

PODCAST 119: GROW BEYOND

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, 119th episode.

Thank you for your time and for making it convenient to listen to these podcast talks. We are also overwhelmed to find this response from our listeners. This is a mutually beneficial program because it helps us to go deeply into Sai literature and teachings.

Yes, some people say that they have been doing *sadhana* and they arrived at the destination. Some people may also claim that they have attained their goals. These are only just their imagination. You could never reach your destination. It is impossible to attain any goal. Why? Because it is an endless journey.

Sadhana or spiritual exercise is an endless journey. Then how do you reach the destination or attain your goal? If anyone thinks so, please conclude that they have not yet even started. They have not yet made a beginning for that matter. It is all an endless journey. Why? I would rather go to the extent of saying that the very journey is the goal. The journey is the goal. However, the journey may be arduous and it may be difficult; but yet it is worth undertaking. It is a sweet pain or a blissful pain that you would never wish to stop if you are sincere in your attempt.

Well, I would rather say it this way: Our mind is the circumference and our centre is our very being. Between the mind and the being is located another point called the heart. Thus, in a sequential order, mind is the circumference, 'being' is the centre, while the heart is in between the two. Thus, there are three steps in our endless journey.

Our Master will never give any impossible goals. Why? Because Master will never want us to feel that it is impossible to reach, or have the feeling that it is not for me. No. He speaks and teaches us in such a way that it is attainable and reachable so that you will start at some point or other.

It is our regular experience that when we want to go to one place, you start walking the distance. At some place we ask somebody, "Sir, will this way take me to that point?" They'll say, "It's quite near, you go. Go straight, turn to the left. Then go and turn right and it is right over there." So, we walk all along and go to that point, but still we have not reached the final point of destination.

Then you ask somebody, "Sir, I want to go to that church" or "I want to go to the bus station" or "I want to go to that temple" or wherever you would like to go. "Is it anywhere near?" "Yes, yes Sir. It's very near. You please go straight, then go right and turn to the left, and it's right over there." But if you go there, somebody will come and say, "There's still some more distance to reach there."

At every point, you'll see people indicating that it is so near; but it is not so near. Why do you come across such statements? It is only simply so that you'll never feel exhausted, you'll never feel tired, and you'll be hopeful to reach your destination.

Likewise, the Master tells us that it is so easy to reach, though it is not so easy. It is very easy to attain, though it is not that easy. But still you'll start your journey and go step by step. And however long the journey is, you'll certainly enjoy the bliss of the journey which is itself a goal.

So, this is how the Master works with us. When we apply this principle to our daily life, we should know that the basic philosophy of life is to let go, let go and flow with the river. Do not resist, just go and flow with the river. That is the message underlying the teachings of the Divine Master. "Go on, go on" is the message.

As I said, there are three steps in this journey. The first is that we have to travel from the head to the heart. That's the first trip, the first step. Then the second step is from the heart to our being, while the third step is from our being to the universal consciousness. Well, for clarity I will repeat once again: Head to heart is the first step. Then we move from the heart to the being, where being or self or *atma* or the spirit is the second step. Finally we travel from the being to the universal consciousness or Divinity. These are the three steps involved in our endless spiritual journey.

We'll certainly enjoy it as we travel from one step to another. Each step will give you more life. It is livelier, if I may say so. Each step is full of intelligence and is aflame. Perhaps we may need some kind of support or persuasion up to the step of being, until we reach the being. From head to heart we may need some persuasion or some kind of push. And then from heart to the being we may also yet need a word of support or persuasion, and there it ends. Then we travel to the state of universal consciousness, which is the third step.

So, people set goals only for beginners. Children need it so that they will not be disappointed initially, as it is a long continuous journey which is infinite and eternal. This has to be realized and understood in our spiritual *sadhana* or spiritual exercise. This is for sure, as I said: Yet it is painful, but blissful. This journey is painful and yet blissful. Painful, yet it is so sweet. There is no stopping on this journey. There is no full-stop either. There are only beautiful spaces, which move to more beautiful spaces, for us to rest for a while.

It is in the context of this spiritual journey that we may get a question about, why all this? Why? Bhagavan said many times: How long will you study the alphabets ABCD like that? How long? Are you going to study and learn alphabets throughout your life? How long will you remain in primary education? Don't you go to the secondary level? Won't you wish to get into the collegiate level? Don't you attend the university? Work for a Ph. D? So like that, you go on pursuing your education. Therefore, in the spiritual field also we should continue, continue and continue. Why? Because we should grow beyond, we should grow beyond.

Yes, I will give you an example from the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar temple (a Kali temple near Kolkata in West Bengal), was the most powerful soul, the noblest soul that ever walked on earth. Ramakrishna Paramahansa slowly evolved, and he has grown beyond. In the beginning, he was under the training of Bhairavi Brahmani. In the later stage, God had sent him Totapuri to grow beyond.

