

Podcast 111: Why Fear?

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prashanti Sandesh, Podcast episode 111.

The topic of this day or rather the question put to me is this: **Why fear? Why fear?** Let us try to discuss this for some time.

This fear I am going to deal with from a different dimension altogether. I am not referring to the regular instinct of fear in everyone. We naturally fear for several things or several reasons. I am not talking about the regular life and fears that haunt us. I am not talking about that. This is altogether different. We have got this, as most of us have experienced.

First of all, let me make it clear that we also fear in the presence of the Divine Master. We also have this sense of fear when we visit temples and stand in front of the idol, in the sanctum sanctorum.

We are afraid in the presence of the Divine Master. Why? But on the other hand, to have this fear in front of the Divine Master is also viewed positively as humility. And fear in temples is looked at as prayerfulness, a sign of devotion. Thus, this fear has entered into our religious life also. Let us see to what extent we can think about this along spiritual lines.

Our Divine Master is love personified, and He is our life for that matter. But peculiarly enough, a Divine Master has in Him the opposite polarities that meet, like day and night, summer and winter, danger and death. If at all you find anyone where these polarities meet, it is only in the Divine Master.

If we question why such a phenomenon exists, the answer is that it is only between the polarities that the disciple grows. Therefore, the Master has these polarities for the growth of the disciple, as we understand. So, we have got to be soft, tender, and delicate and be afraid of the Divine Master also. That is why it is said that we should have *bhaya* (fear) - *bhakti* (devotion) towards our Master. *Bhaya*-*bhakti*, *bhaya*-fear, *bhakti*-devotion.

But the fear should not be a hindrance between a disciple and a Master. It should not block anyway, and a devotee is not supposed to repress this fear. We should learn to accept our limitations, and at the same time go on working beyond these polarities. It is for that purpose that Guru has in Him the polarities that meet. We should work for ourselves and grow beyond them.

For example, a new leaf of a plant is so tender, delicate, fragile, and weak. But at the same time, it is so strong also, peculiarly enough because such a new leaf withstands all storms, raging storms. The leaf goes on trembling. It goes on moving as if the leaf is dancing, as if it is singing in joy. It seems to be almost fearless. It's very interesting.

So, we also note that peculiarly a wall has no fear, a chair has no fear, a table has no fear. It means dead things do not fear. It is only in living that we find this fear. Those who are alive will necessarily fear.

Therefore, fear is quite common and we have to grow slowly out of that fear. We cannot impose fearlessness. That which is imposed is only false, fake, and counterfeit. It is not original. So, we should not impose or pretend to be fearless.

While accepting that fear is natural, we are scared of the Divine Master for some period of time. I am also reminded of what is said. For example, here is fire. From a distance, the fire sheds light quite clearly. When we are close to the fire, we feel the warmth. But very, very near to the fire, you feel the heat and the burning sensation. So that's what it is.

Some people say we should be at a respectable distance with our Divine Master, enjoying the light. Some people also say we can be a little closer to Him, enjoying the warmth of His affection, love and concern. But nobody is willing to be very near or in the fire because of the fear of getting burnt. This example some people give. Further Swami also said that He is fire. Swami is fire.

So, with all this background, how can we be fearless? I also remember Shri Rama Brahmam of Bangalore telling me at that time when I just newly joined there in Swami's college as the Principal. He told me, "Anil Kumar, remember, staying with Swami is something like walking on a razor's edge. You have to walk without being cut." He also further added that it is something like walking on the fire without getting burnt. So listening to these things, how can we be fearless?

So, if fear is my nature, if fear is there in my life from the very beginning, my question is, when I am in deep sleep, deep sleep, what we call *sushupti*, I forget everything. 'I'-ness disappears. There is only emptiness. There is no identity also. And then, out of this emptiness, we'll understand that we gain life, because a sleepless man looks very dull, very weak. Life energy you derive by having a sound sleep, a deep sleep, what I say *sushupti*, deep sleep. Therefore, to say that I have no fear, maybe it is only in that deep sleep when I forget myself, when I don't know anything else, when I enter into that emptiness, then only fear disappears.

In fact, emptiness or nothingness is everything. As Baba says, "Nothing is everything." Let me give you one example. Here is a hall with four walls around. What do you find inside? Emptiness. In that emptiness you tried to make use of the space available.

