

A Special Talk Given by Prof. Anil Kumar

Questions and Answers about USA Trip, 2009

June 17, 2009

THERE SHOULD BE SERIOUSNESS OF PURPOSE

I visited America recently. I returned here on June 6th. What were my experiences in America?

I won't go into the details, but let me give some general points of observation.

Point one: I found, amongst American devotees, seriousness of purpose. They study Baba's literature seriously, they sing *bhajans* seriously. They take things to heart; they don't do it in a light way. When they take to service activity, they take it seriously. When they sing *bhajans*, they are very particular about it. I found in American devotees that seriousness of purpose, that spirit of commitment and dedication. This I liked very much.

DEVOTION WITH DISCIPLINE

I participated in one of their programmes, 'Walk for Values' in Dallas, in the State of Texas. How excellently they organised it — it was a sight for the gods! American police and government officials allotted us one footpath to go in a procession. But watching those devotees, who were highly disciplined, the police came and said, "No problem sir, you can walk in the centre of the road. Nobody will disturb you."

And the mayor of Plano city, Texas, who was serving her third term in office, attended that 'Walk for Values'. She announced publicly that May 9 would hereafter be known as 'Walk for Values' Day in the city of Plano. She gave a government order. The entire traffic came to a standstill and started watching our Sai devotees.

I saw at every Sai centre in America that *bhajan* singers don't sing all of a sudden, on the spur of the moment. They have *bhajan* training classes, and everyone must attend these classes before they lead *bhajans* in Sai centres. So the training and the scientific approach in America I liked very much.

INSPIRE CHILDREN WITH IDEALS

And three: I liked very much the education programme in American society: the Bal Vikas programme, Sai education and human values. It is going on in a tremendous way. I went to the Dallas centre and attended their graduation ceremony. Believe me or not, there are forty trained, experienced, and highly resourceful teachers in Sai education. What wonderful things they have done!

They have encouraged children to participate in service activities. On that day of the graduation ceremony, children came and made their presentations. One boy said, "I participated in the home for the aged. I was encouraged by my teacher." Another student told me, "I visited hospitals and served the patients because my teacher inspired me." Another student came and spoke about air pollution, water pollution and talked about what Baba says about pollution.

It means, my friends, that in America people have taken Sai education to great heights, and combined it with regular societal and global problems like population, pollution, ozone depletion, global warming, and the greenhouse effect. Talks about all these problems were handled excellently by the children who attend Sai education, and they also blended their presentations with the Sai message beautifully. They made PowerPoint presentations. They made use of slides and transparencies. Children . . . just imagine!

My friends, I am not ashamed to tell you that I am thrilled and excited about how Sai programmes are taking place there. Sai Divinity is felt there, Sai spiritual power is experienced there. But here, we are deluded; we are carried away by the physical form. We have forgotten the spiritual strength of Sai, which I recognised there in the United States of America.

YOUTH SHOULD TAKE ON THE BATON OF THE SAI MOVEMENT

I am very happy that there are many youngsters in the Sai organisation in America. I met at least six regional presidents. They are all youngsters. Any organisation will go forward if the leadership is given to the youngsters, not to the people of the older generation who cannot walk because of arthritis, or who have lost their memory. No, no! Youngsters can take this torch of the Sai message, illumine it and keep it burning. I went to several places and met several quite young regional presidents. I met one man by the name of Harish Naidu from Seattle in the state of Washington, quite a young man. I met Mukesh Solanki, regional president from Dallas, Texas, quite a young man. I met another very young man, spiritual dynamite — Ravi Nakkina from Atlanta. These young people are spiritual explosives; therefore they are able to do it.

But I told them one thing: "Please appoint only Americans, not the Indians, as chairmen. I requested and begged them that Americans should be the office bearers. Let us support them. Let us help them and let us be their backbone . . . but let *them* be the leaders. Let them take the leadership, so that the Sai movement can grow further in a foreign land.

YEARNING FOR BABA'S LOVE IN A FOREIGN LAND

My experiences were so beautiful. I went to St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. It is such a beautiful place. How united the Sai devotees are in St. Thomas. They are all from the business community. They live in a competitive society, but after six o'clock they are part of the Sai fraternity, full of love. Till six it is competition and business; these are the keywords then. After six it is love, that is all. They made me visit their residences and offices. I tell you, it was a shower of love, a flood and a lightning of love and affection. It is enlightening. Devotion, that's what I have seen in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, USA.

