

Prof. Anil Kumar Question and Answer Session

with Youth in Dallas

May 10, 2009

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Sai Ram

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Moderator: My name is Madhavan, and I am a young adult from Dallas, Texas. I will be presenting and posing questions from the youth across various regions of the United States of America to our esteemed, respected, revered and most reverent Prof. Anil Kumar.

HOW TO PRACTICE DISCRIMINATION AND HAVE A CEILING ON DESIRES?

When the mind is obsessed with a particular desire, it almost convinces a person that the need is reasonable and absolutely necessary. How is one to practice discrimination and have a ceiling on desires in such an obsessed state of mind?

It is rather unfortunate if the mind is obsessed with a particular desire. How did you get convinced about the desire? That is my question. How do you know that your desire is genuine? How do you know that you deserve the desire and its subsequent fulfilment? How do you know that the desire serves your long-term interests? Therefore without knowing its implications or ramifications, its utility and the impending danger, plus the challenges that would follow, how do you say that you are convinced of your desires?

Desire, as such, we have not understood. Desire as it is, we have not analysed critically and in an unbiased fashion. Once we understand what desire is, it may well take you anywhere. So, let

desire fulfilment be left in the hands of God. He will certainly do what is good for you, making sure you are in a safe zone.

It becomes obsession when you want the desire to be fulfilled in your favour. This point of obsession comes when you have got a preference or a choice. But desire, as it is, has neither preference nor choice. So leave it.

God fulfils well; but if you have a preference and choice, you will get obsessed with this desire, and this obsession will upset your relationships. It will affect your performance. It will affect your mind/thought process. It will make you passive and dull, because your desire is not fulfilled.

But later on, when your desire is not fulfilled in your interest and you come to understand why, "Oh God, *now* I understand why You have not fulfilled my desire. You love me, and You know me much better than I know for myself!"

So, desire and obsession for that desire is something emotional and preferential, an exercising of choice. If you just give up these things, desire is neutral, whether fulfilled or unfulfilled, whatever may be. Then there will never be an obsession.

ARE THE YOUTH READY TO TAKE ON RESPONSIBILITY IN THE ORGANISATION?

One thing we keep hearing is that the youth are not ready to take on responsibility and the adults are not ready to give it up. Could you give us your opinion on what you think of the youth today? In what areas do young adults need improvement?

There are two aspects mentioned in this question: the youth are not ready, and the adults are not willing to give up their responsibilities. This state of affairs is not in any way positive or good for the development and expansion of the organisation. We should get into some kind of a situation where adults would gladly give up their responsibilities, and youth will enthusiastically take up these responsibilities.

What is the problem now? The problem is that the adults, in some instances, consider the youth as an immediate threat to their positions. Youth give adults an impression that they are ready to occupy their positions. So adults are not willing to give them up.

Why are youth not ready? It is because they have varied interests, professional obligations, career advancements, family responsibilities, and so forth. So they find it difficult to devote the time demanded of them, depending upon the projects the organisation undertakes. Therefore, it is justifiable on both sides—adults having a sense of insecurity and youth feeling completely unprepared.

So what is to be done now? I suggest that the youth who are ready to undertake these responsibilities should do so, thus winning the confidence of the community . . . I mean, the members of the organisation. Let all the members of the organisation repose confidence in

these youth who come forward, as they are capable of discharging these duties far better than the adults. In fact, my observation is that they can do and are ready to do, but they are not ready to jump at it.

Somebody should motivate them. Provided with enough motivation, youngsters are ready to take up lots of responsibilities. Therefore, in so doing, let them win the confidence of all the members of the organisation. Let them show that they are capable of doing it. They are quite eligible and responsible, having all the skills and talents required.

Secondly, they should demonstrate in action by taking up one project, in order to prove their leadership qualities. Naturally, after seeing their good qualities, adults themselves will invite these youth to take up responsibilities and occupy the cadre positions in the organisation.

WHAT CAN THE YOUTH DO TO OVERCOME THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL SLUMP?

