

OM SAI RAM!

WELCOME TO PRASANTHI SANDESH,

PODCAST 241, “BARRIERS IN SPIRITUALITY, PART ONE”

May 16, 2024

*The following text contains excerpts from Prof. Anil Kumar’s book
“Sai-Chology,” pg.277-281*

KNOWLEDGE IS A BARRIER IN SPIRITUALITY

There are many hardships and obstacles on the journey of life. But on the spiritual path, such difficulties are more pronounced. The first barrier in spirituality is knowledge, shocking as it may seem. Many may not even accept this and to others it may sound meaningless. Yet, it remains that knowledge is a serious obstacle.

We should beware of this particular barrier (of knowledge). Why so? This is because knowledge is only second-hand information, culled from books written by somebody. It comes from the past of the author and it does not arise from our own creative experience or understanding.

Scholarship does not make a true devotee. Scholars can be very good in academics, but make poor devotees because their knowledge is an impediment. With a head full of knowledge, one assumes the title of ‘Know It All’ and then growth stops. Knowledge gives the false feeling of having known, that which is not known. After all, what the scholar knows are mere facts and figures, or quotations and verses, which are repeated and quoted to rounds of applause. That shows a scholar or an erudite one!

Life is not for reading; and for spirituality, reading is an obstruction. Knowledge is certainly not the path to realisation. Many times Baba has said, “The table with many bottles, tablets, capsules or syringes on it, proclaims that the master of the house has been a successful patient for a long period.” Likewise, if one’s office is full of books, it only means that this person immediately needs a cure through worldly experiences. Experience is the cure for the disease of ignorance, not knowledge. At the most, people of knowledge have insignificant and irrelevant information and other frivolous details.

Baba gives an illustration. A person went to a mango garden and saw many mangoes that were ripe for eating. This visitor called the gardener and asked various details of the mango garden, like the area, the number of trees, the quantity per tree, the time taken for the fruit to ripen, etc. He also wanted information on the income made on the sale of

mangoes, the rate of commission, the wholesale rates, etc. Then the discussion continued on the process of cultivation, etc.

All the while, he did not eat a single mango. Meanwhile, a young boy came along, plucked some fruits and ate them. Now, who is the wise one?

Obviously, the one who eats the mango is more practical. He has had more experience than the other, who only collects useless data. This is exactly what a scholar does and it is nothing more than a foolish, verbal literary pastime, which does not even satisfy the appetite.

We thus see, that knowledge is the first obstruction to spirituality. This has been declared not only by Bhagawan, but also by other saints and sages.

Due to knowledge taken from books, most people claim to know everything. Or, some may quote Swami. Apparently, such people are not aware of their own ignorance – they do not know what they do not know.

When can we say, “I know”? We can say so, only when we have experienced its truth and its validity, and only when this has taken place in our daily life. We cannot say, “I know,” simply because we have read a book on it

Baba has said, “Repeatedly, I speak about love and devotion, *prema* and *bhakti*. Because I always speak about love, some people say, ‘Swami, don’t you get bored speaking about love? It must be boring, really, the many millions of times You speak of it.’ “

Swami replied, “I will repeat it again and again until you start loving people.” We need to be taught about love until we can love. We should never say, “I know”, until we experience what we say we know. The fact that we say, “I know” is only verbal, textual and academic, with no relevance to our daily life. When people claim that they know this or that, it means that they really do not know. Who is this ‘I’, the one who knows?

Therefore, if someone says, “I know” it means that he does not know, because the true ‘I’ is the knower and also the one who knows is God.

So, all the knowledge that we gather and share is the known, while the Knower is God Himself. Therefore, when the knower tries to know everything, what is it that the knower does not know? If we say the knower knows knowledge, then the Knower is more than the known.

When we possess a pen, we are ‘more’ than the pen. Similarly, the ‘knower’ is more than ‘what is known,’ and all that is known is (only) knowledge. Hence, the one who

knows the knower is more than the knowledge. Therefore, this knowledge is inferior to the knower, and it will not help us.

Secondly, when we say that “we have seen this and we have seen you”, then the question arises as to who are we really? In this situation, we are also seen – people see us. Then who am I? I am the seer. If we accept that the seer is greater than the seen, then all that is seen is inferior when compared to the seer, and all that is known is inferior when compared to the knower.

It is important to note that knowledge does not speak of the knower. Knowledge does not speak of the seer. It refers only to the known and the seen. That is all! The knower cannot be known and the seer cannot be seen. We are the seer, whom we cannot see. We are the Knower, whom we cannot know. So, that which is not known is the knower, and that which cannot be seen is the seer. So mere knowledge does not help.

We thus conclude that the first hindrance in spiritual comprehension is knowledge. Those who boast of their erudition need to understand that scholarship is a poor instrument to use, in order to understand God.

Unless we empty our heads, which are full of inanities, we cannot experience God. Our mind is full of wrong information and prejudices. Thus, we cannot be open to true experience. So we need to empty our mind, according to Bhagawan. When our mind is empty, the flower of enlightenment can bloom. When the manifestation of Divinity starts blossoming, the flower of the Self starts opening.

FEAR OF GOD IS A BARRIER IN SPIRITUALITY

Most people today are fearful and they are especially fearful of God. They flock to temples and holy shrines. They visit temples so that they may not have difficulties in life. People claim that they are God-fearing.

Fearing God is a disqualification. One could fear a snake, a wild animal or a dangerous person, but don't fear God! Rather, we should be God-loving, not God-fearing. Why? Love has no fear. Trust knows no fear. Where there is fear, there is no love. The child has no fear because it is by the side of the mother. The child loves the mother, so there is no fear.

Yet, we are saying, “*Mata Pita Daivamu Mari Antayu Neeve*: ‘You are my Father, You are my Mother, You are my Guru’....but I am afraid of you!” It is nonsense! So, let us be God-loving and not God-fearing.

More insights on other barriers to our spirituality will be presented in the next session.

Thank you for your time,

OM SAI RAM