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*Talk Given by Anil Kumar in Rochester, New York*

*April 4, 2009*

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

*Sai Ram*

*With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan,*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

*DIVINE PERMISSION*

*(Professor Anil Kumar began his talk by chanting a bhajan, "Bhajamana Narayana Narayana Narayana.")*

It is indeed very kind of Bhagavan to have permitted me to come to the USA at the beginning of March, despite the fact that exams were underway at the university. My brother-in-law, Dr. Kedarnath from San Antonio, Texas, was going to perform his eldest daughter's wedding, and that made me gather my courage to ask Swami's permission to come. Finding Him in a good mood, I noticed that the atmosphere surrounding Him was also quite cooperative, so I felt emboldened enough to ask, and Bhagavan told me twice, "Go! Both of you go!"

Therefore, by His grace, my wife and I are here this morning with you.

*HAPPINESS AND BLISS*

Friends, this is the season of *Rama Navami*. *Rama Navami* is an important festival in which people re-enact the holy wedding of Rama and Sita. During the festival, Bhagavan usually graces us with a Divine discourse, and a few days ago He donned His yellow robe and addressed the crowds at Prashanti Nilayam. At this blessed event,

He also gave houses to many of the poor people from the state of Orissa, and He moved among the devotees, making everybody happy. That is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He finds happiness when we are happy. That is the reason He asks that everybody “be happy, be happy, be happy!”

Unfortunately, some people find happiness in unhappiness, (*Laughter*) while others find happiness in making others unhappy. Of course, these types of happiness will never last long. Happiness brought about by the Divine grace of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is long lasting, but that which comes and goes is merely short-term happiness.

In Telugu, it is called *santhosham*. *San* means ‘a little’ or ‘a fraction’, and *thosham* means ‘happiness’. *Santhosham*, therefore, is just a little bit of happiness, a fraction of the happiness that is possible. If you have a little cup of coffee, you have *santhosham*, yes? After an hour, you will want another cup. You will want some more *santhosham*!

So happiness is dualistic and time-bound. Happiness comes and goes, arrives and vanishes again. Happiness is mundane, sensual, worldly, ephemeral, and short-lived. But what we experience by associating with God, by living with Him, is something far beyond happiness. This is a state beyond happiness, one that we call bliss, or *ananda*.

Bliss is different from happiness. One can be both happy and unhappy, but there is no such thing as ‘unbliss’. No, no! Bliss is bliss. It is constant and changeless and transcends time, encompassing past, present and future. That is bliss! That is *ananda*. This bliss, this *ananda*, is primordial. We are born with it!

Children are always happy. They don’t worry about respectability. They don’t care one bit about status or dignity or scholarship. They don’t concern themselves with their bank balance or whether their stocks and bonds have risen or dropped in price. They are not bothered about the state of the economy in our country.

Children simply jump for joy. They go on playing and running and laughing and enjoying life. Why? Children exist in the blissful state. That’s why Jesus said, “Unless you become as a little child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

A child is innocent, whereas we are ignorant. There is a difference between innocence and ignorance. Ignorance is a horrible state, a terrible one, and one that must be condemned. An ignorant person needs to be educated. He needs to be taught that which he does not know, that which he should know, whereas innocence is Divine. Innocence is spiritual. Children are innocent!

God is innocent! It is because God is innocent that He always forgives all of us. He knows that we are just ignorant. If God were not innocent, Prashanti Nilayam would be vacant! (*Laughter*) So bliss is of the spiritual dimension. Bliss is transcendental. The

name Rama means bliss. Rama means *ananda*. The festival of Rama Navami serves to remind us that we should be blissful and full of joy.

There is also another state that I would like to discuss, and that is ecstasy. Ecstasy is different from excitement. We all are familiar with excitement, but we do not know ecstasy. When you go to a movie, you are excited. When you go to Universal Studios in Hollywood, you are excited. When you go to Disneyland and see the fireworks, you are excited! Ecstasy, however, is a state that relates to God, and it is different from excitement.

Ecstasy is a transcendental experience, one beyond the senses. Ecstasy is an inner experience, and it is an everlasting one. Ecstasy is more likely to be experienced when you reflect inwardly, as during a state of meditation. You will find a man who meditates is always ecstatic, always wearing a smile.

We, on the other hand, don't smile. Why? Unless we receive something special, something personal, we aren't happy. Sadly, my friends, we have forgotten what a smile is. We have forgotten how to smile because we are always in search of some reason to smile. What an awful situation we put ourselves in! We can always find a reason to cry, but we seldom find reason to smile.

If we see someone else smiling, we don't ask them, "Why are you smiling?" No! But if we see someone with a serious look on their face, we ask them, "Why are you so serious? Is there something wrong with you? Are you sick? What is wrong with you?" We enquire when a person looks serious, when they look disturbed or unhappy; but if they look happy, if they seem ecstatic, we don't ask, "Why are you ecstatic?"