In light of the global economic slump, what can the youth do to overcome this, both for themselves or for others who might be affected?

The present project “Ceiling on Desires” is the best solution. They should think about what is absolutely necessary at this moment. Those desires that can afford to wait should be postponed until a future date.

Let us not run after luxurious lives. Let us not be carried away by all the pomp and show. Let us not compete with others. Let us not compare ourselves with others in respect to extravaganza, publicity, and lavish expenditure. Let us not go in that direction at any point of time. Let us clearly judge what is absolutely necessary at this moment.

Certain things can afford to be postponed, and certain things are not necessary at all. Certain things we want to have as a question of prestige, while certain things we want to acquire for the simple reason the neighbour has it. This type of imitation, this kind of meaningless competition, and this sort of unnecessary comparison are all responsible for our extra expenditures. All these things can be cut off. If you still want to have something like this, yes, you certainly can; but at a later date, a future date—not right now with this economic slump.

The first and foremost thing that the youth will have to do is *not* to make use of credit cards. You have got some balance to your credit; make use of it. Otherwise, don't spend. Don't go for loans. Just think of Swami Vivekananda who, in the earlier period of his visit to England, spent his life living in the pipelines, as he could not afford accommodation at that time. He had to depend upon food which was left over. Only later he became the Swami we remember.

Therefore, we should learn from the people who are illustrious in their career. They should be our role model for how to lead a simple life, a life which is exemplary. The quality of life is more important than the quantity of things. The standard of life is more important than the standard of living. This will solve all problems.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE QUOTE FROM SWAMI THAT APPLIES TO YOUTH?

What is your favourite quote from Swami that applies to our lives as youth?

My favourite quote from Sai literature, which is certainly applicable to youth, is this:

Spirituality is a journey from 'I to We'.

The reason is this: when I just carry on my life with this feeling of I-ness, with a feeling of 'I and mine', there are two evil tendencies. These two reflect narrow-mindedness. They are self-interest and selfishness. So, this self-centeredness is not religious, while selfishness is irreligious.

In order to be selfless, in order to be simple and humble, in order to be benefited by the opportunities of service given to us, in order to know how to care, share and enjoy the Divine, it is a **must** that one travels from this ordinary 'I' to 'We'. Otherwise, this 'I' is just a limitation; 'I' is just a drop, but this drop thinks it is all—something like a frog in a well. But when this drop is dropped into the ocean, the drop will realise that it is a part of the ocean, and lose its name and form.

Self-denial: that is what self-effacement is. So, drop your I-ness or ego/body identification, identification with the mind, and identification with the intellect, which is all only the science of arrogance. These things can be dropped, can be gotten rid of, only if we travel from 'I to We'.

Once we understand that we are one among many, we will be simple, more caring, more loving, more sharing than ever before. From that state of 'we-ness', we travel to He. He is the Divine. So, 'I' is the individual, 'we' is the community, and He is the Divinity. So, from the individuality to the Divinity, one has to pass through the community. Community requires purity and community requires unity. Only then we can go on to He, the Divine, the Divinity.

Therefore, 'I to We' is absolutely necessary. There is a tendency among some people to feel, "I live for myself; after all, it is my life." That is nonsense! It is not your life. The food you eat is not grown by you. The dress you wear is not in any way made by you. So you are no where. You are, after all, benefited by all sections of the society, by everybody, the family, the community, and the labour of many others. Then, how do you say, "I live my life"? It is a sign of madness.

We have to travel from 'I to We'. This is the famous quote of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba that I like the most, which really reflects the depth and the profundity of spirituality.

CAN THERE BE AN EQUAL BALANCE BETWEEN DESIRES AND NECESSITIES?

Can there be an equal balance between desires and necessities in life?

