

PODCAST 206, NOTATIONAL NOT ACTUAL

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh 206th episode welcomes you.

In this talk I want to discuss with you certain important points, which are required in order to understand the depth of philosophy. To have an in-depth glimpse of philosophy we need to equip ourselves and learn certain important points.

To begin with and to make it simple, I would first say that we should know what is notional and what is actual, what is true, and what is false, and we should also know what is substance and what is appearance.

All these terms, the notional and the actual, the true and the false, the substance and the appearance, all have their respective Sanskrit terms, which are used in the spiritual Sanskrit texts. So, let us spend some moments on this.

Let us say that we find two entities here, gold and the ornaments or jewels. We look at them as two different objects. Gold is here and the ornaments or jewels are there. In reality, they are not two, they are only one. The gold here has taken the form of the jewels there. Thus, jewels are basically gold because you cannot take the gold out from the ornaments. Therefore, gold represents the *alma* or consciousness or awareness and the jewels represent the non-self or the world.

Now, the so-called world or non-self which is represented by the jewels is not different from the actual gold. So gold is the actual while the jewels are notional. Gold represents truth and the jewels represent what is false because you can change them from one form to another. So, to begin with, we should have a clear concept of this fact.

In a broader sense, it is said that all aspects of life like birth, life and death are all appearances. They are appearances but they are not the actual. According to the Advaita School of Philosophy, they are only notional but not actual.

As it has been already stated, the whole *jnana* (wisdom, or knowledge), as said in the previous talk, comprises the following two: Existence or *sat* and its awareness, *chith*. *Sat*, *chith* constitutes *jnana* and this is spread all over the universe. It is not limited to a thing or time. It is expansive.

One may ask, how do you know that? The answer is, the scriptures clearly state this, based on the experiences of ancient *rishis*. Their utterances are the Upanishads. Upanishads are made of the utterances of these *rishis*.

Therefore, let us be very clear that what is actual is the 'I'. Awareness or consciousness is spread everywhere. It is so vast, so expansive. It is spread all over the universe and we are aware of this. That is a fact.

Awareness is there, but unfortunately, instead of looking at the self or consciousness as universal, we have rather individualised it.

Therefore, what is spread all over the universe, the 'I' or consciousness, has been limited to a body only. This is individualisation. What I mean is that "I" is confined to the body, to the mind, to the breath and also to the experiences of pain and pleasure. So 'I' is confined to these limitations.

Further, if I say I am here, it only means that I am not there because I cannot be here and be there at the same time. My body may be here, but 'I' the consciousness is here and there and everywhere. This is a universal fact. This is actual.

On the other hand, we consider this individualised I-ness which is limited to the body, to the mind and to life as being the real, as being the reality. That is the biggest mistake committed by all of us, because this I-ness, which is limited to the body, has a beginning, like birth and it has an end, like death. This is purely notional but not actual.

Supposing a person dies here. We think he is gone, but his true self is present here also. He dropped the body here, but the self is there smiling at you. Therefore, the real self is universal and death and birth are limited to a body. Consciousness is universal. This we have to understand.

There are three terms given to the three states of consciousness. One, is the waking state, which is called *Viswa*. So, this awareness is called *Vishwa*. The second, the dreaming state is called *Thaijasa*, and the third, the deep sleep state, is called *Prajna*.

V I S W A, T H A I J A S A, P R A J N A. These are the three names or terms given to the same consciousness, in the three levels of awareness -- the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep state.

However, in all these three states, I am the same. The consciousness is the same. We should be aware of this fact. So, by limiting it to the body, 'I' the consciousness has become a prisoner. That's the reason why we experience pain and pleasure, birth and death. In other words, we are focusing on the wave, but we are forgetting the sea.

Another mistake that we often commit is this: The self, *atma* is one and the same and it is the substance or *Vasthu*, V A S T H U. We have divided this *Vasthu* into two. We have divided it into *Midhyathma* M I D H Y A T H M A and *Gounathma*, G O U N A T H M A. This division into *Midhyathma* and *Gounathma* is of our own making. Actually, both are not there.

The reality or Brahman is only *Mukhyathma*, the substance. M U K H Y A T H M A means Brahman.

Now what is *Midhyathma*, what is *Gounathma*? *Gounathma* is nothing but *Abhimana*, A B H I M A N A or attachment, while *Midhyathma* is a false self, limited to the body. That's what we call *Aham*, which is family or *Samsara*, S A M S A R A. I think I am clear in this aspect.

To put it in a sentence, the consciousness is divided by us into two, *Midhyathma* and *Gounathma*. Actually, this division does not exist. Who did it? Our own *buddhi* or intellect did it. So, it is an intellectual division, but it is not the basic, the essential, or the unity. The basic, the essential is one. So, it is the intellect that has created the division. Therefore this *buddhi* or intellect is the culprit.

