

## PODCAST 125: YOU ARE THAT

Om Sri Sai Ram

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh, 125th episode.

The topic is 'You are That'. Let us spend some time on this topic.

We do not recognise the fact that we are divine. It's quite common to identify ourselves with our body, mind, intellect, senses and so on and so forth. This is all the material side of life. But the spiritual dimension wants us to recognise the fact that every one of us is divine, every one of us!

From another viewpoint, I would rather say that you are that consciousness, you are that *atma*, you are that spirit, and nothing less than that. Of course, this we have been talking about quite a lot. In fact the whole study of spirituality revolves around this. Other than this point, there is no spirituality at all. So therefore, this point has got to be dinned into our ears time and again. Therefore, let us learn and know about this for some time.

Actually speaking, the *atma* or the consciousness can be referred to by three other terms. There are three other important words by which it can be described or referred to. The first one is the witness, the second one is *kootastha*, and the third one is *antaryami*. So, these are three other descriptions of the same self - *sakshi*, *kootastha* and *antaryami*. Let us study one by one.

Witness [*sakshi*]: We are essentially the witness in our character. The essence of our being is the witness. I can put it this way: whatever is named is never the knower. Whatever is named cannot be the knower. Impossible, because the knower is one, while all those named are many, are a variety. So there are an infinite number of named objects outside, but the knower is only one. Moreover, whatever is objectified is never the subject. So *sakshi* is pure subjectivity.

In other words, all objects outside come to the notice of the main subject, the witness, the subject being only one, whereas in the objective world the objects are many. So, this witness, yourself, *atma* is different from the known. You are the knower. You are the knower and not the known. You are the observer and not the observed. That has got to be emphasized.

Therefore, there are two points here: One is the knower, while the other is the known. The knower is yourself or *atma*. The known is that which is realized, that which is known by the knower. Known is the whole world, while the knower is the one *atma*. Now between these two there is a bridge, which is called 'knowing'. 'Knowing' is the bridge between the knower and the known.

So your very being is the knower. The very self is the knower. Rather I would say, these three, the known or that which is known, the knowledge or all that you gather, the information or the knowledge about that known, and you the knower, the self, all

the three are dissolved into this witnessing. In witnessing all these three get dissolved there. Therefore, this witness has to be understood from this viewpoint.

As has been already pointed out, you are not the known. Now some people may ask, "When you are not the known, how can you be the knower? How can you be the knower? After all, you say that you are the knower with reference to the known. 'I have known' means 'I have known this'. So, this 'I', the self or *atma*, is said with reference to the known. In other words, the knower is identified with reference to the known." This is an important point that has got to be realized.

If you are not the object, how can you be the subject? 'I have seen that object' which means 'I am the subject and that is the object', right? So, this subject speaks with reference to the object. So when you are not the object, how can you be the subject? In other words, you are not the subject and you are not the knower. You are that eternal witness, all in one - the knower, the known and the knowledge.

This may appear to be tough, but it has to be grasped and digested at one stage of our life or another. That's the reason why *Upanishads* have chosen to call this *atma* as a witness, *sakshi*. Yes, because even without an object, *sakshi* or eternal witness remains. Without anything that is known or even when there is nothing else to be known, you still remain as *sakshi* or witness. You remain, that's it. It is immaterial [independent] of that which is known or that which is the object. Therefore, *Upanishads* rightly calls it the witness or *sakshi*.

Of course, the materialist sees a thing, that's all. They don't understand this concept of the eternal witness. After all, these things only constitute the matter according to a materialist, that's all. However a spiritualist is quite different. A spiritualist looks at everything as energy. And this energy is alive. It is a continuous process. If this alive energy force is not there, then this energy life force is latent, as in dead things. So, we don't call it living at all when this energy is missing. Then they are dead things only.

So, the spiritual attitude is different. The spiritual attitude is that matter is energy and energy is matter. Nothing is static. Nothing is static like any dead thing, no. This is a continuous movement as has been said, a continuous process like the waves that arise in an ocean. So, this is the first concept and the first description of the self or the *atma*, the witness.

To sum up, you are the observer, so you are different from the observed. You are the knower, so you are different from the known. Beyond this object, beyond this known, you continue to exist as what is called the witness or *sakshi*. That's all about the first witness.

Then we'll pass on to the next term *kootastha*. *Kootastha* means that which is eternal, that which is immortal and indestructible. Yes because, as you say, energy cannot either be created or destroyed. So it is eternal, it exists always, it is immortal. Only two are destructible. What are they? Name and form, *roopa* and *nama*. These two only are destructible.

I can give you one example where the essence remains the same, while the forms may change: You know ice. The same ice naturally is water and this water can be turned into vapor also. So ice, water and vapor may be changing from one state to another. But in a sense, they are all only water. They only differ in their name and form as in this example of ice, water and vapor.

Now then, such a change can be noticed in every other way of our life, for example, a child, an adult, the old, and then the one who is taken away by death. It is the same person as a child, an adult, and an old person. The same, that's all. So, only the name is different at different stages: a child, an adult, then becoming old, that's all. So also a person who is healthy today, the very same person may fall sick later, and then may also regain his health. It's the same one. So the state of health changes, but he remains the same.

Likewise, consider the different poles: south, north, east, and west. Take for example the south. If you look from the north, that is the south. If you look from the south, this is the north. So south and north appear to change. Similarly, from this side it is east and that is the west. But from that side, that is the west and this is the east. Then why do you say this? It depends upon where you are looking from. Depending upon which side you are looking from, that determines which pole or direction it is.