This question needs a sort of re-examination. The question framed needs a little modification. 'Necessities' need immediate attention, while 'desire' is futuristic. If a desire is not fulfilled, you

can still carry on your life. But if necessities are not met with, it is impossible to live. So, necessity is for the moment, while desire is for the future. Also, desire needs a plan, whereas necessity needs immediate implementation. Desire is an expectation, whereas necessity calls for ready action. Desire is something which I may not deserve; but necessity is the one without which I cannot manage.

Therefore, there really is nothing like “maintaining a balance between desires and necessities”. Desire—leave it for the future. After all, if it gets fulfilled, okay; if it is not, all the better, because who knows if the fulfilment of that desire is good for you. That desire, which is fulfilled now, you may think is good because it is in your favour; but in the long run, it may turn out to be a curse, who knows?

So, desire-fulfilment need not necessarily be a boon. It may turn into a curse later on, in the course of time, along with growing experience and exposure. On the other hand, necessity is necessary for our daily life, and therefore cannot be ignored.

So, in fact, desires and necessities are applicable to different periods of time. One (necessities) is for now, while the other (desires) is for later. One is for this moment, while the other is left to the future. There need not be any balance about this. These necessities can continue, while those desires may be cut short selflessly with a preparedness of spirit, of acceptance, come what may. Have the feeling: “Desires fulfilled or desires unfulfilled, it is all for my own good.”

HOW TO KEEP OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND DEEDS IN HARMONY IN THIS CHANGING WORLD?

Youth from Region 8 asks: *Has Bhagavan shared anything, any tips or formulas, which will help us keep our thoughts, words and deeds in harmony with each other while living in such a changing world?*

There are three expressions of inner energy: thought is energy, word is energy, and action is energy. Therefore, our inner energy expresses in these three forms. But it has to be born in mind that one has to discriminate about thought, which itself is energy. One has to examine, evaluate and assess each thought, as and when it arises.

If the thought is bad—that is, if something is motivated by selfishness—it will naturally be affecting things for the worse, and the words that arise from such a thought will translate as well into an action that would put a man into greater difficulty. For example, usually in society, particularly in the field of politics, what politicians think is different from what they say, and sometimes it is totally opposite to their actions. That is political and hypocritical.

Well, such people seem to be successful in life, as we view them from a distance. But truly speaking, if you live with them and observe them in close quarters, you will certainly conclude that they have no sense of satisfaction and no mental peace. They are deprived of happiness and bliss, and are full of anxiety, worry, and tension.

These are the features of those people who have disharmony or disunity in their thoughts, words and deeds. Whereas in contrast, those who maintain this harmony of thought, word and deed, live in peace and in a state of bliss. Therefore, one is only torturing himself by this disharmony.

Remember, success in life is not due to money, position, cadre, or even ability; nor is it reflected by the amount of dignity, status, or respect one is given outwardly. All that is not success! True success means to maintain a balance in life. True success is to be peaceful, and true success is to be blissful. Therefore, if we maintain harmony, we will be peaceful and blissful in our life.

In this challenging world, you may be tempted to be disharmonious in thought, word and deed, and you may try to win others in the community. You may try to work for your own success. But with this disharmony, you lose your individuality; you lose your innate dignity, your happy personality, your credibility, and even your accountability. In short, nobody will believe you. In such a situation, people may say, “Hello, hello, hello,” to your face, but these words feel hollow inside.

A fellow with disharmony will never be respected, and is, in fact, undependable. People may shake his hand, but they will try to avoid him because they know, in their heart of hearts, that what he does, what he says, and what he thinks are at variance with each other.

Therefore, in order to maintain our self-respect, in order to have our own self-esteem and self-confidence, it is absolutely necessary to maintain the harmony of our thoughts, words and deeds. Thus we can live in peace and enjoy a blissful life.

We need to establish our individuality so as to maintain our own personality in the community. By and large, the harmony of thought, word and deed is much more important than anything else.

HOW FREQUENTLY SHOULD WE MEDITATE AND FOR HOW LONG?

