

An Interview with Professor Anil Kumar in Dallas, U.S.A.

by the "Sanathana Dharma Foundation"

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SANATHANA DHARMA

Moderator: *Namaskar* listeners! Welcome to *Namaste* program, brought to you by *Sanathana Dharma* Foundation. *Sanathana Dharma*, also known as Hinduism, exists eternally. It has been there for years; it is there currently, and it will remain forever.

There are some aspects of *Sanathana Dharma* that have been relevant to mankind in the past. There are many aspects that are relevant to us today, and these aspects will be relevant in the days to come.

In order to find out more about *Sanathana Dharma* and the relevance of Hinduism in the modern world, we have in our presence Professor Anil Kumar, who is available with us today.

Professor Anil Kumar is best known for translating Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's discourses into English. He has given very popular talks on Sunday mornings in Prashanti Nilayam, and meanwhile is visiting many Sai centres for the same purpose of sharing Sai Baba's teachings. His morning *satsangs* at Prashanti Nilayam are available on his website www.saiwisdom.com in six languages.

He has been the Principal of the Brindavan campus (of the Sathya Sai University) and has authored many books on Swami. Two of them, *Satyopanishad Volume I* and *II*, are very famous. He is currently a faculty member of Bio-Sciences in Sri Sathya Sai University at Prashanti Nilayam in Andhra Pradesh, India.

Professor Anil Kumar, welcome and thank you very much for taking out time for our listeners of the *Namaste* programme.

Prof. Anil Kumar: Thank you, thank you very much!

Moderator: Professor Anil Kumar, you have given several talks on various topics, and it is really a pleasure to have you on our radio today.

Prof. Anil Kumar: Oh, it is equally my pleasure.

Moderator: Professor, I would like to ask you to enlighten us is about the relevance of Hinduism in the modern world.

HINDUISM IS A WAY-OF-LIFE

Prof. Anil Kumar: It's a really good question. Hinduism, to begin with, is not a religion; Hinduism is a way-of-life. It guides us as to what we are supposed to do at various stages of our life's sojourn.

What is expected of a student? What is expected of a house-holder? What is expected of a recluse? What is expected of a renunciant? In other words, we have four stages in our life sojourn: *Brahmacharya*, *Grihasta*, *Vanaprastha*, and *Sanyasa*.

BRAHMACHARYA

The first stage is *Brahmacharya*, the stage of a celibate. As a celibate, a student learns. He will not allow his mind to deviate or divert. He will focus his attention to acquire knowledge and wisdom while staying with the *guru*. That is *Brahmacharya*, the period of celibacy.

GRIHASTA

The second stage is *Grihasta*, the stage of a householder. A householder not only maintains his family, but realises his obligation to the community. He understands completely his responsibilities to himself and to his family, and contributes to the development and the welfare of the society at large.

VANAPRASTHA

The third stage is *Vanaprastha*, the stage of the recluse. As a recluse, he withdraws slowly, training his children to take up his responsibilities, and giving them guidance as and when they seek it. He is available to his children, yet transfers the family responsibilities to them.

SANYASA

The final stage is *Sanyasa*, the stage of a renunciant. He is, in this stage, completely withdrawn from the mundane world, and likes to spend most of his time in reading the scriptures and in meditation.

Thus, the Hindu way-of-life comprises these four stages: *Brahmacharya*, *Grihasta*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*. This is the way-of-life that a Hindu is supposed to lead.

YAMA AND NIYAMA

The Hindu way-of-life also wants us to have two basic disciplines: *Yama* and *Niyama*. *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Aasana*, *Pranayama*, *Prathyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* is all *Ashtanga Yoga*. I am not going to get into the details of it.

Yama relates to the individual code of conduct, and *Niyama* relates to the way one has to conduct one's own self as an effective contributor and member of the community. Therefore, the Hindu way-of-life prescribes a particular disciplined life as an individual, and also as a citizen.

KARMA SIDDANTA: THE THEORY OF FATALISM

I would also like to bring to your attention that the Hindu way-of-life clearly tells us that we have to reap the consequences of our actions.

