

PODCAST 122: ASSOCIATIONS

Om Sri Sai Ram

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh, 122nd episode.

Thank you very much. There has been an increasing demand for these talks as the devotees are welcoming these episodes. In fact, some are telling us that they are waiting for the next episode to come out. I am extremely grateful to each and every one of you, and particularly to Swami, for this lovely opportunity given to us.

There are three categories of people that we come across. I would rather say we have three types of associations. We associate with people in society every day in different capacities and for various reasons. These associations can be broadly classified into three categories.

The first category of association is meeting someone as an acquaintance. Many are acquainted with us, many are known to us, many are familiar with us. They are all acquaintances only. The second category of association is those with whom we are in a relationship. We are close and intimate with some people. With those chosen like-minded people, we can afford to be very frank, free, fearless and open. This relationship is the second category of associations. Then the third category of associations is based on pure, selfless love, that love which is non-expectational.

I would like to share with you a couple of ideas on this topic of 'associations'. Let me say a few points on the first category of associations, those who are acquaintances. We are acquainted with many people. We know many people, yes, why not? In day-to-day life, as we move about, we get acquainted with many people.

Here I would like to submit to you one important point: In the life of everyone, there are two important positions. The first position is that of being on the periphery or circumference. The second position is being at our center. Everyone has these two important positions, both peripheral and the center point.

The 'peripheral' point includes our personality, our status, our dignity, power, position, possessions and everything that is worldly. All that is our periphery or the (outer) circumference (circumstances), whereas there is a central point at our center (inner) which is Divine. That is the point of love. We will come to that later when I deal with the third category of associations.

Now we have been thinking of the first category, our acquaintances. When I get acquainted with some other person, what happens is our 'peripheries' (external aspects) meet. I meet him, acquainting him with my prestige, dignity, education, qualifications and so on. So in the peripheral meeting, we meet at our circumference, which is where everything we have, even the show and pomp, is visible.

Our peripheries meet in this first sort of association with an acquaintance. We touch our (external) boundaries. But actually speaking, acquaintanceship is not love. If we think it is that, it is a fallacy. No. But this acquaintanceship is within the reach of everybody. It is not very difficult at all. Like that, we can get acquainted with many people quite easily.

Now I pass on to the second type of association, what we are calling a 'relationship'. This relationship is a bit higher than an acquaintance. This relationship is our own creation. When we create this relationship, the relationship in turn creates us. When an acquaintance comes closer and closer, and becomes intimate, then it develops or grows into a relationship.

Here in a relationship two persons meet and their two worlds meet. It is a complex mystery with a long past and with an eternal future. It is very difficult to cut off our relationships. It is impossible to forget our relationships. That's why relationships are eternal. Then, of course even in this matter of relationship, physical relationship is very possible and quite simple. But this is not love in any way. That intimate closeness or relationship may bring them closer and closer, but it is not love.

On the other hand, broadly speaking, a relationship carries some important points. In a relationship, people may be fearful of each other. There will be fighting, exploiting and manipulating also in a relationship. One wants to control the other, one wants to dominate the other, one wants to possess the other. In other words, there can be fear, exploitation, control or domination, and possessiveness in a relationship.

Also in a relationship what happens is whenever anything goes wrong, we blame the other person. In a relationship, we always blame the other person when anything goes wrong. So here in a relationship people try to throw the responsibility on the other person. Such an attitude destroys the possibility of future growth.

If we go deeply and examine ourselves, we will come to the conclusion that ultimately you are always responsible for anything wrong that happens. So there is every need to change yourself. It is also essential to drop all topics that create trouble. There is no chance of bringing up any topic that may create trouble. These are all necessary so far as relationships are concerned.

So now let me share with you the third category of association. For your information, we covered the first category of acquaintances, the second category of relationships, and now we come to the third category which is the highest form of association and is based on pure love. When does this happen?

As I mentioned earlier, in acquaintanceship the peripheries [external qualities] meet, while in love, our centers meet. To remind you once again, peripheries are our personalities, prestige, positions and everything else, while the center of life is our very being. The center of life is our very being.