In Atlanta, I saw hundreds of youth gathering. What a beautiful sight it was. In New Jersey, the meeting was attended by 2000 people. So there is a longing for Baba. There is more hunger and thirst for Baba in the West. Somebody asked me with tears on his face, "When is Baba coming to America? Would you please bring Him here?" I told him, "He is already here, or else you could not be here, nor could I be here. We are here because Baba is here."

So sometimes I pray to Baba: 'Send me to some country or other every year like this, so that I can go and learn from them, and share experiences with my friends here in India. Sai Ram.'

YOUTH ARE THE FUTURE LEADERS

Have you noticed any changes since the last time you were in the U.S.?

Very, very good question. I have been to the U.S. four times. This is my fifth visit. I have visited about fifteen countries. I have been to Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia. All these countries I have visited. But all these years, what I had been doing was to go there, speak and return. Speech-giving was the only thing I have been doing. Baba is so great, you know. Baba, who is the God of gods, made me feel this time: 'Don't speak now. Make others speak. Make the youth speak. You organise a youth workshop.' I developed this feeling in my heart.

Ever since I stepped into America, right from day one, I was mentioning to everybody, "Please organise a youth workshop." Youth workshops were organised in Milwaukee in the state of Wisconsin, in Dallas in the state of Texas, and in Atlanta, Georgia. Then we had youth workshops in Seattle, Washington, where the workshops were a thumping success. The youth were saying this.

I wondered why Baba had asked me to hear the youth speak, and I realised the need to improve my quality, so that I will be able to encourage the youth. They are going to be the future leaders of the Sai organisation. How long are we going to continue living? The youth are the future leaders, and therefore a great hope for the Sathya Sai organisation.

BABA DOES HIS WORK SILENTLY WITHOUT PUBLICITY

I was thrilled. They made scientific presentations about Baba's message. And ultimately they forced me, putting spiritual pressure on me, to stay back for the National Youth Conference held in Chicago, from May 29th until May 31st. Baba graciously permitted me to extend my stay and participate in the conference. I gave a separate talk at the National Youth Conference. Thirty workshops, twenty topics, four main objectives . . . a thrilling experience, I tell you! Hundreds of youngsters were present. What do youngsters do quite often whenever they meet? They will be laughing, jumping around, and cracking jokes. But did they do that in America? No.

There was a segregation of men on one side and women on the other side, as in Prashanthi Nilayam. There was pin-drop silence as in Prashanthi Nilayam. In every workshop, there was a serious discussion on their topic, which I have not noticed here. Baba is inspiring everybody. He is doing His work everywhere. We should open our eyes and see how Baba is doing His work silently while in the wheelchair, smiling and laughing. It is spreading everywhere! While He is sitting on the dais in a physical form, spiritually He is doing His work. It is excellent, and I am a witness to this. Sai Ram.

WORRIES OF YOUTH

Do the Sai youth there have the same worries as the youth here in India?

Youth are youth, after all. Indian youth or American youth, they are not separate. But in America, the problem is that the youth are more independent. Here in India, youth are more dependant. Here in India, we take responsibility for our children until they get married. But there, the children are quite independent. Some of them earn and learn. They do jobs and study, very independently. Therefore, they have independent views. They don't allow you to dictate. They love freedom. If you ask anything, they will say, "Why?" That "why?" nobody will ask you here. They love independence in America.

And secondly, there is openness. They will openly ask questions:

Mr. Anil Kumar, dating in America is quite common. The boy and girl move freely for sometime until they understand each other. And they may marry or may not. What do you say about dating? Is it wrong?

In America, boys and girls mix freely. Should there be segregation? Why should boys and girls be away from each other? We are studying in co-education.

In America, boys and girls mix freely. Why not in the Sai centre?

There are questions about dating, marriage. This is their independent outlook, their openness. These are the questions bothering American youth. I told them, "Look here boys and girls, you may date, but that dating should not lead to a relationship. That dating should not lead to

bondage, or make you a slave. That dating should not be a weakness. If it is just understanding each other, well, I don't find anything wrong in it."