Karma Siddanta or the theory of *Karma*, the theory of fatalism, is not to be condemned. It is a simple law of science, something like the Newtonian laws of gravitational force. For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Likewise, as is the action, so is the reaction; as is the cloud, so is the rain; as is the flour, so is the bread; as is the stove's flame, so is the preparation; as is the seed, so is the fruit. Therefore, we cannot escape or run away from our responsibilities, nor run away from the consequences or fruits of our action. This is what is called the theory of fatalism or the theory of *karma*.

The Hindu *Vedanta* has contributed this beautiful theory to human society. You do not find this *Karma Siddhanta* or the theory of fatalism in any other faith.

This theory of fatalism will never allow us to get frustrated or disappointed if there are certain failures because we realise that this failure is the result of our past actions. It will not allow us to be egoistic, or feel too proud of our achievements either, because they are all gifts of God and the results of our own actions. Therefore, God is named "*Karma Phala Pradata*", the Dispenser of the 'fruits' of our actions. You cannot escape from the consequences of your actions.

When man says, "Oh, God, give me all the freedom," God says, "Yes, My son! You can enjoy all the freedom. Do whatever you want, but on one condition: you cannot escape from the results of your actions. You are bound to pass through all the results, pleasure or pain, as the case may be."

HINDU VEDANTA IS A MIGHTY OCEAN

The Hindu philosophy takes you to a certain state, because Hindu *Vedanta* is like a mighty ocean. All religions get merged into that mighty ocean; it will accommodate any number. Just as out of the ocean you find that water transforms into vapour, collects into clouds, rains, and flows as rivers, ultimately all that water merges back into the ocean.

So, the ocean is the birthplace of all rivers, and the ocean is the centre into which all rivers merge back. That's what the Hindu way-of-life, or Hindu philosophy, or Hindu *Vedanta* is. We have to clearly understand the beauty of the Hindu *Dharma*.

*Parama Pavanamainatti Bharataavani Yandu,
Sahanamunnadi Manaku Chakradhanamu.*

*In this land Bharat, where the Hindu way-of-life is practised,
It is sahana or forbearance, purity, tolerance, and patience, which adds to the beauty of a person.
It is not anything external. No, no!
This real quality or virtue is the beauty that adds to your personality.*

Vratamulanti Yandu Vanakanchinatti Gana Satya Seelame Katina Tapamu.

*What is the highest form of penance?
The highest penance is not the ritual.
It is a strict adherence to the path of Truth: one has to follow Truth.
That is the highest level of penance.*

*Madhura Bhavambedi Mana Desamandanna,
Maatru Bhaavambhu Kanna Manyamedu.*

*The nectarine feeling that one has towards one's mother . . . that is highest of all sentiments in
Sanathana Dharma.*

*Above all, it is Sanathana Dharma that prays for, strives and struggles for
the peace and welfare of the whole universe.*

Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu.

May the Lord bless the whole world with eternal peace and goodwill.

Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu.

May the Lord bless the whole universe with eternal peace and goodwill.

Vasudhaikakutumbakam...

The entire human race, the entire human society...

There is only one caste, the caste of humanity. The mighty ocean of Hindu *Vedanta*, the Hindu *Dharma*, is so vast that it provides all kinds of opportunities to everyone. To everyone!

Basically Hindu *Vedanta* believes in *Manava Saubratrutva*, or the brotherhood of man, and *Eashwara Pitrutva*, the Fatherhood of God. That is the main thing.

The purpose and the goal of life is to realise Divinity within. Understand, oh man! You are not the dust! "Dust thou art, and to dust thou returnest." No, no, no! Understand clearly that you are the son of Immortality: *Amrutasya Putrah*: "You are the son of Immortality!"

But you have to realise the Divinity within, so you can reach that state of attainment, that state of achievement so as to declare, "*Aham Brahmasmi*: I am God, I am God!" I am no ordinary mortal. No, no, no! I am That, I am That! *Thathwamasi*.

