

*Prof. Anil Kumar Q&A session in Rochester, New York, USA*

*April 4, 2009*

*OM...OM...OM...*

*Sai Ram*

*With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan,*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

*Prof. Anil Kumar began the Question and Answer session by singing, "Nanda Mukunda Sainatha."*

*PLEASANT MOMENTS WITH SWAMI*

***Your stories have brought us much joy and laughter.*** (Anil Kumar comments: Good, I am happy about it, there were no tears, anyway!) ***Can you relate an experience when you joked with Swami and got Him to laugh?***

There were many, many such experiences! To give you one example: it was during the time of the ground-breaking ceremony for the building of the University. I was participating in the service activity, crowbar in hand . . . but not digging . . . just pretending! (*Laughter*) Please understand! I don't even know how to hold a crowbar!

Swami's car gently stopped at the side and He said, "Anil Kumar, good action!" (*Laughter*)

I said, "What, Swami?"

Swami: "You are not doing any work. You are simply acting!"

I said, "Yes, Swami. I knew You would be coming over to this side; therefore I am acting the part. What can I do?"

He, too, laughed at that.

I will give another experience. In Kodaikanal, *sevadal* (service volunteers) distributed ice-creams to everybody outside. I like ice-creams and I got my quota. Then in the building Swami started giving ice-creams to everybody. I stretched out my hand.

He said, "Hey, you already had some outside!"

I said, "Swami, did I say that I did not have any ice cream?"

Swami: "Then why do you stretch out your hand like that?"

Anil Kumar: "Since You are giving, I want to have one more, Swami."

Swami: "Oho, you like ice cream! Give him two cups."

These are pleasant moments. I had many, many instances like that, thank you.

Why not give that person a clap for asking such a question? (*Applause*) There should be equal response and participation by everybody, not only by a few.

### ***THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERACTING WITH GOD EVERY DAY***

***Sai Ram, you are interacting with God Himself every day. You speak, dine and spend the entire day with Him. Please explain what this is like!***

What is there to explain when lost in the joy of the song? What is the experience as I dine? That happiness cannot be explained. There is one thing that I can say -- nothing is guaranteed. He may ask you to come in the morning; and in the evening you will get a message not to come. Nothing can be taken for granted, so every moment is an opportunity.

"Swami, You spoke to me, thank you. I am so happy. Let me not be worried about tomorrow, and let me not regret yesterday. I am happy."

Live in the present; live in the moment of eternity. This moment is the one of eternity, the one of continuity. This is the message of Bhagavan. That is all I can say.

### ***THE JEWELS OF SITA***

***Thank you for being here. We are truly blessed. You could not have seen Sita's jewels before, for she lived thousands of years B.C. So how can you be certain that the jewels materialised by Bhagavan in the present time, belonged to Sita (Rama's wife)?***

I have not seen Sita also! (*Laughter*) Why and how do I know? The One who knows materialised the jewels. The one who does not know, how can he question what he sees? So, *Hari Om Tat Sat!* (*Applause*)

### ***TO WORK WITH BABA IS A CHALLENGE***

***How does it feel to work with Baba?***

To work with Baba is a challenge. He works continuously and He wants us to work continuously. He works without thanks and He wants us also to work without thanks. He works selflessly and He also expects us to work selflessly. He does not expect any recognition or reward. He wants us also to be like that.

So to work with Baba is very difficult. There is one thing you can be certain of: all rewards and awards are given indirectly, in private. Perhaps you sang very well, but He won't tell you that, no, no! To somebody else he will say, "The other day that boy sang very well." (*Laughter*) The message will reach you; but He won't tell you to your face. On the other hand, all admonitions are given in public! It might be that you somehow spoil *bhajans*. He will say in front of everybody there, "Don't allow him to sing from tomorrow!" (*Laughter*) One should be ready for admonitions in public! (*Laughter*)

### *COMPASSIONATE SWAMI KNOWS WHEN WE BLUFF*

So to work with Baba, one should be very careful, always on the alert. But also sometimes He saves us from the natural risks or mistakes we make when working with the Divine. And He also knows when we are bluffing and accommodates that because He is compassionate. If He was always prompt with a rebuke, we would run off and not stay.

