

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: Q. 297, ANANTHA - INFINITE

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, Question and Answer session

Q. 297:

Earlier we have discussed two aspects of the Divine. One aspect is that the Divine is beyond our thinking, which we call *achintya*, A C H I N T Y A -- beyond our thinking. Then we talked about the unmanifest aspect, *avyaktha*, A V Y A K T H A.

And now we'll come to another aspect of the Divinity, which is that He is in infinite forms. The Divine has infinite forms -- *anantha*, A N A N T H A. *Achintya*, *avyaktha* and now *anantha*, which means 'infinite'.

To say that the Divine is unmanifest means that it is formless. To say that it is beyond thinking means that it is formless. But the sage says that the Divine has infinite forms. Let us try to understand this aspect of the Divine.

Only the formless can have infinite forms. Something that has its own form cannot have many forms. If I have a form, then I am limited to that form. But if I don't have a form, then I have fluidity. Then I can take any form and I can be in any form. Hence, the Divine can become a tree, it can become a rock, it can become the sky, it can become a flower, an animal, a human being. It can become anything. It has no form of its own so it can have infinite forms. If it had a form of its own then this would not be possible. All that we see in the world is the appearance which we call *abhasa*, A B H A S A, the form.

But the stream of life that is flowing through all forms is without a form. It is *nirakara*, meaning formless, N I R A K A R A. Hence it can take any form. The ocean can become a wave of any form. It can become small, big, tidal or anything else. The ocean can take the form of any wave because the ocean is not a wave. The ocean can manifest through any wave because it is not limited by identification with only a certain kind of wave. No!

Formless means fluid, flowing. We can understand it this way: If I pour water into a glass, it will take the form of the glass. If I pour it into a pitcher, it will take the form of the pitcher. Water will take the form of whatever vessel I pour it into. Water has no form of its own. It is fluid.

But if I put a stone into a glass it will make no difference. The stone will keep its form. If I put it into a pitcher, then again, it will keep its form. A stone will keep its form wherever it is put.

Well, water may change its forms, but water cannot become fire or a stone. Please understand this! A stone is solid, it is not liquid. But water still has a form, even if it is a fluid form. So it cannot become fire. Even the fluidity of water has a form. Water can have many forms, but only as water. It cannot change its form beyond the

bounds of being water because it is liquid. It can take many forms, but only within the limits of being water.

The Divine is fluid, and it's not confined by any limitation. Its fluidity is without limits. Hence, it can become a tree or a stone or water. Now, even scientists say that through analysing matter, as they move deeper and deeper, they are experiencing more and more that all matter is born out of the same energy -- just out of one energy.

In the past, alchemists, plus who knows how many others all over the world, were trying in some way to turn baser metals into gold. They never succeeded, but their hopes have now been fulfilled. Now science says that there's no obstacle to iron becoming gold because the energy in iron and in gold is the same. It's only a matter of increasing or decreasing some electrons.

The difference is only in the number of electrons. Somewhere there are ten, somewhere there are twelve, somewhere fifteen and somewhere twenty electrons. It could be any number. But the difference is only in the number of electrons and not in the electrons as such. So, if one element has twenty electrons and another has twenty-five electrons, then by adding five more electrons in the first element, it will become the second element.

Therefore, iron can become gold. Experiments have been done and there's no difficulty in doing it. But this iron-to-gold is not sold commercially because it is much more expensive than ordinary gold. So it would be pointless to try to sell it. Adding to or taking out electrons is a very expensive process. Hence is not done commercially. But technically, there's no problem doing it. In other words, dust can be turned into gold and gold into dust!

Now, we should not have a problem because man has managed to discover atomic fission. Atomic fission means that it's now possible to change the number of electrons in an atom. It also means that there's one formless reality behind everything.

Now, this fact has also been confirmed through scientific research. By increasing or decreasing the number of electrons, a baser metal can be transformed into gold. But so far, science has not been able to figure out what to increase or decrease so that matter can become consciousness. Please note this! Nothing has been discovered so far, about how to transform matter into consciousness, or how to increase or decrease the electrons, so that consciousness can become matter.