Boys and girls may sit together because in American society they do that. I don't find anything wrong with that. Why? Because you may be sitting away from girls, but thinking of girls constantly. As a girl, you may sit away from boys, but in your dreams you think of boys all the time. That is very bad. You may sit side-by-side, but don't think of each other.

So it is the mind or thought that is more important, not simply the sitting position. Your motive is important. Therefore, I want you to understand this. Whereas in the Indian community it has been an age-old practice for men and women to sit separately, I don't say it is completely correct. Individually, I don't support it because I care for the feeling or thought, which is more important. That is my answer.

DRESS SHOULD BE MODEST

Why should we not wear jeans and the latest dresses? What is wrong with that?

Nothing wrong with that. Who said it is wrong? I love to dress. But the dress should be modest. The dress that you wear should give you the look of a gentleman. It should not give you the look of a wild animal from the forest. It should make you look like a decent and cultured young man.

Why do we not eat non-vegetarian food? Why only vegetarian food?

By killing an animal, you are taking life; you have no right to kill. You have the right to live, not to kill. The animal has its own right to live. To take life is not in your hands.

UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE BHAJANS

Anil Kumar, what are your views on bhajans? I want Spanish bhajans or English bhajans. I want Chinese bhajans.

Sing the *bhajans* of your land. Don't sing only Hindi, Telugu or Sanskrit *bhajans*. C'mon, sing English *bhajans*. It happens in America. You should understand the *bhajans* also; understand and sing, or else it is just sound, *tak tak*. What does it mean? Is it mere drumbeat? You should know the meaning, so sing songs in your language too.

In Thailand, they have *bhajans* in the Thai language, but the tunes are Prashanthi tunes. Go to Japan: Japanese *bhajans*, but the tunes are Prashanthi *bhajan* style. Come on, make that language also absorb the *bhajans* and their tunes. Then see, the organisation and the Sai mission will expand further and further. Sai Ram.

Is there a special meaning in that this trip was made now, and that it lasted so long? We understand that on earlier occasions you didn't spend so much time here.

These are two personal questions, but it doesn't matter to me. My brother-in-law, Dr. Kedarnath, is settled in San Antonio in the state of Texas with his wife Dr. Meenakshi. Dr. Kedarnath is a radiologist and Dr. Meenakshi is a pediatrician. They have a Sai centre at their residence. They organised the Sai centre in San Antonio thirty years ago and they have been staying there since. As ill luck would have it, my brother-in-law lost both of his parents sometime back. He was celebrating his daughter's wedding in San Antonio on March 6th. He has no elders from his side, nobody. Therefore, he requested me to attend the wedding because no elders would be there representing his family. And they wrote a number of letters to Swami. They come here every year and serve in the hospital also.

Baba Himself gave me a chance and asked, "What's the matter?" I grabbed that opportunity. I said, "Swami, they are celebrating the wedding."

"Go, both of you go," He said.

The marriage was on March 6th. So to be present, I left this place on March 1st. I attended the wedding on March 6th, and since it was followed by the summer vacation here, I extended my stay. Having come to know that I was there, a large number of invitations began pouring in throughout my stay. But I laid down one condition: "I will come to you if you organise a youth workshop, or else I won't come."

They said, "Sir, people here yearn to hear your talk."

I said, "I will give my talk after the youth workshop: morning, youth workshop and afternoon, Anil Kumar talk. If you want this, you must have that also."

But in America there is one problem. They are free only on weekends. So even if Baba goes to America, they will say, "Baba, we will see You towards the weekend. You please take rest from Monday to Friday. We will see You on Saturday and Sunday." Poor, hardworking people! The way they work . . . right from dishwashing, washing the clothes, mowing the lawns, gardening work, dropping children to schools . . . they slog from six o'clock in the morning till six in the evening. Abba! But I feel we should have an American salary with the Indian work culture. We don't want to work as hard as they do. With this work setup, if we received that salary, it would be excellent. So, with Swami's permission, it is this wedding that made me go and stay there during our summer vacation.

Did you have a chance to meet people outside the Sai movement there? Do you think that these people outside the Sai mission are really prepared to ask for more guidance?

