

PODCAST 135: BE A MIRROR

Om Sri Sai Ram

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh, 135th episode. The topic is: "Be a Mirror."

We all know and make use of a mirror, so the mirror is always very close to us. Besides our own residences, wherever there are mirrors, either at malls or in shops, we stand in front of them and try to check and adjust our hair or something like that. So, we are very, very familiar with mirrors.

Now let us study about the mirror for a while. The first and foremost point is that a mirror merely reflects. That's all. A very handsome film star may stand in front of a mirror or a very ugly person may stand in front of a mirror, but it only reflects. A mirror does not show any reaction or see any difference between beauty and all that is ugly. It makes no difference. It reflects beauty and it also reflects all that is ugly at the same time. It doesn't contain or show any kind of partiality or preference or choice.

The second point is when you stand in front of a mirror, you see your reflection and then you leave the mirror and go. The mirror does not feel badly about your absence or that you have forgotten it or that you have left. So the mirror carries no past with it. A mirror carries no memory with it. Alright, you can see yourself and then go. Like that, everyone will see their reflections and then leave one after the other, while the mirror remains just like that, unaffected by the complexion or hairstyle or whatever aspect you are looking at. The mirror is not at all affected. It just simply reflects. So, the first feature of a mirror is to reflect, while the second feature of a mirror is not to be bothered about what is reflected nor to look back at what's passed.

The third point is that none can get into the mirror. No one can go deeply into the mirror. It's just superficial, that's all. So nobody will break the mirror to try to get into it. You simply cannot get into a mirror. It's impossible! No person or image can ever get into the mirror. Impossible! Well, that should be our ideal.

Let us take the mirror as our guide, as the best illustration to follow to lead our lives. Just as I mentioned, that mirror is not bothered about the beauty or the complexion, or the height and weight of anyone who stands in front of it. Likewise, there lies within us a mirror which just reflects. It doesn't carry anything with it. It is unblemished and just reflects. That's all.

What is that mirror within every one of us? That is what we call the 'witness' or *sakshi*. That witness is within every one of us, merely reflecting, while remaining totally unaffected and left to itself. You may call it the 'witnessing consciousness'. Without realising this truth that there is an inner mirror, what we call the witnessing consciousness, we are never awake in this lifetime. In that case, we can consider that we spent all our life in sleep.

Then the question may arise, “How to create this witnessing? How to achieve it? What to do?” We can only analyze our own experiences. For example, I see a flower. The flower is an object there. I am seeing it so I am the ‘seer’, I am the seer. This object is outside, while the seer or the subject is inside. The seer, that experience, is within me who is the subject.

In other words, there are two - the subject and the object. There is a relationship between the two. They are not two separate things. The subject will know the object completely. This is what is known. This knowledge is known by the ‘knower’, and all that is known can be branded as ‘knowledge’. So, there are three here: the knower, the known and the knowledge. We can also put it this way: the experiencing, the experiencer, and the experience. All these three are there.

Now I would like to draw your attention to another dimension of this thought. We may be aware of these three - the known, the knower and the knowledge. But there is still something more behind that. That which is beyond these three, all these three for that matter, is the witness. That is the witness and that witness witnesses. So the witnesser and the witness are one and the same. Therefore, all the earlier three are witnessed. All the three are witnessed, while the witness remains unaffected, untainted, unpolluted and unblemished. The witness is like that.

So let us know a few thoughts about this witness. The witness is never involved in any experience. Suppose I make faces in front of a mirror. The mirror does not react, it simply reflects. Or if I put on a very serious face in front of the mirror, it doesn't react. It simply remains as a witness. Like that mirror, the witness is never involved in any kind of experience.

Then the question will come, “We know that which is known is the object. Now the question comes, who is knowing or who is the knower here?” The knower is the ego or the mind, while that which is known is the object. So the knower is the mind or ego. But beyond these two, there is something more. All these three stages, as I mentioned earlier - the knower, the known and the knowledge, all these three are witnessed, which is the basic unknown factor in everyone's life.

A simple example is when we go to a cinema hall to watch a cinema. We enjoy the cinema. So the screen there is the witness, unaffected before the cinema started, during the course of the cinema, and even after the cinema is over. In fact the screen remains a witness for the entire playing of so many films that appear on it.