Spiritual discipline gives us a clue about what to increase so that matter can become consciousness or what to decrease so that consciousness becomes matter. The name for this process of spiritual discipline is meditation. Yes, if meditation grows, then matter will start becoming consciousness and if meditation becomes less then consciousness will start becoming matter.

A rise in the level of meditation will result in the transformation of matter into the soul. When the meditation becomes total, the whole world becomes godly. Then, you'll start seeing God everywhere. You will see the ocean within every wave. You'll simply

forget the wave. It's interesting that if we are mindful only of the wave, then the ocean will be forgotten, and if you are mindful of the ocean then the wave will be forgotten. Both cannot remain in your focus simultaneously.

It's the same when a person tries to focus on each individual tree. The forest will not be there. If you focus on the whole forest, the individual trees will not be there. Both things cannot be in your attention at the same time. It's impossible for you to focus on each individual tree separately and on the forest at the same time.

It's impossible I say! It is not possible because the very meaning of a forest is that there are no individual trees. There is only a collectivity, a formless collectivity, and the very meaning of a tree is that there is no forest. There's only the individual tree.

In exactly the same way, if you are aware of a wave, the ocean will disappear. When if you are aware of the ocean, the wave will disappear. This is the reason why a wise man like Adi Shankara experienced that the world is an illusion. It was not just some theoretical concept, but people can also come to this conclusion theoretically.

For example, in the West, Bishop George Berkeley came to this conclusion. Berkeley has said that the world is an illusion. But this is theoretical. Berkeley has had no direct experience. Through rational and logical thinking he has deduced that because the reality of the world cannot be proved. Therefore it must be unreal.

Many people have compared Bishop George Berkeley to Shankara. But there's no comparison. Many people have done great comparative research on Shankara and Berkeley, but all that research is based only on misunderstandings.

It is a misunderstanding because Berkeley has had no experience of meditation. Rather his own experience is that of thinking. No. And Shankara has not come to any conclusion through thinking. It all happened through meditation. Hence, you cannot compare the two, although they may have made similar statements.

Both Berkeley and Shankara say that the world is dream-like. If you want, you can compare these two statements. But it will be wrong to compare them because both statements have come out of two different levels of consciousness. Berkeley says this because the reality of the world cannot be proven, and Shankara says this because he has known another reality, a reality before which the reality of this world just disappears.

On the day that Shankara experienced the Brahman, which is the ultimate reality, the world disappeared for him, because both could not exist simultaneously. As long as the world is seen, the Brahman, the ultimate reality, is not seen. When the Brahman is seen, the world is not seen anymore.

The very meaning of the world is that you are seeing it from the perspective of the wave, while the meaning of the Brahman is that you are seeing it from the perspective of the ocean.

The formless, which is beyond thinking, is unmanifest. Hence it manifests in any form. All forms belong to it and it belongs to no form. This is what is meant by 'infinite form'.

We can apply the same principle in relation to our Bhagavan. We have gone through His biography where we have seen that He has manifested in different forms. He manifested in the form of a Shirdi statue. He manifested in the form of a monkey that carried His picture to a devotee's house. He has taken the form of a person, say a midwife. He has taken the form of a watchman. He has taken several forms, as we know.

Because Swami has taken so many forms, therefore, Swami is *anantha* or infinite. You cannot simply limit Him to the physical frame that you see here. That frame is only fractional, decimal. But He's *anantha*, infinite. Because He is infinite, the infinite or infinity is unmanifest. Because it is infinite and unmanifest, it cannot be within the range of our thinking, it is unthinkable.

Thus, with these three aspects *achintya*, *avyaktha* and *anantha*, which are the three dimensions of the same Divinity, we could discuss and apply these aspects to Swami. Yes! How do you think of Swami? What do you know? He said, "You cannot think of Me. You cannot estimate Me." Therefore, you can only experience Him.

And you cannot express *avyaktha* either. What is it that you express? After all, whatever you may express in a couple of words is inadequate. All words are inadequate. Words fail to explain His Divinity in depth.

So Bhagavan is *avyaktha*, *achintya* and *anantha*, which means beyond thinking, unmanifest and infinite.

Thank you. We will meet later.