

Podcast 144: NOT PERSONAL

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, 144th episode.

The topic today is this: 'Not Personal'. I repeat, 'Not Personal'. Let me share a couple of thoughts on this theme.

We come across many of the devotees who say they are very close to Swami and even some say they have got easy access to Him. I also know an elderly man who is no more, who lived up to 90, who was in charge of South Indian Canteen for a long time. He used to say that he is 'the dearest child of Baba'. So, we hear such claims, people saying that they are close to Him. These things we often hear. So I would like to talk to you on this subject for a while.

Long ago, it was V.K. Gokak, the former Vice-Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai University, and the very first Vice-Chancellor, who in one of his talks made this statement: "Baba is both personal and impersonal." And his next statement was, "We have to travel from the personal to the impersonal level." In other words, we consider Him as a person at the beginning of our *sadhana* or practice, and go on to reach the stage of taking Him totally impersonally.

So, this topic is 'Not Personal'. We have to understand this. *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads* also emphatically tell us this: that our spiritual journey should be from form, *sakara*, to formless, *nirakara*, from attributes to attribute-less-ness, from *saguna* to *nirguna*, from name, *nama* to nameless. So, our journey is to attain this state of namelessness, attribute less-ness and formlessness.

Similarly, we may begin with the personal, but go beyond and understand that aspect of Bhagavan which is impersonal, God being impersonal. If we take Him as God, He is impersonal. If we just look at Him as a human being, yes, He is a person. We may begin with that assumption or with that feeling that He is a person. But we should go forward, onward and go to that state of taking Him as beyond that person, that He is not a person. That He's impersonal.

Upanishads do not believe in a personal God. Most of you may be aware of that. In fact, they say it is impossible and even inconceivable that we have a personal relationship with God. Why? Because personality is illusory, personalities are false. They appear to be persons, as well as you may appear to be a person; but you are not. Personality, after all, exists as an island. In fact, personalities define, demarcate and separate. This is all only your personality, as others look at you, or as you look at others, the outer view.

But the inner being is impersonal. That which is an impersonal being, the inner being, has no limitations and has no boundaries. And if you go to the etymology, the word 'personality' has got a Greek root. When you go to the Greek root of this word 'personality', you will know that 'personality' means 'a mask', 'a *persona*'. So, a mask

is just a face and is artificial, while there is no face inside. There is no person at all inside. Inside what do you find? Eternal energy, infinite energy. That is very clear from our *Upanishadic* texts. In a drama, we have many faces to play. Sometimes it is even multi-dimensional. There you are not one person. There are many people in a drama, and we know many of the places where one person plays many roles.

So now coming to the point, we have many personalities. For example, towards a friend, I have one personality, while towards an enemy, a different personality. Towards the beloved, there's a different face altogether. Well, to a servant, a different face, and towards the boss, a different face. Like that, we will be changing our faces or our outer personalities. That's very strange, though it's a fact of facts. So, we are not one personality, but many personalities, as has been pointed out earlier.

Now from another point of view, we can also take it this way. I may put up some face when I meet a friend or an enemy or a boss or a beloved, whatever it may be. All the faces I put on are all for others. They are all for others. In reality you are faceless. Inside you have no face. All the faces that you put on are only outer or outside.

Upanishads say that inside, within you, you are impersonal. You are just life, energy, just vitality, just existence, that's all. There's no face and no personality inside. So, inside you are totally divine, pure existence, with no face and no body.

So, we can come to the conclusion now that you cannot be related personally to God because you yourself are not a person, but just a mask. Inside you are impersonal. So, when you are not a person, when you are impersonal, how can you be related personally to God? What sense does it make?

Some say, "I consider God as my brother", or "I consider Him as father." That's okay. That may be at an initial stage. But as we go further on in our spiritual pursuit, we reach that state which knows there is no person within, so hence God is also no person at all. You are divine essentially, and the Divinity within you has no face. It is not a person.

So that is why it is said, 'That', 'Tat', 'Tat', that Divinity, that Divinity. We mean the Divinity has no sense of personality, so how can you be related to that which has no personality. How do you worship that Divinity which has no personality? Just think along this way.

