

PODCAST 182: SELF-ENQUIRY – ADVAITHIC APPROACH

Om Sri Sai Ram

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh, 182nd episode.

The topic is 'self-enquiry' according to Advaita School of Philosophy. I will cover the Advaita perspective on this most important topic 'self enquiry'.

Before we go into the details, let me share with you three of the common ideas. The first is that, 'There is God'; the second is, 'We have to pray to Him'; and then the third one is, 'Once He is pleased, He'll grant us *moksha* or liberation.' By that we are free from all the sufferings of this world.

These three ideas are common to every devotee of every religion. In addition to that, these three are supported by the eighteen epics, Puranas (P U R A N A S), and these three are taught by heads of all schools of philosophy, by all teachers, *gurus* and many devotees like Meerabai, Ramdas, Tukaram who also spoke along these lines. So, there is God, you have to pray to Him and He'll grant us *moksha* or liberation.

We know there are three classes of people. One is atheist or *nasthika* (N A S T H I K A), who denies God. He says there's no God at all. It is all your imagination. So then there's no question of praying to Him, and *moksha* it is non-existent. He's very clear about that.

Then there's the second group. We all come under that – the theist, *asthikas* (A S T H I K A) or theist, those who believe in God. But we seem to be confused because some worship Shiva, some worship Vishnu, some worship Ganesha, some worship Goddess, it's like that. Oh ho! There are a number of gods - more than one crore!

Lastly, there's the third group, the *yogis* (Y O G I S). So *yogis* are the third class of people. They say that the body is useless; the body is so mean so we don't have to consider the body very important. Just close your eyes and turn inward to attain God. That's what they say.

Then, how about common people? Well, common people blindly follow. They don't verify, so they find anything they hear is correct. They just blindly follow.

So what we can say is one has to trust oneself first. Trust yourself first because if you blindly follow me, I may misguide you. Where is the guarantee that I am not bluffing you? Also my experience cannot be your experience. So in what way will it help you? Thus both of us will be equally spoiled. If the one who speaks lies or if the one who claims he has a genuine experience, both of them are useless to the listener. My experience cannot be your experience. That we can clearly understand.

There are some people who say, 'I want to see God. He should appear in front of me,' *sakshatkara* (S A K S H A T H K A R A). I want to see God with a name and form right in front of me.' Oh! I see! Then we should put a question to him. 'Where is

God?' All would answer in one voice that He is everywhere, *sarvathra* (S A R V A T H R A). He's everywhere and He is awareness or *jnana* (J N A N A) or knowledge. He is awareness everywhere.

But here we should bear in mind that which is everywhere is nameless and formless. Awareness has no name and no form. Then how do you expect that nameless formless awareness or knowledge and what you say 'God everywhere,' *sarvathra*, to appear in front of you? Is it possible? Impossible!

When He's everywhere, *sarvathra*, and *sarvam* (S A R V A M) meaning everything in the whole universe, then everything in the entire cosmos is divine. So these two words, *sarvathra*, everywhere, and *sarvam*, everything, mean that the whole thing is divine. Very good! In that sense, you are God. Your body is God. Your life is God. Why not!

It means nothing exists except God. God is the only one that exists without the second. And in fact, from microcosm to macrocosm, from *pindanda* (P I N D A N D A) to *Brahamanda* (B R A H A M A N D A), from microcosm to macrocosm everything is only divine.

Then who is to see Him? When you are God, when He is everywhere, when everything is divine, who is to see His manifestation? Because you don't exist. You as an individual *jeeva* (J E E V A) don't exist and there's no *jagath* (J A G A T H). There's no universe. There's no *Jagadeeswara* (J A G A D E E S W A R A). There's no God separate somewhere because we have accepted in principle that God is *sarvathra*, everywhere and *sarvam*, everything. So the whole thing is divine.

Now, awareness has no form and this awareness is spread all over the universe. That is *Pragnanam Brahma*, which is a *mahavakya* from *Upanishads*. *Pragnana* (P R A G N A N A M) *Brahma*. The entire awareness is Brahman which is *akhanda* (A K H A N D A) infinite, and that is nameless and formless. So how do you see it? Awareness in a limited sense is within you but it has no name and form. This infinite awareness or *jnana* is spread all over, so how do you expect to see it with a name and form?

But still if you insist that I should see Him, what can I say? I can put it this way. Here is a table in front of me. Suppose I say I want to see the table. What would you say? Yes, in front of you, you see that. That is the table. In the similar way if he insists on seeing God, we can tell him, yes, God is here in this nature. You are in this nature. That is divine. God manifest is nature. Nature unmanifest is God. If you want God to manifest well, He is in the form of this nature. When this nature is unmanifest, there's only God that remains. Therefore we have to understand this very clearly.

