

A Special Talk Given by Prof. Anil Kumar

“SOUTH AFRICAN GROUP”

July 9, 2009

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Sai Ram

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A WELCOME TO THE DEVOTEES FROM SOUTH AFRICA

I thank Swami for making this morning's meeting possible. Yesterday, there was a slight failure in communication, so we could not meet. But it is better later than never, and we were able to meet here this fine morning in this sacred place of the *Samadhi*.

I welcome all our devotees from South Africa. I know quite a good number of them. In fact, some of our friends from South Africa come and say to me, “Sir, we have been listening to your talks.” Others say that they have read my books or that they know me. I feel very, very grateful to each and every one of them. Please convey my greetings back home at your place. Thank you for being here this morning.

This morning I will give you a brief introductory talk followed by a question and answer session. The question and answer session is a regular feature in gatherings and small meetings like this because it gives me the opportunity to provide material on certain topics of your interest rather than speaking of all that I know. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is like a diamond with so many facets. So, the facet you want, the dimension you want, or the particular aspect you are interested in, can be covered. You will have ample opportunity to come forward with a volley of questions. No reservations whatsoever—all questions under the sun with no formalities!

THE MERCIFUL DIVINE MASTER HAS CHOSEN US

My friends, as was made very clear yesterday, it is time for us to remind ourselves once again of one important point. It is this: we are not here because we wanted to be here. No, we are here because the Divine Master has chosen us to be here. We should also know that we have not selected Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as our *Guru*, Divine Master, or chosen God. We have not chosen Him, because we are not intelligent enough to find a genuine *Guru*. We are not sharp enough to find a true Master. We are not wise enough to find the guide for our life. We are lost, and more often we are confused. Under these circumstances, the Divine Master is so merciful and so compassionate that He has chosen us, as we cannot choose Him. He has chosen us. This is the point I want you to ponder over and reflect upon.

THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF BHAGAVAN BABA

The next point I want to draw your attention to on this very pleasant morning, at this long awaited meeting, is this: as human beings, we need an example, a model to emulate so that we can learn how to love. Do you think we know how to love? I don't think we know how to love. I don't think so because our love is conditioned, limited and finite. We cannot imagine what love is.

In this self-centred life of selfishness, narrow mindedness, possessiveness and attachment, we want somebody who is selfless. We want somebody to love us unconditionally. For instance, we might say or think, "I am tired of those who love me for my possessions or property. I am not enamoured of those who want me because I am popular. I want somebody to love me in spite of my weaknesses and my faults, somebody to love me in spite of my simple mistakes, somebody to forgive me. I want somebody to love me unconditionally."

We are left with nobody in this world who will love us unconditionally. We know parental love which is conditional; we know family love, and that can be conditional, too. As long as the father keeps on giving what the son demands, the son says, "My dad is the best in this world." The moment the father says, "Sonny, please wait for some time", he says, "I'll meet you in your next life." The wife is good so long as the husband is satisfied with her care. The moment she says, "I am quite busy", he says, "I am bored with you." Everything seems to be conditional.

We know even marital and family relationships are polluted, and we can forget about relationships in the wider sections of the community and society. Under these conditions, to think of one who would love us unconditionally is unimaginable, incomprehensible, and mysterious. But we do have in Baba a true friend, a true parent, who loves us unconditionally!

If we look back into our lives, just as we rewind a cassette . . . I am not speaking of fast-forward, but let us rewind or go back in our lives: how many times have we promised to be good and we have failed to be good? How many times have we decided to correct ourselves and how many times have we miserably failed? How many times have we decided to improve the quality of life and we could not? But yet He loves us, because He knows that, after all, we are His children. As a father, as a mother, we are able to forgive our children, be what they are. When human parents are like that, how about the Divine parent, Bhagavan Baba?

Therefore we are lucky to have Bhagavan Baba in the first place as the Divine Master who has chosen us. And in the second place, we are very lucky to have Him who showers upon us unconditional love, forever and ever.

THE SENSE OF GRATITUDE

Thirdly, we are highly indebted to Him. We feel very grateful. Sometimes I feel I have done this for Swami, or I have done that. Whatever I may do, I am still indebted; I have to do still more for whatever I do doesn't match what I have received from Him. What I have received from Him is much more than what I have done for Him.

Therefore, man is always indebted to God. After all, we cannot repay our gratitude to our parents, so how can we repay our gratitude to God? Impossible! For that reason, we should continue to serve Him. We should continue to love Him because there is no end to this. We can never repay our debt of gratitude and He does not expect any gratitude.

My friends, we think gratitude is an act or a kind of expression of thankfulness to please somebody who has helped us. "You help me. As a matter of gratitude, I will help you in return." We think that gratitude is an expression of having received some help. Not necessarily so, my friends. You thank God not to make Him happy; you thank Him to make yourself happy. He does not expect any thanks or any gratitude.

