about your destiny on that particular day because you understand that only two things can happen: success or failure. The work you are doing will give either successful or unsuccessful results—either there will be prosperity, or there will be adversity.

Once your mind is made up to attain Self-realization, adversity is no longer considered something unwanted, or something that is detrimental.

Rather, it becomes a part of spiritual movement. You consider adversity as austerity. As an aspirant you gain both in prosperity and in adversity. Therefore, you do not come under the ordinary laws of astrology. You are not going after earthly destiny. No matter which way the world flows, you are always gaining internally.

Once you have grasped this point, your self-effort is no longer directed towards ordinary things. Although, in

practical life, you will continue using your intelligence to avoid adversity and to promote prosperity, you will not be affected by the external world, no matter what happens. You will keep yourself always above the world.

Holding before your mind the ultimate goal of Self-realization, your self-effort must be directed towards integrating your personality. In a well-integrated personality, the senses obey the mind, the mind obeys the intellect, and the intellect obeys the higher Self. If that order exists in your personality, then you are effectively moving towards God—the higher Self.

But if that order is not there—if the senses dominate the mind, if the mind is so filled with sentiments, egoistic desires, and cravings that it does not listen to the voice of intellect, and if the intellect becomes so dull that it has no sensitivity to the deeper voice of the higher Self—then your personality is disorganized and your spirit is caught in the process of karma. You go on creating karmas, and, as a result of that, you incarnate. No matter how great your fortune may be, as long as you have not directed your self-effort towards personal-

ity integration and Liberation and stopped the process of coming back, you are in a miserable predicament. This point must be well understood by an aspirant.

Further insight into the questions of freedom, destiny, self-effort, and Grace is gained when you begin to better understand the action of the three *gunas*—*rajas*, *tamas* and *sattwa*—in your personality. When you allow your mind to be distracted, restless, and filled with so many desires, then *rajas* is predominating. When you allow thoughts of gloom, dejection and dullness to develop, then *tamas* is predominating.

If you allow *rajas* and *tamas* to dominate your mental horizon, then you experience a form of dependence and live in a world where you have little freedom. Therefore, you must promote *sattwa* in your personality by systematizing

your daily life in such a way that there is harmony—by performing actions that are selfless, by meditation, by study of scriptures, by good association. As a result, you begin to enjoy a serenity never known before. You discover that you have boundless resources within yourself, and you are not a slave to circumstances or dependent upon objects, or conditioned by people around you. You begin to discover a new sense of freedom and you work to enhance and intensify that freedom.

As that vision develops, you further realize that your self-effort is leading you towards the big Self. For every step you take towards the Self, the Self takes a thousand steps towards you. That response from the big Self is called “Grace.”

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deeper Self is the same as your movement towards God. So as you move towards your deeper Self, that Self or God is as if coming closer to you.

The right type of self-effort is associated with Grace. In the beginning it may seem that you have to work very hard in order to accomplish integration of personality, in order to control the mind. Those tasks may even seem impossible. But as you begin that process, you discover that there is a Divine Hand that begins to sustain your movement. As you depend upon the Divine Hand, your dependence, paradoxically, allows you to experience increasing freedom—because the Divine Hand is nothing but your own innermost Self.

A parable has been told about a sparrow that lost its eggs in the ocean. In order to recover the eggs the sparrow decided to empty the ocean. And with tremendous determination, she began to do so. With a blade of grass she would hop to the ocean, dip the blade, hop away from it, and shake the blade—all the while repeating to herself, “I’ll work to empty this whole cruel ocean until it gives back the eggs.” And although it was

an impossible and ridiculous task, the sparrow persisted.

But it so happened that Sage Narada became amused by the sparrow and, developing compassion towards her, went to see Garuda, the great mystical bird who is the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. “One of your own kind, a sparrow, is in trouble,” said Narada. “Go and help her.” And Garuda went to the aid of the sparrow with his giant wings—wings that stretch beyond this globe, wings that touch the stars. That majestic power of Garuda began to churn the ocean, and the Ocean God became terrified. Garuda said to him, “Let go of those little eggs of the sparrow or I will show you no mercy!” Of course, the Ocean God gave back the eggs to the sparrow.

As the parable suggests, when you begin the project of attaining Self-realization, it is like the sparrow trying to empty the ocean. Nevertheless, you are related to Garuda—the intuitional power within you. As you continue with sincerity, that Divine Grace begins to unfold. Your effort, associated with Divine Grace, works wonders. Mind, which is like the ocean, is easily overcome by intuitional vision, and once it

is overcome you discover the bliss that you have lost, the peace that you have ignored within you.

When you understand that you are working not for material goals but for internal advancement, your only destiny becomes Self-realization. You are destined to attain Self-realization, and that type of destiny is unchangeable. You are pre-destined to become one with *Brahman* whether you like it or not. And in the enfoldment of that destiny the majestic wings of Divine Grace will join forces with your right self-effort in the most amazing way!

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