

PODCAST 187: ENDLESS PILGRIMAGE

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh welcomes you to the 187th episode. Thank you for listening.

The topic of today is ***ENDLESS PILGRIMAGE***

Let me begin by saying that there are people who are goal-seekers. They always set certain goals to reach and certain aims to attain; but what I am talking about here is life in general. Life in general cannot be goal-oriented. Life is an endless pilgrimage. There's no end to this pilgrimage. There's only a beginning.

It was Buddha who said, "The world never begins, but it ends." On the other hand, enlightenment begins, but it never ends. I repeat, enlightenment begins, but it never ends. On the other hand, ignorance has no beginning, but it has an end. However, awareness has only a beginning, but it has no end. Therefore life is an endless pilgrimage. We don't see the end. At the most we can see the beginning.

In ordinary, physical life, everything is limited. It has boundaries. In contrast, in the spiritual realm the experience has no boundaries. Spiritual life simply goes on and on. You never come to a point where you can say, "Now I have arrived." You are always on the way, but you never arrive because if spiritual growth comes to an end, there will be nothing but death. With death no more doors open, and no more flowers blossom. That's what the end means, when everything is past and there is no future.

So the very pilgrimage to Bhagavan begins by dropping the past. The more we are unburdened of the past, the bigger our future will be. When there is no past left, then there are no psychological hang-ups. There is only infinity and unbounded growth. It is a challenge forever.

As we travel more and more on the spiritual path, the goal does not come closer; but we are more peaceful, more silent, and more rejoicing. That is why this talk is called, *Life is an endless pilgrimage*.

Our life goes on changing into a more beautiful existence every moment. It becomes a blessing not only to us, but to the whole existence. So the pilgrimage is endless, and it is only for those who are not goal-seekers.

After all, goal-seekers are mediocre people. They have a certain goal and they aim to reach it. For example, it might be to become the president of a country or an emperor. Once they reach their goal, they have arrived. Another goal is to make a lot of money, and when they have done it, once again, they have arrived.

However, the question arises, 'When they have reached their goal, have they found anything really?' No! By reaching the goal they have simply found that they have been fools, and that they have been running after shadows.

Now, one has become a president and another has become an emperor, but what have they gained? They are the same people, or perhaps even worse, because the

journey they had to make is full of violence, corruption, treachery, and cunningness. They really sold their own souls. So goal-seekers sell their souls.

Let us take the life of Buddha as an example. He was born a prince and he was the only son of his father. Just before he was going to be enthroned, he escaped. The father was old and he wanted to retire. He had a beautiful, young, intelligent, well-educated man in Buddha. He was mature enough. He was twenty-nine and the father wanted him to take charge of the kingdom.

In fact, that is one of the reasons why Buddha escaped from the kingdom, because he had seen his father's empty life with riches all around but poverty inside. The king had everything that was available in those days, but he had no peace, he had no love, and he had no compassion. He had never understood what beauty is, what poetry is, what music is as there was no time for such things.

He was constantly fighting against other kingdoms. His own life had been the life of a warrior but what had he gained? He had simply lost his life in futile wars. He had never enjoyed a blissful night under the stars. He had a beautiful garden, but nobody had ever seen him in the garden. The roses bloomed, but not for him. He had no eyes for that.

Gautam had seen the emptiness of the great Emperor and he was intelligent enough not to want to repeat the same empty circle once again. So he escaped from the kingdom. He knew that his father would search for him ferociously. His father's whole army went all over the kingdom. That's why he left his kingdom to go to another kingdom. But people saw his chariot crossing the boundary line to the neighbouring kingdom and they informed his father.

So the father sent a message to the neighbouring emperor who was his friend, "My son has escaped into your kingdom. Try to find him."

The neighbouring king was overjoyed because he was hoping that Gautam could be persuaded to marry his daughter. He had only one daughter and no son and he wanted a capable man who would manage the two kingdoms together.

He found Gautam in the forest in a cave and he said to him, "What kind of madness is this? My palace is there. If you don't want to live with your father, you could have come to me. This kingdom is as much yours as your own kingdom. It is even bigger than your kingdom and you are just as much a son to me as you are to your father."

"We are great friends, you know. Don't be foolish. Just come with me and sit in the chariot. If you don't want to go back home, you will not be forced."

Then Gautama replied, "I have not left one kingdom to get another kingdom. I have not left the palace to get a bigger palace. I know that if in that small kingdom and in that small palace there was so much emptiness, so in your bigger kingdom and bigger palace, there must be a much bigger emptiness."

"I can see it in your eyes. Watching my own father's eyes, I have become almost an expert. I can see a person's eyes and can say whether he has anything inside or

whether he is just a poor, empty man. You may be an emperor, but to me you are just a beggar, just like my father."

"You certainly are friends with my father but don't disturb me. I am in search of something which cannot be taken away from me, and even death cannot destroy."

"I am in search for something which can bring a kingdom into my heart. I am not a seeker for anything that is outside of me. Peace has to be within me. Silence has to be within me. Love has to be within me. Compassion has to be within me. A sense of beauty has to be within me. Everything that is valuable is inner. I am in search of myself. Just be kind enough and don't disturb me. Otherwise, I will have to move to another kingdom."

My friends, in the physical world there are goals. In the spiritual realm, there are no goals. It is a pure journey leading nowhere.

Atheists have taught me more about God than the theists, though this is quite strange. Twenty-four hours a day they are arguing against God.

There was a man who was such a fanatic atheist that he had written on his office wall, in big capital letters, '*God is nowhere*'. So anybody entering into his office would first read '*God is nowhere*' and naturally, this became the first topic to be discussed, so people would even forget the reasons why they had come to his office.

One day the atheist was sitting with his small child who was learning to read. He could read small words. He could read the word 'God' as it was not a big word. However, the word 'nowhere' was too big for the small boy so instead, he read, 'God is **now here**'. He broke the word 'nowhere' into 'now' and 'here'.

His father, who had written it and had seen it on his wall for many years, was not aware that 'nowhere' can also be 'now here'. It was a sudden shock for him, a kind of awakening, and he started thinking about it.

"Perhaps the child is right. Yes, why not? All my arguments are only arguments, but they are not solid proof that God does not exist. I have not explored the whole of existence so I cannot say that God is nowhere."

So that statement is invalid. It can be made only by a person who has been everywhere and has found that God is not anywhere.

Thinking about it, he understood that his statement had not come from within himself. He decided that he should start his journey again from now and from within.

Therefore, the pilgrimage we are starting now begins here and it never ends. It ends nowhere because it is always 'now' and 'here'. In existence only 'now' exists and only 'here' exists.

In language there is the word 'there' and 'then,' but not in existence. In existence everything is here. Everything is now.

Also, the words 'now' and 'here' are not separate. They are the two aspects of reality. This is one of the most important discoveries of modern physics - that space and time are not two things. Space means 'here' and time means 'now'.

Albert Einstein who worked all his life on the subject of time and space finally dropped the two words, 'time' and 'space'. He created a new word, 'spacetime'. He created this word 'spacetime' because all his research led him to one conclusion - that time and space are not two things. They are one.

You cannot separate 'now' from 'here'. The journey will move from one 'now' to another 'now', from one 'here' to another 'here'.

However, it is not going to come to an end. It is an eternal pilgrimage and one should rejoice that life is eternal and that we are part of eternity. There is no death. There is no end.

So what I wanted to repeatedly share with all of our listeners today is that life is an endless pilgrimage. Life is not goal-seeking. Life is here and now and it never ends!

Thank you for your time.

Jai Sai Ram!