The sun shines, trees give their shade, rivers give water, but nothing in nature expects any thanks or gratitude from us. Yet we can only call ourselves human beings through expressing gratitude, otherwise not. A dog expresses its gratitude, and if a man cannot, he is of no worth at all. He is much worse than a dog. Therefore, my friends, when we thank Him, when we say we are grateful to Him, it is only to make ourselves happy. It is to please ourselves, and to be worthy of the life of a human being, and not anything else.

SUPREME SACRIFICE

Do we know what sacrifice is? We do not, because sacrifice as we understand it, is an obligation. We think sacrifice is an action of a superior quality; we think sacrifice is a matter of sharing something. It is not so. Sacrifice is a natural quality and not something to be cultivated. Sacrifice is not anything special. If we do not sacrifice, we are not natural. As I breathe in oxygen, I breathe out carbon dioxide. I don't want to keep all the carbon dioxide inside me, so I sacrifice carbon dioxide. Therefore, life is a matter of sacrifice, which is natural.

Bhagavan Baba demonstrates that fact. What a supreme sacrifice His is! He sacrifices His time despite His age. Physically, He is of a great age and looks tired. You must understand this is 'physically'. Physically, He looks as if he needs some rest. But how He struggled on the day of Guru Purnima (a day to honour one's spiritual teacher)! You must have witnessed how tiring it was, a very, very long hectic day.

Could you sacrifice your time, imagining yourself in His position? Can you do that? When you have a little headache or a temperature of 99.9°, you take a holiday. With the slightest indigestion, we declare curfew at home. (*Laughter*) That is what we are, how we behave, in a demanding situation.

But see the Divine! In all physical activities, in His physical state (as it appears), He has grown beyond. He continues to sacrifice His time, His resources, and His energy. He has no personal time. He has no privacy, nothing.

If you have too many guests staying until 10 o' clock at night, you say, "Would you please leave me alone?" (*Laughter*) If you are very tired and hungry, and you still have visitors pouring in, you say, "I am hungry. Would you leave, and let me to have my food?" Won't you say that? Did God ever say, "I need rest. Leave Me alone." No!

THE TRUE MEANING OF SACRIFICE

Sacrifice is not giving anything extra. "I have 200 rupees (Indian currency), so I will give you 50 rupees". Nothing great about that! But, "I have nothing, yet I have something to give you." "I am sick, yet I can make you healthy." "I am in an unhappy position, yet I can make you smile." That is sacrifice. You understand?

When things are working in your favour and all are positive, there is nothing great about doing sacrifice. Instead of paying income tax, you pay in the form of charity; that is not sacrifice. So, the true meaning of sacrifice, love and Truth—all these three, we can learn from the life of Bhagavan.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

We think all that we see, hear and think are true. That is absolutely false. All the things that we see are not true; all the trees and all these things around us are not true. Do not take me for a mad chap, I am not! I am not mad yet, though I am anxious to be so (mad for God) as early as possible! (*Laughter*)

If all the buildings and trees that we see were really true, then this "world" of buildings and trees should be experienced throughout the 24 hours. But when we go to sleep, we experience a different world. When we go to sleep, we go to our dream world; when we are awake, we think of Prasanthi Nilayam. And when we are in deep sleep, there is no dream world and no Prashanthi Nilayam . . . we are just like a vegetable. So if all that we see, hear, and think were true, it should continue in all the three states of awareness. It does not continue, so none of it is true!

So to know Truth we should come to Bhagavan because His very name is Truth, *Sathya*, Sathya Sai Baba. He is Sathya, the immortal, transcendental, blemish-less, nectarine Truth or *Sathya* without beginning or end. That Truth we find in Him, that Truth we learn from Him. And finally we come to know that you and I are that very same Truth. So Truth we learn from Him. Sacrifice we learn from Him. Love we learn from Him.

Do you understand? Am I sermonising or philosophising? Am I talking fiction? No, I am not. I believe I am factual. You are from South Africa and have a spiritual understanding, due to in-depth study and the spirit of Self-inquiry. Therefore, I wanted to dive deep and bring the pearls from the depths for you to see and enjoy.

PEACE AND ONENESS

We have a mind which will never allow us to live in peace. We think if we get what we want, we will be at peace. Wrong, my friends! I think I need coffee and if I get it, I will be peaceful. No! After one hour, I am not at peace because I want something else, I want something more. So, as an individual, I have no peace in spite of getting all that I want. It is not only that. It is “I should get and you should *not* get.” That is the second aspect of the absence of peace.

I don't have peace and there are many others who don't have peace. Why? It is because others have what I have – so I want 'extra'. You are happy, I am also happy. No, no, where is the 'extra' for me? If you are unhappy, then I will be happy. This craving for something more, something extra, will never allow us to be at peace. So we don't know what peace is.

