

PODCAST 126: ONLY THAT

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh 126th episode.

Welcome to all of you. We are trying to dive deeply into spirituality in one after another episode. We are reaching the depths of Sai's message. Therefore, these talks might seem to be quite serious, but it is most essential for our *sadhana*. So let's talk about this day's topic: "Only That".

No one is isolated and no one is alone because we are linked with the universe. We are linked with existence. If we are keen enough, we'll know that we are in deep dialogue. This can be affirmed on the basis of our breathing process. We breathe in and breathe out. As we breathe in, the air from this universe outside comes into us. As we breathe out, the carbon dioxide is released back into the universe. So we draw from the universe and again send it back to the universe. Thus, there is a 'dialogue'.

It is also necessary to know that there are two important factors. One is what we call 'individual consciousness' or *jivatma*, while the other is 'universal consciousness' or Paramatma. So both these two are there: individual consciousness and universal consciousness. The difference is this. Individual consciousness is encased within the framework of the body, mind, intellect, five life breaths, five life sheaths and five *koshas*, whereas the universal consciousness is totally free. It is formless, attributeless and nameless. These two are very important for our talk today.

Though they may not say so, the materialist and the attitude of a scientist is this: The individual consciousness, the 'I', is the only thing there in existence. It's the only functional identity, and there is nothing like universal consciousness. There is nothing other than this [personal] 'I'. Whatever you refer to, it is nothing but matter. Barring you, the rest is just matter or a thing. That's what a scientist says. As such, there cannot be any dialogue between you and the rest, which are nothing but things. This is the approach of a materialist or a scientist.

Then the question arises, if the world is just a thing, then who am I? Can I be a person? No. And if the universe or the whole world outside is just a thing, how can I be in close contact with it? How can I have a dialogue with it? As a person I may respond to various stimuli. So if the universe is just a thing, then there is no intimacy. There is no religion. This has got to be realized.

But the religious viewpoint or religious attitude is altogether different. You, the individual consciousness, are not only within everyone, within every person, but the universe is also a person. It's personal. You can't call the universe a thing, no. The whole universe is a person, so that you can talk, love and sometimes even be angry with the total, with the whole universe. That is the religious attitude..

How do we say that? We all know in our *Sanathana Dharma* we call earth as Bhū Mata, fire as Agni Deva, the rain as Varuna Deva, and the wind as Vayu Deva. We look at this whole universe with a personal attitude, as the whole universe is a person. This is the religious attitude. With this attitude, there'll be richness, and then life develops so that we'll have a deeper dialogue with reality.

The basic difference is science exists regarding things, whereas religion grows among people. There are a lot of differences between the two. Now, how is our behavior today? Are we behaving as people with everybody? Do we treat everybody as a person or as a thing? Let us just examine. We don't behave with people as persons. No. We want to possess people. The husband wants to possess his wife, while the wife wants to possess her husband.

Actually speaking, can any person be possessed at all? Impossible! You can possess a thing, but not a person. Why? Because a person means freedom. How can you possess a person? It's absurd. But unfortunately, we have reduced the person to a thing. That's why a husband treats his wife as a thing, or the wife treats her husband as a thing. We don't consider the other as a person. Why? Because we want to possess them. That is very absurd.

Then moreover, the basic point is that the more we mingle with things, the more we become a thing ourselves. You also become a thing because you mingle with things only, with more and more things. Further, the one who tries to possess someone becomes himself a possession. It means the other person is a thing for you, so you want to possess them, forgetting the fact that you also thereby reduce yourself to a possession or a thing. This has got to be noted.

Another point is this. There will be no expectations when the relationship is purely personal. When you treat the other as a person, there cannot be any expectations. It is not possible. Why? You can expect things from a thing but not with a person. Why? Why? A person may behave one way today and a different way tomorrow. He may change his view tomorrow. How can you expect the other person to be the same way every day like a machine? No. So you cannot have any expectations with a person. No. You can only have expectations with a thing. Please understand that.

So therefore, what happens is that when we are connected to things, frustration comes. Frustration comes because a thing is there, so I expect something out of it. Take for example, a machine. I expect the machine to work powerfully. I want the fan to be in working condition. I want the lights to be functional. So, you expect something from a thing. You have expectations of these things. When the machine stops working, when the bulbs are off due to the filament breaking, you are frustrated.

So, we can conclude that frustration comes with things, not with persons because as a person, you are the very consciousness, not simply the body, name and form. So a person does not simply mean the body, mind, intellect, name and form. No! A person is something more – consciousness! Therefore, this consciousness is never frustrated. You can never get frustrated with another person unless you reduce him to the level of a thing.