My friends, we are born in bliss. Bliss is our rightful state of awareness. Bliss is our rightful state of consciousness. Let us remember this during this festival. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is an embodiment of bliss and He wishes that we should choose to be so too.

### *SMILE – THE QUALITY OF SPIRITUALITY*

One morning when Swami was giving *darshan* in Bangalore, deer and ducks and swans surrounded Him. These animals were all so ecstatic in His presence. Yes! They were all gathered around him, the deer jumping and prancing as Swami fed them. What a fantastic experience that was, and what a lesson it taught me. *Sarva Jeeva Vasa Narayana*. That means "Oh Lord, You dwell in all of the beings. The entire creation is Your own reflection."

In the middle of all this, Baba looked at me and He said, “When the Lord is giving His *darshan*, all of Nature rejoices.” Nature rejoices! Nature celebrates *darshan*! So why do all of us look like we have just eaten castor oil when we take His *darshan*? (*Laughter*)

We human beings really do not rejoice in His *darshan*. We do not celebrate. Why? It is because we each have our own personal agenda when we are there. ‘I will be happy if He looks at me. I will be unhappy if He looks at you.’ (*Laughter*) ‘I will be happy if He takes my letter, and I will be miserable if He takes yours.’ ‘I will be happy if I get an interview. I will be mad if you get an interview.’ (*Laughter*)

This is our state of being. We are cut off from spiritual awareness and consciousness. Bhagavan Baba is bliss. Bliss is Baba, Baba is bliss. If you want to describe Swami, if anyone asks you to describe Baba, just say that He is bliss. Bliss is Baba, Baba is bliss.

Sri Ramachandra is also bliss. The sage Valmiki said that Lord Rama always wore a smile, whether in the royal palace or exiled in the forest, in the midst of war or while on the throne. He always had a smile on His face. That is the sign of Divinity. That is the sign of spirituality. That is the quality of awareness that Ramachandra had. He was always smiling, come what may.

On the night before Rama’s coronation, his father Dasharatha said, “Oh, my dear son, you are going to be crowned tomorrow morning.” Upon hearing this, Rama just smiled. Then next morning, Dasharatha called Rama saying, “I’m sorry, but you are not going to be crowned king. Instead of occupying the throne, you have to go into exile in the forest.” In response, Rama had the same smile on His face. That is a quality of spirituality.

Look at Bhagavan. He smiles! One fellow may say to Him, “Swami, I sustained a fracture.”

Swami will just reply, “*Santhosham!* Very good!” (*Laughter*)

“Swami, my grandmother died.”

Swami will say, “*Chala Manchid!* Very, very good!” (*Laughter*)

“Swami, I am getting married.”

“*Santhosham!* Very good.”

Come what may, He is always blissful. For Him, there is nothing like happiness or unhappiness. “Some people may praise Me. Some people may criticise Me. Some may appreciate Me. Some may condemn Me. I bless them all.”

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba blesses those who praise Him and those who condemn Him. Unless we are the very personification of spirituality, we do not bless both with equal poise, with the spirit of equanimity, with a balanced state of mind. Only our beloved Bhagavan Baba is able to do this.

### *STATE OF EQUANIMITY*

I also remember an occasion when Swami had lost His brother-in-law, His sister's husband. Swami was leaning on a pillar, waving one hand into the empty air and adjusting His hair with the other. He would hold His robe with one hand, and take letters with the other. Throughout it all, Swami was smiling, even when someone said to Him, "Bhagavan, we are so sorry that You lost Your brother-in-law."

And do you know what Baba said? He said, "If trains don't come and go, the station master will be unemployed. That is My position. Birth and death, birth and death. I am the Station Master."

Nothing ruffles Him. Nothing disturbs him. That is the quality of Ramachandra, balanced and steady.

*Kashita Sukhammulu Kalisiyundu Vidadeesi Gaduparaadhu.*

### *PAIN AND PLEASURE*

Pain and pleasure go together. They are intertwined. You cannot separate them. Some people want only pleasure. Impossible! Pain will be there too. Some people say, "Oh, this is so painful, so unbearable." Don't worry when you experience pain, as times of pleasure will follow soon. All days are not Sundays, my dear son. It may be night now, yes, but you will find that the sun will also rise tomorrow morning. Why not? Day and night happen in succession. There cannot be day alone, nor night. One follows the other.

So pain and pleasure are mixed together. It is like a pendulum that oscillates between a tear and a smile. Both extremes exist. That is part of the totality of life. So my friends, let us not be choosy about these things. Some people come to Baba and, because they think that they are spiritual, they expect that He will fulfill their desires; but this is not the case. It is not like that. No, no, no! That is not how it is.

Suppose a fellow were to come to me and say, "Anil Kumar, a miracle happened! My son got a seat in a medical college."

I would tell him, "Sir, I experienced a miracle by not getting a seat in a medical college." (*Laughter*) Why? If I were a doctor, I would start crying even before the patient started complaining. I am unfit to be a doctor. Unfit!