But see Bhagavan. He never feels 'more' than anybody else here. He does not feel that He is 'extra'. He says, “You and I are one. All are one, My dear son.” “Love all, serve all.” He will never say, “Love few, serve few.” (*Laughter*) And He will never say, “Some are equal, but some are more equal.” (*Laughter*) He always advocates the principle of Oneness; He teaches Oneness and practices Oneness. Therefore, He lives peacefully and is in peace continuously.

After all, we face so many problems while managing the house. Right from breakfast, we have controversy. The husband wants toast, but the wife makes some *dosa* (pancakes) (*Laughter*), or the wife is ready with *puri* (deep fried chapathi) but the husband wants porridge or cereal.

So how do you expect to be peaceful at home? I want my child to wear a frock, while she says, “No, dad, I want something else.” The children don't listen to us. Why? We want them to hear us. Or then I am not peaceful because I want my wife to listen to me. Why can't I listen to her? No, because I think I am superior. I am not happy in the office. Why? It is because I am the boss and others have to follow me. Why?

BABA'S TREATMENT FOR THE ABSENCE OF PEACE

Therefore, my friends, we don't have peace because of the complexity of our mind. The mind is complex; it is not at peace within itself nor with its surroundings, nor with other people. It is not at peace with anybody. Such a mind we have! What shall we do? The mind has to be cleansed. An electronic dry cleaner is required! (*Laughter*) Household powder cleansers or antiseptics cannot clean it, no lotions, nothing.

It needs some surgery. We have the Divine surgeon, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who will correct our mind. How? It is a major surgery. What is the process of surgery? Is it cardiac, or cardio-thoracic, or a hormonal treatment? His is the surgery of Divine Love, which gives us peace of mind.

Peace is health. Peace is natural. The absence of peace leads to disease. If you say, “I have no peace”, you are sick. We think sickness means a high temperature, a cold or cough, or where we have to be admitted to hospital, or lie in bed. No, not necessarily so, my friends. Jealousy, anger, and absence of peace are sicknesses. We should be free from these sicknesses.

Baba, the Divine surgeon, operates by the process of Love. You may say, how? Sometimes if He does not look at you, that is the treatment. He won't shout at you; He just ignores you. You

are sitting there in *darshan*, so the theatre is already ready. (*Laughter*) When He starts ignoring you, the process starts. The sterilisation is finished, the patient is prepared.

He does not beat or talk to you, but makes you feel like: “Swami, a beating is better than being ignored. It would be better if You gave me two heavy blows and talked to me nicely instead of ignoring me. (*Laughter*) It would be better if You beat me as You did in Shirdi, as Shirdi Sai. Why did You lose your old habit? Please bring it back and just hug me, my dear Lord!”

So the pain of this treatment of Love lies in being ignored. The pain of it lies in being neglected. And finally He confers peace upon you, so that you forget the pain. The mother suffers pain at the time of delivery; but the moment the child is born, the mother never thinks of that pain. The wail of the child is enough for the mother to forget all the pain she had. The moment Swami confers that peace, gone is the pain! Everything is gone!

How does He confer? He does not have to give you a gunny bag of currency or a suitcase full of jewels. You can buy them if you want. He just looks at you and gives a smile. His smile will go for miles and miles on our journey of life, please take it from me. The smile of Baba is the cure. When He accepts your letter, it is curative. When He looks at you, it is supportive. When He throws a flower, it is creative. So that is how He confers peace in the agonising, difficult, testing, challenging, troubling moments of life.

BABA GIVES ANSWERS

When we look to Him and pray, we find an answer from within. We may even find an answer from the personal experiences of some devotees, or they may come forward to help you. A devotee who tells you, “I too had that situation and Baba helped me like this . . . “ may have some message for you. Baba communicates through His photo, a picture, books, dreams, or even through other devotees. There are so many channels, my friends. After all, the TV set has only 50 channels. Baba has a million channels (*Laughter*) and that, too, is a remote operation! The remote control is there; He presses the button, and finished!

LIFE IS BEYOND

After coming to Baba, we know what life is . . . that it is beyond. Had we not come here, we would have thought that life is only for living. Life is not only for living, my friends. Trees are living, and animals are living. Life is not just for living. Life is immortal, while living is only earning, eating, dancing, sleeping; that is all. But life is a continuous flow, a journey to immortality. Life is blissful and joyful. Life is to enjoy, not for profit-making. Living is profit-making, living is business, but not life. Living needs luxuries, comforts, and conveniences.

After coming to Baba, we know that life is beyond. We know that life is natural. Living is unnatural because we have complexes about ourselves. What is my position? How is my dress? How is my hair style? This is all living, artificial. Shall I talk to him? What is his rank? Convener or coordinator? National or zonal? Veranda in-charge or carpet in-charge? (*Laughter*) But life is beyond cadre.