The kind of intelligence that is latent in me is nothing but the Divine: *Pragnanam Brahma*. That intelligence is Divine. *Pragnanam Brahma*: I am One with the Divine. I am the Divine: *Aham Brahmasmi*. What a declaration it is: "*Aham Atma Brahma*."

The Hindu *Vedanta* will never allow you to be a coward or timid, no! It wants you to realise that you are a lion, that you are Divinity. It will never allow you to live in constant fear, stress and strain. That's why one could say, *Hridaya Daurbalyam, Hridaya Daurbalyam!*

“*Chakthothista Paramthapah*” This kind of fear, *Hrudaya Daurbalya*, is our weakness. *Chakthothista!* “Come on, get up, Arjuna!” says Krishna.

The Hindu *Vedanta* calls for the discharge of one’s own *dharma* to the best of one’s ability. Yes, you should do your duty. It is applicable to modern society, whether you are a computer engineer, a doctor, a salesman, or a businessman. Be an expert in your own field: *Yogah Karmasukausalam*.

WHAT IS YOGA?

Yoga is not merely physical exercise. No! *Yoga* is discharging one’s own *dharma*—profession, vocation, duty. *Karmasukausalam* means ‘discharging to the best of one’s ability’. That is what the Hindu *Vedanta* says emphatically. Furthermore, it goes on declaring what is *yoga*. *Yoga* means ‘the feeling of equanimity, the sense of equality’.

“*Yogam Samatvamuchate.*” *Samatva*: that equality, equanimity, equal-mindedness, steadfastness is the clarion call of Hindu *Vedanta*. It also clearly says that religion is not for lazy people. No! It is meant for experts, competent personalities. Therefore it is said, “*Yogam.*” *Yoga*: that is what we call discharging one’s own duty.

Kartavyam! “*Kartavyam yoga mucchate.*” So discharging one’s duty is *yoga*. Like that, Hindu *dharma* wants us to lead a fruitful, meaningful, and purposeful life of competence.

HAVING A SPIRITUAL GOAL IN THE MATERIAL WORLD

While leading a material life, we should have a spiritual goal. A simple example: here we have a tree. Roots are deeply buried in the ground, while the shoots are above the ground. The leaves, branches, flowers and fruits are all above the ground, while the roots are deep in the ground. Similarly, let us have our roots in the materialistic world, yet let the fruits be our spiritual goals and objectives.

Human life is given to find out and know who you are. Here we are so busy today in trying to know, “Who are you? What is this? How is that? Why is that?” It is not a question of why, how, what, and when.

Just put a question to yourself, “Who am I? Who am I?” *Koham?* We should find an answer to this question, “*Koham? Who am I?*”

The answer should not be, “I am the body, *Aham Dehasmi.*” No! You are not the body. *Naham Deham.* You are not the body.

Koham? Then, who are you?

Aham Jeevasmi. I am the individual.

No, no, no! You are not the individual. Then, who are you?

Aham Brahmasmi: I am *Brahman*.

Having been born with this question, *Koham*, we should leave this world with the answer, “*Soham*.”

SOHAM: “I AM DIVINE”

Soham, *Soham* is the answer. I am That, I am Divine. I am the Divine, immortal, blemishless, nectarine, unpolluted, eternal principle of Divinity. I am the Son of God; I am a spark of the Divine. I am not different from That.

This should be the realisation. Therefore, though we are innately Divine, we have been carried away by sensual desires, so we have forgotten our reality. The job of a Divine Master is to remind us of our duty, and to help us investigate, explore, and dive within in order to understand and experience the Divinity within. That is the purpose of our human life.

After all, when we go somewhere by boat, we don’t stay there in the boat. We don’t build a boat in order to reside there once and for all. The boat simply will help you cross from one shore to another shore. To go across a river, you make use of a boat. That’s all.

DHARMA, ARTHA, KAMA AND MOKSHA: THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVES OF LIFE

Likewise, human life is a boat. On one shore, you have the mundane, material, ephemeral, transitory, and momentary life. On the other shore, there is eternity, immortality. So, human life is something like a boat, taking you from this shore to the other shore.