Now I will also put it in this way. I go to a meeting and listen to a speaker. There are two here - the speaker and I, the listener, are here. These two, the speaker and the listener as well, are witnessed. The witness will be witnessing the speaker and the listener too.

So now a question may come to us, “Who are you? Who are you?” The answer is that this one who is aware of both the speaker and the listener has also transcended both the speaker and the listener. The one who is a witness of the speaker and the listener does not belong to either. So here is the speaker. Yes, he is speaking. I see that. I am a witness to that as I am listening. The listening is also different. The ‘I’ is

also different. This 'I' is different from the listening or the listener. So I observe myself within myself. I observe both the listener and also the speaker. This is a very important basic factor.

Therefore, the one who is a witness is beyond, though everything belongs to it. It is something like the cinema screen. All screens of all kinds, whether of stunts or dances or music, are projected onto the screen. Likewise, the witness is the eternal screen. All scenes belong to it, but it does not identify with any of them. That is the beauty of the witness.

Then we can also go to the next step. This witnessing is a way to reach the Divine. This witnessing is the way to know of the existence of your being. So, if I am aware of my own witness, I'll understand and experience existence and this being in their totality.

Now the point is this: witnessing is not yours. Please understand. As a knower you are different because it is the mind that knows. What is known is also different because we see so many objects outside. The knowledge relating to the known is also different. So, these three states are different in their own way from person to person.

But the witness is the same. It is something like the screen is the same in all the cinema halls. All over there is the same blank white screen. That is the same in all cinema halls all over the world. So likewise, this witnessing is not only yours. It does not belong to any one. The screen is the source of all. The witness is the source of all. Without the screen you cannot see any films. In other words, it is the basis of all. It is the source of all.

This witnessing is the most important basic factor in my life. When once I understand this witnessing faculty, what happens? You are not an ego from then onwards. When you are identified with the mind or ego, you move about. But when you transcend these two, like the subject and object as in the case of the listener and the speaker, then you are no longer an ego. You just transcend and go to the point of the witness.

So here is an important point: For every circle there is a central point. I have given this example many times earlier. The circle or periphery or the circumference is the body. The next circle is the mind, while the center is your being, which is the central point. Now once you reach the level of awareness of your own witnessing faculty, the basic fact you'll notice is that the witness has no 'I' center. 'I' is no longer a center. The central point is 'I' the witness. This 'I' ego or 'I' ness, is totally gone.

In other words, the witness is without a center because it is uniform in everybody. If it is individualized, you can think of a center. But when it is universal, it has no center anymore. In other words, as the witness or being is center-less, or we can also say its center is everywhere. That's the beauty of the witness.

It is something like this. We are all here under the sky, but we don't think about it. The sky surrounds us all. It surrounds us all. Likewise, this witness is like the unknown sky that surrounds all of us. Oh! What is the sky after all? Just empty

space. Like that, the witness is our inner space and we exist in that witness. We are born and we dissolve into it, into that emptiness which we call the witness. Therefore, our job or *sadhana* or spiritual practice is to find this witness in everything we are doing, knowing and feeling. Be watchful and be aware of this witnessing process.

Suppose you are walking along a street. Be a witness to that. See the path. Please be aware that you are walking within the body. While the body is walking, you feel that the body is walking and the mind knows that you are walking. That which walks is the body and the one that knows that you are walking is your mind. To both there is the witness or *sakshi*.

Or we can put it this way: walking is the object, while mind is the subject. This subjective mind and objective walking both are witnessed. Then who are you? You are not simply a walker and you are not simply the mind either, no. You are beyond. You are beyond both because you are a witness, aware of both the body and the mind.

It is just as in the example of the same cinema screen. The screen is in every film and it is also there without the film. Though the films may be projected on it, it is beyond all that. While the film is projected, the cinema screen may appear to have been identified, that's all. But actually there is no involvement with the film. Likewise, the witness is there in both the body and the mind, but it is also beyond.

This kind of experiment of witnessing should be experienced in every stage of our life, even in the state of walking for that matter. Suppose you see a flower on the tree, yes. You see the flower as an object. The one who is seeing inside is the mind, the subject, but you are the witness of both the subject and the object and also the beyond. Or when you go to a public meeting, you listen to the speaker as a listener and there is also the witness beyond. That witness witnesses both and transcends both. That is the beauty of the witness.