Therefore my friends, let us not choose anything. To be frank with you, we should live our lives in choiceless awareness. Choiceless awareness! Let us learn to live by the principle of acceptance, accepting whatever is destined to happen in our lives. Our prayer should be, "Oh God, let me willingly, happily accept all that happens to me. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Whatever You wish, let those things happen, and not what I wish."

Why? Because I do not know how to wish and what to wish for. Most of the time, wishes are vicious and misguided, so let me be wish-less and not vicious. That is one lesson of Rama Navami, to maintain a balanced state of mind.

The second lesson of this festival? Rama is *Gunavaan*, the one of virtue and good character. Rama is *Gunavaan*, the personification of good values. If we want to see human values manifest in a human form, we can only witness this in Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba today. He is human values on two Feet, walking among us.

### *DEVOTEES ARE IMPORTANT TO THE LORD*

Bhagavan once went to the state of Kerala on a visit. Do you know what He said at a public meeting there? He said, "The organisers announced that I would be speaking to you at eight o'clock, but in fact I came half an hour earlier. Because I arrived earlier than was announced, I waited on the outskirts of the city so that the truth of My devotees would be upheld. Whatever My devotees say, it should be upheld."

That is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. "Whatever I say, I will never go back on My word." He exhibits *Gunavaan*, virtues and character. He upholds *Sathya*, truth. Whatever He does, He does with *Dharma*, with righteousness. Bhagavan's speech reflects and embodies *Sathya*, truth. His actions reflect *Dharma*, righteousness, and peace always shines on His face. He embodies peace, *Shanti*.

People run around worrying at these events. Suddenly the Prime Minister or some cabinet minister will visit, or some president will come on an official visit, but Bhagavan embodies *Shanthaakaaram Bhujaga Shayanam*. What does that mean? *Bhujaga* means 'the serpent'. *Shanthaakaaram* is 'peace'. Can you be peaceful lying on a bed of serpents? Just try! Just try! The sight of serpents is enough to make anyone run for their lives! But here is Lord Vishnu Himself reclining comfortably as if the cobra, the *Adishesha*, is the most comfortable bed. Life is full of poisons and problems and

difficulties, of troubles and turbulence and disturbances, yet we should be *Shanthaakaaram*, we should remain peaceful. That is the message of Sri Ramachandra. He maintained peace within.

Bhagavan maintains His peace at all times. No disturbance will prevent a function from taking place. We find the topmost people visiting Prashanti Nilayam. On such a day, while Swami was giving *darshan*, the Central Defence Minister arrived on a visit to Prashanti Nilayam. Swami walked up close to me and said, "Are the results of your son published?" (My son had recently taken his final year engineering examinations.)

I said, "Swami, my son's examination is not that important. The Central Defence Minister is here on a visit, so it is not important." Not only had my son taken his examination, but so had so many others as well. Examinations come and go, so I was thinking, 'What is this about?'

Swami replied, "Ministers are not important to Me. Devotees are important to Me!" Devotees are important to Him, not position, not wealth.

*Dhanamunnadani Peddalanu Chenkanagunu Kaani*

*Pudami Addaaniche Mukṭiraadhu*

*You may be quite proud of your wealth, but it will never confer liberation. No, no, no, no!*

*Vidhwamsudanani Birudula Nanda Nagune Kaani*

*Pudami Addaaniche Mukṭiraadhu*

*You may be a scholar with many degrees, but will these take you to paradise or lead you to liberation? No! No, no, no!*

*Balamunnadani Mittipadavacchune Kaani Pudami Addaaniche Mukṭiraadhu*

*If you are physically strong, you might be highly egotistical, full of courage and ready to wrestle with anybody and everybody, but physical strength will never take you to Mokṣha, to liberation.*

*RAMA – SYMBOL OF COURAGE*

Therefore, my friends:

*Bhaktidenideraadhu Mukṭhi.*

*Without devotion, you can never get any sort of liberation.*

That is the message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. A *Gunavaan* is one of virtue. A *Veeryavaan* is very powerful, very courageous, victorious, and triumphant. Whatever Bhagavan undertakes, He is sure to emerge successful. He will accomplish every task He undertakes.

Nothing will make Him give up His ideals. As a boy, He corrected many elders. In His formative period, He reformed and transformed everybody because of His courage – *Veeryavaan, Gunavaan*. Sri Ramachandra is a *Veeryavaan*. He stands for courage, with courage. Look at the picture of Sri Ramachandra. Look at His chest! Wow! *Kodhandapani!* He stands for that kind of courage, valour and spirit, and that is what we find in Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Veeryavaan* and *Gunavaan*.

Bhagavan is *Jitakrodhaha*. Sri Ramachandra is *Jitakrodhaha*, meaning ‘He has not any trace of anger’. No anger. In fact, Ravana, the Demon King, himself came to Sri Ramachandra saying, “Swami, You should pardon me.” Well, Swami readily granted pardon as Sri Ramachandra.