Once in Bangalore, Swami went around to every classroom. In one place, there was a pool of water. The silly fellows had not cleaned there. What am I to do?

Swami said, "Anil Kumar, come here. What is this water here?"

Anil Kumar: "It rained heavily before You came here. The fellows mopped the floor, but it is still wet, Swami."

Swami: "Oh, I see." He came out of the room and said, "What a bluff! I know!" (*Laughter*) So, He is tolerant even though it is an open bluff.

Sometimes we bluff because there is no other alternative. While putting up the window and door curtains, I found that I was short of a window curtain. Well, if Swami sees it, He may ask me what happened. So I removed the curtain from the other window to make a match! (*Laughter*)

Swami said, "What happened to those two curtains?"

I said, "Swami, the *dhobi* (laundry man) has not yet returned the curtains." (*Laughter*)

Swami said, "Oh, they are 'lost'. I know, I know!"

Sometimes He enjoys the joke He makes on our behalf also. One day He gave me some light-grey woollen material to have a suit made. He asked me to make sure that the tailor took my correct measurements because in India, tailors have the habit of keeping any cloth left over for their own use. (*Laughter*)

"Be careful, it should be a perfect fit," He said.

I went to the city by bus to give the woollen cloth to the Aracks Tailors in Bangalore City Market. Bangalore buses are very funny, private buses. They have their own private timetable! (*Laughter*) Life is highly risky. *Govinda Narayana . . . Hari Om*, anything may happen. A tire may burst and then we all have to get out while the driver replaces it. That is the sort of daily story

that goes on there. What can I do? You have time to practice being more spiritual when travelling by private buses in Karnataka! (*Laughter*)

Anyway, I went to the city and I was bound to be late getting back. So I told some lecturers that if Swami asks, "Where is Anil Kumar?" tell Him that I am in the College busy with examination work. (*Laughter*)

They said, "Yes, sir!", as I am their Principal and to do otherwise could mean trouble for them tomorrow. They know that.

But Bhagavan is Bhagavan. *Bhajan* was in full swing in Kalyana Mandapam when I got there. Usually I wear a long-sleeved shirt but I did not have time to dress properly. So I just had on a casual short-sleeved shirt which I rarely wear. Swami looked like *that* (*Anil Kumar gestures.*) Then I knew something was waiting for me! (*Laughter*).

He said, "*Evi adhi, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit madiri vesukunnavu!*" ("She wears half sleeves!") (*Laughter*)

Then He asked, "Did the tailor take the correct measurements?"

Now the cat was out of the bag! (*Laughter*) "Why did you ask these people to tell Me that you were in the College? Don't I know where you are? I am there in you, in the suit material, and also in the tailor! Understand that!"

That is what working with Baba is -- highly risky and challenging -- but I wouldn't say troublesome.

### ***SATHYA SAI BABA IS DIVINE, TOTALLY DIVINE***

#### ***When did you realise that Bhagavan is God incarnate?***

Well, when He comes to your rescue, as she (referring to his wife) said in her talk earlier.

As you heard from my learned friend who introduced me, I belong to *Brahma Samaj*, a religion founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. We do not believe in idols, temples or rituals. We don't believe that the *Veda* (the ancient Hindu scripture) is the only scripture to follow. We believe that all religions are equal. We believe in the formless, nameless, eternal God who has neither beginning nor end. That has been the concept for three generations of our family. That was how it was when I first went to Puttaparthi.

But this lady, my wife, brought me to Swami's fold. It happened this way: she had undergone a hysterectomy operation for a problem. But afterwards, she started to feel a burning sensation. I took her to about thirteen doctors. All of them said, "She is fine, Mr. Anil Kumar. You do the cooking from now on and give her some free time." They were joking like that.

Being frustrated at this state of affairs, I went to Puttaparthi to pray to Sai. But for seven days, believe me, I never entered Prashanti Nilayam! I always stayed outside. But on the final day, I was curious to see Him because of hearing how He had materialised *laddus* (Indian sweets). As

sir, my learned friend explained to you before, the *laddu* miracles are all true, and I have written about them in my books.