Also if you think at the ground level, at the grass roots level, we have got human relationships which are all dual, meaning for these relationships we need two. For example, to that person, I am his brother, or to that person, he is my father. So this kind of human relationship is totally dual, whereas the Divinity is pure existence, and cannot be related to in a dual way. Please understand this subtle point.

So then, how to be related when God is not a person? Well, I am not a person for that matter. Then how to get related? The only way is when you become one with Him. So when you are no more, when you are not, when you are without 'you', you cannot be related. In other words when you are not as 'I', as ego, you are one with

Him. In that egoless-ness within, you are non-personal or impersonal, pure existence. You are one with the Divinity. That's the point here.

So, *Upanishads* do not teach any prayer or worship because prayer is always personal. Prayer is a dialogue between you and God. A person is needed. That's the reason why all religions teach in terms of personal relationships, treating God as a brother, mother, father, beloved, and so on like that. All these relationships are basically human.

Therefore, I repeat once again what *Upanishads* declare: you are impersonal inside. As the Divine is not a person, there is no possibility of personal relationships. So to have that experience, that Divine experience, this 'I' ego must drop because 'I' is just a barrier. So then 'That' is born or realized which is your true nature.

In other words, *Sat-Chit-Ananda* is pure existence. *Sat* is existence, while *chit* is consciousness, and *Ananda* is bliss. *Sat-Chit-Ananda* means existence, consciousness and bliss. That is your nature, your reality, the Divinity. So, is that a personality? That's not a personality. It is totally impersonal.

In fact, let's also consider this topic from another dimension. This so-called 'I' exists as a claim. In other words, you identify with the state you are in. If you are a child, you may say, "I am a child." Yes. Then when you are quite young, you say that "I am young." It means you are no longer a child. When you turn old, you say, "I am an old man." Then the child is gone, that youth is gone, and now you are an old man. In other words, you are transformed from one state to another state. The state goes on changing. That's what *Upanishads* say.

And *Upanishads* further emphasize that, that which goes on changing is not existential. That's not existential at all. It is all dream-like, dream-like, while Divinity is eternal, it is existential. You'll attain that when you reach your center, meaning by being egoless. Then you'll become absolutely conscious. You will become filled with bliss. Whatever you do, you do with a fully conscious mind. You are mindful. You are aware. You are alert, whatever you do. Then you can say you are enlightened, not till then. The moment you are fully conscious and aware, you will be existence, absolute, eternal, bliss and total. *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, the Absolute! Yes! What wonderful points we have to learn, practice and experience.

Now here is an important caution: don't allow your consciousness to be vulnerable to misery. People want to be pitied. People want to be sympathized with. No. Be strong; resist the temptation of falling into misery. Some people want misery, so they invite misery. It is a psychological feeling because by being miserable, they think they can draw more attention, like children do.

When some fall sick, they become almost a dictator. Yes. Take for example elderly people, old people, aged persons who have got a feeling that everyone must listen to them. So they have a feeling of authority. Therefore, in other words, misery is our investment to draw attention, or to be a dictator, or to feel authoritative. So, that's not the way.

Feel blissful, do not allow yourself to be miserable at all. When you help yourself to be blissful, you are going to be blissful. Try to be blissful in every state of mind. Whatever happens, whatever may happen, that's all outside. Anything that happens, it happens outside only. Do not allow it to disturb your bliss within. The bliss is within, while the happenings are outside. So many things may be happening outside. So what if they are? But you are in bliss within. Don't allow the outer things to disturb the inner state of bliss.

I have heard an anecdote related to a Taoist from China, a very famous monk, and a very famous man. He was leading a life of poverty by choice, but was highly reputed. One day he was seen sitting in front of his hut, laughing loudly and even dancing. The people gathered and noticed that this Taoist had lost his wife. His wife had died. Usually when death takes place, people cry, they lament, and people come from different places to try to console them and say a few soothing words. But in contrast, this man, the Taoist, who was the very husband of that lady who died, was dancing and laughing hilariously.

This Taoist, being very famous, was known as Puyang Shuyao from China. Being very famous, the king came to know that Puyang Shuyao lost his wife. He had all reverence for this Taoist, so he came there to visit him. But to his surprise, he saw Puyang Shuyao dancing in joy and laughing. He is almost celebrating the death of his wife.

The king was surprised and came close to him and said, "Oh! Why are you laughing? Why? What makes you laugh? You lost your wife. What happened to you?"

