

## PODCAST 207: “WHY NOT THE OUTER WORLD?”

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh welcomes you.

Today's topic for discussion is, 'Life is a circle'. Life is a circle. This includes both the outer and the inner.

Why this topic has been chosen is this. Most often people, particularly the religious people, lay much emphasis on inner enquiry, inner growth, inner development and so they would say 'turn inward'.

But our attempt now is, why not the outer also? When the outer is our daily experience, where we communicate and interact day in and day out, how can we ignore that? In fact, why should we neglect it either? So let us try to understand this to some extent.

Usually those who want to move in a spiritual direction have to weaken their senses. What we have heard is that suppression of the senses is the way to the Divine. But it is not so according to *Kaivalya (K A I V A L Y A) Upanishad*. No, it's not so.

“Lord, why have You given us these senses? I would pray to You to give strength to my sense organs. May my eyes be strengthened. May my ears be strengthened. May my tongue be strengthened. May my sense organs grow and be nourished.” That is the prayer as per *Kaivalya Upanishad*.

This idea that there is an opposition between the Divine and the world has settled so deeply within our hearts. Now there is no opposition at all to this idea. If there were any opposition between them then only the world could exist or the Divine could exist. Both could not be there. If there were any opposition between the two, one would have been destroyed long ago.

So, the one who believes only in the Divine says that the world is an illusion or *maya*. He feels a difficulty: 'If I believe in the Divine, how can I also believe in the world? Only one of the two is possible.'

Then the one who believes in the world says that the Divine is a fallacy. That it cannot be there. It's all imagination, an idea, a dream. In fact there is no such thing as the Divine. He feels that because the world is there, the Divine cannot be there. They both believe deeply that there is a contradiction between the two. Hence only one of the two can be; otherwise life will become impossible.

But this sage is saying something else. This sage does not believe that the Divine and the world are opposed to each other. Please be very clear about this. The world and the Divine are not opposed to each other. He does not believe that the sense organs and the soul are opposed to one another. This sage, even in his search of the ultimate realisation, begins his journey by praying for the strengthening of his own sense organs.

This sage -- I mean the composer of *Kaivalya Upanishad*, says there's no contradiction. There cannot be. It is simply not possible. Forget about any contradiction! There's not even any duality. The Divine and the world are not two things. The Divine that comes within the grasp of our sense organs we call the world, and the Divine that does not come within the grasp of our senses, we call the Divine.

This sage is saying a remarkable prayer. He is saying, 'Right now if I ask for the other part of the prayer -- that You enter my experience from within me, that will be asking for too much. So right now I pray only for this much: that my sense organs through which You come into my perception even a little in the form of the world should grow strong. I pray that You become available to me, all around me, in the world itself.'

'I pray that my eyes grow so strong that when I look at a tree, not only will I see the tree, but I'll also see You throbbing and growing inside. And when my ears hear someone speak, I pray that they hear not only the words that come from the mouth but also they hear the soundless which is always there beyond the words. And I pray that when my hands touch someone, then as well as touching the body, my fingers may also touch the One who is hidden within the body. For this, strengthen my sense organs, nourish my sense organs.'

This is a very novel point of view indeed, and psychologists today support this view. They say that the more sensitive and alive a person's senses are the more he will begin to feel and have glimpses of the deeper reality that is within life, that's hidden within life.

What you are doing by killing the senses is that you are becoming enemies of the world. You are saying to the Divine, 'No matter how much I try, I cannot see you in this world.' So then you make your eyes blind, you deaden your hearing. You make all your sense organs weak and feeble. You dry them up and you want to search for the Divine inside you.

Is it not a big mistake? Yes, it is. But try to understand a little. What you could not find even on the outside which would have been easier, will you be able to find it within? Moreover, what you divide into outer and inner, are they really two? The sky that's outside your house and the sky that's inside your house, are they really two? And the breath that you inhale and the breath that you exhale, are they really two? What permeates inside you and what is everywhere outside of you, are they really two? And there's such a vast expanse outside of you. If you are blind to it and cannot see it, will you be able to discover it in the tiny part within you?

The sage says, 'First, strengthen my senses.' So, "Oh Lord! Strengthen my senses. Make them powerful so that through them I can experience what I cannot perceive when my senses are weak.'

It is a courageous prayer. This *Upanishad* has not been written in any moment of weakness. No. Nations also have some weak moments. For the last twenty to twenty-five centuries, India has been living a very weak helpless time, a borrowed existence. It is as if the sun has set and only memories of the sunrise linger. It is as if

darkness has descended everywhere and a deep dejection has possessed the heart. Even to take one step feels frightening. There's a fear to move on any new path. To go on treading only an old rut seems to be safe, comfortable, and convenient. There's no courage about new thinking, new ideas, new flights. In such a weak moment, one becomes afraid even of drinking nectar. 'Who knows? It may be poison. The unknown, the unfamiliar-- who knows if I'll survive it or die from it?'

Once the spirit starts shrinking away from everything, a contraction sets in. There's fear of everything. So you drop everything, you escape from everything. In this escaping and dropping, the soul shrinks. Therefore, let's be clear about these things.

The sage of this *Upanishad* is starting from the outer. There are also other reasons for starting from the outer. The first is that man is naturally an extravert and it's better to begin from where man is. Why not transform what is happening naturally into a spiritual discipline? Why not let this spiritual discipline be natural? Why should we favour the unnatural?

The senses are already experiencing. So why not pray that these same senses become capable of seeing so deeply and so intensely that even the invisible becomes visible. The ears are already hearing, so why not strengthen the power of these senses for some years so that they become able to hear what they have not yet heard; so that the hidden, the unmanifest, the subtle also becomes available to them? Why not pray that the clarity of your seeing becomes so sensitive and so sharp that glimpses of the formless can also happen through it? Why not begin from where man is naturally standing? Why not begin from the nature of man?

The *Upanishads* are very natural, very simple. They are not at all unnatural or complicated. They have no interest in asking man unnecessarily to become other than what he is. Man is acceptable to the *Upanishads* as he is. In his immediacy, he can be refined.

The *Upanishads* don't say to throw a stone away because it is not a diamond. They say to refine it, to clean it and polish it so that is the diamond. The diamond is hidden in the stone and it can become manifest. What looks like a stone today can become a diamond after being polished. Don't throw it away. Transform it, transmute it.

Man is a sum total of the senses, and what we call mind is also just an accumulation of experiences through the senses. Yes. If you go within yourself and look at the kind of mind that you have, what else are you except your senses? And the sum of all your sense experiences is your knowledge.

This is your situation right now. This is not the end. This is not your ultimate state. This is your state today. Why not refine this very state? Why not? That's what the sage of this *Kaivalya Upanishad* asks. He asks you to enquire, not merely eliminate the outer. No! That's what he meant.

Well, we also know that the history of the country also has an effect on our thinking process. When a nation shines in its full genius, when a nation manifests itself in its

full grandeur and to its fullest being, then it is strong and its statements are very powerful.

When a nation is in its youth, fresh and growing and rising towards the peak, when it is the sunrise hour in the life of a nation, then nothing is denied. Everything is accepted. In such a time there is so much capability in the soul of that nation that even if it accepts poison, it is transformed into nectar. No matter who or what it embraces, even if it is a thorn, it is transformed into a flower. Whatever path it puts its feet on becomes golden.

We'll continue in the next session.