

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION:

Q. 295, BEYOND THINKING

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, Question and Answer session welcomes you.

Q. 295: The question today is: “What do you mean by ‘beyond thinking’?”

We have a few thoughts on this subject of “beyond thinking”. I repeat, the topic is about what is beyond thinking.

Actually speaking, the doors to meditation open in the dimension where thoughts cannot enter, where thinking has no access, where logic and reasoning have no existence and where only experiencing remains. This is important. This is what I mean by ‘beyond thinking’. This is about the state where there can be no thinking, where there can be no contemplation, where the intellect becomes impotent. Meditation is the door to this experience.

What do you think about? Thinking is possible only about what you know. You may not have thought about it. But, whatever you can think of, you have known beforehand. You cannot think about the unknown. How could you possibly think about it? How can you think about something which is not known to you? Thinking is like chewing the cud. It is just like chewing the cud, yes.

So, thinking is like chewing the cud. It means first you already have the thought or the idea, and then you chew on it. It is only after you have the idea that you can think about it. However, the ultimate reality of life is unknown. The ultimate mystery of life is unknown. Therefore, it is not possible to think about it. Only if the unknown can become known, only then will you be able to think about it. However, as it has been said, day to day realities are known, and you can think about them. But how is it possible to think about the unknown, the ultimate reality

One more thing needs to be understood here. The ultimate mystery of life is not only unknown. It is not correct just to call it ‘unknown’ because it is more than that. In fact, it is unknowable! Unknowable! It's not only unknown, it is unknowable. For example, we call whatever is behind a mountain unknown. It is not known. If somebody goes behind the mountain and comes back and reports to us, then whatever is behind the mountain becomes known. This means that the unknown can later be made known in ordinary realities.

But, even if someone realises the ultimate reality, the Brahman, and then tells you about it, it will still not become known because the information you receive will be so tiny, so limited as one is unable to say anything about the mystery of Brahman. All that has been said about it until now just shows man's helplessness in expressing it.

Hence, a man like Gautama Buddha stopped saying anything at all about God or the ultimate reality. If someone asked Buddha about God, he would remain silent. This created much misunderstanding. Many people thought that he did not believe in

God. But he was so silent about it, that he would not say even this much: "I'm not able to say anything about it". Buddha said, "Even to say that I'm not able to say anything about it is already saying something about it." He was not ready to say more than that much.

If the ultimate mystery of life were simply an unknown, then we could study it in the universities. So then it would be possible to make it known. Scientists may be able to discover it. Until something has been discovered, it is unknown. Then scientists like Edison, Einstein, or Newton would discover it so it would become known. Then, even the school children in the whole world would read and learn about it. It means that each person would not have to discover it. In science, first one person discovers something and then everyone else knows about it. So each person need not discover it all over again because what has been unknown has now become known. Yes.

The Divine is not like this. Many have discovered the Divine and yet it still remains unknown. Hence, we should not put the Divine in the category of the 'unknown'. Rather, it is in the category of the 'unknowable'.

Unknowable means something which remains unknown even after it has become known again and again. With your permission, I repeat, unknowable means something which remains unknown even after it has been known again and again. People may learn about it. They may even talk about it and yet it cannot become your knowledge. So there can be no education about it.

Now, let us take note of another thing. All knowledge in life is collective. One person comes to know and then everyone else comes to know. But the Divine is a personal experience. When one person has known it, it becomes like sugar eaten by a man who cannot speak. It is an ecstatic feeling which cannot be expressed. That man is unable to tell it to others. He is tongue-tied. His lips won't move.

It is also a very interesting thing that the one who does not know about the Divine can talk about it, while the one who knows from experience finds it very difficult to say anything. It seems to be strange that those who don't know about the Divine can speak about it. They can speak about it for the simple reason that they do not know the Divine by experience. They don't know that what they are trying to put into words cannot be put into words. They have only heard words about it and now they are repeating those same words.

That's why a pandit or a scholar never feels any hesitation to speak about the Divine. The pandit goes on talking. On the contrary, the sages constantly face their inadequacy. Even if a sage has something to say, he repeats the same thing again and again. He will think to himself, "I have not been able to say it! It has remained unsaid!! I have tried but I have failed!" On the other hand, a pandit never fails. He always appears to have succeeded. But the one who truly knows always feels that he failed. He tries but then he finds that the thing has slipped away. He has not been able to say it. It is something like trying to hold a fresh breeze in your fist. As long as your fist is open the breeze is there, but the moment you close your fist, the breeze escapes.