Then where is the question of confusion? The question of confusion is because there is this awareness, *jnana*, knowledge, and there is *chith*, awareness. *Chith* (C H I T H) awareness plus *jnana*. *Sat*, meaning existence. There's *sat* and *chith*, existence and awareness, the substratum. These are the two components of Brahman, of *Atman*, all that I-ness, all that Divinity have these two, *sat* and *chith*.

That is there all of us know. But we have no experience of it. Therefore some follow the path of action. They want to do some activity, they want to do some actions so that they can be very close to that *sat, chith*. How foolish it is! You are that *sat, chith* existence and awareness. What's the question of being near it? You are that. What is the question of manufacturing it or generating it?

Now to be a little clearer, there's a rope and you have mistaken it as a snake. So long as you see the snake, you cannot see the rope. Once you see it is a rope, then the snake question does not arise at all. So the confusion is due to mistaken identity. This they call in Vedanta *rajju sarp, branthi*. *Rajju* (R A J J U) the rope, *sarpa* (S A R P A) the serpent, *branthi* or mistaken identity.

Therefore, in other words, I can put it like this. You are looking at the rope that is appearing as a snake. But it is just a rope appearing as a snake, that's all. It's not the snake. It's only the rope that appears as a snake because of your own mistake. With the result that what happens? Because of this mistaken identity you have created this division into the individual soul, *jeeva*, and *jagath*, the universe. This division of the universe and the individual soul has come because of this mistaken identity.

Division is duality; but we are thinking of a non-dual approach to the whole thing. Now, all that you see is God. That's all. And if the whole world is withdrawn, if we don't see the world, there is God also.

If you want to see God, there is a world which I have spoken about in a different way. All that comes and goes is *samsara*, the world (S A M S A R A), while that which neither comes nor goes is *sayujya* (S A Y U J Y A), the Divinity, all is one with the Divinity. Therefore, we should have these views clearly in our mind so that we don't get confused. So 'I and the world' are two, in common understanding. But it's false or wrong. Both 'I' is divine and the world is divine. Not two, only one. Only one, that's all. For notional purposes you may say, 'I and the world'. So 'I and the world' are totally divine. One only!

That's why it is said in the *Upanishads, prathyaksha avagamam, prathyaksha avagamam*. This is a Sanskrit word which is broken down like this. *Prathyakshaavagamam* means: *prathyaksha*, that is 'direct' and *avagama*, 'that which you see'. *Avagama* means what you see (A V A G A M A). *Prathyaksha* (P R A T H Y A K S H A) means direct or directly. So *avagamam* means: **that which you see is God Himself.**

The same *Upanishad* says it is very easy to know, see and experience Him. *Susukham* (S U S U K H A M) , *karthum* (K A R T H U M). It's very easy to know, see and experience.

An example is given here. When there is light, darkness is dispelled. Where does the darkness go? It is the light that swells. The darkness gets merged into the light. The darkness is dominated by the light.

In a similar way, once we have within the understanding, the purview, or the attitude of Divinity, what happens? The whole world will appear as God. You are God.

There's nothing like *ajnana* or ignorance, nothing like that. There's only *jnana* the knowledge, the awareness. This has to be very well understood by us.

It's not that easy, my friends. I'm thinking and talking to you. The repetition is because of my exertion to make myself very clear to you. That's all. Being a teacher repetition is unavoidable. I think you'll understand me with due sympathy.

So that which is easy to know and experience is this Divinity. You and the world are one, the Divine only. This will come to our experience when we are in that mood, in that contemplation of the Divine, the Divine ambiance, the Divine thought.

But some say that we should do something, do some *sadhana* or spiritual practice. My friends, it is wrong. *Sadhana* or spiritual practice is not to be done at home. No, because that is all about **becoming**. But the truth is about **being**. Truth is not about becoming.

Some say, 'Let me do some *dhyana* or meditation.' Well, what is that meditation? From the *Adwaita* point of view, meditation is only this: To know that you are God and that God is all-pervasive. So everywhere there's only Divinity, nothing else separate from it. Constantly think of this. Baba says, Constant Integrated Awareness is true *dhyana*. This is what is required.

My friends, as this topic is deep and lengthy, I want to make it two parts. The next part we'll certainly discuss in the 182nd episode.

Thank you very much for your time.