

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION:

Q. 293, DECISIVE MEANING OF VEDANTA

Om Sri Sai Ram

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh.

Q. 293:

We will have a brief discussion on the “Decisive meaning of Vedanta”. Let me share a few ideas with you.

Whenever you listen to someone who is speaking from experience, you'll feel that his certainty is very intense. If you understand his certainty correctly, you'll see that in his intensity there's no presence for any doubt whatsoever. What this means is that there's absolutely no question of any doubt, because his certainty is so intense based on his experience.

There was a Zen Master. We know Zen philosophy. There was a gentleman by the name of Bokuju, B O K U J U. An atheist went to see the Zen Master. The atheist said, "I don't accept the existence of any God."

The disciples of Bokuju thought that now their Zen Master would explain to the man that there is a God. But Bokuju said, "So don't accept it". He simply said just that, "Don't accept it!"

Then the atheist asked, "Won't you try to tell me that there is a God?"

Bokuju answered, "If your non-acceptance could create any dent at all in the truth of God's existence, then I would try to persuade you of His existence. But if you don't accept God's existence, that is fine."

But the atheist was an insistent man. He wanted to pull Bokuju into an argument. So he said, "No Sir, I will not go away when you have only said this much. Either say that God exists and prove it, or if you don't want to prove that God exists, then say that God does not exist. Only then I will leave."

Bokuju said, "There's no problem! I say that there's no God."

This made the atheist very uneasy and he said, "You are saying that there's no God? Bokuju, are you saying that there's no God?"

Bokuju said, "My statement does not make any difference to the truth of God's existence. I'm so certain about His existence that I can even deny Him. I'm not even afraid of denying Him. I know He just is! He just is! It does not make any difference what Bokuju says about Him. My statements are irrelevant. Whether I say 'yes' or 'no', it makes no difference to His existence."

“Moreover, I'm so utterly certain about Him that I'm not afraid, like a trembling theist, because I have denied God by my statement! No! Even if the whole world denied Him, even if God Himself came and said, 'I don't exist,' I could ignore all this with a smile. God simply is! Therefore, once you are convinced that God is, God simply is, He just is! It doesn't matter whether you accept His existence or not.”

This certainty, this decisiveness, does not come through knowledge. Knowledge brings uncertainty. There is certainty in ignorance too. But that is the certainty of darkness because it means that you don't know anything. You appear to be certain, but that certainty is of no use. It is rather dangerous.

Therefore, the certainty of ignorance is dangerous. Yes! It is a kind of certainty which arises out of darkness. So, a certainty of ignorance can even make you assume that a wall is a door.

This certainty happens not because you have seen a door but because you have not seen a door. Hence, no matter which side you believe in, you have to believe. Belief is a requirement for such a person,

Even a blind man will have to walk outside. And if one has to walk out, then one first needs to believe that a door exists. But even if he hits his head against a wall, the next day he will still imagine that some other wall is a door and he will remain certain in his belief. Otherwise, he will not be able to walk even one single step. That's the situation of an ignorant man who lives in certainty that is born out of the darkness of ignorance.

A pundit, a knowledgeable person, hesitates and then comes to a full stop. He begins to see so many doors. Now he begins asking himself, “Which one is the right door? Which path is the right one? Which discipline to follow? Which is the way to choose?” So much energy is spent in all this thinking and choosing that there's no energy left for him to move.

This decision is difficult in the same way as when someone says, “Yes, I want to learn to swim. But until I learn to swim, how can I go into the water?” His thought is logical because if you go into the water first, without knowing how to swim, it can be dangerous. So he thinks, ‘First let me learn to swim, and then I will get into the water.’

This man's statement is rational, but now he will never be able to go into the water because even to learn to swim, one has to enter the water. In fact, if anyone wants to learn how to swim they will have to gather enough courage to enter the water first, without knowing how to swim. That's the only way that you'll be able to learn how to swim.

The knowledgeable man stands thinking about which path to choose, which doors, which ideas, which principles to choose, and which boat will take him to the other shore. To reach the other shore is no longer as important as the worry about which boat to take. Will the boat sink on the way? Will the boat take me in the right direction? Will the boatman that I choose be able to take me to the destination? So, knowledgeable people become confused, while ignorant people are blind.

Knowledgeable people are full of doubt, while ignorant people just go one rushing, even towards the maddest or most chaotic action. Therefore, even if the path appears by itself in front of the knowledgeable person, he will miss it because of too much thinking and his inability to decide.

I want our attention please! 'Decisive' means that only by experiencing, it is revealed. So those who not only want to know about it, but also want to recognise and to realise the meaning which is hidden in the Vedanta, will have to go through the experience.

