

PODCAST 166: BE JUST AS YOU ARE

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh welcomes you. Thank you very much for your time.

We often come across people complaining that they are not content, that they are not happy with what they are. Why?

Outwardly we find them quite rich enough, very popular, and enjoying status in the society. But still they express that they are not fully happy or that they are not completely content in their life. What could be the reason?

On the one hand, we may say something, while they express something different. Therefore, in what way should we understand this psychology of discontent in spite of having everything possible in life? Let us discuss these points for a while.

Let me openly say that we are not what we are. We are not what we should be. We are not what we could have been. We are not what we wanted us to be. Therefore this dissatisfaction continues. Now, just take this idea, 'Be just as you are'. Be just as you are, then you are bound to be happy.

Why are we dissatisfied and discontent? Why? The reason is that right from childhood everyone is condemned. Everyone is condemned. I mean 'condemned' in the sense that a child is not allowed to grow up with his own ideas and ideals. In fact the rest of the community expects children to fit into their ideas and ideals. Thus a child is helpless. Have you ever thought of this, that the child has not been given enough freedom to grow? Therefore we'll find that discontent. Just study this, which is what has been happening over the ages.

Funnily enough, it is only man who is helpless as a child, not animals. Animals don't need their parents to grow, whereas a human child cannot survive like that. The child dies immediately if it is left to itself. So the human child is the most helpless creature in the world, so vulnerable to death and so delicate.

Therefore what happens is this. Those who are in power are able to mold the child in the way they want. They manipulate and manage them that way. So everybody has become what he is – basically against himself. Please note and keep this in mind – basically against himself! That is the psychology behind the fact that everybody wants to pretend to be what he is not.

Here there is a division, a divided personality, or what you call schizophrenia. Schizophrenia means a divided personality. So he wants to be as his nature demands him to be; but society wants him to be different. His parents want him to be different. That is the situation. So naturally what happens? He has been made into somebody else. But he's not that, he's not that. Why? Let us study this.

One may be an engineer or a doctor. But if we just inquired into this, they would admit that they were forced to become an engineer, a doctor, or a politician, and so

on and so forth. They're forced. It's not that they wanted to be, and it's not that their temperament is that way. So nobody is at ease with himself.

Here I have got a small story to tell you. A great surgeon, who was about seventy-five years old, was retiring. All his colleagues and students gathered and were celebrating his retirement. They were all enjoying themselves, dancing and singing and drinking. But the senior professor, who was the one who was retiring, was seen standing in a dark corner, very sad.

One friend came to him and asked, "What is the matter with you? We are celebrating but you are standing here so sad. What's the reason? Don't you want to retire? You're seventy-five already. You should have retired fifteen years ago. But because you are such a great surgeon, even at seventy-five, nobody can compete with you. Nobody comes even close to you. Now you can retire and relax."

Then this old surgeon started replying like this: "That's what I was thinking. I am feeling sad because my parents forced me to become a surgeon, while I wanted to be a singer. I would have loved it." In other words, this surgeon wanted to be a singer, a musician, but his parents decided that he should be a surgeon.

So the surgeon says now, "Even if I was just a street singer, at least I would have been myself. Instead today I am a world famous surgeon. But I am not myself. When people praised me as a surgeon, I listened as if they were praising somebody else. I have been given awards, rewards, and doctorates, but nothing rings a bell of joy in my heart now because this is not me. This being a surgeon has killed me, destroyed me. I wanted to be just a flute player, a flute player. Even if I had to be a beggar on the street, I would have been happy."

Therefore, in this world there is only one true happiness - that is to be yourself, to be yourself. People are discontent and dissatisfied because of the simple reason that each one is not acting according to himself. So, one should learn to be oneself first. Because nobody is himself, everybody is trying to somehow hide, pretend and thus becomes a hypocrite. That makes them finally feel that they are ashamed of what they are.

We have made the world a marketplace not a beautiful garden. The world is supposed to be a garden, not a marketplace. We have not been courageous enough to rebel against the crowd. They have forced artificial plastic flowers on us. We have our own real flowers of talent and creativity for which our juices are flowing, but we cannot show our real flowers.

Today we are living in an artificial world of plastic flowers, where no one lives as per one's own self. So when I say, 'be yourself' it appears to be rather strange. You're being taught everything, but you are not being taught to be yourself. We are taught to be everything, but not to be yourself. This is the ugliest form of society possible because that makes our lives miserable.

I'll also give you another anecdote. There was a great professor of literature who was retiring, and the university professors and friends and leading people from the community gathered. They were all rejoicing. But they all found this great retiring

professor missing. A close friend of his, an attorney, went out and searched for him. He found the senior professor sitting under a tree.

The attorney immediately asked him, "Professor! Professor, what are you doing here?"

The Professor replied, "What am I doing here? Remember, fifty years ago I came to tell you that I wanted to kill somebody. I could not because I would be kept in prison. I told you that I wanted to kill my wife; but you said, 'Don't do that.' Now I am thinking that if I had not listened to you, today I would have been out of jail, free. I am feeling so angry that the desire comes to me: why should I not at least kill you. I am seventy-five. Even if they put me in jail for fifty years, they cannot keep me there for fifty years anyway. Within five to seven years, I'll be dead. But you are not a friend. You proved to be my greatest enemy."

Here in this instance we find in this professor an instinct to kill somebody, which he could not do because he was prevented by his attorney friend. "Don't do it." But still that desire persisted in him. Therefore he was feeling so sad, away from all those people who came to celebrate his retirement.

When all is said and done, to be what you don't want to be, to be with someone you don't want to be with, to do something you don't want to do, is the basis of all your miseries, all your miseries.

And on the one hand, society has managed to make everybody miserable. The same society expects you not to show your misery, at least not in public, and not in the open. It is your private business because your misery finally belongs to you, that's all. You cannot show it in public because of etiquette, manners and culture. But basically it is all hypocrisy.

Therefore this hypocrisy continues unless a person decides that, whatever the cost, I just want to be myself. Even being condemned, unaccepted, or losing respectability is okay. Everything is okay, but I cannot pretend anymore to be somebody else.

This decision and this declaration - this declaration of freedom, freedom from the weight of the crowd -- give birth to your natural being, to your individuality. Therefore only then can you be just as you are. Then you can be just as you are. Then there's a tremendous peace that passeth understanding. At that moment, you don't need any mask. Then you can be simply yourself, just as you are.

Thank you.