

PODCAST 218: THREE VIEWS

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh welcomes you.

There are three interpretations or I should say, three different viewpoints. These three viewpoints relate to life after death, and they are divergent. Let us study each of these views. What do these three views say?

The first viewpoint is the atheistic viewpoint. The second is *upasana*, U P A S A N A, or devotional spiritual practice. The third viewpoint is *Vedanta*, V E D A N T A, or Advaitic approach. Therefore, life after death is viewed from these three different angles: atheistic, then devotional practice or point of view, and thirdly, what we call *Vedanta* or spiritual approach.

The atheistic point of view is very well known to us. They all believe that we are born, we live on Earth, and then we die -- we vanish, we disappear. So what is there in it? There's nothing unusual. There's nothing peculiar. We are born and we die. That's all.

This means that the atheists are not bothered about what led to this life and what will happen after life. They believe in these two: the beginning and the end, birth and death, nothing more. So we have nothing to say about it because their point of view is very, very clear.

Then we come to the second viewpoint, which we call *upasana*, U P A S A N A -- the scriptural point of view or traditional point of view, conventional point of view or orthodox point of view, whichever you may call it. This is the second view. What do they say about this topic? Let us just take a glimpse of their perspective. They say that we are born here as a result of past deeds or *karma*. We have taken birth as a consequence of our past life and deeds. So this birth is not just a happening. It is not just accidental. It has a history behind it in the sense that there's a past life, and that's why we are born here.

So, there is a reason for birth. It's also clearly said that the past life traits, instincts or impressions will be brought forward to this life. They are called *vasanas*, V A S A N A S. *Vasanas* are instincts, traits, and impressions from the past life which are brought forward to this life. In fact, the scriptures would say that *vasanas* are responsible for our birth. They are the root cause for our present life. Similarly, the consequences of the *karmas*, (our actions) which we do during this life, get accumulated or accrued, and we call this *sanchitha*, S A N C H I T H A, *karma*. *Sanchitha* is the sequence of actions that we do in this life, which will also have their effects in the next life. This is what the scriptural awareness and understanding is.

This scriptural understanding, the second viewpoint, also includes this: If you do good deeds, after death you will go to heaven or paradise. If you are involved in bad deeds, you will necessarily go to hell as a consequence. Well, the body is burnt here. It's burnt, gone or buried. So what is it that goes to paradise? What is it that goes to hell? The body is gone! We can say that the body is the medium of expression.

When that medium has left here, what is it that goes to paradise, to heaven or to hell?

The scripture says that the physical body is gone. The subtle body, which we call *sookshma*, S O O K S H M A, *sookshma shareera*, will also go. It will leave the physical body. So, what is this subtle body?

The subtle body has two parts -- one is the mind or *manas* and the second is the life force or *prana*, P R A N A. So, these two, meaning the mind or *manas* and *prana*, the life force, constitute the subtle body. The subtle body will leave this physical body after the end. After death, it will move out.

Where does it move? How does it move? The scriptures say that the subtle body will acquire a 'separate body apparel', or what you call 'special equipment', so as to enter into either heaven or hell.

Just as a man who goes to the moon will have separate attire and will have separate equipment, or will have his own dress, in a similar way the subtle body which goes to heaven will have a particular body which is called *bhoga shareera*, B H O G A. *Bhoga* means 'pleasure'. So this body of pleasure will be given to the subtle body so that it will enjoy all the pleasures in heaven.

But if this subtle body is to go to hell, it will be given a separate dress or apparel or garment or a separate medium which is called *yathana shareera*, *yathana*, Y A T H A N A. *Yathana* means 'suffering'. So, with that body one goes to hell.

Then, the question arises as to who will give them these new dresses? Who will give them this new equipment to go to either heaven or hell and pass through the experiences that are destined for them? Who will give this to them? The answer is simple. The same One who has given you the form while you are in your mother's womb, the same One will give you this new body.

