

PODCAST 177: LIFE IS A DESERT / TAKE SHELTER IN 3 STEPS

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh welcomes you.

Life seems to be almost a desert to a spiritual man because most of the people around that spiritual man are unconscious. That's why the whole world looks like a desert. In other words, to live with people who are not blooming or flowering is to live in a desert. It is a human desert indeed. To become enlightened amongst the unenlightened people is to live in a desert.

Swami's message is conveyed to us if we are really committed to God in the energy field that He creates around us. We really become a plant in His garden if we allow Swami to destroy our ego because that's how our growth begins.

The death of the ego is the beginning of growth. Just as a seed has to die in the soil, the ego has to die in the Master. Once your ego is completely gone, you're a beautiful tree with much foliage, greenery, flowers and fragrance.

Swami's effort is to make this desert a garden, and there's every possibility of succeeding because people are getting ready. Hesitating may be natural, or waiting or thinking is natural; but we cannot be here for long thinking and waiting. Sooner or later it is necessary to make the quantum leap, as you cannot go on misunderstanding the truth forever.

What I want to draw your attention to is that we cannot go on hesitating or thinking or waiting because there will certainly come a time when we have to take a quantum leap. We just remain in this ambience even if we misunderstand at times.

Bhagavan is working on us but not through the mind. He is playing on the instrument of our hearts. Words are just to keep us engaged so that He can enter into our hearts. In fact, as Swami Himself sings in His popular song, *Bada chittachora*, the Master is like a thief.

There was a man who was known as a Master thief in Japan. I am just going to give this example. He was well known, famous all over the country, and of course he was a master thief. So nobody had ever been able to catch hold of him. He was never caught red-handed, although everybody knew that he was the one who had stolen even from the treasury of the king as when he had been stealing, he always left a mark of his so everybody would know who had been there.

In fact he had become fashionable, yes. It had become the fashion to brag about it if the Master thief had thought you worthy to steal something from. It became an aristocratic bragging. "Oh, just see! The thief entered and stole from me; therefore I am an aristocrat." People would brag saying, "Last night the Master thief was at our house."

But this man was getting older, and one day his young son said to him, "Now you are getting older, teach me your art." The father said, "Then come with me tonight

because this is not something that can be taught. You can only imbibe the spirit of me. If you are intelligent enough, you can catch it. I cannot teach it to you. But you can catch it. I cannot give it to you. But you can get it. We'll see. You come tonight with me."

Naturally the son was afraid because it was the first attempt. The wall was broken. They went into the palace. Even in his old age the father's hands were like a surgeon's, unwavering and unshaken. Even though he was becoming very old, he had no fear, as if he was working in his own home, breaking the wall. He did not even look here and there. He was so certain of his art while the young man was trembling. It was a cold winter night yet he was perspiring. But his father was doing everything silently, everything silently. That's his expertise. See that. But it's not the case with the son because the young man was trembling, trembling because of the cold winter, as I said.

Then the father entered the house. The son followed. His knees were trembling and he was feeling that he might fall at any moment. His fear was such that he was losing all consciousness. What if they were caught then? The father was moving in the dark house as if it was his own house. He knew everything about the house and even in the dark he could move without stumbling against the furniture, or against the doors; he was making no noise at all.

Noiselessly, he reached into the innermost chamber of the palace. He opened a cupboard and told the son to go in and find anything valuable. The son entered it. The father locked the door and shouted, "A thief, a thief!" and, "Wake up!", and he escaped through the hole that they had dug in the wall.

Now this was too much. The son could not understand this. Now he was locked in the cupboard, trembling and perspiring, while the whole house was awake. People were searching for the thief.

'What kind of father is this? He has murdered me,' he thought. And, 'What kind of teaching is this?' This is the last thing he'd ever have imagined. He has created a living nightmare for him. Now he is certain to be caught as he has locked the door from the outside. He cannot even open the door and escape.

After one hour, the son reached home. The father was fast asleep and snoring. The son threw aside his blanket and said, "What kind of nonsense is this?"

The father said, "So you are back. No need to tell the whole story. You also go to sleep. Now you know the art. We need not discuss it."

But the son said, "I have to tell you the whole story of what happened."

The father said, "If you want to tell it you can; otherwise you need not. I don't require it. Just that you have come is enough proof. Now from tomorrow night you start on your own. You have got the intelligence and the awareness that a thief needs. I am immensely happy with you."

But the son was overflowing. He wanted to relate the whole thing. He'd done such a great job. He said, "Just listen! Otherwise, I'll not be able to sleep at all. I am so excited. You almost killed me. You almost killed me."

The father said, "It is hard but that's how a Master has to act many times. Tell me the whole story. What happened?"

He said, "Out of nowhere - not from my intellect, and certainly not from my mind - this had happened."

The father said, "This is the key to all mastery in all fields of life, whether you are a thief or a meditator, whether you are a lover or a scientist, or a painter or a poet. It does not matter, it does not matter. Whatever the feeling, this is the Master key: Nothing happens from the head. Everything happens from somewhere below. Call it intuition, call it no-mind, or call it meditation. These are names, different names for the same thing. It has started functioning. I can see it on your face. I can see the aura around you. You are going to become a Master thief. Remember through being a Master thief, I have attained to meditation. So remember this is the way for you to attain meditation."

The son said, "When I was standing inside that damned cupboard and the people were searching for the thief, a woman servant came with a candle in her hand. I could see her from the keyhole. Something coming out from nowhere, I started making noises as if I was a cat. I have never done this before. The woman servant, thinking that there was a cat in the cupboard, unlocked it. As she unlocked it, I don't know how I did it, or who did it. It just happened. It just happened, that's all. I blew the candle out, and pushed the woman away and ran."