Youth from Region 1 asks: *How frequently does one have to meditate—both in the morning and evening? And for how long, in order to derive joy from it?*

This question is put due to your own limited understanding of meditation. The meditation you are thinking about is the one bound by time and space: “I meditate between four and five in the early hours of the morning. I meditate once again in the night between seven and eight,” or whatever you may say. This is only a limited meditation, within the framework of time.

Further, you could say, “This is my meditation room. This is the place where I meditate every day most religiously.” This is the second point of your idea of meditation—referring to space. Space and time are the two binding factors, as you currently understand meditation.

But true meditation is *beyond* time and space. Time and space are two aspects that relate to the mind. When the mind is off, when the mind is in trance, when the mind is withdrawn in deep sleep, what is the time and where is the space? When you are sleeping in the night, unmindful of what is happening around you, do you know the space where you are? Do you know the time where you are? So, deep sleep is beyond time and space because, in that deep sleep state, the mind is totally withdrawn. Even in this waking state, even now, there can be withdrawal of the mind or true meditation. But if you limit meditation to time and space, it is no meditation at all.

On the other hand, maybe for beginners, it is a good idea to practice like that. One may do it that way initially; but that is not the final form of meditation. In fact, the whole life is meditation. Life is meditation! Whatever you do is meditation. A state when you forget yourself—that is meditation! A state where you get yourself involved and identified with the job totally, that is meditation. If you are a computer man, as you work with your computer, you are totally into it . . . one with that only. That is meditation.

As a doctor, the way he handles a patient—the examination, diagnosis, treatment, prescription, all of that in its totality—is his meditation. A teacher, as he teaches in the classroom, forgets himself, his family, his family problems, and his ailments. He gets lost in the art of teaching, disseminating knowledge to the students who are sitting in front of him. So teaching is his meditation.

The job of a doctor is meditation. The job of a computer engineer is meditation. So meditation means ‘totality of existence’. When you are totally into it, completely into it, losing all sense of time and space, it can be called meditation. That is the very definition of meditation, which you will understand as time passes, and in particular, as you gain more experience.

Therefore, this is not a job or anything like an activity that is limited to morning and evening only. If you look at it like that, then what would you do during the rest of the time? You stop meditation. So, what do you mean by meditation? What you think of as meditation is not meditation in the true sense.

If this meditation, as you understand it, is true, then Lord Krishna should have asked Arjuna, “Meditate, my boy! You don’t need to fight.” Or Rama should have said to Anjaneya (Hanuman), “Please meditate! You don’t need to go to Lanka to fetch Sita.”

But instead, they wanted them to take to activity. While Hanuman was travelling, he was totally involved in thoughts of Rama; that is all. While Arjuna was fighting, he had nothing other than the command of Krishna in his heart. So in Arjuna’s case, fighting was his meditation; while in the case of Hanuman, the search for Sita was his meditation.

Develop along these new ideas of meditation, so that you never limit meditation to a particular place and a particular time.

IS IT FAIR TO DEPEND ON SWAMI TO DO EVERYTHING FOR US?

Youth from Region 3 asks: *I have seen people who say every time, “Swami should do everything for me.” How far is it fair to depend upon Swami, without putting forth any effort, rather than trying on our own? Is that fair to depend on Swami? Of course, Swami does things whenever we ask, and even when we do not ask. An example: a student would ask Swami to pass him in the exam, but not study hard to achieve that. Similar is the case with many devotees.*

The third chapter *Karma Yoga* of the *Bhagavad Gita* gives a correct answer to this question. You cannot be lazy. You cannot live passively continuously. Action is quite natural. You may say, “I am not doing anything.” But you do not know. You may be doing many things without your notice.

You may sit idle, but your mind is thinking. That is action. You may be lying on the bed, but blood circulation is taking place. The heartbeat continues, and the lungs breathe in and breathe out. There is action again. So when you again say, “I am not doing anything,” try to stop breathing, stop thinking, stop imagining, and stop everything! Only then you can correctly say, “I am not doing anything.” But can you actually stop these actions?