The Divine is in the experience. But after we try to put it into words, it slips away. Words function like the fist. As long as you don't say it, the Divine is there. If you try to say it, it slips away. Those who have spoken, have only expressed their inability to describe the Divine. Those who did not speak were saying through their silence that it could not be expressed in words. Therefore, the experience is personal and not collective.

The reason for calling the Divine *Achintya*, A C H I N T Y A, which means 'beyond thinking', is that you cannot think about it or contemplate it. So if one says, "I'm contemplating the Divine," he is saying a wrong thing. He may be contemplating, but the objective of his contemplation cannot be the Divine. It must be something else.

Understand well that this means that whatever you can think about is not the Divine. You can think about Rama, but only about what you know about Him, such as His shape, His eyes, His body, His words, His behaviour. All these are known and you can think about all of these aspects.

But you have not known the ultimate being. That which has remained unknown and hidden despite all your knowledge is the ultimate being. Rama's behaviour is not the same as the Divine. His behaviour may be known. But the Divine is the innermost essence behind Rama's behaviour. Rama's words are not the Divine. They are heard and known. However the wordlessness behind the words is the Divine and it remains unknown

It is the day of Gautama Buddha's death and Ananda was weeping and hitting his head. Buddha consoled him, "Why are you weeping unnecessarily?"

Ananda replies, "I am not weeping unnecessarily. Soon Buddha will be no more. He will disappear. And now he will be gone forever. What else can I do but weep?"

Buddha laughed and said, "In the first place I am not the one who you think will disappear! When have I ever been the one that you think will die? When have I ever been the one that you think will die? I was never that! I am not what you are crying about. And you are crying about me? It is pointless. I will remain the same as I am. There will be no difference."

That Gautama Buddha, the one which Buddha was talking about, was not the same Gautama Buddha that Ananda was weeping about. These two don't meet anywhere. If Ananda thinks about Buddha, then he will leave the real Buddha aside. He does not know the real Buddha. He will think only of his gestures, his movements, and he will think of Buddha sitting, rising etc. It is like thinking of the house in which Buddha lives when instead you want to think of Buddha himself. What does Buddha have to do with the house?

Therefore, whenever you think of the Divine, you think of some form through which the Divine might have manifested, but you cannot think of the Divine directly. The Divine is beyond thinking. Then how to reach it?

It can be reached only if you drop all thinking. You cannot think of the Divine. When there is no thinking, the Divine is there. When all thoughts cease, the process of

thinking stops. When all things have come to an end, then language and mind are no more. Only consciousness exists. Only knowing remains and there's no object in that knowing.

It's like a mirror. A mirror has two states. One state is when there's a reflection of someone or something in the mirror. The second state is when the mirror is empty and there's no reflection of anyone or anything in it. When there's a reflection in the mirror, then the mirror is covered with that reflection. It means that there's an object in the mirror. When there's no reflection, the mirror is pure, uncontaminated and clean as it is without any object in it.

Our consciousness is like a mirror. When thoughts move in our consciousness, the mirror of our consciousness is covered. When the consciousness is without thoughts, when no thoughts are moving, then it becomes clear and tranquil. In such a tranquil state there's nothing to be known. There is only the capacity to know. There is just knowing and this state of knowing is what is called meditation.

It is in this meditation that *Achintya* or that which is beyond thought, is known. It is in this meditation that *Achintya* is experienced. *Achintya* is not known through thinking.

Try to understand one more difference between thought and experience. Thought is only a name for the waves that arise in the intellect. Experience moves in one's entire being. When you experience the Divine you experience it in every single cell, in every single drop of your blood, in every inch of your bone, in every atom of your consciousness. So your whole being experiences.

When you are thinking, only a part of your intellect goes on repeating everything that you have heard about the Divine, including all the words that you know about it. Your intellect is a very small fragment of you, and that too is all borrowed. It's not your real being. No! It is not authentically you.

It will be easier to understand it this way. Your intellect is a piece of the society which has penetrated you. You exist and all the teachings that society has put into you is what makes up your intellect so you can go on repeating these teachings. This is why when a Hindu thinks of the Divine, he's reminded of Rama. A Mohamedan thinks of the Divine but he is not reminded of Rama. When a Christian thinks of the Divine, he is reminded of Jesus. When a Jain thinks of the Divine, he is not reminded of Jesus or of Rama.

Only the idea which has already been given to you will come to you. All ideas are borrowed. Your thoughts are not your own treasure. They are only what you have collected from outside and you can chew over them again and again.

But you'll not know the Divine through this chewing. This chewing should stop completely. There should be no reflection in the mirror of your consciousness. On the day there's no reflection in your mirror, on that day, *Achintya*, that which is beyond thought, will reveal itself!

Thank you very much for your time and we'll meet in the next session.