

PODCAST 176: WHAT IS BRAHMAN? WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF BRAHMAN?

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, 176th episode welcomes you.

This morning we're going to discuss a most commonly discussed subject, a very commonly known subject. Let us try to delve deeply into it.

We often use the word 'Brahmam' or 'Brahman'. In English they may say Brahman. B R A H M A N, Brahman, Divinity, Brahman. We use that word Brahman. But what is it? What are the features of Brahman? How are we to know it? Let us try to investigate together and understand.

Yes, etymologically the word Brahman is derived from another word *Nibarhana*, N I B A R H A N A, *Nibarhana*. That is the root of this word Brahman etymologically. What is the meaning of *Nibarhana* then? *Nibarhana* means smashing, completely grinding, totally cutting to pieces. That's what *Nibarhana* is.

Now, we are all suffering from this *triputi*. *Tri* means 'three'. Three aspects have been putting us in total confusion. A simple example: Suppose I look at this paper. 'I' here as the seer, and then there's the process of seeing, and then there's the paper. Therefore, *drasta* is the one who sees, while the process of seeing is *druk*, and that which is seen is *drushya*, D R U S H Y A , *drushya*. *Drasta*, D R A S T A, the one who sees is *drasta*. The process of seeing is *druk*, D R U K, *druk*, and that which is seen is *drushya*. Thus, there is this *triputi*. These three aspects have been there throughout. In every matter, there is *triputi*, in all sciences, in all arts, in spiritual aspects, everywhere we find this *triputi*, these three aspects.

Now, this *nibarhana* which is totally breaking it to pieces, will break this *triputi* because this *triputi* is the cause for all the pain. And this *nibarhana* will remove that which is undesirable. That undesirable is *anardha*, A N A R D H A. So *nibarhana* means removing this *anardha*.

Then question comes what is *ardha*, desirable? *Anardha* is undesirable, while *ardha* is desirable. Then what is *ardha*? What is desirable? That which is desirable is *jnanodaya*, that kind of awareness J N A N O, *jnanodaya*, D A Y A, *jnanodaya*, the dawn of *jnana*, knowledge and experience of Divinity, *brahmanubhava* B R A H M A N U B H A V A, *brahmanubhava*. So *ardha* means these two, *jnanodaya*, the dawn of knowledge, and *brahmanubhava*, the experience of the Divinity. That is *ardha*, that is desirable.

All the rest is *anardha*, undesirable. However, we can say when our *ardha*, that which is desirable, is total, what happens? The undesirable vanishes. When *ardha* is known, *anardha* vanishes. In other words, when the desirable is known totally, the undesirable disappears. It is something like when light appears, the darkness disappears.

Now, let us understand what is this *anardha*, which is undesirable. I said *ardha* is the dawn of knowledge and the experience of Divinity. So now, what is *anardha*, or undesirable? It has three aspects. One is *avidya*, A V I D Y A, that is ignorance. And secondly – *kama*, K A M A, which is desire, and third - *karma*, K A R M A, action. *Avidya, kama, karma* - these three constitute *anardha*, undesirable.

Well, as you all know we have got three forms: one - that which appears is the gross body. That which is psychological is the subtle body. That which is deeper inside is the causal body. So we have three forms - the gross body, subtle body and causal body. Now, this *Avidya* or ignorance is the quality or is the nature of *karanadeha*, K A R A N A D E H A, *karanadeha*, the causal body, *avidya*. The second, *kama* or desire, is the feature of the subtle body, or *sookshma*, S O O K S H M A, *sookshma*, *kama*. And the third one is *karma* K A R M A. This is experienced by the *sthoola deha* S T H O O L A, *sthoola*. In other words, *avidya* is the state of *ajnana*, or ignorance. Desire belongs to the subtle body and action is undertaken by the gross body. *Karana, sookshma, sthoola deha*.

Now, let's also understand that out of this infinite vast Divinity, this vast expansive Divinity or infinite Divinity, every individual has got Divinity to some extent. All the rest is spread all over the universe. Every individual has got only a part of it and so he is *jeeva* or an individual soul. Every one of us is a *jeeva*, a living being, *jeeva*, an individual soul. We do have this Brahman or Divinity to some extent, while all the rest is spread all over the universe.

Now, the usual quality of an individual or *jeeva* is to possess everything that is possible anywhere, or to acquire everything that is possible. It is with this nature that man amasses wealth. He doesn't mind cheating anybody, due to his desire. And therefore what happens is this. The cause of this is the individual's desire or *kama*, to acquire properties and so he needs a body. Therefore the individual, *jeeva* with this body has got this quality of *kama*, or desire and acquires property. Why all this? It is because he doesn't understand that everything is divine. Everything is divine, or Brahman. He doesn't understand that everything is Brahman. Therefore he goes on desiring.