It was Anjaneya who objected: “Swami, are You going to pardon Ravana?”

Then Lakshmana said, “Are You going to pardon him?”

“Yes, why not?” said Ramachandra. “If anyone surrenders to Me, if anyone says ‘O Swami, I belong to You’—yes, he is granted a pardon.” So said Sri Ramachandra, and that is the case with Bhagavan too. *Jitakrodhaha*. He has no enmity whatsoever.

Some people come to Him and cry, “Swami, Swami, I committed this or that mistake. Please forgive me. Please excuse me.”

Swami will say to them, “So what? You made a mistake! So what? The past is past, Bangaru, the past is past. The past is beyond recovery and the future is uncertain. Take hold of the present. Why do you worry about the past?” *Jitakrodhaha*. He is not vindictive. He is not vengeful. He is not a taxing, punishing Lord. He is a giving, forgiving Lord.

*(Prof. Anil Kumar sings a bhajan, “Chanda Kjrana Kula Mandana Ram.”)*

### *COMPASSIONATE LORD*

Sri Ramachandra is known for this quality, for *Jitakrodhaha*, ‘He who conquers all anger’. Sri Ramachandra is also known for another quality, *Sarva Bhootha Hithe*

*Rathaha*. He has compassion toward all living creatures, not merely for members of the royal family, not merely for His brothers and immediate family. He is so compassionate, so kind to the whole of the creation! He blesses the squirrel, the monkey, and the demon. Vibheeshana was blessed, and then Jatayu, the bird, was blessed. Irrespective of status, irrespective of position in the ladder of evolution, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba blesses everybody, not merely *Homo sapiens*, not merely the human race. That is His quality.

Swami once went to Madanapalli in the state of Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, and spent time in the Horsley Hills with His devotees. On his way back, He surprised everybody by asking them to stop. Stop! Why?

“Let us say thanks to that buffalo that fetched water for us all. Let us say thanks to that buffalo,” said Swami.

We don't tend to thank anybody, yet Swami wants us to thank even a buffalo. You see? *Sarva Bhootha Hithe Rathaha!* He is so accepting, so compassionate, and so loving toward all and He asks us to be so too.

I remember another occasion when Swami came out among us at 12:30 in the afternoon, a very unusual time for him to appear. Normally He gives *darshan* in the morning before retreating to His house, and then does not come out again until about 4:30 in the afternoon. One day in Brindavan, however, Swami came out at 12:30 in the afternoon. I was staying nearby, very close to Swami's Mandir, in a bungalow, and when I saw Him appear, I wondered why Swami was coming out among us now.

A deer approached Him and Swami gave it some grass to eat. The deer then looked at the Lord's Feet and breathed its last breath, dying at the Feet of Bhagavan. I was standing there watching this!

Afterward, Swami called me to Him and said, “It knew the end was approaching, and it wanted to die with My blessing. Therefore I came outside at this odd hour.” So said Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. *Sarva Bhootha Hithe Rathaha*. That is what He meant to teach by being compassionate, by being so kind toward all creatures.

### *NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE TO THE LORD*

In Brindavan, there was a tree by the Sai Ram Shed that the old devotees from Bangalore might remember. It was cut down some years ago, and in its place Sai Ramesh Hall was built. When the time came to chop down that tree, they began by cutting off a branch, and at the end of the branch, we could all clearly see Swami's face.

Everybody was amazed to see Swami's smiling face on the end of that branch! When we asked Swami about it, Baba said, "That tree gave shelter to many people for many, many years. Therefore that tree is truly blessed and has the imprint of My blissful face in every branch and on every leaf." That is what devotion is. That tree exemplifies the height of devotion! *Sarva Bhootha Hitha Rathaha.*

Similarly, in Bhagavan we find the qualities of Lord Ramachandra. With Him, there is no question of compromise. No question! It was Vibheeshana who said, "Rama, would You attend my coronation ceremony? Would You come and bless me?"

Ramachandra said, "Certainly not. I still have a few days left of exile. I still have a few days that I must spend in the forest."

When Sugreeva invited Rama for his coronation, Rama said, "Sorry, I cannot come because I vowed that I would spend My time in the forest. How can I break My vow, My pledge, and attend your coronation? I cannot and I shall not."

*Dhrudavrathaha Sathya Vakhya Paripaalakaha. Dharmorakshathi Rakshithaha.* Rama upholds the *dharma* and proceeds according to the code of life. Bhagavan does the same. Once Baba says that He will be doing something, then there is no question as to whether He will do it!

"Puttparthi will have a university very soon," Bhagavan once declared on the Mandir. Professor Bhagavantham, an international scientist who was translating Swami's speech at that time, looked up with a puzzled look on his face. (*Laughter*)

The professor then went up to Swami and whispered in His ear, "Impossible, Swami, impossible."

"Impossible?" Swami said. "It is possible! Your job is to translate, so now come on and do it!" (*Laughter*)

Shortly after the discourse, someone asked Professor Bhagavantham, "Sir, why did you say 'impossible' to Swami?"