Therefore, among the primary objectives of life are *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, and *Moksha*. *Dharma* is righteousness, *Artha* is wealth, *Kama* is desire, and *Moksha* is liberation.

At the beginning is *Dharma*, my friends; please let us understand that. At the end is *Moksha* or liberation. *Artha* or the wealth we earn should be supported by, should have *Dharma* or righteousness as its backbone.

MONEY SHOULD BE RIGHTEOUSLY EARNED

Mere acquisition of wealth or *Artha* by unlawful means is not a spiritual path or spiritual way-of-life. We should earn money according to the law, and it should be fully accountable. That accountability, that credibility, that righteousness should be maintained, as you earn your money. So *Dharma—Artha: Artha* or money should be righteously earned—*Dharma*.

DESIRE SHOULD BE BASED ON RIGHTEOUSNESS

Then, *Kama* or desire: how do you fulfil your desire? What kind of desires are there—selfish desires, desires that ruin you, or desires that harm others? What kind of desires should we have? *Dharma* again! All our *Kama* or desires should be based on *Dharma* or righteousness.

So, earn *Artha* based on *Dharma* or righteousness. Have your desire or *Kama* fulfilled, but again with *Dharma* as its foundation. Then, where it will take you? To *Moksha* or liberation. *Moksha* is liberation, our ultimate objective.

These are the four *Purushardhas* or the four objectives of life. But most unfortunately, we have taken the middle two, *Artha* and *Kama*, and forgotten the fact that they should be supported by *Dharma* or righteousness. Only then can they lead to *Moksha*, the ultimate goal.

DETACHMENT FROM ATTACHMENT IS MOKSHA

Moksha is not a foreign land. *Moksha* is not something alien to you; it's not separated from you. *Mohakshaya* is *Moksha*.

Moha means 'attachment'. *Kshaya*: once that attachment is gone, bondage is given up and you are free, my child! *Moksha! Mohakshaya* is *Moksha*. So when you are detached, detachment is *Moksha*, which is the ultimate goal of human life.

We are born free, but we get attached to this world. Because of our senses, because of our associations, because of our worldly life, we get attached as we age. Yet we have to struggle, to meditate, to spend some time going within.

After all, the one who goes only by the external world is an animal: *Pasyatiti Pasuhuh!* The one who goes by all that is seen is *Pasyatiti Pasuhuh*, an animal which has an outward life. But man should be able to go both inward and outward.

VISWAM VISHNUMAYAM JAGAT:

THE OUTER WORLD IS A REFLECTION OF THE INNER DIVINITY

The outer world is nothing but a reflection of the inner Divinity. When we realise this, then the outer and inner are only one.

Viswam Vishnumayam Jagat. Today Hindu *Vedanta* is needed more than ever before in human history. Why? The air is polluted, water is polluted, food is polluted; there is noise pollution, soil pollution and so on. There is no solution to pollution today.

The only solution to pollution is to be respectful to Nature, to be worshipful of Nature, to have feelings of gratitude towards Nature, which you develop on spiritual grounds.

Viswam Vishnumayam Jagat. That is what is needed today, my friends, Hindu *Vedanta*. Let's all live together in brotherhood. Let's live peacefully in this creation, *Shristi*.

SHRISTI, SAMISHTI AND PARAMESTI

Shristi is creation. I am an individual or *vesti*, living in a community or *Samishti*, with the help of the Divine or *Paramesti*. That is the message of Hindu *Vedanta* or Hindu *Dharma* to everyone in the community.

Moderator: Professor, thank you very much! In a very, very short span of time, you have given the gist of Hinduism so nicely to all our listeners. I really appreciate the time you have taken. I know you have a very busy schedule. And, in spite of that, you spared some time for all of our listeners, giving a very, very wonderful, lovely message.

Prof. Anil Kumar: Oh, it is my pleasure to speak to brothers living in a far-off, distant place like America.

Moderator: Thank you very much, Professor.

Anil Kumar ended his talk thanking the Sanathana Dharma Foundation.