What has been done is this: With this kind of division, the intellect has done the greatest harm. It has mistaken the rope for the snake. There lies the rope but you think it is a snake. This is mistaken identity. You think it is a snake but actually it is a rope. This is all a game of the intellect. This is notional. The rope is the one which is in existence. We should be very clear about that!

That's why it is said in Sanskrit terms, *Vasthu Siddham* or *Vasthu Tantram*, V A S T H U S I D D H A M. *Vasthu*, means the substance, the reality, the consciousness, the rope, whereas *Buddhi Siddham*, B U D D H I S I D D H A M (the intellect) is the one which has led us to the mistaken identity. Thinking that the rope is a snake is our mistake.

To put it in other words, I can give you this example: Here is a tree with all the fruits and seeds. We shall understand that the tree is nothing but the product of the soil, of the mud which is there. The composition of the tree is mud or soil. The seed is also composed of soil.

Well, as ill-luck would have it, the big tree fell down because of the wind. So, we think that the tree is gone and the seeds are also gone. But the ground, the soil, will say, "What nonsense you are speaking? The tree is nothing but for I, the soil! The seed is also nothing but for I, the soil! When I am here, why do you say that the trees and the seed are gone? They are my appearances. I am the reality!" That's what the soil claims.

This is what is called *Abhasa*. *Abhasa* means appearance. The seed and the tree are *Abhasa*, A B H A S A. But the actual substance is *Vasthu*, which is the soil. This clearly explains the difference between the notional and the actual.

Then the question will arise, how is it that this kind of mistaken identity happened? Why? The reason is ignorance.

From where did we get this ignorance? Maybe from past lives. This part of ignorance is called *Karana Shareera* or causal body.

We have another kind of body, the one we call 'I' when we are referring only to the physical body and the mind. That is called *Sookshma*, S O O K S H M A, or the subtle body. So, we have three types of bodies. The physical body, the subtle body, which comprises the mind and breath or life, and the third one is the causal body, which is ignorance.

These are all the basic things that one has to know.

To complete this subject, I may need one or two minutes more. I think you'll bear with me because I cannot cut it abruptly.

The mind can travel to any distance but breath cannot. It goes in and goes out. Breathing in, breathing out. It doesn't remain outside for long as that leads to death and it doesn't remain within as this would also be catastrophic. So, the breath moves only within a limited space, whereas the mind can go to any long distance.

Then another point is this: the kind of *jnana* (wisdom, knowledge) which we possess, is limited to our own body, to the individual. This is called *Vruthi jnana*, V R U T H I. *Vruthi jnana* means the *jnana* (knowledge or wisdom) of the individual, which means that this *jnana* has not been expanded, it is not vast.

So, it has to be made very clear and we must be convinced that this *Vruthi jnana* which is confined to the individual is notional. But actually, the *jnana* which is both outside of you and also within you, the *jnana* which is in everyone, spread all over the universe, is one and the same, and that is *Sarvatra*. It is present everywhere.

Similarly, we can also understand this point if we refer to pain and pleasure. Pain is experience. That's all. So also, pleasure is experience. You are not the experience. You are the experiencer. You are not the experience. Pain is different from you. Pleasure is different from you. You are the experiencer but not the experience. You are the observer but not the observed.

So, there are two formless, function-less vast aspects in this world. One formless, function-less aspect is within me and within every person. It is individualised and it is called *Chidaakasa*, C H I D A A K A S A.

On the other hand, according to the Adwaita School of Philosophy, the vast sky above, space, is also formless and function-less. That's called *Mahaakasa*, M A H A A K A S A. So, *Chidaakasa* is individual and *Mahaakasa* is universal.

However, we have to know that this *Chidaakasa* is very much the same as *Mahaakasa*. They are not different. We are the ones who individualise it. This is notional. But actually, it is everywhere and it is so vast.

Next, what we have to understand is this: We have the body, next is the mind, and then the intellect, and above that there is *jnana*. So, understanding that *jnana* is a fundamental source is what is called *Prathyabhigna*, P R A T H Y A B H I G N A, meaning 'the source the *jnana*'.

So, what is to be done is we have to withdraw and go to the source. To go to the level of the *Prathyabhigna*, the source, *jnana*, we have to withdraw from the body, the mind and the life. This process is called *Pravilapana*, P R A V I L A P A N A, meaning 'withdrawal to the source'. That's what *Pravilapana* is.

Therefore, we say we want *moksha*, liberation. What is that liberation? Liberation is coming out of the false notion, liberation out of the dreams. We have to be awake to know that everything is consciousness and nothing less than that. Everything is one without a second. Get out of the limited, go to the infinite.

So, this is what it means to go 'from the notion to the actual'.

Thank you for your time.

I'm sorry for taking some extra time in this session to give a kind of conclusion to the topic under discussion.

Thank you.