We now know that life is sacrifice, truth, love, peace. We know that life is beyond luxuries, money, or position. It is beyond spans or limitation. For example, if anyone dies, we say he lived for 70 years, or whatever was the life span. But no one lives for 70 years, 80 years, and 100

years because no one dies! You may ask, why? Well, you were not born. When you are not born, how can you die? So to have the thought that you are born is a myth, and to think you are going to die is delusion. Both ideas are full of ignorance.

When I change my clothes (as in casting off the body), that does not mean I am going to die. This evening I am going to wear my cream-coloured suit and take off this grey suit. So by wearing the cream-coloured suit, do you think I am dead? (*Laughter*) I was never born nor will I ever die. That is the simple point. Therefore, we should know life.

VALUES ARE KNOWN AFTER COMING TO BHAGAVAN

All these things are known after coming to Baba. For instance, we have been practicing our religion for years; but after coming to Baba, we learn how to be religious. You know what religion is, but you do not know how to be religious. You know what prayer is. After coming to Baba, you know how to be prayerful.

I am not a student of English for your information. I am a student of botany. So, I am not playing with words. I have not planned anything; this is all Baba's will. So you may know prayer, but you do not know how to be prayerful. You may belong to a religion, but do not know to be religious. All these values we come to know from Bhagavan.

LIFE HAS TRUE MEANING AFTER COMING TO BABA

We do not know how rich we are today. Richness cannot be calculated in terms of bank deposits or safety lockers or entries in the passbook. Those who are rich like that are utterly poor in spirit. Those who are rich in spirit care for nothing. Those who are peaceful inside are not disturbed by outer chaos. Those who sacrifice are not bothered about their possessions and position, acquisitions, power, wealth, or whatever it may be.

Therefore, personally I feel life is interesting and so sweet after coming to Baba. I feel that life has a meaning after coming to Baba. You may compare the people here to many of the people who are elsewhere. Go back to your country, (which you have to some day, because you have your jobs), and just look at the people there. What long unhappy faces they have! (*Laughter*) They have no smiles at all, no satisfaction at all.

Many people have five or six cars to enjoy *shikaar*, a car ride, but why? I don't want them to throw away their cars. Please have your car if this makes you happy; but you are not happy. People say that they have a 3-bedroom, 4-bedroom, or a 100-bedroom house! I want to know where the living room is! (*Laughter*)

LOVE BRINGS DEVOTEES TOGETHER

So my friends, with these words, I throw open the question and answer session to you. I love you very much and I appreciate your time here.

I do have a question to ask you first. What brings us together? What is it that brought you here? Usually in the western countries, when you announce that a meeting was scheduled at 10:30 or 11:00, but now it must be postponed to a later date or time, the response is "No! There will be no next time, not now." (*Laughter*)

So in spite of certain things that could not materialise, your love made you wait and be interested in what I would say to you this morning. So love only is our business; we are not salesmen. I really appreciate your devotion and thank you very much for your time and patience.

HAVE TIME TO LOVE LIFE

Let us all together love life, my friends. Life is music. Listen to Sai *bhajans* (group devotional singing). The Sai *bhajans* is really full of life. Each *bhajan* is an entry in the passbook of your heart. Each *bhajan* is a million dollars! Each thought of Swami is a spoonful of sugar added to a glass of water that will make the whole glass of water sweet. The water is tasteless without sugar. Our life, our living, is like tasteless water without *bhajans*.

Why? Here is an example. I went to visit my children and stayed with them. I also visited many, many houses in the U.S. over three months. The day begins with dish-washing! (*Laughter*) Those sinks are full of dishes in all the 24 hours!

Also, there is no time to eat!

“What do you want for breakfast? Some sort of snack?”

“What! A snack? We want at least four *dosas*!” (*Laughter*)

Poor people, they have no time, not even to eat. When you have no time to eat, where is the need for money? Are you going to eat dollars, or what? What a mechanical life it is! Also, you don't get home until 6:30 pm as well.

On my return trip, they asked me, “Mr. Anil Kumar, what do you want?”

I told them, “I want an Indian job with an American salary!” (*Laughter*) (*Applause*)

They pay very well, but I cannot match their work. So, Indian work style with American salary would be ideal. (That is just a joke because we are all members of the Sai family.) Actually, it is hats off to them for their honesty, sincerity, work, dignity and commitment. There are many, many things to learn from our American friends. Now the floor is open to you, to put questions of your choice to me.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Have you faced any test put to you by Baba and failed?

He is very much interested in my failures! (*Laughter*) And secondly, he is not simply convinced by my smiles or outer appearance. He wants to know if there are any inner hidden miseries. (*Laughter*) Or else, he gets a sinister pleasure in enjoying what I may say at my cost!

