

PODCAST 181, 'ONLY ONE, NOT TWO'

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh welcomes you to Podcast episode 181.

The title of this short talk is, 'ONLY ONE, NOT TWO'. I repeat, 'ONLY ONE, NOT TWO'.

Now I very well remember Swami referring to this 'not two, but one' repeatedly. If at all I forget to mention one, He will prompt again. When I say 'not two' Swami will say, "'Not two, but one', say that!" One, not two! He wants these two phrases to be made very clear. So let me share my thoughts on this, 'Only One, Not Two'.

What is that 'one'? Let us study it from a different angle.

In this world, we find diversity, multiplicity, plurality and we may speak of anything, even of unity in diversity, but that is a different matter. What we see is actually diversity and variety. But in the Advaita School of philosophy, as advocated by Adi Shankara, there is nothing like diversity. There is nothing like multiplicity. There is only one, only one.

What is that 'only one'? That is what is called Brahman is the present, the present. It's also called *sat*. *Sat* means existence. This *sat* or existence is independent. It is its nature. In other words, this *sat* or *vasthu* (V A S T H U) means the substance; in other words, *atma*, awareness or *jnana*. I want to make it clear, it is quite independent. It is a standard unto itself. There is no other thing to certify it, no other thing to measure it by. So it is immeasurable or *apramana* (A P R A M A N A) the immeasurable. So it is a standard unto itself and as it is *atma*. I want to make that clear.

Then the question comes, how about the rest? If there is only that *vasthu* or *atma* or *atma jnana* or self-awareness or Brahman, what about all the rest of the things; what of the rest of the world? The answer is simple. All the rest are only *abhasa* (A B H A S A) or appearances, that's all. They are only *Abhasa*, appearances.

Here's a simple example. Ocean is *vasthu*, the substance is the essential, the Brahman, while the waves emerging out of the ocean are only appearances or *abhasa*. Gold is *vasthu*, the substance, the essential or the Brahman, whereas ornaments are *abhasa*, appearances. Mud is *vasthu*, the main substance, Brahman whereas the pot and other things made out of this mud are appearances.

Therefore, according to Advaita there is only one that exists and that is *vasthu* or the substance. Therefore Swami says, "Not two." He wants me to say "Not two, only one." *Ekamevaadwitheyam Brahma. Ekam* (E K A M), only one. *Eva* means 'only'. *Ekameva* E V A means 'only one'. It is *adwitheyam*, the only one without the second (A D W I T H E Y A M) . Therefore, apart from this Brahman, apart from this essential primordial substance, the rest is only *abhasa* or appearances.

So in the entire cosmos, there is only one thing that exists according to Advaita and that is *vasthu*, that's all. It is that only that exists. You can call that *sat* meaning existence. Therefore, as I said all the other *abhasa* we may accept them hypothetically, but not as reality. So this point has to be borne in mind.

Now there are three other words that we commonly use: *Jeeva* (J E E V A), the individual soul; *Jagath* (J A G A T H), the universe; and third, *Jagadeeswara* (J A G A D E E S W A R A), Lord Eshwara. So *jeeva*, *jagath*, *jagadeeswara* are three words that we commonly use. But they may be used, but they are non-existent! According to Advaita, they don't exist. No. Only that *vasthu* or Brahman exists, while *jeeva*, *jagath*, and *jagadeeswara* are only *abhasa*, or appearances.

As I said, these *abhasa* or appearances may go on changing. One ornament can be changed into another ornament for that matter. Wooden furniture one can be made into another. So appearances can change, but not *vasthu*, the Brahman, the original. It cannot be changed because it is *sat*, existence which cannot be changed. So that existence, the primordial principle, the essential Divinity is formless. It is independent.

Now another point is this. Appearances can go on changing, but no one can change Brahman. It is impossible, as it is independent. It is so independent like this example: fire cannot burn itself. Fire can burn anything, but it cannot burn itself. Likewise, *vasthu* is so independent that it does not allow any change by itself. That is what we call *chaitanya* or awareness, which is independent, formless. This is what in Advaita is called it *atmasreyadosham* - A T M A, *atmasreya*, S R E Y A, *dosham* D O S H A M. *Atmasreyadosham* means this *atma*, *vasthu* is quite independent. It doesn't change. No one can change it. It is independent because it exists by itself. It doesn't need any proof and it is immeasurable. Yes, immeasurable. It doesn't need any *pramana* (P R A M A N A) or proof. No. It is *apramana*, beyond all proof. So this Brahman, the one that exists, has got all these points that we have been talking about.

So the wave may appear to be separate but basically its water only. The wave has got only a name and a form, but basically it is water. In the same way the substance or *vasthu* takes so many appearances or forms *abhasa*.

So this Advaitic philosophy is passed on from one generation to another generation as a tradition right from Adi Shankara. Tradition - *traditio* means handed over from one to another, *traditio*. Tradition means handed over from one to the other.

Now then, the question arises, what is all this world? It is clearly said *jaganmidhya*. *Jagan* (J A G A N) *midhya* (M I D H Y A) *midhya*, which means the world is an illusion. The world is imagination. It's only notional. But it is non-existent. *Brahma sathyam*, that Brahman is truth. That is *vasthu*, that is *atma jnana swarupa* your own, self *atma* (A T M A) *jnana* (J N A N A) *swarupa* (S W A R O O P A) *atma jnana swarupa*. It is that knowledge itself, the knowledge of the self. It is the nature of the self. That's what *vasthu* is or Brahman is.