Doing these natural things but externally, outwardly not doing anything is the surest sign of a lazy man, an idle person, and a fit-for-nothing fellow. So one must take to activity, jump to activity, which is absolutely necessary.

The second point: what does “letting Swami do everything” really mean? You have to do your job, but leave the results to Him. “Swami does everything” means “Let Him grant me the results that I deserve, which are in my own interest, in my best interest. Let Swami grant me the results.” That is in the hands of the Divine. However, proper effort is in your hands.

As a youth, sometimes one is attracted to ask this question. I can understand that. But if Swami does everything, my dear young man, let me put this question: why do we have a mind then? Can you think with your mind? Then, why have the intellect? Can you decide what needs to be done without the intellect? Why the body? Is it not for action? So there should be thought at the level of the mind. There should be decision at the level of the intellect, and there should be action at the level of the body. You are given all these for specific purposes.

You cannot say, “I don’t do anything; let Him take care of everything.” It is laziness. Baba gives one regular example for this. What is it? You are very hungry, so a chapatti is served on a plate with *sabji*, the vegetable curry. The food is ready. It is now for you to eat. You cannot say, “God, You have given me food. You also see that I eat.” Can you say that? You have to eat.

Therefore, opportunities of service, opportunities of work, opportunities to come up in life, opportunities to struggle hard, still aiming high, are all the many number of things that God has granted us. Plus He has given you a sharp intellect, He has given you a sound mind, and He has given you a healthy body, which has got to be used. If God does everything, you yourself will say, “Oh God, I don’t have freedom. Can I manage myself?”

At home, if parents do everything, the children feel that they have no independence. They feel, "Can't I do this?" Right from childhood, we crave for freedom. This yearning for freedom will grow more and more as we age. If God takes care of everything, we will complain.

Therefore, man is endowed with freedom to choose this way or that way. Come on, act! Proceed in the field of action, and then when you say, "Swami does everything" it means that He will grant you the results depending upon your own efforts. That is what I understand regarding this question.

WHERE SHOULD QUESTIONING AND ENQUIRY LEAD US?

Where should questioning and enquiry ultimately lead us?

We question because of certain factors. Doubt may prompt you to question. Suspicion may prompt you to question. Distrust may lead you to question. Emotional imbalance may lead to question. Ego may be the cause for questioning. The spirit of domination, superiority complex, or inferiority complex, whatever it is, may be the cause for questioning. However, if none of these factors are the cause for questioning (like doubt, suspicion, distrust, domination, ego complex), then further questioning takes you to enquiry.

True questioning, which is free from all the factors I listed till now, is correct enquiry; otherwise not. True questioning is the path of enquiry, which will take you to the point of your true being, the centre of your life—the supreme Self.

True questioning means turning inward. True questioning is what we call meditation. This type of questioning that gets transformed into enquiry is investigation and exploration into one's own Self. Such enquiry will end up in Self-revelation, revelation of the Self, or experience of the Self.

Questions based on doubt, distrust and other factors will take you to confusion confounded. On the other hand, questions which are independent of these factors will help you to meditate, reflect, ponder upon, and take you to the experience of Self, conferring supreme non-dual joy.

Therefore, a question is a challenge when it turns one inward. A question is *sadhana*, taking one along the spiritual path, if it is an enquiry. True questioning is an eagerness to search, a yearning to learn, when turns one inward. Questioning helps you find an answer for the birth of a human life and the goal of human life. But if this questioning is based on other silly factors, turning one outward, it may be a foolish, idiotic, meaningless question, one which wastes time.

You cannot go on questioning everything that comes up. Why? Certain basic things in life also cannot be questioned. For example, your mother loves you. Do you question that? A flower is beautiful. Do you question that? The sunrise is also so beautiful. Do you question it? So, certain facts of life are unquestionable. Likewise, the Divine is unquestionable.

So, taking an unquestionable position will take your life from question to quest. Quest is different from question. Question ends when the answer is given, while quest goes on continuously, eternally. Therefore, a question which turns you inward becomes a quest, a pathless land and an eternal journey!

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