That is just a joke. I like to entertain everybody because spiritual talks and spiritual gatherings are unfortunately usually too serious. That seriousness will never give you wisdom or take you to liberation. Seriousness takes you instead to the hospital (*Laughter*) because of blood-

pressure! Life is full of fun, life is full of smiles. So my jokes are made in order to make you laugh. When chimpanzees and monkeys can smile, can't we smile? (*Laughter*)

Now I tell you, I was put to tests a number of times. I cannot say that I never failed the tests with their challenging moments. I cannot say that. I have failed when I have not made an attempt to be successful. He made me withstand the tests; but where I have failed is in not forgetting those very same tests, and how I felt during them. I have not forgotten those moments of tests.

Here is a simple example, just an example. Suppose yesterday you fed me a sumptuous lunch, five sweets, five hot dishes, and the South Indian pickle. I enjoy all that. Now today, you insult me. If the hurt from this insult, the hurt of some bad words or some wrong actions done to me, is not forgotten, it means I have failed.

Yes, I remember plenty of things, many, many things that God has done for me. But if He wants to give me a list, I will find that I have forgotten many, too. But I remember exactly every test, every difficulty I passed through, every challenging situation, and the heavy, sickening, troubling, tear-shedding, sleepless nights. I remember every detail. But of infinite rewards, I may remember a few and omit a few. I may have taken them for granted many times. So I have failed in not being able to forget all the challenging moments in my life.

I will be really touched when I can do that. I really pray for the day when I will forget some of the injuries, some of the sad moments I faced. There I failed. Am I clear, sir? Thank you. You have helped me to look at things in a new dimension, which I never expected. It just came up like that.

Has one any control over one's karma?

First, let us know the answer to this question, what is *karma*? *Karma* is the result of an action. Who did this action? I kept my hand in the fire. That is action. The hand is burnt. That is *karma*. So action leads to reaction. So action is the cause for *karma*. If I help everybody, I get merit. If I harm everybody, I am committing a sin. So good action leads to a good result; bad action gives a bad result. As is the flour, so is the bread. As is the cloud, so is the rain. As is the seed, so is the fruit. As is the thought, so is the action. As is the action, so is the reaction.

So I have control over my *karma*, if I know that I am the cause for it. Then the next question is: why don't I know this? Today I am suffering. Why don't I know that my actions are responsible for my sadness today? The reason is that some actions give immediate results, while other actions give results after a long time. Some actions may take a longer time to bear results.

I give you a simple example. When you cut yourself, you bleed immediately. The milk you drink gives you strength for one hour. When you eat lunch, it will give you energy for four hours. If you sow a seed, it will grow into a tree after a couple of months or years. So some actions give immediate reactions, and some actions give reactions later on. It is *karma*, in due course of time, over a period of time.

So, let me know that I am the maker of my destiny. “*Karma Phala Pradataya Namah.*” One of God’s names is *Karma Phala Pradataya Namah*, which means “He sees to it that you cannot escape from the results of your actions.”

I can escape from paying income tax. (*Laughter*) I can copy and escape the notice of the examiner while sitting for the examination. I can escape from the notice of my children, family and the public. But I cannot escape from *karma*. So, *Karma Phala Pradataya Namah*.

The next stage is: how do I do this action? I think of it and then I act. Do you act and then think? No! You think and act; so action comes second, while thought is first. Am I right? From where does thought arise? It arises from the mind. So thought arises in the mind, and that thought leads to action undertaken by the body.

So *karma* is the suffering of the body from wrong thoughts which lead to wrong actions. Am I clear? The action is a result of the thought which arises in the mind, bringing suffering to the body. Therefore, what we have to do is to arrive at ‘no-thought’, so that there will be no action. That is called ‘thoughtlessness’, and that thoughtlessness or ‘no-mind’ state leads to actions which are totally detached from the consequences or results. Then there is no *karma* whatsoever.

Also, by praying to God, the period and pain of *karma* can be reduced. We can have certain exemptions from *karmic* effects, much like we can have certain income tax exemptions. Am I clear, sir? Thank you for your thought-provoking question.

God has given us incredible powers like buddhi (the intellect or discriminating power), which is used to follow the five pillars in Sanathana Dharma (Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema, Ahimsa). If a thought arises in me (irrespective of word and action) that brings misery, then I have the power to stop it. What do you think? The spiritual ideals of joy and happiness say this should be done.

A very good question! You are from South Africa! Why not give him a big hand? (*Laughter and applause*) He must be the study circle convener or a voracious reader of Sai literature!

Thought can be controlled at a higher level. (I am just putting what sir has said in a different style.) The mind thinks, but which thought is good or bad has to be decided by the intellect. It is the intellect that decides the quality of a thought. The main gate at the airport will allow you to carry all the bags and baggage along with you. But at the security gate (*Laughter*) any oils, eatables, or vegetables, will not be allowed in. Therefore, the mind is the general main gate for any thought, but the intellect is the guard at the security gate. There, thoughts that are good are allowed to pass. Naturally, in such a case, the *karma* that waits is bound to be good. So there is no problem. (*Applause*) Any more questions?