So, when in love two centers meet. Such a thing happens very rarely. Unless we are vulnerable and open, we cannot have this sort of association which is based on love. Of course, it is quite risky. It's quite risky and at times even dangerous. Out of

love, when we share our secrets, they may be made known to everybody. Because of love, all that is hidden is shared. Everything is out in the open, revealed, totally and completely exposed. This is the risk or the danger in this association based on love.

This association based on love can happen when we allow somebody, in fact, when we invite somebody to enter into our center. Yes, unless you allow it, there cannot be any love. So, centers meet because we allow this to happen. So when does it happen? This may be our next question. Two centers meet when we are not afraid, when we are not fearful, when each one becomes a passage, when there are no barriers, no locks, no doors, and no limitations. Then love is born there.

It is quite new. It is quite thrilling. At this point where two centers meet something new is born just as hydrogen and oxygen together make water, which is altogether different. Hydrogen and oxygen are different and separate. But when they meet, they make water which is altogether different.

Likewise, in love, when two centers meet, there is a chance for something new to be born. It doesn't happen immediately. In the first instance, the peripheries meet, and later the centers meet. That is called love. If we can be in this moment, live in this moment, in this present-ness or this plenitude, we get into this field of love, not otherwise.

Love is a rare flowering. We can come across certain trees that flower once a year. That's a rare flowering. Divine love is of that kind. God is love, so very precious. When that love happens because of the two centers meeting, there is no need for prayer anymore. There is no need for meditation anymore. We don't have to visit temples and churches, synagogues, mosques or any other such places of worship.

Therefore, this divine love is the most superior association. Hence, God is love, love is God, so live in love. In that state, it can happen with anyone. An animal like a dog is divine, yes. A tree is divine. We know that the deepest source is divine.

We should not consider love as a belief, no. This love happens to a deeply spiritual, religious person only, not to a worldly man who gets acquainted or establishes relationships based on selfish grounds or mutual exploitation. The closeness based on love is meditative. It is the ultimate relationship.

It is quite clear by now that the peripheries meet first, and later the peripheries disappear. While in love, what is happening? We come in contact with the inner formless being. The individuality, the individual disappears in love. Something beyond happens. Therefore, this love is so great and so unique that it makes all the peripheries vanish, and even the individual disappears when we get into contact with that formless inner being.

Here I may give you an example of a great devotee, Meera. Meera attained that state where she needed no temple to go to because to her the whole existence was a temple. She would dance before a tree and consider that tree as Krishna. She

didn't mind singing in front of a bird because that bird is Krishna. Wherever she looked, the door opened to the holy shrine of Krishna Himself. That is love. That is divine.

It is a matter of a struggle, maybe sometimes like death. Great devotees face all these struggles, troubles and turmoil. But we should allow the other to penetrate into us unconditionally to such an extent that the 'other' disappears. At that moment God is there. In other words, the formless being, the center meets another center which is also formless. In love what happens? God is there because God is love. If we can be there at that point of formless love, of togetherness, there will be no death, *amrutasya putrah*. So for a lover there is no death because love is God. But for a non-lover, every moment is death.

On close analysis, we'll come to know that if you cannot love the beloved, you cannot love the Divine. It is not possible. And if your beloved cannot become divine, how can you become divine? In other words, it is a divine association of love. This love is *sadhana*, and in this love which is a *sadhana* we will not blame the other. We'll never say that the other is wrong as we do in a relationship, as was pointed out previously.

In this area of love, we begin to feel that we must be wrong somewhere or other as the other [God] is never wrong. So I may be wrong. I may need to correct myself. That will be the attitude in this association of love. Also this love is desireless, desireless because desire is discontent. It is discontent, while love is contentment.

In fact, as our observation goes, we know that death will destroy everything. Body is taken away by death. All that was belonging to you is taken away. So why can't we give love to others while we are alive? Why can't we share this love with others while we are alive?

Thus, my friends, there are three types of associations about which I would like to share these simple points. The first level is an acquaintance, the second level is a relationship and the third level is love, divine love.

Thank you very much for your time.