So, life is a movement. So name and form change, but the essence remains the same. Everything is dynamic. The essence [*atma* or self] may remain the same, but energetically it is very dynamic. It's never static.

So, this is essentially your basic nature: your being or *atma* is *kootastha*. Even if you destroy every *rupa* and *nama*, name and form, *kootastha* remains. All the five life sheaths or *pancha koshas* or other related barriers may be gone or destroyed, but you remain as *kootastha*. So when you proceed from *sakshi*, you reach *kootastha* stage.

As *sakshi* you know the known, while you remain the observer, so you will understand the witness. Meanwhile that which is eternal and immortal, eternally changing while the essence remains the same, is *kootastha*. Now the third aspect is *antaryami*. What is this *antaryami*?

The same self, the innermost running force, the innermost running energy, is *antaryami*. I'll give you an example. You have got a thread to which many beads are strung and tied. Many beads are brought together and strung up with a thread which is underlying them all. Or you can take the example of a garland, where there is a thread with a number of flowers strung together. So that thread which travels through all these flowers, that thread which runs through all these beads, is *antaryami*, the innermost running force.

Well, how to know that? When you just try to separate two flowers lightly, you will see the inner thread. Or you try to keep two beads a little away from each other, you'll see the thread there. Likewise, this *antaryami*, the self or *atma*, can be experienced between two thoughts. Between two thoughts, there is a slight gap. There is a slight gap that we should be able to notice. And if we remain in that gap,

then the thought flow reduces. The thought flow diminishes once we remain in that slight gap between two thoughts. I can also put it again this way: There is a slight gap between two thoughts. Let us know this gap and just focus our attention on this gap a little more. Then you feel the gap, and when you start filling the gap, there is a sudden silence and you'll become aware of the thread of the inner force, what we call *antaryami*. That is here and now.

Once you feel the *antaryami*, there is nothing further to be known. You cannot proceed anywhere. There is nothing left. So, *antaryami* is the very definition of our being. *Sakshi* is the method and then *kootastha* or the eternal is the end. *Sakshi* is the method, while *kootastha* is the end. These two are connected by *antaryami*, the thread. But all the three are one. All being one, these three names are the same self or *sakshi* or being.

It is in this connection, there are five obstacles or barriers that I would like to draw your attention to. I may be too harsh if I say diseases, complaints or ailments will not allow us to know this self or being, *sakshi*, *kootastha* or *antaryami*.

The first obstacle or barrier is the mind; the second barrier is the lust for life. We have become so attached to our life that we are not prepared to lose it at any time, so that is what is meant by 'lust for life'. The third one is desiring. So, to go on desiring endlessly is the third barrier or the third complaint. Then the fourth one is feeling good. This feeling is within every one of us, 'I am good, I am good'. This also is an obstacle. Then any craving for *punya* or merit is also another barrier.

Let us spend some time on this topic. We know about the mind. We talked a lot about it. The lust for life is known to every one of us. Desiring, yes, it is our very way of life. But let me say a few words on this feeling of being good. This is also an obstacle.

We think we are good. Everyone starts feeling that he is good. Well, if you just think this way, you feel that unless others are bad, unless you condemn others, you cannot feel good. So, your goodness depends upon your view of others being bad people or those whom you condemn. So, this kind of feeling good indirectly makes you condemn others or feel others are bad. This is the point here.

So, feeling that others are bad is certainly a disease. We have no business to condemn or feel that others are bad. And moreover, this feeling good is a relative as it varies at different times. So it is not a constant factor. This feeling also strengthens our ego. I start feeling that I am virtuous which means I am egoistic. This kind of feeling good due to my virtues strengthens my ego. Then it becomes dangerous, worse than poison.

Then, how can I know that I am feeling good? How am I to know that? Yes, when you feel others are bad. Not only that, you can never feel at ease with any person who feels that he is good. You are not comfortable with a person who declares himself to be good, who feels that he is very good while others are bad. No. Moreover we will feel very restless when we are very close to such a man. So, unless you can feel at ease, the man is not good, not good at all. You should feel at

ease and you should feel quite comfortable. Yes, that is a sign and that is an indication.

So, I don't mean that goodness is bad. I don't mean that. But to feel good is bad. You can be good, but don't feel good, no. This goodness is established in relation to others: 'he is bad so I am good'. So this is only a confirmation in relation to others. It is only comparative. So, anything related to someone else is not worthy for the inner journey. When you go on relating to others and come to a decision that you are good, well, you will never be able to proceed on your inner spiritual journey. Some people say, "There is no one more humble than me," what shall I say? This is the arrogance of humility or the ego of humility, if I may say so. It is only the ego that is strengthened.

The next and last barrier is *punya*. Our merit is also a barrier. 'I feel holy while I serve others, while I am being serviceable to many people.' In that process what happens is the service itself becomes the end, not the served. Here the served, the one who is served, is not important. Instead my service has become very important, but the one who received my service becomes irrelevant.

So, what finally is to be done? Doing good or earning merit must be a spontaneous thing or action. On the other hand, if you are good and violent, it's most criminal. Goodness and violence will never go together.

Therefore, in this brief talk I can tell you that the one who is served is more important than the service. That has to be taken into account when we get involved in any holy activity or trying to earn *punya* or merit.

With these words, we'll conclude this talk. We will meet again.

Sai Ram