We do appreciate your answers and thoughts on karma, but all of us are not on the same plane of understanding. This is something we should think about because at times, (I don’t know whether this is due to ego or not), we don’t know what level we are at.

Yes, good. Actually speaking, unless we know something higher, unless we experience something higher, we don't crave for it. We don't look for it. Unless we have tasted something better than what we are eating now, we won't want it. So long as I am happy with popcorn, I don't run after pie or doughnuts. But once I start loving the taste of doughnuts and pie . . . "Oh, I want it!" Some people, (of course, not everybody), when they think of fried chicken (*Laughter*) or hamburger, they say that is better. When someone tastes Italian or Mexican food, or fried rice, "Ha, I want it." So it is from then on that I realise those other tastes exist.

Therefore, if the taste is known (experienced) of a superior way of life, a superior way of thinking, a finer attitude, we will love it and want to have it. We are not of the same understanding because some have tasted a better way, while some have not yet tasted that. But Sai will make all of us taste the higher life.

Prasadam (blessed food) is given to everybody. Does He give *prasadam* to just a few? Moreover, our good God will not leave until the last man gets the *prasadam*. So all of us will have a taste of it; all of us have awareness, all of us will have the same understanding, the same standard, because Sai has not come to drop anybody from the plane's passenger list.

An airline may take 350 to 400 passengers maximum. Some very rich people told me also of a cruise in St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands in America, where they carry 5000 passengers! I told them next time we will have a conference while cruising there! (*Laughter*)

You know what they said? "We are ready, Mr. Anil Kumar. Give us the dates."

I said, "Come on, don't say that!"

"We will arrange it now, okay."

So I said, "I am so happy. Next time we will have a very good *sadhana* camp on a cruise in the Virgin Islands, USA!" (*Laughter*) However, we may not need that "5000 capacity cruise" for a conference; instead, just 500 selected devotees.

SRI SATHYA SAI UNIVERSAL AIRLINES

So when we go on to higher tastes, we will love it. If you enjoy silence, you don't like noise. When you enjoy meditation, you have gone beyond rituals like external worship. When you follow the path of enquiry, you are no longer attracted by stories.

So let us taste higher and higher. Bhagavan will not leave you at ground level. The Sai Airlines are very big, (*Applause*) and we are all in the Sri Sathya Sai Airlines, SSA. This airline is so big that there is enough space for people who are yet to be born! There is enough space, but we need a passport and visa: the passport of interest, yearning, inquisitiveness, or the art of knowing plus the visa of devotion. So with these two, we can easily get onto Sri Sathya Sai Airlines. But we are already there! And we didn't have to buy a ticket.

How is that you are here from South Africa? Are you here without passports? Are you here without visas? If you did not have these papers, there is a police station here . . . not in

Prashanthi Mandir, but outside there is a police station. So we are already here! The only thing is that we do not know where we are!

Our prayers should be only to continue to be here and never be thrown out. If we are on a visitor's visa, we may stay for six months. There are restrictions with a visitor visa and it is a crime to stay beyond the permitted period. If we arrive as an immigrant, we stay here. If we are a citizen, we have special rights and privileges.

So we are citizens of Sri Sathya Sai universe. We are citizens, not visitors who come and go. We are not on a visitor's visa or an H1 visa (sponsored by an employer). Nothing doing! We have the red category of security. No problem! Am I clear, please?

We are leading a family life and have a baby. We need elaboration in something we are very interested in. I know that Upanayanam will take us forward in Brahma Jnana (supreme knowledge of God). I am asking you a question to please clarify with Baba: can we perform the sacred thread ceremony for that?

I am not here to give you Bhagavan's opinion about it. You may ask when the time is suitable and appropriate. But in studying Sai's literature and listening to Him for many, many years, these are my conclusions, which may be even wrong. But the conclusions that I arrived at are that wearing a sacred thread at a special thread ceremony (*Upanayanam*) is only an external ritualistic act, an act of religion.

The actual meaning of the thread ceremony in Sanskrit is *Upa-nayanam*: *upa* meaning 'extra', *nayana* meaning 'eyes'. We have two eyes, but *Upa-nayanam* says 'extra eyes'. What eye is this? It is the third eye, the wisdom eye. For that, a thread is not needed. Many people have a thread which is the size of a rope! (*Laughter*)

I am not laughing at it because I know many people who have had *Upanayanam* and I belong to the community that wears the thread. So I know all that stuff. Moreover this is the land where such things take place. Baba is now bringing us out of that dogma and ritualism. Baba is taking us out of that fanaticism and those blind practices. It is not that He condemns them; rather if you do it, do it in full awareness.