Bhagavantham told them, "It is impossible because according to the University Grants Commission, according to the Central Government's rules, you cannot have two universities within a radius of sixty miles, and there is already a university at Anantapur. So how could Swami expect another university in Puttparthi? It's impossible."

Baba then smiled at the professor and said, "What is impossible is possible to Me. Do you understand? I will make it possible."

At that time, Madhuri Bensha was the chairman of the University Grants Commission. She visited Bhagavan, and Swami blessed her with an interview and said, "Madhuri, I want a university here."

She said, "Swami, please take my head, but not the university." (*Laughter*)

So Swami said, "I won't take your head, but you will come for the inaugural function here."

Indeed, she attended the inaugural function of Sathya Sai University. She was the chairperson for the event, the very lady who said it was impossible. How was this possible?

What is impossible at the human level is quite possible at the Divine level. Why? Because of that *Sathya Vakhya Paripalakaha Prajaaranjakaha*: His views are always for the upliftment of the welfare of the community. Nothing selfish lies within Him. Everything He does is for everybody else.

Bhagavan said, "You people think I am resting there in Prashanti Nilayam. No, no! You know, I have only one constant worry."

"Swami! You have worries?"

"Yes. I go on worrying for these people. How are they going to advance in life? I worry about how I can best help these people, how I can best get them to take up projects and help them to lead a happy, spiritual life. That is My only worry. Nothing else." That is what Bhagavan said.

That is *Prajaaranjakaha*. Therefore, as we think of Rama Navami, we should remember *Dhrudavrathaha, Prajaaranjakaha, Sathyavaan, Veeryavaan*. These are all qualities of Sri Ramachandra. These are also qualities that we find in Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Baba exemplifies these qualities for us.

Once during a war, Ramachandra was with his battalion, resting under a full moon. He looked up and spoke to the troops. "Look at the moon. There is a shadow there. What is it? Can you tell Me?"

One fellow said, "Swami, I see an old woman sitting there. She is gossiping. That is the dark mark on the moon."

"Oh, I see," said Rama.

Then He said to another fellow: "What is that dark part on the moon?"

The fellow replied, "Swami, there is a tree there. I see a tree."

Rama said, "Oh, I see." Then to yet another, He asked, "And what do you see there?"

'Deep valleys, Swami.'

"Oh, I see." Then Sri Ramachandra asked Anjaneya, "What is that dark spot on the moon?"

*(Prof. Anil Kumar sings the bhajan, "Mita Smita Mukhaaravinda Nacho Nandalala.")*

Anjaneya replied, "Swami, other people have told You it is a gossiping old woman, or a tree, or a valley. Nonsense, Swami! That is the reflection of Your face. That is the Ramachandra moon and you are Sri Ramachandra. It is the reflection of Your face! That is what I see." Anjaneya demonstrated the qualities of a devotee.

Bhagavan has given us another example. Draupadi had her shower and was drying her hair. That morning, Krishna was surrounded by eight of His consorts, His *Ashtabhaaryalu*, and one of them asked Him, "Swami, You like Draupadi more than all of us, correct? (It is common that women in particular would ask such a thing.) (Laughter)

Anyway, Krishna replied, "Why not? I like her more than all of you."

"What, Swami?"

Krishna said, "You go and find out for yourself."

All eight consorts went to see Draupadi in their ethereal form, without their physical bodies. In their subtle bodies, they were able to go to Hasthinapura where Draupadi was drying her hair, and as she was drying her hair, the air was filled with the resonance of Krishna *Nama*: "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna." As she was combing her hair, the air resounded with "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna." Just as everything around Anjaneya reflected Rama, so was it around Draupadi, even while she was just drying her hair. The echo of Krishna was constantly all around her. That is devotion! That is devotion!

I also remember Bhagavan taking a firmer resolve on certain issues when it was appropriate. He can be softer than butter, but He can also be tougher and harder than a diamond. One time the then-President of India, Venkataraman, was in Prashanti Nilayam to lay the foundation stone for the Super Specialty Hospital. For some reason, Venkataraman was not able to arrive on time, and so Baba went to the hospital and personally completed the groundbreaking ceremony.

Later Venkataraman came for a vote of thanks. (Laughter) Swami wasn't bothered at all that Venkataraman had failed to arrive to do his duty. When Baba decides that

something should happen, when He resolves that it will happen, He can be tough, hard as a diamond in that regard. Other times, He melts and is softer than butter.

In another incident, a boy once took Swami's car and went for a ride when Swami was not in Brindavan. Boys will be boys after all. Anyway, this boy crashed the car into a wall and he had to go to see Swami the next day. As you can imagine, this boy did not need to practice any shake-dancing or anything like that. (*Laughter*) His body knew how to shake automatically in this case.

When he went to see Baba, he cried, "Swami, Swami!"

Swami saw him and said, "What happened, Bangaru? What happened?"

"Swami! The car! The car!"