Let us have a glimpse of his life, a bird's eye view, relevant to this context. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the worshipper of Kali, dropped all his attachments till there were none, nothing whatsoever. He focused his whole life energy on Mother Kali. There he enjoyed all the bliss and ecstasy. He would sing and dance in the presence of Mother Kali for days together. But with all that said and done, it is also a fact that it is all a projection. It was all a projection of the mind, which is unreal.

To give you an example, a stone is given to you, say a small stone. In all our innocence, we may think that it is a diamond and we'll be watching it with all its preciousness as a highly valuable stone. But when we take it to a jeweller, he will say that it is not a diamond but just a stone, a fake diamond. In a similar way, however blissful the state we may reach, however ecstatic we may be, however forgetful of the body, or however we may transcend the body, yet it is all a mental projection which is unreal.

You will also notice from the biography of Ramakrishna Paramahansa that Paramahansa started eating the sacrificial food, what we call *naivedya*, which is to be offered to Mother Kali first. The usual procedure is that the offering is made to the Mother first and then after that the others partake of it. But Paramahansa started eating it first and then he offered it to Mother. This was not acceptable to many people. Sometimes he would not open the door of the temple, keeping it closed for a couple of days, and this irritated the people, the devotees.

They made a complaint with Rani Rasamani, the builder of the temple. All have approached and lodged a complaint with her, so Rani Rasamani asked Paramahansa, "Swami, why do you do that? Why don't you follow the convention to offer sacrificial food to the Mother and then partake of it? Why do you do this? Why don't you open the temple every day? Why do you allow it to be closed for a couple of days? Why? Swami, why do you do it?"

And Paramahansa replies, "There is a relationship between me and my Mother Kali. Why do you interfere? In this relationship sometimes I may be angry with Her or She may be angry with me. She may nag me and I will nag Her in turn. This is our relationship that you do not know about and that you don't understand." That was the reply of Paramahansa to Rani Rasamani.

In his life we also come across an incident where Paramahansa, while singing and dancing in front of the Mother Kali statue, was carrying with him a sword. He went on telling, "Mother, You should manifest. You should appear in front of me. If you don't, I'll cut off my head with this sword I am holding now." He went on saying that and he prayed and prayed. Finally, what happened? Mother Kali gave her appearance, manifestation, *sakshatkara*.

Watching that scene, seeing the very appearance of Mahakali, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa fell unconscious for about six days, as his biography tells us. That was so powerful! It is not so easy, but yet when all that is said and done, still this is a psychological projection. So the spiritual aspirants and seekers should go beyond their projection. Unless you go beyond, we will never know the Truth.

And what happens then? Another Master comes close to Paramahansa, named Totapuri. What does he tell him? He tells him, "While you are in meditation, cut the statue of Mother Kali into two. While you are in meditation, begin to imagine Mother's statue. Cut her into two halves. Then drop both." That's what Totapuri said. Though it may be painful to you, understand you are living in an illusion. This illusion may be very sweet to you, but drop it. You cannot continue in illusion for long.

But Paramahansa was hesitating. At that time, Totapuri picked up a glass piece and what he did was he cut the Goddess within Paramahansa, where Paramahansa was imagining Mother Goddess within. With this glass piece Totapuri has cut the center of the forehead of Paramahansa. The centre of the forehead refers to the third eye, *jnana netra*. And then Paramahansa could have a revelation, could experience the truth of Mahakali. He could see Her unmanifest Divinity. In fact he could see the form manifested in front of him, when Totapuri had cut the center of his forehead with the glass piece. He could enjoy Kali, the unmanifest form. He could realize that all that mental projection is like a child playing with toys or dolls, and that there is every need to go beyond.

So, our Divine Master simply disappears and He will simply slip out of our life because we go on imagining our Master within. So, he wants us to grow beyond, from the manifest to the unmanifest, from *sakara* to *nirakara*, from the formful to the formless state. Therefore, we should grow beyond. We should never stop our *sadhana* at any particular state and think that's all, or that we have reached the goal. It is all a mistaken idea.

It was Gautama Buddha who always said, "If you come across Buddha, cut off his head immediately." Gautama Buddha himself said, "If you see me again, cut off my head." It seems to be quite silly, but there is an implication behind this.

When you go beyond, you don't lose the presence of your Master. No, and the experience you have when you go beyond the Master, you will get more than in His presence. And you will also feel that the experience you have had in the presence of the Master is just a drop. What is a drop in front of the ocean?

The manifest form, the *sakara*, the formful aspect gives you a drop of experience. When you go beyond to *nirakara*, the unmanifest, you'll have the experience that you are open to the whole ocean, and you will gain the whole of the universe. You are not a loser at all!

Therefore, this eternal journey, this endless journey, takes you to that universal consciousness, that universal Divinity. That is why Swami tells or may give many examples. One I know is that the flower has a form, but its fragrance has no form and it reaches long distances. Mother has a form, but her love will reach you

wherever you are. Likewise, Divinity has a form, as you look at it in the beginning. But later you will realize that Divinity in the formless state is universal and spread all over. That should be our experience as we walk and as we travel on this spiritual journey.

Thank you very much.

Sai Ram