And remember that even if you move on the wrong path courageously, with awareness and understanding, the doors of experience will open even on that wrong path. It's better to go on a wrong path than to just stand still.

What to say about moving correctly? The person who stands still will not even be able to move wrongly. The person who does not move will not reach anywhere. Even if a person moves on a wrong path, his journeys will bring experience and maturity to him. Something within him will grow. One thing is certain. This man will not take that kind of wrong path again. Although it is small, this is a gain because it is through making mistakes that we learn to move on the right path. There is no other way to learn.

To make a mistake is not bad, but to make the same mistake again and again is bad. There's no problem about making mistakes. A man who thinks that making mistakes is wrong will never be able to do anything at all. Those who finally find the right way are the same people who had the guts and the courage to make mistakes. But this does not mean that you should go on repeating the same mistake again and again.

If you repeat the same mistake again and again, you will not reach anywhere. One should have the courage to make a new mistake every day. That's the main quality of a religious seeker. When the mistake has been recognized, something valuable has come into your hands. Something subtle has come into your hands. You have moved ahead. You're no longer the same. You are no longer the same person who committed the mistake. You have become a different person.

To know the false as false is the beginning of the process of coming closer to the truth. To realise the wrong as wrong is the beginning of the journey towards the right.

The emphasis of Vedanta is on experience, not just on information. Information gives you knowledge-ability, but after that the person will come to a halt. He will lose the ability to move at all.

The ability to move should be like that of an ignorant person and the intensity of vision should be like that of a knowledgeable one. Wonderful really! I repeat again: the ability to move should be like that of an ignorant person and the intensity of vision should be like that of a knowledgeable one.

If the knowledge of the knowledgeable and the daring of the ignorant come together, then there it is! The experience comes! What a wonderful synthesis this is! The synthesis of knowledge and ignorance!

When the intelligence and alertness of the knowledgeable person and the daring of the ignorant person join together, experiencing begins. However, this becomes a difficult thing because an ignorant man is full of courage, but when knowledge, intelligence and understanding come to him, he loses courage. Whenever he gains eyes (or the ability to see clearly) his feet become crippled, and whenever his feet are strong, he has no eyes (to see clearly).

We have all heard the story from Panchatantra in our childhood, about a blind and lame man who had difficulty in escaping when the forest caught fire. The story is not a children's story. It is a story in Vedanta. We tell it to children, but it should be told to adults.

The story is saying that every person is in the same situation: either he is blind so he cannot see, or he is lame so he can see but cannot walk. And in the story, there's a fire in the forest. Unless a relationship between the two (the blind man and the lame man) develops, they will both die in the fire. Yes, they cannot get out of the forest, so they'll burn for lifetime after lifetime.

Both this blindness and the lameness are within you. The ignorant man is blind while the knowledgeable man is lame.

Some way or other the lame man has to be picked up on the shoulders of the blind man because the other can see, and the blind man has to agree to walk because as we know he has strong legs.

On the day that the legs of the ignorant man and the eyes of the knowledgeable man join together, the journey of experiencing will begin. This is what is meant by "decisive meaning of Vedanta" as shown to us by this story

Many people come to learned people, like seers and teachers. Someone's problem may be blindness, while another one's problem may be lameness. It may be easy to get the blind man to consent, but it is very difficult to get the lame man to consent. He has the idea and believes that he can see. He is under the illusion that he can see. But he has forgotten that his legs are completely broken, and that he has earned his seeing at the cost of his capacity to walk. No doubt he has started to see; but all the energy which his legs had earlier has now moved to his eyes. So now his legs cannot walk. Then of what use is the fact that he can see?

That's why an ignorant man does not feel much anguish. There is no question that he will feel anguish because he is ignorant, but he will not be as anguished as the knowledgeable man, because the knowledgeable man can see but he cannot walk.

There are people who say, "Yes, we know what is right, but we don't do it. We know what is good, but we don't practice it. We know what should be done, but we are unable to act on it. We know what should not be done, and we end up doing that thing every day!" Now these people are bound to be in great anguish.

The pain and the anguish of the knowledgeable man is very deep. It is as if he can see a lake nearby, he feels the thirst, but his legs won't budge.

The blind man also feels anguish, but it is not the anguish of being stuck in one place. He simply does not see any lake. He is aware of his thirst and he has strength in his legs, so he goes running around. He bumps into things, falls down, and suffers. His anguish is born out of this bumping into things, this wandering, this falling down and getting hurt.

The knowledgeable man's anguish is that he can see the lake and he feels the thirst. He longs that his thirst and the lake should meet right now, but his legs are immobile.

So somehow or other, you have to bring your inner blind man and your inner lame man together!

We'll meet again in the next session.