Swami looked at him and said, "It doesn't matter, Bangaru. Let the car go. I am happy that you are okay, My dear son. I am happy that nothing happened to you. I am happy. Let cars come and go. I am not bothered about the car."

Would any father speak to his son like that? Please, please, let us ask ourselves. It's not that boys should take our cars and crash them. No! (*Laughter*) But you can see that when His heart melts, yes, He will go to any length to ease his devotees. He will go to any length! But when He takes a stand, there is no compromise. Not on any issue. Nothing doing! It will be done!

Once I travelled with Baba in His car to Madras. As we arrived at the airport there, we saw the Prime Minister's flight taking off and Swami said, "I planned My entrance to coincide with his exit!" (*Laughter*)

### ***FULFILMENT OF DESIRES LEADS TO BONDAGE***

My friends, please remember that, as Sai devotees, when we find time flying by, take it from me, you are a devotee! You are blessed! If time crawls slowly, however, if something is wrong, if one's papers and documents are held up at the income tax office, or one is involved in some litigation, some court case, or is behind the bars, or is in hospital, then time moves slowly indeed.

As a devotee, do not expect that all rewards are going to be given. Do not expect that there will be no trace of suffering in your life. No! What is the greatest gift that Bhagavan can give? What is the miracle of miracles that He bestows upon devotees? That gift is the spirit to bear difficulties. In times of distress, in times of tragedy, a devotee will cling

to His Lotus Feet. A true devotee of Bhagavan will not lose faith when facing challenges, nor will he become egotistical when all his desires are fulfilled.

If life is all green grass and happiness, we will say, “Oh God, oh Bhagavan, it is all Your Grace.” When something goes wrong, however, we must remember that Swami wants to teach us a lesson to help us to grow. This is the greatest gift of Bhagavan, not the fulfilment of our desires. If a desire is fulfilled, it just leads to another desire, and that will lead to another desire in a chain-reaction. Fulfilment of desires will take you into bondage, will lead you to attachment. Non-fulfilment of desire will take you to *vairagya*, renunciation and detachment. Who knows what is the purpose? Who, but Baba, knows what is the purpose of His designs and plans?

I'd also like to tell you about a day when Swami called a servant-maid and He gave her a big bundle of cash and a very costly silk sari. I could not bear it! When Swami is giving, of course, He is giving; but it is still difficult for me to take! (*Laughter*)

So I said, “Swami, why did you give her such costly gifts!?”

So Baba said, “When it is I who is giving, why are you bothered? This is not your problem.”

I said, “But Swami, giving so much to that servant-maid?”

Then Swami said, “Hey, shut up! They too attend weddings. They too have relations. Let them wear a sari that is given to them by Sathya Sai Baba. They will be so happy! They will preserve that sari for their whole life! What more do I want? I don't calculate their poverty or their wealth before I give them a gift.” His love, His concern, His care for others is awe-inspiring.

Back in those days, Swami used to go to Ooty (Ootacamund), and I would go with Him. I come from a very hot place in Andhra Pradesh, a village called Guntur. Guntur is a very, very hot place. We don't have seasons like winter and spring. Oh no! We only have hot, hotter, and hottest! That's all we've got. (*Laughter*) And during the hottest season, we eat only chillies. Then the heat can do nothing to us. (*Laughter*) Everybody's stomach is then air-conditioned! (*Laughter*) We just munch down handfuls of chili with no water! You can try it if you want. (*Laughter*)

Anyway, coming from a hot place, and then going to a cool place like Ooty, a place that is chilly, damp, cold, is something I could not bear. When we were there once, Swami said to me, “Anil Kumar, this is your room. You lie down.”

Fine. What else was I to do? Swami then said, “Oh, there is a heater and a blanket. Come on, lie down. Are you comfortable?”

I said, “I’m okay, Swami.”

Half an hour later, again Bhagavan came with another blanket, a beautiful rug. He said, “This is My personal blanket. You are shivering, and therefore I have come to give it to you.”

He spread it out for me. It was biscuit-coloured with a picture of a deer on it. It was so beautiful. He said, “This is for you. Are you okay? Are you comfortable? Okay, good night!”

I don’t remember ever receiving such a reception, such hospitality. Not even on my wedding day! (*Laughter*) I don’t remember ever receiving that kind of love, that kind of concern. But the food there is another story!

In Ooty, most of the boys are from North India. Some are from Tamil Nadu, some from Karnataka, and others from Kerala. Those boys from the north don’t eat spicy food, whereas I relish only spicy food. The hotter it is, the more I like it. So what was I to do? I simply swallowed each mouthful like homeopathic pills, not appreciating it all! (*Laughter*)

Swami saw me from a distance and said, “*Paapam*, you don’t have Andhra pickles, eh? These boys don’t eat hot stuff, but don’t worry.” Then He went inside and brought back a big bottle of pickles. “This is mango pickle that I brought for you.” Then He said to someone there, “Serve him. He may feel bad if he has no company, so serve Me a little pickle too.” What dining manners He has! Can you ever imagine God showing so much love and concern toward an individual? After all, who am I? I am nobody, but He gives such care to every detail to make me comfortable and happy.

