

## PODCAST 197: YOU HAVE ARRIVED!

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, 197th episode.

We often think that we have arrived at our destination and there is nowhere further to travel, or that we have come to a conclusion and there is nothing more to know. In other words, we feel satisfied with the travels we have made, thinking that we have reached our destination. So we are under the impression that we have arrived. But it is not so.

Let me share with you a story from the *Upanishads*. One young boy by the name of Svetaketu was sent by his father to a *gurukul*, (hermitage), to a family of an enlightened Master, in order to learn.

He learned everything that could possibly be learnt. He memorised all the Vedas and every science which was available in those days. He became proficient in all of them. He became a great scholar and his fame started spreading all over the country.

There was nothing more to be taught. So the Master said to the boy, "Svetaketu, you have now learned everything which can be taught. Now you can go back home."

Svetaketu went back home to his father, thinking that the Master had taught him everything there was to know and that now he was as knowledgeable as the Master. He thought that there was nothing more to learn, so he came back home with great pride and ego.

As he was entering the village on his return from this *gurukul*, his father Uddalaka was looking out of the window and saw his son coming. He noticed that Svetaketu was walking very proudly, and that he was holding his head up in a very egoistic manner. He was looking all around, being very self-conscious of the fact that he was knowledgeable.

The father became sad and depressed because he realized that this was not the manner of one who is truly knowledgeable. This was not the way of one who has come to know the Supreme knowledge. This was definitely not the behaviour of an enlightened man.

The son entered the house. He thought that his father would be very happy because he had become one of the best scholars in the country. He was known everywhere and he was respected by everyone.

However, he noticed that his father was sad so he asked, "Why are you sad? Why?"

The father replied, "I have to ask you just one question, "Have you learnt the one thing which, once it is learned, there would be no need to learn anything else? Have

you acquired the type of knowledge which will cease all suffering once it is acquired? Have you been taught that which cannot be taught?"

Now, the boy also became sad. He said, "No father, whatever I know has been taught to me and I cannot know more than what I have already learnt. I am now ready to teach everything I know to anybody who is ready to learn."

The father said, "Then you go back and tell your Master that you want to learn that which cannot be taught!"

The boy said, "But that is absurd. If it cannot be taught, how can the Master teach me?"

The father replied, "That is the art of the Master. He can teach you that which cannot be taught. Just go back." So after bowing down at his father's feet, Svetaketu went back to the Master.

He said, "My father has sent me back for an absolutely absurd reason. I am confused. I don't even know where I am and what I am asking you. My father has instructed me to come back and return only when I have learnt that which cannot be learnt and when I have been taught that which cannot be taught. What does this mean? What is that thing which cannot be taught? You never told me about it."

The Master replied, "You never enquired about it and unless you enquire about it, it cannot be revealed to you.

However, let me tell you that now you are starting a totally different journey, which is very delicate. Also, remember that this is something which cannot be taught. Therefore I can only help you indirectly.

This is what you must do: "Take all the animals in my *gurukula*, and go to the deepest forest possible, where nobody ever comes. There are at least four hundred cows, bulls and other animals here. Take them and live with these animals in silence. Don't talk because these animals cannot understand any language. Remain silent and when these four hundred animals have become one thousand by reproduction, then come back."

It would take a long time for four hundred animals to become one thousand. However, Svetaketu was being instructed to go without saying anything, without arguing and without asking the question which was in his mind, "What are you asking me to do? Where will this journey lead?"

He was told to live with animals, trees and rocks, not to talk to anyone and to forget the human world completely. The reason for that is that our mind is a human creation. If we live with human beings, the mind is continuously being fed. Someone will say something, then we will say something back, and the mind goes on learning and keeps evolving.

So, the Master said, "Go to the hills, to the forest. Live alone. Don't talk. There's no use in thinking either, because these animals won't understand that you are thinking. Just leave all your scholarship behind."