People followed me. The whole house was awake. The neighbourhood was awake and they were coming closer and closer. I was on the verge of being caught. Then suddenly I came across a well. I saw a rock just by the side of the well. I don't know, I didn't believe that I had that much strength to the rock pick up now, but it has happened. Yes, the rock was just thrown into the well.

When you are in such situations, your whole energy becomes available to you. You don't live only on a superficial level when your life is at stake. Your whole energy becomes available. I moved the rock, and picked up the rock. I cannot believe that I could even shake it now. I threw it into the well and then ran away. The noise, the sound of the rock falling in the well made all the people who were following me stop following me. They surrounded the well. They thought I had jumped into the well. That's how I am back home."

The father said, "Now you can go to sleep. I'm finished. Never ask me anything again. Now you start on your own."

The work of a Master is difficult work. He has to shout from the peaks while you are crawling in the dark valleys of life. We are living in our graves and He has to shout from eternal life. Misunderstanding is natural and because of that misunderstanding, every Buddha lives in a desert, every Buddha. See how difficult it is to be a Master! What a hard task it is!

It's natural because the Master speaks from one world, while we listen from a different world. Between the Master and you, there's a great desert. If we allow it, it can become a garden; but only if we allow it. It cannot be imposed on you. You cannot be forced. Great things never happen through enforcement. So now, you cannot be regimented, you cannot be ordered. You cannot be commanded. All commandments have failed. Religion has not succeeded because priests have been ordering people to do this and do that.

Therefore Swami will never tell you, "Do this, don't do that." Swami only relates His understanding to us. Swami opens our heart. He goes on playing on my flute. If we become enchanted by it, yes, enchanted is the word - if you become eluded by it, meaning if you become completely oblivious to yourself, your past, your mind, your ideas, your prejudices, your upbringing, it is due to Swami's presence. Hence it can help you to unburden, and your seed will fall into the soil. The soil is ready. Spring has come. Now it is up to you. It's all up to you. With a little courage, the desert can be transformed into a garden.

I can tell you there are three steps here according to Buddhism:

***Buddham sharanam gacchami,
Dharmam sharanam gacchami,
Sangham sharanam gacchami.***

These are the three shelters. Let us not think in terms of a collective soul. There's nothing like a collective soul at all because the soul is individual only. The soul is individual.

We can see the soul on people's faces, and we can notice by the way he walks and works. So people who work with a soul, fully conscious that they're not ordinary humanity. Some grace you'll notice, some joy permeates the whole place, some playfulness, some sense of humour as people work throughout the week. This is the way how people with awareness, conscious of their soul, behave and conduct themselves.

These people enjoy work as a play and as creativity. These people are never tired as they are conscious of their soul. The deeper they go into this creativity, the more nourished they feel, and the more energy is released in them. So, something is there, an inner connection among these devotees of like-minded people.

They fall into the same rhythm, which is the rhythm of their Master. The closer you come to Him, the more you start falling into the same rhythm. Then the breath of the Master and your breath synchronize. Next, his heart and your heart synchronize.

So in this way, all devotees are getting synchronized with the Divine Master. It is synchronicity, it is an orchestra. We are playing different instruments but in harmony, in accord. So this is not the action or expression of a collective soul. No. The soul is individual, yet as I pointed out, we work with the same rhythm.

So we work in perfect harmony with others because harmony brings us closer to the soul. When a person is absolutely in harmony with the universe, he becomes enlightened. Buddha is one who was absolutely in harmony with the universe, and yet Buddha is one who was an absolutely unique individual. He plays his own flute but he plays his flute or any musical instrument in absolute accord with the whole. He does not go into his own egoistic vein.

This is important, where we remain as an individual soul but live in harmony with many people around us. There lies the beauty of life. Right now we cannot connect ourselves with the universal rhythm directly, but the Divine Master is in tune with the universe. Call it God, nirvana or enlightenment and the Divine Master is lost in it. He has no song of his own to sing. The Divine Master sings the song of the universe and we can fall in tune with the Master. That's how we become a disciple.

When we find somebody with whom falling in love brings joy, falling in love is falling 'in tune' with somebody. The ordinary love affair is a deal. It is superficial, leading to a conflict. Therefore when we fall in love with the Master, it is a totally different phenomenon. You feel the rhythm of the Master slowly, slowly in our heart. We feel the call and joy to enter into an adventure.

Slowly, slowly more and more people enter into this adventure. First, the Buddha. *Buddham sharanam gacchami*, surrender to the feet of Buddha. Then the disciples arise, those who have gone to the feet of Buddha: *Sangam sharanam gacchami*. Then many disciples gather and they start feeling attuned not only with Buddha but a certain attunement with each other also arises naturally. They are all gathered around one center so they start feeling an attunement with each other. Brotherhood and sisterhood arises. That is *Sangam sharanam gacchami*.

And then finally, being in love with Buddha, they fall in love with other devotees. The ultimate surrender arises: *Dharmam sharanam gacchami*. Then you'll know that neither Buddha or the devotees are behind this universal law. The ultimate law is *Dharmam* or *Dhamma*. Buddha only represents the ultimate law in a visible form. His commune represents it in a grosser way.

Thus, there are three shelters. First, you take shelter in Buddha. Then you take shelter in a Sai centre, in the midst of devotees. Finally you take shelter in the ultimate law, *Dharmam*. That's what is happening here.

Thank you very much. Meet again later.