Puyang Shuyao said, "I gave a vow to my teacher that I will remain blissful in all circumstances. Yes. After all, my wife died. With her death, her oldness died, her suffering died, and as I saw her dead body, I saw her face blissful for the first time ever since I was married. Therefore, I am celebrating."

Then the king asked him, "How to be blissful like you?"

He gave the answer: "First remember that everything happens outside of you, not inside you. And what happens outside should not disturb you because you are not outside, as your 'you' is inside. So look on life with total acceptance. After all, death is natural and death is a great departure. So now I am singing and laughing because I am celebrating all the memories. In this way, I pay my gratitude and thankfulness to my wife."

So, what a wonderful illustration this is! If you are centered in the being, you can be blissful continuously, undisturbed and unwavering. And it is only in that state that you will attain consciousness and pure existence. It is so beautiful to think of these ideas and concepts.

For that matter, there are three paths. The first path is to be blissful. The second path is to be conscious. The third path is to be existence. So the path of bliss, the path of consciousness and the path of existence are the three paths.

These three are not new to us. The path of bliss is *ananda*, the path of consciousness is *chit* or awareness, and the path of existence is *sat*, being or existence. These three are all the attributes of the ultimate reality.

Though these three seem to be different, yet they all take you to the experience of reality, to the ultimate. Just as rivers merge in the mighty ocean, this is also like that. You can also draw a comparison that they are equal to the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswathi, the three rivers. Ganga and Yamuna, two of the rivers, are visible, while the third river Saraswathi is invisible.

Let us think of these three paths for a while. The path of bliss or *ananda* is Ganga. You cannot hide the bliss, you will be blissful. All of you will notice your bliss visually, because it comes flowing out of your eyes and your movements, and your blissful gestures will indicate this. That is the path of bliss, the Ganga, which is visible.

The second path is the path of *chit* or consciousness, or I should say 'awareness'. So what is this path of consciousness? This is visible again because the one who is conscious with the *chit-bhava*, consciousness, you will notice that he's in a state of consciousness, in a full state of consciousness, because his features, his movements and gestures indicate that he's in a full state of consciousness which is expressive and very much visible.

As Buddha walks, as He speaks, you'll notice because the path of consciousness is quite visible. Every gesture is so visible. Take for example, Bhagavan. Even though sometimes He sits in our midst, He goes on moving His hands in some direction or other, looking upwards. Where is He? We are all here, all around Him. Where does He look? What is He doing? That is the path of consciousness. So, the very visibility of their gestures indicates that it is the path of consciousness. This is also visible.

Then we come to the third path, the path that is invisible, the path of existence or *sat*, the Saraswathi River. The Ganga River is blissful, standing for the path of bliss, and the path of *chit* or consciousness is Yamuna River. Both these rivers are visible, whereas the third path of *sat*, the path of existence, or the Saraswathi river are invisible.

The Saraswathi is invisible because it happens within. It goes on inside. They are in constant remembrance of that which exists. And those who follow the path of existence, yes, are invisible. Naturally they are not known because that's all a feeling, an experience within. You cannot feel Him outside. They look very ordinary. So they are ordinary outside, but extraordinary within. They are all unknown Masters. Most of the Sufi saints are of this category. They may be cobblers or sweepers, whatever it may be. They look very ordinary, but they are extraordinary.

Therefore, to meet that extraordinary person, a Sufi saint, along the path of existence, you'll find he's invisible. We'll not come to know Him unless we stay with Him for two to three years, and feel Him, feel Him and see the difference in how He looks from outside. How does He look from outside, but what is He really deeply within?

Therefore, the three paths are the path of bliss - Ganga, the path of consciousness - Yamuna and the path of existence - Saraswathi.

I may conclude this talk by praying to all my fellow pilgrims along the path of spiritual practice that our journey has not come to an end. Some even have not started. As has been said earlier, at the beginning, our travel should be from personal to impersonal, from name to namelessness, from form to formlessness, from attribute to attribute-less-ness, from something to nothing because "Nothing is everything," as Baba says. In that emptiness, you feel the Divinity.

We'll have topics of this nature in the coming weeks also because one time or another we have to evolve. We have to evolve because what we are doing is we are just revolving, but we are not evolving.

With this, I thank all of you for your time, and will come back to you next week.

Thank you.