So let us behave in a non-possessive way in order that the world behaves non-possessively towards us. When I am non-possessive, the world will also be non-possessive towards me. This has got to be very clearly understood.

Therefore, we can understand this very clearly on inquiry with the help of a religious mind. A religious mind will go deeply into inquiry and will search for the eternal. You cannot reduce that eternal, which is beyond time and space, to logic or rationale. No. Logic and rationale have got to be dissolved.

We should also know that you are the witnessing consciousness. 'Witnessing consciousness' means you are the 'knower'. I think I am very clear. What do I mean by knower? Knower means that you will know any respect given to you, and also any disrespect shown towards you. You will know your health and also when you are in ill health. You will also be knowing your wealth and your poverty. You will know your heaven or hell, as the case may be. All these things go on changing, while the knower or witnessing consciousness is changeless and immovable. The knower will be able to know all these changing things because the knower is immovable.

Just like the central hub does not move in a wheel, while the whole wheel moves around rotating, likewise that which does not move [the knower] will help the rest move around. In a similar way, the knower, being immovable will know all that is changing from time to time, as a witnessing consciousness.

This is a very interesting point which I vaguely remember we have dealt with some time ago in one of these talks. The knower is eternal. Being eternal, he will know all changes from moment to moment. Unless the consciousness is eternal, it cannot cognize or notice all these changes. So, it is the eternal that notices the momentary changes. The immovable notices that which is ever-changing, and that is this witnessing consciousness. This is all about religion.

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to another important point. As mentioned earlier, there are two factors - the individual consciousness or *jivatma* and the other, universal consciousness, Paramatma. The individual consciousness, as I said, has been associated with the body, mind, intellect, the senses and all that, while the universal consciousness is totally free and all-pervasive.

Now, as the individual consciousness, I may feel that I am separate from the universal consciousness. It is quite natural to feel so. But once I understand that the inner consciousness is this witnessing consciousness which remains unchanging and absolutely eternal, then I can understand that my nature is that which is formless and infinite. That is my nature, while all the remaining things go on changing. Realizing it in that way, means that I am the same as universal consciousness.

For clarity I'll repeat once again. I am here as individual consciousness, *jivatma*. I think I am different from universal consciousness or Paramatma. But on inquiry, using *vicharana*, I will know the truth of my nature. Am I *jivatma*? What is *jivatma*? So in reality, what is this individual consciousness? What is it? Inquiry shows that it is absolutely eternal as the formless and infinite. That is *atma*, the very consciousness.

Other aspects may be changing, like the body may be changing. The mind may be changing and the intellect may be changing. So all other things associated with myself may be changing. But my *atma*, the spirit, consciousness, the individual consciousness, will not be changing. With the result that what happens is the individual consciousness is the same as universal consciousness, which is also changeless. It is infinite, formless, nameless, attribute-less. So, the individual consciousness is not separate from universal consciousness.

So, to begin with, we think the individual consciousness is separate from universal consciousness. But on inquiry, we'll come to know individual consciousness is the same as universal consciousness without any doubt. Therefore, this can be understood very well. There is no doubt about it. Why? Because this can be known by inquiry, yes. So then we'll come to an understanding of reality. In fact, the whole thing is universal consciousness. That's all.

At one time, I thought I was separate from the universal consciousness: I, *jivatma*, as individual consciousness was at the center, while I am surrounded by universal consciousness on the periphery or at the circumference. So I am at the center as individual consciousness while surrounded by a big circle, universal consciousness. But with deeper understanding I, the individual consciousness, will be shifting to the circumference, while universal consciousness will come to the center.

To repeat once again, I am at the center as the individual consciousness, surrounded by universal consciousness on the periphery or the circumference. But on inquiry I'll come to know that universal consciousness is the actual center, while the individual consciousness is the periphery or circumference. That which is the circumference or periphery is non-existential. It's non-existential in reality. There is only a thin line between the two. That's all.

So this individual consciousness is nothing but the projection of universal consciousness. It is nothing but the extended universal consciousness in the form of individual consciousness. Therefore, the conclusion is universal consciousness, Paramatma, and individual consciousness, *jivatma*, are one and the same.

So in this statement, 'I am That', there are two - 'I' and 'That'. So when the question comes [who am I?], instead of saying, 'I am That' ('I' meaning the individual consciousness, while 'That' means universal consciousness), the conclusion or answer is 'Only That'. There is no 'I'. There is only that universal consciousness. There is no individual consciousness.

Thank you. Sai Ram.