

## PODCAST 180:

### PAINTING/POETRY / SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM - SAME JOY WITH A DIFFERENCE

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh welcomes you.

We think that meditation is a spiritual exercise. But in recent times people have been thinking of meditation from a different angle. Doctors prescribe meditation. Educational institutions teach meditation. Thus meditation has come into the picture in every walk of life. It's not merely a spiritual exercise or a *sadhana*. It is something more than that.

As has been said some time ago, life is paradoxical. It is already a synthesis of paradoxes. The opposites are already meeting in it. All that we need is a pure mirror like consciousness so that whatsoever life is, that is reflected and you will see in that reflection or the meeting of the opposites - like the meeting of the east and the west or the meeting of religion and science. This feature must have been observed by all of you. It is not an exceptional observation.

It is in this context that I would like to share with you a few ideas on meditation and on how it transforms the pattern of functioning in our life activities. Well initially we may put a question to ourselves: where does art stand? We know two. One is religion and the other is science. Where is the place for art?

It's quite clear that art is just in the middle between these both, equi-distant from religion and science. Art has the qualities of both. What they expect of art is scientific, the technological aspect. Hence the scientist can paint and enjoy painting. They will have the same joy as the mystic who can also paint, having the same joy as in prayer or in meditation.

Although both are doing the same thing, the mystic's painting will be totally different from the scientist's painting. You can look. The modern painting in the west is too much under the influence of technology. It has lost its beauty. It is no longer helpful in bringing you to the divine presence, that which penetrates existence. On the contrary, it simply reflects the insane mind of man. Looking at the western painting, you will feel dizzy, nauseous, and ill.

In contrast, Zen masters have also painted. But their paintings are totally different. Seeing a Zen painting, you'll feel uplifted. A feeling of subtle joy will arise in you. You would like to dance or sing or play on your flute. Zen painting comes from the other side, the mystical side, while Picasso, Dali and others come from the side of science.

Now there is no similarity between a Picasso painting and the paintings of a Zen Master. No similarity! They are totally different worlds and the reason is that the painters are different. Let us make note of this point: the painters are different.

You may say that you have the same joy in painting, writing a poem and solving a scientific problem, but it's altogether different. It's all mind. Solving a scientific

problem is mind. A poem will also be more or less mathematical, logical. It'll have only the form of poetry, but in spirit it will be prose. That's why in the west, poetry is dying and painting has become ugly. Sculpture is no longer a representative of nature. Something is immensely missing. The spirit, the very spirit of art is missing.

Looking at a Zen painting, you'll be overwhelmed. Something from the beyond will start showing up in you. Have you ever watched a Zen painting closely? There are a few things you'll be surprised to see. Human figures are very small. So small that if you don't look minutely you'll miss them. Trees are big, mountains are big, sun and moon, rivers and waterfalls are big but human beings are very small.

In the western painting the human being is very big. He covers the whole canvas. Now this is not right. This is not proportionate. This is not true. The human being covering the whole canvas is very egoistic. So the painter is egoistic.

The Zen master is right. Man is only a tiny part in this great universe. Mountains are big, waterfalls are big and the trees are big plus so are the stars and the moon and the sun. Where is man in that?

Just the other day a gentleman started looking at a Zen painting and he noticed that the men were so small – just two small figures crossing a bridge. He'd have missed them because tall mountains and trees were covering the whole painting. But there is a note underneath the painting saying, 'please don't miss this: there are two human figures on the bridge. So he had to look very closely. Yes, they were there, two very small human figures, walking hand-in-hand, passing over the bridge. This is the right proportion. This is a non-egoistic painting.

In western paintings you'll find the whole canvas covered. In Zen paintings only a small part of the canvas is covered and the remaining part is empty. It looks like a waste. If we are going to make such a small painting, why not use a small canvas? Why? Why use such a big canvas which covers the whole wall and just in the corner make a small painting? Why?

But Zen people say that's how things are. Emptiness is so much all around. The whole sky is empty. How can we leave out the sky? If you leave out the sky, the painting will be untrue.

Now the Zen painting has the vision that we are surrounded by emptiness. That's it. So the western painting has a vision that the earth is very small, while in Zen painting humanity is a very small part of the earth and infinite emptiness is all around. To be true, to be existentially true, the emptiness cannot be left outside the painting. It has to be there. This is a different vision from a different size, from a different side altogether.

Zen painting is not done in the western way. In western painting you'll find that the painter goes on improving. Over one coat of paint there'll be another coat of paint and still another coat of paint and he goes on improving and touching up and touching up, doing certain things.

Zen painters cannot do that. That's impossible. They use a certain kind of paper, which is rice paper on which you can make only one stroke. You cannot correct it.

You have to leave it as it is. The paper is so thin that if you try to correct it, the whole thing will be lost.

Why is rice paper being used? It is so the mind has nothing to do with the painting. The mind is constantly trying to improve, to make things better; in Zen it has to be from the heart, with just a single stroke. If your heart is full of it, it'll come right. But you cannot correct it. Correction comes from the mind.

Zen painting is never corrected. If you correct it, your correction will always show that you are not a master. It has come out of your meditative-ness, your silence. Your feeling of the moment is spread on the rice paper.

Art is just in the middle, equidistant from science and religion. Or it can be both. It can be scientific art as it is the best. That's what you mean. It can be religious art. But you don't know anything about that yet because before you can know anything about it, you have to know what meditation is.

For your information, meditation is not a state of concentration. No, it is not a state of mind at all. It is a state of total mindlessness and not a state of sleep either. No mind, no sleep. No mind, but total awareness. Out of that awareness you bring a different quality to music, to painting, to poetry. And out of that meditative-ness you can bring a totally different quality to science too.

But before that can happen, we'll need meditators all around the earth. That's the work of the divine masters. That's what they tried throughout their lifetime to create - meditators. Because they think that it is the first requirement. If we want to bring a new world vision where science and religion can meet, we'll have to create the foundation first and only then can the temple be raised on it. Meditation has to be the foundation.

Don't try to reconcile things. Just become more meditative. In your meditation is reconciliation because in your meditation you become able to see that contradictions are only apparent and the contraries are only enemies on the surface. But deep down they are friends. It's like two friends playing chess. On the surface they are enemies but deep down they are friends. That's why they are playing chess. They're friends because they are playing chess together; but they pretend to be enemies. This is the divine sport or leela of experience and of existence. It's the play of existence.

God has divided Himself into two because that is the only way to play hide and seek. It's a very beautiful play if we understand it as a play. Don't take it too seriously because then you'll not be able to see the playfulness of it. Therefore meditation will take us to greater heights in all fields of poetry, painting, and music. We have to look at meditation from a different dimension rather than look at it as just a spiritual exercise.

So in this brief talk I'd like to draw your attention to this importance of meditation which is a must to every person of any chosen field to maintain a higher quality in performance and also in life.

Thank you. Meet again.