It's about Divinity, the Divine. The Divine has given you this form while you were in your mother's womb, and the same Divine will give you this subtle body apparel appropriate to the living in heaven, the *bhoga shareera*, the body of pleasure. Likewise the Divine will give the body to pass through all the pain, all the torture expected in hell, and that body is called *yathana shareera*, Y A T H A N A. This is the scriptural point of view, the traditional viewpoint.

But one thing is also certain, and it is mentioned very clearly in the scriptures. Life in heaven or in hell is not permanent. One will have a stipulated period to stay there. After the stipulated or particular period is exhausted, one will have to come back to Earth and get into a mother's womb. This will happen after a certain date, because life there in heaven or hell is not permanent. It is only for a specific period. Something like a man who is elected to the Parliament can only stay there five years. Afterwards he has to return to his place. That's all. So likewise, all souls return to earth from heaven or hell. This is the scriptural viewpoint.

But the question no one is certain about is this: Some say the very pleasure in this life is the very heaven. The suffering in this life is the very hell. Then, where comes

this problem of heaven and hell being existent there? So in that case, would taking the subtle body into those realms or domains be true? That's the question against this scriptural point of view.

There are also some people who say that just as on T.V. you come across something like a break; likewise, between one life and another life, there is a break, like a journey in the subtle body to heaven or hell for a specific period. It is a break time because one still has to return to earth and their next life, depending upon the *vasanas*, instincts, impulses or impressions of the past life, as I said earlier. I think I am clear about this.

Last comes the third viewpoint, which is the *Vedanta* or spiritual point of view. *Vedanta* completely and outright condemns the atheist point of view and also the second one, the scriptural interpretation as well. *Vedanta* completely contradicts and opposes both these two viewpoints. How? This is the way: *Vedanta* says there's neither birth nor death. There's no birth, and there's no death. These two are only your imagination, your illusion. They are non-existent, so they are totally false.

So then, what is true? The truth is that Divinity, which is everlasting, abiding, immortal, nectarine, blemish-less, pure, and absolute consciousness is the only reality. That is the truth. That's all. That reality, which is the truth, appears as birth and death. They are only appearances. The truth is the Divinity. Birth and death are only appearances.

How? The ocean represents Divinity. The waves represent birth, and the foam and the rest of the things represent death. The wave is not a reality. The wave is not separate from the ocean. Water bubbles are not separate from the ocean. In content, they are made of the same stuff as the ocean, which is water only. So, if we enquire to the core, we will know that in substance and in quality, it is all only water. The waves arise and subside. We will also notice that the foam disappears, but the ocean remains permanent.

So, that which remains permanent is divine while the waves and ocean and all other things are appearances which are false, non-existent, a myth, *maya*, delusion, or your own illusion. Nothing else! So there's neither birth nor death. There's only one thing and that is eternity to continuity. That's all. This is the *Vedanta* point of view or *Advaita* point of view.

So, as people are very much afraid of death, therefore they take up doing different rituals. One thing they hope for is that they'll get into a better world, a higher world like Brahma Loka, Sathya Loka, *Swarga* - heaven, Vaikuntha - paradise, Kailash. So in expectation of a better world, they take to doing these rituals. And further, they are also hopeful that these *yagnas* and *yagas* will help them to have a better life, a better birth in the life after this.

As it has been clearly established, one has to be born again and again. At least they are hopeful of a better, more comfortable, luxurious, happy and healthy life. Therefore they do these things. In other words, while convinced that they are passing through all these things because of past *karmas*, they want to undo it by taking to good *karmas* or actions so that they'll have a better life next time.

Thus, these are the three viewpoints -- the atheistic point of view, the scriptural point of view and the Vedantic point of view.

So, what is to be done now? The ultimate philosophy, the ultimate truth in spirituality is *Vedanta*. But as we have different classes of people, some only understand one viewpoint or one approach. Another person may not be able to rise above that level. So maybe people take to these viewpoints depending upon their comprehension, their understanding and their level of awareness.

Therefore, we follow Shankara *Advaita* because Swami advocated this *Advaita* always, at least for fifteen to twenty years in the last phase of His life. That's purely Vedantic.

Therefore in this talk I wanted to place before you these three viewpoints or approaches for your information.

Thank you for your time.