The individual soul or *jeeva* does not stop at that level. He wants to enjoy life after death also. He wants heaven. He wants paradise. He wants to reach what we call, *Chandramandala*, or lunar space. Today's what's happening is a funny thing as people go to the moon. We even also hear some are buying plots there. How silly it is! In fact ,according to some of our Puranas, it is said that one can go to lunar space after death in the form of a subtle body. So we don't need a rocket. Nonsense! This is all nonsense.

Man's greed and infinite desire while alive, and even after death, is all *avidya*. All this is undesirable, *anardha nibarhanath*. *Anardha A N A R D H A nibarhanath N I B A R H A N A T H nibarhanath*. Therefore this ignorance has to be crushed, has to be smashed, cut to pieces. How should it be taken out? From the grass roots, because as we know when one seed remains, it will grow into a big tree tomorrow.

So this seed is *samsara* or the whole family life, the whole of our life on Earth should not be allowed to grow, and it should be driven out. It is something like a watchdog

which will be lying in the corner of the room. You cannot allow it to lie down there. Kick it off. Therefore *avidya* or ignorance has to be removed from its grass roots.

Then let us understand where this Brahman is. Brahman is Divinity. Where is it? Where is it? *Prasiddham P R A S I D D H A M, prasiddham*. Does it exist? *Prasiddham*, does it exist? Brahma or not? Tell me. *Aprasiddham A P R A S I D D H A M, aprasiddham*. So let me know whether Brahman is *prasiddham*, existent or *aprasiddham*, non-existent. Let me know.

Now the scripture gives the answer. Yes, it is only Brahman that exists, the one without the second. *Ekamevadvitityam Brahma*. Brahma is the only one without the second.

Oh I see! Then what are its features? *Nithyam N I T H Y A M, nithyam* continuous, ever *suddham*, *S U D D H A M* pure, *buddham*, *B U D D H A M* awareness, aware, *muktam M U K T A M* released, freed. These are the qualities of Brahman. *Nithya, suddha, buddha, muktaswabhava*. *Swabhava* means nature. *S W A B H A V A*. So it should be eternally pure with awareness and totally free.

Alright, then what is it? Let us examine where these qualities are present? Define these qualities in this earth *prudhvi*, *P R U D H V I*, *prudhvi* means earth. *Jala J A L A*, water. Do you find these four qualities? No, because you find soil pollution. Soil is polluted, water pollution. So it cannot be divine.

Then let us think of the air and the light. The air blows and the light travels. That which travels that which moves cannot be Brahman because when it travels to some place it is empty here. When it starts blowing, it is empty here.

In other words, that which is ever extending, ever expansive, all pervasive, cannot move and therefore it is very clear, *prudhvi* the earth, *jala* the water, *vayu* the air, *tejas* the light *T E J A S*, are not Brahman. They are not totally divine.

Alright, then what are these qualities? Let us try to know. Now here comes the space, *akasa*. The space will say, yes, I am *nithyam* eternal, *suddham* the pure. Oh, I see! The sky is not polluted. Space cannot be killed. Space cannot be moistened. *Bhagavad Geeta* clearly says *acchedyam*, it cannot be cut, *adahyam*, it cannot be burnt. Forget all that. These are all things said in *Bhagavad Geeta*. It cannot be killed, it cannot be cut to pieces, it cannot be moistened. It cannot be burnt. That is *akasa*, *A K A S A* or space. So *akasa* or space is *nithyam* and *suddham*. It is eternal and pure.

So can I say that space is Brahman? No, because there is no awareness in space. Space is not aware that it exists. Space cannot say, "I am here. I am the space." There is no awareness. There is no *jnana* there. So *akasa* or space cannot be Brahman. I see!

Then we come to this. We have already analysed that *prudhvi* earth, *jalam* water, *vayu* the air, and *tejas* the light and *akasa* or space are not Brahman. Then comes an individual. An individual soul or *jeeva* says, 'I', 'I'. I see! So I am here with that awareness. Let's understand this. 'I' means Brahman. 'I'

means atman. Well, 'I' means atman, Brahman, 'I' is *jnana*. These three words are same atma, *jnana*, 'I' - they are all the same.

Now, I am here. I know that I am here. I am here, existence, *sat*. I know that I am here, that is *chith*. That knowledge is *chith*. That very presence is *sat*, S A T; that is C H I T H. So I know I am here. I am here existent. I am aware of my existence. That is *chith*. Therefore I, individual *jeeva*, the soul will say, "I have got this awareness," *buddham*, awareness, B U D D H A M.