Svetaketu followed the Master's instructions. He went to the forest and lived with the animals for many years. For the first few days, thoughts remained in his mind. The same thoughts were repeating themselves over and over again.

Eventually, this becomes boring because if new thoughts are not created, then we become aware that the mind repeats the same thoughts. It is just a mechanical repetition. As a result, the mind goes into a rut and there's no way to get new knowledge. With new knowledge the mind is always happy because once again, there is something to grind, something to work out and so the mechanism goes on moving.

Eventually, Svetaketu became aware. There were four hundred animals and also birds and other wild animals around. There were trees, rocks, rivers and streams but no man and no possibility of any human communication.

There was no use in being very egoistic because these animals did not know that Svetaketu was a great scholar. In fact, they did not consider him at all. They obviously did not look at him with respect. Slowly, his pride disappeared because it was futile and he looked foolish walking with the animals in a prideful way. So he thought, "If I remain egoistic, these animals will laugh at me. So what am I doing?"

This story is beautiful. As Svetaketu continued sitting under the trees and sleeping near the streams, eventually his mind became silent. Ten years passed and his mind became so silent that Svetaketu completely forgot when he was supposed to return. He became so silent that even the idea of his return was no longer there. The past had dropped completely.

With the dropping of the past, the future also drops, because the future is nothing but a projection of the past. It is just the past reaching into the future.

So Svetaketu forgot what the Master had told him. He forgot when he was supposed to return. There was no *when* and *where* in his mind, only the *here* and *now* existed. He lived in the moment. He became just like the animals. He became like a cow.

The story says that when the animals became one thousand, they started feeling uncomfortable. They were waiting for Svetaketu to take them back to the ashram but he had forgotten.

So one day the cows decided to speak to Svetaketu and they said, "Now enough time has passed. You must remember what the Master had told you. He said that you must come back when the animals become one thousand, but you have completely forgotten. However, it is time to go back now, as we have become one thousand."

So Svetaketu came back with the animals. The Master looked through the door of his hut at Svetaketu, who was coming with one thousand animals and he said to his other disciples, "Look one thousand and one animals are coming!"

Svetaketu had become such a silent being without ego, without self-consciousness and he was just moving with the animals as if he was one of them.

The Master came to receive them and He was dancing ecstatically. He embraced Svetaketu and he said, "Now there's nothing more to say to you. You have already become aware. Why have you come? There's no need to come now. There's nothing more to be taught. You have already gained Supreme Knowledge."

Svetaketu said, "I have come just to pay my respects, just to touch your feet and to express my gratitude. It has happened! You have taught me that which cannot be taught."

This is what a Master is meant to do. His purpose is to create a situation in which awareness happens, but only indirect effort can be made. Only indirect help, indirect guidance can be given.

Wherever direct guidance is given, or wherever your mind is taught, that teaching is not religion or enlightenment. It may be theology, but it is not religion. It may be philosophy but it's not religion.

Looking at Svetaketu, the sage was satisfied and blessed him to return home.

The first thing that this episode from this *Upanishad* teaches us is that we cannot feel proud of our knowledge, and that we cannot be egoistic under any circumstances.

The second point is that we cannot decide exactly when we have arrived, because we do not know how long we have to travel and for how long we should continue to learn.

Should we say that we have arrived? The answer is no, we should not! Svetaketu thought he had arrived, but he had not arrived. That is the reason why Svetaketu's father asked him to go back to his Master, in order for him to learn what had not been taught to him. He had to learn the kind of knowledge which cannot be conveyed verbally but only through certain indications, when the good Master creates a situation for us in which to learn.

So this episode teaches us what a spiritual journey is all about. It is a spiritual journey that never ends so it is misleading to think that we have arrived. How do we know? Who certified it? Therefore, let us understand that we are all on a spiritual journey and that we are growing as we move from one point to another. This is what I wanted to share with you.

Also, as it has been already said, our view of life should now be totally different. It should be totally different from the kind of view which we had previously.

Since time is up, we will take up this topic once again at a later time. Sai Ram.