One day Bhagavan introduced some people to me. He said, “Here is so-and-so. He gave so many *crores* of *rupees* to the hospital. Here is someone else. He also gave so many *crores*.” *Crores, crores, crores!* I don’t know the number of zeros to a *crore*. I don’t know! I felt quite shy about it. Anyway, Swami asked me, “Why are you looking like that? Why do you feel bad?”

So I said, “Swami, I feel so bad because I am very embarrassed. When those people gave a hundred *crores*, fifty *crores*, two hundred fifty *crores* for the hospital, I think, ‘What have I given?’ I have not given anything.”

Then Baba said, ‘Where are they staying? That one who gave one hundred fifty *crores* is staying in the Carlton Hotel. The one who gave fifty *crores* is staying in the Heritage Hotel. They are all staying in hotels. Where are you staying? You are staying with Me in My room. They have given the money, but you have given your life to Me. What more

do I want? I am not in this for money.” I felt really deeply touched. Who else would say something like that to me?

I once accompanied Swami to Bombay and Delhi in a helicopter. It was just in a six-seater, a small helicopter. All the VIPs came along too. The five of them sat down; so where was I to sit? Should I ask anybody to get up? Then Swami, who was watching this embarrassing situation, said, “Come here! You sit by My side.” So of course, I sat by His side!

On the return trip, I said, “Bhagavan, *Ah, yem appa yemi*. Swami, the golden dream vanished. The lovely trip passed like a cloud, Swami. What a wonderful experience.”

Then Swami whispered into my ear, “Why do you say it vanished? You will be here with Me, translating My discourses for ever and ever. Don’t worry, don’t worry. You will be here.”

What He said at that moment made me very happy. Will anybody else say something like that to me? “I will keep you with me for ever and ever!” Unconditional love, my friends, unconditional love! There is no reason for love, no season for love, because He is Love Himself.

Today there are many, many people who are beneficiaries of Sathya Sai Baba’s water project. Many of them do not even know His name. Many village heads came to see Him to thank Him. “Swami, You have given us a water project. We have come here to thank You.”

And do you know what Baba said to them? “No, no. Why do you thank Me? It is My duty.”

Do you thank your father? “Oh, Father, you have given me birth. Thank you, Father. You have given me shirts. Thank you, Father?”

Baba said, “I am not a stranger. I am your Father. I am your Divine Parent. You don’t need to thank Me. We are One. I should thank you for giving Me the opportunity to serve you.”

By that He meant that service is an opportunity, not an opportunity for publicity. Service is a duty, not an obligation. Service is *sadhana*, not propaganda. That is what we learned from Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

*(Prof. Anil Kumar sings a bhajan, “Adishesha Anantha Shayana.”)*

One day, while talking with the boys, Bhagavan waved His hand and materialised a big ring with a white diamond. Wow! It was so beautiful to behold! Then Swami asked, “Do you know what it is?”

I knew this one! I said, “Swami, it is a ring.”

Swami said, “No, no! It is *the* ring presented by King Janaka to Sri Ramachandra on Sri Navami Day. This is a wedding ring.”

I was very happy to see it, but was also feeling a bit mischievous, so I said, “Swami, even Rama expected something from His father-in-law!” (*Laughter*)

For fellows like me it is quite natural to think about things like that, but for Lord Rama? Swami looked at me and said, “Hey! *Noru moosuko!*” (meaning, “Shut your mouth!”)

Then He materialised a green emerald ring and said, “The diamond was given by the father and this by the father-in-law.”

I said, “Swami, both are very nice! Everything is fine!”

And Swami said, “Anil Kumar! What?”

I said again, “Everything is fine, Swami! Come on now, Swami! I want to see Mother Sita’s jewels too!”

So Swami said, “Hah! You are bad! Don’t talk! Keep quiet now!”

And I said, “Swami, I am a bad fellow. It’s true! But still I want to see Sita’s jewels.”

Then when we went for lunch together at someone’s house, I told all the boys to ask Swami to see Sita’s jewels! (*Laughter*) When we got there, Swami was sitting on a *jhoola* (a decorated swing), and we started to sing to him.

*(Prof Anil Kumar sings the bhajan, “Baba Gopala Bala Gopala.”)*

Swami was seated there on the swing, enjoying “*Bala Gopala.*” Seeing that He was having such a good time, I slowly approached Him and said, “Swami, please, Sita’s jewellery! I want to see!” (*Laughter*)

Swami stopped swinging and looked at me and said, “Hmm...You go and sit there!”

“But I already informed boys to ask You.”

With that, the boys all started pleading, “Swami, Swami, Sita’s jewels, please!”

So Swami materialised a beautiful chain, and in the centre were three rows of diamonds and three big stones—one yellow, one red and one blue. Swami then told us that this was the chain that Sita was wearing at her wedding to Rama. It was beautiful!