Baba never once spoke to me during my visit, but when I returned, I found my wife hale and healthy! That was the first experience that made me realise that He is Divine, totally Divine. Thereafter, I started studying His literature and spreading His message, as well as participating in the *bhajan* activity.

Usually what happens in the Sai organisation is that every wife, please note, *every* wife, thinks that her husband is not a good devotee. (*Laughter*) She thinks that he is not completely convinced of the Divinity of Sathya Sai Baba . . . that he is not ready to follow her to Puttaparthi any number of times . . . that her husband is not a full-time devotee. This is the complaint of the women all over the world! (*Laughter*)

Somehow the poor fellow is pulled into the Sai-fold, and once the fellow gets in, then it is totally Baba -- full work, activities, *bhajans* and all that. The same wife now says, "He has no time for me! Always Baba, Baba, Babal!" (*Laughter and applause*) This is what happens. That is my autobiography and the biography of everybody else as well. (*Laughter*)

### ***A SAI CENTRE IS THE FELLOWSHIP OF FAITHS AND UNITY OF RELIGIONS***

***We are fortunate to have many Sai Centres in this country. The majority of Centre members are Hindu Indians, and so the Hindu rituals are more practiced. Very conveniently we state that Swami does the same in Parthi. Swami likes us to recite the Vedas. Is the Centre the place for these? What are your suggestions and advice on this?***

This question certainly puts me in a corner and holds me responsible for future developments. It also puts me at great risk if Swami should not approve of my answer! But as I understand Swami's literature, let me put it plainly.

When you are in Rome, do as Romans do! This is a country of western culture, so we should also have English *bhajans*. Very necessary! The *Vedas* are optional and not compulsory. They are not well-known to even Hindus in India. Although they recite them, they do not always know the meaning. So if people don't know the meaning, there is no point in forcing the *Vedas* on all of you.

For your information, I served in a Christian college for thirty years. They adopted all our *bhajan* songs, using the same tunes as their Christian hymns. When they can do that, why can't we do it? Why not?

Here is a simple example: *Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare*. That is the song you know. What did the Japanese do? (*Anil Kumar sings the same bhajan in the Japanese language*) Why can't we do it, why not? Why not be role models? *Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya, Bolo Bolo Sab Mil Bolo*. (*Anil Kumar sings this bhajan in the Japanese language*)

When people are adopting the *bhajans* like this, what is the fun in maintaining our own identity? Let us not make the Sai Centre a regional centre, a centre of linguistic chauvinism. It is a centre

of multiple faiths. It is a centre of the unity of religions. It is a centre of the fellowship of faiths. It is a centre of a congregation of worship. That is what I believe in. (*Applause*)

### ***SAI IS NOT A RELIGION – SAI IS NOT A CULT***

By the by, allow me to make these statements - but please verify them from Sai literature. “Sai is not a religion; Sai is not a cult.” This is what He said in the First World Conference held in Bombay. Sai believes in the unity of religions; therefore let us have songs from other religions and English *bhajans*. Let us be one with the land, let us be one with the community. We should not organise ourselves into a separate isolated group. That is what I understand. (*Applause*)

### ***IT IS THE MIND THAT MAKES DUALITY***

***The content of the Rasovaisaha (Divinity as Bliss Absolute) in a ‘Sathya Sai Speaks’ article, said that He is the Truth in untruth, the good in goodness, the bad in badness. How to interpret or understand the phrase: “He is the bad in badness”?***

There is no “good” and “bad” in the sight of Divinity. There is no good and bad. There is no right and wrong. There is no sin and merit from God’s point of view because He is beyond the mind. Therefore He is non-dual.

We are bound by the mind. We are limited and circumscribed by the mind. It is the mind that makes duality. Good and bad, right and wrong, is made by the mind. So at Swami’s level, all are the same. At our level, there are differences because of the mind. When you transcend the mind, you too are non-dual.

***Mana Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandha Mokshayoh.***

***It is the mind that is responsible for bondage and liberation.***

One should transcend the mind. That is what this implies.