Here is a simple example. If I salute a national flag, I am not saluting a piece of cloth; rather, I salute the whole nation. You do it with that premise. If it is not being saluted as a revered cloth, it is okay. Similarly, the sacred thread could be used to scratch my back if I have an itch. Some people keep it on the coat stand and wear it on special occasions. (*Laughter*) Some people tell you it is a sign of their community.

How about Christians, how about Muslims, how about Buddhists, how about other religions? Babais for all religions, not just the Hindu religion.

SPIRITUAL AWARENESS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN LEARNING SANSKRIT

For instance, I personally feel that too much emphasis is placed on Sanskrit in those countries where Sanskrit is not known. It is not that important. All over America, people ask me "Anil

Kumar, should we learn Sanskrit?" (*Laughter*) Why do they think that God knows Sanskrit and He does not know English?

My standard answer is this: "God knows English also. So you don't have to struggle to learn Sanskrit." Suppose I introduce myself, "I am Anil Kumar." Okay. But then suppose I start introducing myself like this phonetically: "I am A-N-I-L . . ." You would say (very surprised), "Hi, brother." (*Laughter*) Certainly you would not reply, "Hi, A-N-I-L-K-U-M-A-R, pronouncing each letter very carefully. (*Laughter*) When I was born, Anil Kumar was the latest name; today it is outdated.

Therefore, instead of trying to learn Sanskrit in this present age and mispronouncing it, is it worth it? It is no longer in our blood; it is no longer in our bones and marrow. Many Sanskrit scholars in this country have their children settled abroad with no knowledge of Sanskrit at all. If you are a Sanskrit scholar with no faith in it, then with what faith can you propagate it to others? Here the role of Baba comes in. Your understanding, your awareness, your comprehension, your experience is much more important than repetition and recitation. In this modern age, we have CDs and DVDs that can do a much better job. (*Laughter*)

Swami knows everything that goes through our mind, yet still many of us like to write letters to Swami. Can you please explain the meaning and significance of that? Also, sometimes if Swami does not accept the letter, does He bless it?

Now the point is this: let her write things. We know Baba knows everything. But we still pray to Swami, "See that my daughter is married to a boy with a visa (*Laughter*), preferably an immigrant visa."

If He knows all that we want, then why do we pray? "Baba, see that my daughter is married to at least a millionaire." (*Laughter*) "Oh, Swami, I want an interview plus a chain." (*Laughter*) If I say, "He knows", then why do I pray like that to Him?

It is because theoretically I know, but in practice, I have yet to reach that stage. So long as I see something as a goal or aim, I have to do these things like prayer, letter writing, and so on. When there is no role at all, when there is no goal, when there is no longer a target, nothing to ask for, because That you are, then no letter is written. When I realise that I am infinite, that I have no desires, no petition to make, no submission, that I am everything, at that stage, there is no letter writing.

But I have demands right from breakfast time. For example, the coffee must be hot. If not, I cannot bear it. I have been speaking on philosophy here. But if you ask my wife at home, she will tell you, "You can see his *vishwaroopa* (cosmic form, meaning all forms, both good and bad) when the coffee is not hot!" (*Laughter*) I want it very, very hot. So with what authority can I say, "Let me not write letters because He knows everything." Does He not know I like hot coffee? Hot coffee is also known to Him and also that I have that desire.

Therefore, spirituality is a journey. It is a continuous, eternal, immortal journey. It is a wonderful journey, a bon voyage. We love this journey, this trip. There is no competition here; you reach a stage earlier than me, that's fine. We enjoy it, whatever is the pace. The elephant walks slowly.

Is there not beauty in the style of walking slowly like an elephant? It walks majestically. The deer jumps very fast. Is there not beauty there? There is! All dancers can learn from him. Then think of dancers. Is there not beauty there? How about lions? So there is beauty too. Let us be slow, dead slow, or let us be fast. But we are moving. There is beauty at every stage of the journey. A sweet may be small or a sweet may be big, but all sweets are sweet. So there is no reason for competition.

Some of us are not Hindus, we are not Muslims, we are not Christians, and we are not Buddhists. Is it okay if I call myself Baba's devotee or that I follow Baba's religion?

You go to the ocean where all rivers have merged. If you call to your own river, it is there. If you say, "This is my river", it is there. If I say "ocean" all rivers are there. That ocean is Sathya Sai. (Applause)

You said last week that we should 'swallow' the name of Swami. Are you saying Swami is asking us to do Namasmarana (repeating the Name of the Lord) and focus on His Name and form?

Exactly, that is what I meant. We should move from His Name to namelessness, from His form to formlessness, and from His attributes to attributeless-ness.

In the process of moving towards attributeless-ness, are we not trying to move away from the physical form? But while focusing on His attributes, in fact we are not moving away from the physical form?