Not all people share their experiences with Swami because they feel that Swami may object; but anything that comes to my notice with Swami will be broadcast and re-telecast, come what may. (*Laughter*) Just as you have got the BBC, the British Broadcasting Corporation, to tell the news of the world, in the Sai world of devotees, there is ABC, the Anilkumar Broadcasting Corporation. (*Laughter*) I shall not keep quiet! I tell everybody and anybody who will listen!

After materialising the necklace, Swami stood up and posed for photographs with everybody, one after the other. During all of this, Swami was adjusting His hair and I was staring I suppose, when He said, “Why are you just staring at us? You are losing your chance to have your photo taken!”

“Swami, I have seen so many boys come to be photographed, but You seem to be the most handsome of all.”

So Swami said, “*Manchidi*. (It is okay, good.) You see one after the other coming for their photographs and then going, but I was there throughout. God remains forever—then, now and in the future. Only creation comes and goes. *Ja Gath. Ja Gath*. They come and go. But *Jagadishwara*, God, remains always.”

What a wonderful message that is! Swami’s gestures, His words, they carry such deep messages. Such depth! Such profundity!

### *GOD IS ENCOUNTERED IN THE DEPTH OF SILENCE*

Swami also told us a story about when Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana went to the forest. Sita sat among the ladies, and Rama and Lakshmana sat among the gents. In telling the story, Swami wanted the boys to learn a lesson. Sita did not sit in the modern style, mixing with the men! No, no, no! Sita followed the ways that we do in Prashanti. She sat among the ladies and Rama sat among the men. So there was segregation in Rama’s time too! Very good!

When the other women there saw Sita—a new lady sitting there for the first time—they came around her and asked, “Who are you?”

“I am Sita.”

“Is your husband here?”

She said, "Yes."

So the ladies began pointing to the men's section and asking, "Is he your husband?"

"No!"

"Is he your husband?"

"No, no!"

"Is he your husband?"

"No!"

Then the ladies pointed to Ramachandra. "Is he your husband?"

And with that, Sita just bowed her head.

Baba points out that, unlike most people might today, Sita did not call out to Rama, saying, "Hey husband, hubby, get up! He is the one, he is my husband." She wouldn't say that! (*Laughter*) So why did she remain silent?

Baba gives us a spiritual interpretation: he says that when you actually experience God, you are speechless. So long as there is speech, so long as there is a dialogue or even a monologue, so long as there is verbal, oral expression using words, then you still have a long way to go until you are experiencing God.

Once you are drenched in, basking in, even drowning in the depth of the experience of the Divine, you no longer need to speak. So when the ladies asked Sita if Ramachandra was her husband, Sita regarded Him and then just silently bowed her head. When you encounter God, when you are drowning in Him, experiencing Him, identifying totally with Him, you are speechless. You remain silent. That is what *samadhi* is. *Samadhi* is not eloquence. *Samadhi* is silence. Meditation is silence. That is what Bhagavan explained.

In Hindu weddings, there is always sacred sacrificial rice, *talambralu*. The bridegroom will put some yellow rice on the bride's head and will also put some on his own head. You must have seen *talambralu* in Hindu weddings.

Bhagavan explains that at Rama's wedding, they did not use rice because Rama was the son of Emperor Dasharatha, and Janaki was the daughter of another emperor, Janaka; so they brought pearls for the ceremony rather than rice. They replaced *talambralu* with pearls! Baba says that when Rama held the pearls in his hands, they shined white like precious diamonds because white represents the *sathwic* temperament. When Sita held those pearls, they appeared red because of her

wonderful complexion and her rosy palms and fingers. Red suggests a *rajasic* quality. It speaks of emotion, desire, passion, ambition, and a worldly nature. That is all *rajasic*.

When Ramachandra placed some pearls on His head and Sita's, some fell to the ground. The reflection of the earth on those pearls caused the appearance of some dark specks, representing the *thamasic* quality—gluttony, over-sleeping, the life of the buffalo. Those all suggest *thamasic* qualities.

So, Baba explains that if you approach God as the father, like Ramachandra, the influence will be *sathwic*, like white glittering diamonds. If you approach God as Mother, *Sita*, there will be a *rajasic* quality. If you deny both, this will induce a *thamasic* quality.

So that is how Swami explained *Sita Kalyanam*. How wonderful it is that He is here to explain these things to us. When Swami explains, we should listen. So I thought that on Sri Rama Navami, I should share these thoughts of His with you.

*(Prof. Anil Kumar ended his talk with the bhajan, "Karunya Rama Lavanya Rama.")*

With this, we come to the close of Part One. Sai Ram. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your time. Thank you for giving me a wonderful audience of ardent devotees this morning. I really appreciate your patience!

Thank you very much. May Bhagavan be with you for ever and ever and bestow special blessings upon you all on this Sri Rama Navami day!

*Sainath Maharaj Ki Jai!*

*Sai Ram!*

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