So we have to learn to live like that in full awareness that the witness within is like the space outside. It is space. It is all inner-emptiness, inner void, and that inner void is infinite. It has no boundaries, no limitations, and no ego either. Thus, there exists a space inside and that space within is the witnessing consciousness. That witnessing consciousness is like a mirror which is unaffected in every way.

Therefore, let everyone of us feel that I am the witness and this witness is ever auspicious as it is pure consciousness. It is ever holy, it is ever fresh and it is ever pure. Let me be aware of it as a witness. Let me recognize that I am the witness, different from the experiencer. I am the witness who is different from experiencing and the experienced.

In all the three states mentioned earlier - the knower, the known and the knowledge, I am the witness. I am the witness in the dream. I am the witness in the waking state also, yes. So I am the witness in all the three states of consciousness – in the waking state, dream state and deep sleep state. The waking state, dreaming state and deep sleep state are the three states of consciousness which are all witnessed.

So, it is clearly understood that you can witness both the body and the mind. Therefore, it is ever auspicious. It is innocent and pure like a mirror, reflecting whatever is in front of it. In fact, that which gets identified will be the impure. Yes, if I am right, by our identification with what is there, it becomes impure. So, a mirror doesn't identify with anything. So, therefore it is pure. Like that, our witness will also never get identified with anything. Therefore it too is pure.

Anything impure cannot get into you, the witness. It cannot become a part of you because the witness is just like a clean mirror. Whatever is in front of it, it cannot get into it. In a similar way, nothing whatsoever can get into our consciousness or pollute this eternal witness.

So then the question comes, "Why impurity?" This impurity is because of identification. All that impurity you notice is a fiction, not a reality. You think you are impure or that you have become impure. No, it is all self-deception. You are deceiving yourself.

The witness can never be impure as it is like a mirror. So to think it is impure is our ignorance. Likewise let us not think that we are impure as this so-called impurity is only because of our identification. It's just self-deception. So let us be careful about it. The whole thing is merely a reflection.

As is said in the Dakshinamurthy *stotram*, *Vishwam darpana drishya maana nagari*, just like the whole city is reflected in a mirror, in a similar way, everything in life is reflected. We should know that as the witness. Yet we consider ourselves sinners because this sin is reflected. Therefore, we consider that we are sinners based on that reflection. In fact, you are not the reflection. You are the witness, you are the mirror; you are not the reflection. So never consider yourself to be ugly or a sinner or impure. Let us be aware of this, which is the fact of facts. Be the witness to your own experiences.

In fact, the whole world is a reflection of you, the witness. When I don't witness, what is there to be witnessed? So, you are the witness and you are the world. The whole world is reflected in you. Be aware of that. In that awareness, all impurities dissolve.

To say 'dissolve' is also wrong because the impurity was actually never there. So where is the question of dissolving anything? Can I say that I removed all the impurities in a mirror? It was never impure, so where is the question of removing them? No. Shall I say they disappeared? It is also wrong because they were never there. This is real understanding.

At this moment, let me give an example of Bhagavan Buddha. What did He say? Somebody said, "Oh Lord, what have you gained in your life?" And Buddha said, "I have never gained anything because all that I gained was always with me. It has always been there. There is nothing to gain." And somebody asked, "Lord, what is that you have lost?" Buddha replied, "Whatsoever is lost was never with me. Whatever is gained has always been with me. Whatever is lost has never been with me."

Rather in simple terms we can say, "I have lost my ignorance which was not with me." Ignorance was not with you because actually you are that awareness, *Pragyanam Brahma*. You are that awareness so you cannot say, "I gained knowledge" because that *pragyana* is part of you. It is your nature. Then at that state of being the witness in full awareness, one can declare, "I am Brahman, *Aham Brahmasmi*." Not till then.

Therefore my friends, for this talk I thought of giving the title, 'Be a mirror, be a mirror.' Be a witness so that you will never be affected by these dual experiences, and you will never be carried away by this dual scenario all around.

Remain for yourself untouched by developing an awareness of this eternal, pure, ever auspicious witness that is within everyone.

Sai Ram. We'll meet again.