Take for example a pot, an earthen pot. It is all empty inside. It is only in that empty space, in that emptiness, that you'll be able to fill it up with water. Look at the sky, which is pure, yet empty.

When once we know the emptiness, we can certainly relax. The very awareness of the emptiness revives and rejuvenates. Take for example a wheel. A wheel has got a number of spokes joined at the centre, at the hub, but the exact thing within the hub

is empty. The exact centre is empty. So, a wheel and spokes connected to a hub within is empty. The entire movement of the wheel is because of this emptiness.

So also, this emptiness of our life is like a wheel, life is a wheel. So, emptiness in this life wheel is centered. That's very amazing. What is that? That is the emptiness of non-being, emptiness of non-being. Well, it might seem to be quite complex, but it is a fact.

Take for example other aspects of life such as happiness. Happiness is not difficult at all, but we should permit happiness to get in. We don't do that quite often. Happiness is not difficult, but getting permission to be happy is difficult. When once we permit happiness to come, to enter into our lives, we start enjoying life. Consequently, there will be no problems at all. So, permit yourself to be happy.

It may look rather interesting when I say this. You may say, "Am I not inviting, am I not permitting happiness? What do you mean?" This may be a question I am likely to face. But let me be very honest: We have not allowed happiness because when we are perfectly well, yet we feel disturbed.

In fact, many people feel very happy in unhappiness, in unhappiness! They seem to be happy in tune to misery, and it is also very peculiar that when there is no misery practically, some would like to create misery because they got used to that. Because in this miserable state, in unhappiness, there will be a problem. There will be problems and we have to face them, and we have to do something to be free from problems.

Now, when you are happy, when there is no problem, you have nothing to do. This disturbs you because you want to do something. You want to do something all the time. Therefore, the work of the Divine Master is to take you to a no-mind state. N-O. When once this no-mind state comes, you are very close to your Divine Master. And you see that it's all the game of the mind. The mind passes, but one would like to pass through misery.

But we should understand. On understanding we'll come to know it's all our own making. All the hopes are entertained by the mind and they will be frustrated. It is the mind that hopes, and frustration is the result. And then by moving with the mind, we are almost thrown into a ditch. See how the mind works. The nature of the mind, the dynamics of the mind, we have got to understand by and by.

And another interesting thing is that mind needs distance to function. Mind cannot function in the present. Why? People say heaven is there, hell is there. There people are happy. There people are ecstatic. It only means mind always thinks of there and then. Mind is never mindful of the present. It thinks of either things of the past or the future. Why does it not recognize? Why doesn't the mind recognize that happiness is very much here? That happiness is heaven. Why should mind think that heaven is elsewhere? Because it is the nature of the mind to think of a distant place, a distant paradise.

And mind brings misery. It was John Milton who said that it is the mind that makes heaven out of hell and hell out of the heaven. The mind always promises heaven, but it's never delivered to us, please understand. So, the wonderful job of a Divine Master is to teach us as to how to put the mind aside, how to put the mind aside. When once the mind is kept aside, there will be no dichotomy, there will be no split personality, no misery and no tension.

So to be clearer, when we are with the Divine Master, we forget the mind. We forget the mind. Until Swami starts giving *darshan*, the mind is confused, the mind is very sad, and the faces are very grim and dull. The moment Swami comes close to us, closer and closer, what happens? You forget the mind. All the previous suffering, all the anguish, all the difficulties are dead and gone once and for all because in the presence of the Divine Master the mind is forgotten.

It is the mind that brings all this luggage or baggage. Why? 'Swami is more important than my mind. My mind is after all less important. Swami is important because I love Him and Swami's presence overwhelms me. I am overwhelmed with joy and bliss, and forget myself.' That is the effect of the Divine Master.

Therefore, though there is fear for some time, which is quite natural, by being intimate, closer and closer, we emerge as a new being, a new personality. That's what you can call 'resurrection'. Actually speaking, when the fear is gone, it means you are losing your ego, which is very, very necessary. Therefore, accept fear to be fearless. Living in ego, we move to the place of egolessness.

Many people say, "When Swami comes, I tremble. When Swami comes and asks me, I have great fear. I cannot say anything. I didn't open my mouth because I fear Swami." It is quite understandable. By repeated visits and involvement in His service activity, being in touch with His literature, developing immense love towards Him, you will certainly be egoless quite soon.

