

PODCAST 175: UNION, UNITY, INDIVIDUAL

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, 175th episode welcomes you. Thank you very much for your time and continued encouragement.

We have been hearing these two words 'union' and 'unity', 'union' and 'unity'. Are they different or one and the same? If they are different, in what way are they different?

One can certainly say that no group can ever be a 'unity'. At the most, a group can be a 'union,' so the difference between union and unity is great.

In unity, you become one. You dissolve yourself completely, and you are no more separate. In union, you are together only for a certain purpose. Once the purpose is fulfilled, the union disappears. But unity, once attained, never disappears. It is not purpose-based..

With people, you have only unions. But with God, you have unity. Even a love affair is a union, not a unity. A friendship is a union, not a unity. Once the purpose is fulfilled, the love affair will disappear. You may cling for a few days just out of a sense of gratitude, out of a sense of responsibility, duty, or out of a sense of all the promises that you have given in the past. You may cling for a few days, but that clinging cannot go on for long. Sooner or later it is finished. The purpose is fulfilled. Unity means there is no way to finish it. That can only be with God.

Unity is with God, while union is with people. In unity, you become inseparably one. But in a group, you are not inseparably one. It is a temporary commitment. You can drop out of it at any moment. You can say 'no' at any moment. You still remain capable of separating yourself. This is the important difference between union and unity. Yes, with people it's always a union, not unity.

As I said, this union is a temporary arrangement, an experiment. You are not to become one with the group, as has already been pointed out. You have to function in harmony with the group, but you remain an individual. Yes, just like in an orchestra, different instruments are being played, but each instrument remains different, unique. Each contributes to the whole. But you can contribute to the whole only if you are separate. Otherwise, who is going to contribute and to whom?

In an orchestra the flute player is contributing, the guitarist is contributing, the pianist is contributing. But the pianist is a pianist and the flute player is a flute player. The flute is a flute and the piano is a piano. They retain their individualities but for the moment when they have joined hands together. So it's a union, not a unity. The flute has not become part of the piano. If it does become so, the whole beauty will be lost.

Hence in groups, the emphasis is that you should be individuals, yet capable of functioning in harmony with others. But it is not expected that you should destroy your individuality. That would be suicidal. That would be murder.

On the contrary, the whole effort is to give you more and more uniqueness, yes individuality, and the more meditative you become the more unique and incomparable you become.

The Buddha is a peak, a part of the infinite universe, but not part in the sense that he is replaceable. He's not like a part in a car that you can replace. He is unique. He is irreplaceable. Nobody can replace him. The higher you rise in awareness, the more you are in tune with the universe and at the same time, the more unique you go on becoming. Hence, there is the uniqueness of Buddha in contrast to Jesus. There is the uniqueness of Mohammed in contrast to Mahavira. Where else can you find such unique individuals?

But we have lived in a society which destroys individuality, giving us false toys in the name of individuality, while actually giving us a personality. This personality is a burden, and you're always ready and absolutely willing to put this burden aside. You don't know anything about your individuality, yet you put this personality aside. Yes. It's rather strange. You start functioning as part of the group. You don't attain a soul. In fact you lose much because the personality is discarded, and the anxiety that was there is no longer felt. But this is not a way to get rid of anxiety. It'll come back.

How long can you live in a group? Sooner or later, you'll be back in society. There you will again cling to the personality. It will be needed and soon the desire will arise to go to another group for a few days to put the personality aside so you can feel free. But that freedom is at a great cost. Freedom is good only if it happens around the center of your individuality. Otherwise it's not helpful; it is even harmful.

The group takes away your individuality, yes, destroys something very essential in you. It functions like an intoxicant. Yes, in the group you learn how to be in tune with others and at the same time you learn how to remain yourself. It's a paradoxical process. Remain yourself more and more, yet become a great contributor to the orchestra of life. Between these two poles, your real being will become more and more sharpened.

Yes, in a group, they'll have a mind, but not a soul. A group can easily have a mind; that's how people are. Yes, Mohammedans have a certain kind of mind, Christians have a certain kind of mind, and Hindus have a certain kind of mind. Same with all people. Mohammedans have a very obstinate, stubborn mind. Hindus also have an obstinate stubborn mind, but it is not so tight. It's a little loose. The reason is that so many Buddhas have existed in this country, and they have been hammering on society. They have made it looser in many places.

But Mohammedans have not known anybody else except Prophet Mohammed. That's what happened to Catholics. The word Catholic means one who is very liberal; but that's not the case. Catholics are worse than Communists at certain times. These things we need to know.

People who have no individuality start having a certain mind, the mob mind. In the army, you find there are no individuals. The whole effort in an army is to destroy the individual and give you a uniform and a number. Now to give you a number is a

subtle way of destroying your individuality. A name gives you some uniqueness, while the number eleven or simply any number, takes all individuality from you. So if a person dies, they say number eleven died, that's all. They don't even mention any names.

In the army, scientifically and technologically the individuality is destroyed. Your name disappears. You become a number. Your hair is cut in the same way. You are forced to follow stupid orders year in and year out: left turn, right turn, above turn - that's all, nothing more. That's really what happens.

In the army, there's no 'why'. You are simply told to do such a thing and you have to do it. In fact the more stupid a thing is, the better it prepares you for the work of the army. Following the stupid orders for years, one day they say, "Shoot this man," and you shoot the man, robot-like, without asking why. You have forgotten how to ask why.

In the army, the group mind arises. It's not a group soul, remember. Soul is always individual, while the mind is always a group. That's what it is. If you believe in God, that means you belong to a certain group which believes in God. They have given the idea, this conditioning to you.

What are your beliefs? Where do they come from? They come from the social mind, from the church, from the state. Look and you can find the source from where they come. You can watch your mind and be surprised that all that you carry in your mind and think is yours, is not actually yours. It has come from different sources, from parents, teachers, priests, politicians, and others who have given it to you. There's something like a Hindu mind, a Mohammedan mind, a Buddhist mind and so on. So the mind belongs to groups. This is important.

But we cannot forgo our soul because the soul is always individual. It cannot be given to you by anybody. It's already in you. It has to be discovered. In a group, you may function as a union, but never as a unity. In a group, you may drop your personality, but never your individuality. There the 'no' has not to be killed completely. If you become utterly incapable of saying 'no', your 'yes' is meaningless.

So what has to be done here is to transform your being from the level of the mind to the level of the soul. It's a journey, it's a pilgrimage.

The greatest adventure that can happen to a human being is the moment one shifts from mind to no-mind, or the moment one moves from personality to individuality. The no-mind has individuality, while the mind is social.

Like this, my friends, we can discuss so many aspects relating to group psychology and our uniqueness by remaining as an individual. We'll also know the advantages of being a member of a group and we'll also come to know what we are losing by identifying ourselves with a group.

So in this short talk, I have made an attempt to bring to your attention these three aspects: union, unity and individuality. Thank you for your time.