### ***SWAMI PRAISES OVERSEAS DEVOTEES***

***Thank you such an inspiring talk. Have you had another conversation with Swami about His expectations of overseas devotees?***

A regional question! Good! I will tell you the truth also. I see many foreigners in Puttaparthi and many foreigners come to Kodaikanal as well. Swami has made two points concerning foreigners. Everybody, please remember, *all* overseas devotees.

What does He say? Here is a lotus flower. A honey bee comes from a long distance to suck the honey; but beneath the lotus flower, the snails, frogs and fish do not realise the value of the nectar of the lotus flower. So all overseas devotees are honey bees, while we are the snails and fish, according to Baba. (*Laughter and applause*) But I am happy when you are praised because when others are praised, I have a legal share in it. Yes, why not?

Another time, Swami said, “See when I look at that foreigner, how happy he is. When I say “Hi”, they hug and shake hands with each other; they jump in joy, whereas you fellows always have sour faces.” (*Laughter*)

Additionally, Bhagavan says, “The light of a lighthouse will reach far into the distance, while beneath the light there is shadow. You are living in the shadow, while they receive the Light.” That is what Baba said about overseas devotees. So you are in the Light, Baba is your delight, Sai Ram! (*Applause*)

### ***ALL THE SENSES RECEIVE “FOOD”***

***You mentioned that you like spicy food or food with a lot of pepper. I too like such food. (Anil Kumar: I have found another comrade!) (Laughter) From what I read, spicy food is rajasic i.e. it stimulates the emotions - action, anger, passion, etc. And we are advised only to eat satwic food i.e. no meat, pure, fresh, and moderate in every way, including seasoning. How do you . . . ?***

Oh, western mind . . . you see the western mind? Good, I appreciate it.

My dear friend, understand, food does not necessarily mean only what you eat. What you think is food for thought; what you hear is food to the ear; what you eat is food to the tongue; what you see is food to the eye. Therefore, you cannot limit our intake to just the food that we eat. There are many vegetarians who are first class *goondas* (criminals, troublemakers) and rowdies. (*Laughter*) There are many, many non-vegetarians who are saints.

So the five senses individually receive food through touch, sound, sight, taste and smell. We have five senses of action, *Karmendriyas*; five senses of cognition, *Jnanedriyas*. These also receive food. So one *indriya* may be *rajasic*, but the other *indriyas* may be *satwic*. (*Applause*) So one isn't too bad, okay? (*Laughter*)

I am reminded of a joke from long ago. In 1975, I came to the United States and visited Aurora, Bloomington and Corydon, in the state of Indiana. I was with four friends and in the prime of my youth then. One question was put to us by an American. The question was this: why don't you eat beef in India?

One of the other friends said, “We don't eat beef in India because the cows are sacred.”

The same man then asked, “But why do you eat beef here?”

I replied, “My friend said cows are sacred in India . . . he did not say that cows in America were sacred! (*Laughter*)

### ***WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VISION AND A DREAM?***

***What is the difference between a vision and a dream?***

Dreams are psychological projections; they are imagined. Unfulfilled desires or incomplete tasks will generate a dream. For example, I might want to hit you, but this is not possible in my daily life. However, in the dream, I can not only hit you, but also put you out of action! (*Laughter*)

But a vision is purely spiritual. Baba, the Supreme Being, appearing in the dream, is *not* a dream. It is a vision. In the vision, you will clearly know and remember what He tells you. However, that is not so if it is a dream.

Somebody might say, "Last night, Swami appeared in my dream."

"Very good! What did He say?"

"He said . . . something . . . I don't know . . ."

*Hari Om!* Then it is only a dream, not a vision. Everything that He tells you is quite clear when it is a vision. A vision is positive; it is a directive. A vision is spiritual and choice-less, whereas a dream may be correct or not. You can brush it off as "my imagination", but not so the vision.

So hereafter, you should say "vision" and not "dreams" when Baba appears in what you think is a dream. Am I clear? You can dream to be the President of America. But you cannot dream up Baba, because it is a vision of Him, from Him. Thank you!

*Prof. Anil Kumar ended the Question and Answer session with the bhajan, "Jai Jai Prabhu Giridhari  
Natawara Nandalala."*

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