After all, we are living a mechanical life. Get up, breakfast, lunch, office, return, watch TV, dinner and sleep. What is all this? There is no freshness in our life. No!

But by being fearless, we'll be certainly as much as a new person. Fearlessness is egolessness. So initially we accept fear because we do center around the sense of ego. From this ego center, we act and that ego leads to fear. When once that ego is gone, we are bound to be fearless. Why? Because we ourselves hold too much of a tight grip on everything, hold everything that is possible, and we don't relax. That is the main reason why we don't come close to our Master.

This kind of possessive instinct, this art of holding everything unto ourselves, is the prime cause for not being able to relax and come close to Swami. We miss so much unnecessarily. And some people keep at a distance from Swami. 'Let me maintain some distance.' I don't understand. When He wants to come close to us, we want to be distant from Him. Why? It's only your ego that makes you be away. When once you are close to Him, close to Him, you will never be away from Him.

Let us get out of this routine life, this mechanical life. Don't fear at all. And then let's also know that there is a great thrill in that fearlessness, in egolessness, a great thrill and excitement also. It is really an adventure to get out of the ego because to be egoistic, we think it is an adventure. Certainly not! It is not adventurous at all. If you wish to be adventurous, you should be egoless. If you are egoless, then only you are alive. That aliveness, rather than simple life, that vitality, that dynamism should show that you are alive. That aliveness is more important than to just lie down with life. Because without aliveness, life becomes dull.

Well, to be with the Master may be risky, unpredictable, and even to be in danger. It may appear to be that we live in wilderness. Nothing is certain. Baba Himself said, "Love My Uncertainty." Naturally all our securities are gone. That is the situation. Why? Why all this? Why is it a danger? You may be asked to get out of His presence at any time. Why is it unpredictable? You do not know why you are asked to go. You cannot predict what is to happen tomorrow. Having been with Him, if you are thrown out, you'll feel that you are living in a wilderness.

This uncertainty pains us because we think certainty is security. When securities are gone, naturally we are fear-stricken. Therefore, we have to learn a life of managing moment to moment, not with regard to the future at all. Let us understand this. The whole universe manages moment to moment.

The universe has no planning, no! There is no planning practically in existence, so it is so beautiful. And moreover, there will be a surprise in wait in the future. What cool breeze you are going to get? What a rainbow you are going to witness? You do not know. So, in this newness lies aliveness. This newness is neither a management matter nor a planning affair. It just happens. And we live and enjoy that moment when we see a rainbow or when a cool breeze touches us.

These are all hard facts known to us that we experience, but yet we have to correlate from this basic point of being fearful. And if we want to be with the Divine Master, we should be totally egoless. If some are egoistic even in His presence, we have to pity them. All the sins accrued in their past lives made them continue to be egoistic, even in the presence of the Divine Master. Pity them, sympathize with them, and pray for them because the very presence of the Divine Master should make you egoless.

And then in the presence of Divine Master, you risk finding yourself, risk finding yourself in the sense that you are so engaged, you are so diverted sometimes that you find the risk of finding yourself. And having lived as an ego till now, you may have to risk the ego hereafter. But these are the things that will happen in the presence of the Divine Master.

Yes, it is painful, I do understand. It hurts us, and everything implied in ego, like jealousies or possessiveness, hatred, anger should all be necessarily dropped. All that is negative and dark should leave you. These are the effects of the presence of the Divine Master.

Well, we find electricity passes through metals. But the electricity will not pass through dead wood. So, though we are with Him, yet still we are egoistic with jealousy, possessive, and so on. What should I say? Bad conductors of heat. We have not prepared ourselves. We have not studied deeply into our own life. Therefore, we continue the old attitude.

Well, after all, there is no risk, there will be no risk when once we know that ego is a false entity. Ego is not true; it is totally false. Why? Because this false covers the real, so the real is repressed by the false. Then what happens? The real is suffocating and wants to be released. That is only possible when we are egoless.

All this false ego is like a prison, and this prison has to be broken and demolished. But, though it is painful, it is amply and tremendously rewarding. Pain is very important and so we should not expect the results to come very soon.

We should have a longer vision in the company of the Divine Master, and we should see things in the ultimate sense, in the ultimate sense, not expecting immediate benefit. Then how surprisingly life starts going through radical transformation, radical transformation. So I thought of sharing with you these views and ideas on fear.

Thank you for your time. We'll meet again.