This concept we have got to understand, which has been handed down to us from one generation to another, is what we call *sampradaya* (S A M P R A D A Y A)

A *sampradaya* is a tradition from one generation to another generation. To make it simple, what is this *sampradaya*? Remove that *ya* and it becomes *sampradanam* (S A M P R A D A N A M), handed over from one generation to another generation. That's what it is.

Therefore this reality, the truth which is the only one, the *vasthu*, makes itself as if it is separate like waves and all that with their names and forms. All the names and the forms that we'll find around are all *abhasa* or appearances.

I beg to be excused for my repetition but the topic demands it. I am speaking on this topic, thinking at the same time to best communicate this to you. I am worried how much I am able to reach you with such a precious jewel; it's like a diamond. The ultimate truth has got to be hammered in, and has got to be remembered day in and day out.

Now with this understanding what happens is the family, the wife and the children, their properties, friends, in fact everything is only *abhasa* or appearances of that reality or *vasthu* or Brahman with names and forms.

Then we may say, why are we so attached? Why? The reason is we are deluded or we are under this illusion. An example: here is a rope and I am looking from a distance, so I think it is a snake. Now I hold it, thinking it is a snake; but in reality it is not a snake. So the mistake lies in me because of this mistaken identification. I have got to be careful here.

This *rajju*, *sarpa*, *branthi* are often used as an example in Shankara Advaita: *rajju* (R A J J U) or rope, and *sarpa* (S A R P A) or serpent. This example is often given in Shankara Advaita. But what happened is the actual, is *Paramatma* (P A R A M A T M A) the Divinity, the actual while any other notions are *abhasa* or appearances.

A simple example: I have a dream and in that dream I fall from my bed, and then I shout. I shout. All the people gather around me and ask me what happened? "Oh! I fell from my bed." They laugh at me and say, "You! Ah! It's a dream. You have not fallen. You have not fallen. You are quite comfortable on the bed."

Therefore, know the truth, *asatoma sad gamaya*, from untruth to the truth. So we should go to the truth. Go back. You are in a dream now. Come on, get out of the dream. Get out of the dream and understand what the truth is.

This coming to the truth is what is called *prathyabhignaprathyabhigna* (P R A T H Y A B H I G N A) which means recognition, cognition. I'd forgotten that myself so in a dream I feel as if I have fallen from the bed. Now come back to the recognition that that's only a dream, not the truth. This is called *prathyabhigna* in Shankara Advaita.

Therefore all this we have forgotten. We got disconnected from the source. The source is *vasthu* or Brahman but because we are disconnected or because of this disconnect we are feeling like fish out of water and deluded. Actually we should make a charge looking in full awareness of the reality. That's what it is.

The greatest of all Advaitists is Gowdapadacharya. Gowda (G O W D A) Pada (P A D A) Acharya (A C H A R Y A) - Gowdapadacharya. He is the Guru of Adi Shankara. You know what he said? It is very nice! What a kind of assurance it is! All of us think that we want liberation or *moksha*. But Gowdapadacharya said, "No! No! You are already liberated. You are already a *mukta* (M U K T A), liberated. You don't need to achieve *mukta* or *moksha*, no. *Moksha* means liberation. You're liberated right from birth. Later you realize that there is neither birth nor death. Birth and death are only appearances, while you are the reality." Therefore the point is Gowdapadacharya says, "You're birthless, deathless and liberated. It's not something that's going to be achieved."

Here are two words I want to bring to your attention. One is *brahma* (B R A H M A) which is illusion, ignorance. Out of this ignorance we are carried by *abhasa*, appearances, names and forms. But there is another word *prama* (P R A M A). That is *jnana* or knowledge. *Brahma* is ignorance, while *Prama* is knowledge, *jnana*. With this *prama* or *jnana* you will understand the reality or the truth or Brahman or *vasthu* and all the rest is just illusion or *midhya* or *abhasa* or appearances.

Now here are two words used in Advaita carrying this concept: *Abhidanam* (A B H I D A N A M) and *abhidayathe* (A B H I D A Y A T H E). They convey this: You feel as though it is existing, though it is non-existent as in the example of the snake! "Snake! Snake!" You go on shouting, "Snake! Snake!" Where is the snake? Where has it come from? Actually speaking, what you are holding is the rope. But you are thinking it's the snake so you go on shouting. Where is it? It is non-existent. It is not there. Where has it come from? On analysis you know it is a mistake of our own *buddhi*, the mind and the intellect. *Buddhi dosha* (B U D D H I D O S H A) the mistake of the intellect. It is the mistake of the mind that makes you confused.

So now we can conclude by saying it's only the mistaken identity that will make you think that there are three - *jagath* or universe, *jeeva* or the individual soul, and *Jagadeeswara* or God. You think that those three are there. No! They are non-existent. Only one actually exists and that is God or *Paramatma*.

Then who or what is *Paramatma* finally? *Paramatma* has got two features: one is *sat* or existence, while the second is *chith* or awareness. *Sat* plus *chith* is *paramatma* or reality.

So in this short talk I conveyed what I understood on this topic. I once again beg your pardon for any repetitions.

Thank you very much.