Exactly! I will give you my favourite example: you have some milk and add to it a spoon of instant coffee and a spoon of sugar. Have you not a drink of coffee? If you put curd into the milk, it gets curdled. Am I right? Another example: here is a fruit on a tree. That tender fruit becomes larger and ripens on its own, without your effort. Do you go to every fruit and press it to ripen? You may squeeze it, but you cannot ripen it. (Laughter) Let it ripen on its own.

So in our spiritual journey, things happen; they are not done. Those things that happen are spiritual; those that are done are human. For instance, I saw plastic flowers at many places. They are in many restaurants all over the USA. The moment I go there, "Ah, that chap, Mr. Anil Kumar is here! Plastic flowers, please!" (Laughter) So there are certain things like that. We slowly move from the artificial non-genuine flower to the real flower. When the plastic flower is so beautiful, how about the real flower? In some of the clothes shops, you see a lady standing in the shop window. (Laughter) You think that she is real? The glass will hit your head if you try to get closer. If that display model is so beautiful, then how about the real lady? Therefore, if the Name makes you happy, namelessness will make you happier. Am I clear?

This is the question she was asking about. And the answer is what I said the other day: in the *Ishavasya Upanishad* (the first of the earliest Hindu sacred texts), the name and form are to be 'swallowed'. The meaning is that they have to be transcended.

We are attached to the physical form of Sai and that is why we come here. Now we notice that there are a lot of security men around Him. Our pure love has brought us to Him. But

most of the time our view is blocked due to the number of people around Him. Everybody is questioning this.

I sit close to the lion statue so that I can also hide behind it! (*Laughter*) I have chosen that place for the sake of convenience. (*Laughter*) Even from there, all I can see are the people surrounding Swami and the wheels of the chair in which He sits, but not Swami. I feel so badly.

On enquiry, I have come to know that the government wants certain security measures to be taken in the light of the present situation of terrorism all over the world. The terrorists are targeting temples and places of worship. There are two centres which have been given top priority by the central government. These are Tirupathi and Puttaparthi. The highest grade of security has been put in place and Swami certainly will follow the rules of the government. In fact, though, He loves to move among people. The point is that security arrangements are made as per demands.

I was wondering why they can't put up big television screens so that the people in the back can see?

What happens then is that when Swami passes by, you will be watching the television! (*Laughter*) You won't look at Him. Baba gave an example of this. It seems a fellow goes to a mango shop. This is in summer when the mangoes are in great demand. He will pick up a mango, but he won't buy it straight away. He will smell it first to check if it is a lemon or a tamarind. Why does he do that? He wants the mango, and he sees that it is a mango . . . but maybe it is a cucumber? Similarly with the screen, you are looking there to see if it is Baba, so you are not looking at Baba as He passes by. Therefore, you may as well sit at home with a video of Baba and see Him that way.

Actually there are many mangoes in USA also, and wherever I went, people served me mangoes because they knew I liked them. So I did not miss anything. People came to know the foods I liked, no matter where I went. Even in St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands! I could not imagine how it was that *dosa* and *vada* (spicy doughnuts made from lentils) could be prepared for me, there. I asked the devotees how they managed to do that. They said, "One or two old students of Anantapur campus are here. They said because you were coming, it was their duty to take care of you."

We don't want to be over confident about what we got and what we did not get from Swami while we were here. Would you say to us that we must be contented with whatever we get from Swami?

My friends, we have not come here to be contented nor have we come to take anything from here. There is nothing here that is not in South Africa. There is nothing that you do not have that you are going to get here.

Then why should you come here? Is it to waste money, to be pushed around by *sevada*ls (volunteer helpers)? (*Laughter*) You have come here to know what you are, to know what you have, to know how great you are.

Suppose if someone says to me, “Mr. Anil Kumar, you are handsome.” (*Laughter*) He has not made me; I have not become handsome for his sake. I have not worn this colour for his appreciation. I do not know how nice this colour is and I do not know how nicely this colour suits me until somebody tells me so. Somebody says to me, “Mr. Anil Kumar, please take the food left over from breakfast.” I looked hungry but I did not realise it until somebody told me.

Similarly, we have certain things; but it is only when somebody tells us, that we realise it is so. “That chain looks good. Where did you get it?” “That sari looks nice. Where did you go to get it?” Here we have come to know how handsome we are, how rich we are in spirit and spiritually, how we are born blissful. And how joyful, playful and hopeful we can afford to be; how promising and enjoyable life is, and what a beautiful nature we have been given by God. We have come here to know what we have.

May Baba bless you, and be with you forever and ever.

Prof. Anil Kumar ended the session with the bhajan, “Ek Bar Kshama Karo Sai”.

OM

*Asato Maa Sad Gamaya
Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya
Mrtiyormaa Amrtam Gamaya*

*Om Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu
Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu
Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu*

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

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