So am I Brahman? No Sir. Why? That knowledge is encased. It is entangled in your body. It is arrested. It is encompassed by your body. Therefore the *jnana* or that awareness in you is arrested. It is not *muktam* M U K T A M, meaning it is not released. It must be released. Therefore the individual soul cannot be Brahman.

But here I may tell you, sir, one point is this 'I', this I-ness, I should say. 'I' does not mean the leg, 'I' does not mean the hand, 'I' does not mean the eye, 'I' does not mean the ear or nose, nor anything to do with the body. When I say 'I' I don't mean the body. When I say 'I', I don't mean my *prana*, P R A N A or breath because breath travels. Also then 'I' doesn't represent mind either, *manas* M A N A S.

So 'I' does not stand for the body or the life *prana* or even the breath, *prana* or body. It has nothing to do with this. That 'I' is separate. What everyone says is that 'I', that is *jnana*. 'I' is *jnana*. 'I' means *jnana*, 'I' means *atma*, 'I' means Brahman. And this 'I' Brahman is universal. I cannot say this is my *jnana*, that is your *jnana*, that is his *jnana*, that is her *jnana*. It's nothing like that. *Jnana* is one and the same in everyone. *Jnana* cannot be split. It is universal.

But what is happening is, this infinite *jnana* is arrested within the framework of the body. It should be released, *mukta*. When once it is released, it identifies with this universal knowledge, with this universal consciousness, with this knowledge which is the core of the animate and inanimate. Therefore the individual *jnana* should be universal *jnana* because of the release. And then what happens is called *buddham*.

So we are clear now that *nithya*, *suddha*, *buddha*, *muktaswabhava* applies our knowledge only, applies to this 'I'-ness only, nothing else.

Now another point my friends: I would like to draw your attention to this. I see many, I see many. It means with my knowledge, I am able to see. So the one who sees is what you call *jnana*, *jnana* yes. That which is seen is *jneya* J N E Y A. So I see means there is something that is seen. The seen is *jneya*, the one who sees is *jnana*.

The same thing applies in every aspect of life. Either in respect to hearing or tasting or to the sense of touch, all sciences, all humanities, all spirituality everything, comes under this category, *jnana* and *jneya*, the knower and known. Known is *jneya*, the knower is *jnana*.

Now at this stage this universal 'I'-ness, this consciousness, is *sarvajnaha*. It is all-knowing meaning all subjectivity. There's no object at all. There's no object. There's

no *jneya*. There's nothing to be known there, *sarvajnaha*, it's all subjectivity only, that consciousness with nothing else, nothing else.

Now then, what are we to do now here? With this consciousness, with this *sarvajna*, with this subjectivity, we can look at the whole of creation, the whole of creation. Then we'll understand the entire creation is nothing but *vibhuti*, the mystery, the miracle, the glory, and the grandeur is all this *vibhuti* of the divine or Brahman.

In other words, the 'I' or Brahman is the main focus and is universal Brahman, universal consciousness; everything else in this world is *vibhuti*. It's just the grandeur and the splendour of Divinity. It's all powerful or *sarvasakthisamanvithimam*. Sarva S A R V A *sakthi*, S A K T H I, *samanvitham* S A M A N V I T H A M *samanvitham*, which means it is all powerful.

Therefore, we should be able to look from this point of 'I', which is not identified with the body, not identified with the mind, not identified with what you call life or *prana*, and not identified with the *manas*, mind. The 'I' in its purity, with none of these attachments or annexures, should be viewed as Brahman. That 'I' is Brahman, that 'I' is atman, that 'I' is knowledge.

I would rather conclude by giving you one example. This knowledge or *jnana* is the cause for all that we see all, and for all that appears. A simple example: Here is the ocean. Out of this ocean waves have emerged. Some waves are huge, while some of them are small. The waves are of different sizes, but the ocean is the same. It's only that the waves give an appearance as if they are different from the ocean. But waves are not different from the ocean. After all, all is water only.

So waves, though they are not different from the ocean, give an appearance as though they are different. This appearance is called *abhava*, A B H A S A, *abhava* which means 'appearance'. It means the ocean appears as waves, that's all. Therefore this is Brahman. This ocean is Brahman or I-ness, and the waves appear different, being entire objects. The ocean is the subject, the I-ness or Brahman or atman, while all the rest of the universe is just objects. That's what we call *abhava*, A B H A S A, only appearances, that's all.

Therefore in this brief talk we have come to know what Brahman is, where Brahman is, and what are the features of Brahman. I beg your pardon for certain repetitions I made in order to make myself very clear and to make it understood by listeners as well.

Thank you for your patience.

Sai Ram.