Yes, by all means. All youth workshops were attended by many non-devotees, and also by many who are not in the Sai movement. For example, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, they invited

heads of different spiritual organisations. There are a number of spiritual organisations in America today. They invited them also for the youth workshop. In Dallas, they invited the church pastor to attend a meeting. In the 'Walk for Values', some Christian nuns also participated. They wanted to know more and more about Baba. I pray that He should send me repeatedly to talk to them, so that this movement can spread more. This is what I love most to do.

BE EAGER TO LEARN

What special ability did you notice in the U.S. youth that you can recommend to the Indian youth? In other words, were there practices or qualities that you noticed in the U.S. youth which can be implemented and practiced by the Indian youth? Conversely, what are the qualities of the Indian youth that the Western youth can emulate and benefit from?

Very good. What is fundamentally wrong with Indian youth is this. If you say anything, they will say, "We know." If you tell them, "Please do it" they will say, "We already did it." So this kind of feeling, that we did it already, is a factor that will never allow them to grow. But in America, whatever I said, the youth would come with white paper and pen: "Uncle, what do you say? What do you want?" They will note the points down, but that doesn't mean they did not know them.

In America, the youth run a magazine or a newsletter. Those who are interested can certainly go through that newsletter. What information they have! Most of the things that I do not know are in the newsletter of the U.S. youth. They never said, "We know this or that." They were always receptive, eager to know and understand, implement and improve. Unfortunately, in the Indian youth, I haven't noticed that. I have met with youth from all the states in India. Whatever you say, their response is, "We know." Whatever you say, they respond, "We did it." These qualities should leave immediately.

And secondly, in American youth, I observed punctuality. If you say 3:30, it is 3:30. It is not 4:30 or 5:30. Punctuality is what I liked. Would you believe me if I tell you that people drove four hours to attend a Sai meeting at the centre? Punctually—they will be there on the dot of time. This I liked very much.

And thirdly: efficient and excellent planning for a number of groups and discussions. They will have conference phone calls, and go on discussing every minute detail. There is scientific planning. This I liked very much.

Four: devotion. When they go on singing, they start crying. When we mention the name of Baba, their faces will be full of light like a thousand candle bulbs, and bubbling with enthusiasm. These are the qualities I liked in them. Indian youth should cultivate these habits.

And what the U.S. youth should learn from the Indian youth is the art of singing *bhajans*. Indian youth sing *bhajans* very well. They can learn *bhajans* from them. Also, from the Indian youth, they can learn the different types of service projects that we have in India. The American youth can certainly learn that from us.

Did you learn anything in the U.S. which can be implemented or put into practice here?

That height of devotion I want to cultivate; that strong faith I should cultivate; that determined commitment of leadership I should develop. These are the things I have to learn and cultivate here.

A BLEND OF EAST AND WEST IS NEEDED

Do you feel that there is an integration of Eastern and Western cultures taking place now on earth through such trips and exchanges, reactivating the awareness and practice of human values in the world today?

Yes, it is going on. The very fact that the Sai movement is spreading in the West is enough to state that East and West have come together. Most of the people in the West can sing our *bhajans*. They are experts. Simple example: would you believe me if I say that Spanish-speaking people in Mexico and Argentina sing Sai *bhajans* better than our Indians? You can take it from me. They are Spanish-speaking people. How do they sing so nicely and with such devotion? I saw Argentine natives, white people, where the boy was playing the role of Krishna, and a girl was playing the role of Radha. One boy was singing, and another played the *mridangam* . . . Indian instruments, dance and music. Why?

Is it not an exchange of East and West? So that exchange is already going on: the developed scientific, technical approach of the West has united with the cultural artistic approach of the East. So the Eastern artistic approach and the Western scientific approach should be blended together by these exchanges and trips. There should be involvement in these conferences, so that we can emerge as a very strong, powerful spiritual movement.

Are people in the USA finding any kind of solution to achieving self-realisation? Have they mentioned anything that you can recommend for attaining the goal of self-realisation?

Please believe me, in the U.S. I observed people putting forth questions on self-realisation. Nobody asked me, "Anil Kumar, tell me some stories, or tell me miracles, or how you have come here." No, no. Everybody asked about self-realisation. There were so many questions on meditation, and so many questions on the Self. "What is the Self? How to realise it? What is the experience?" Oh, such thought-provoking questions. By Baba's grace, I could answer them all, taking material from Sai literature, which is well known to me. I should thank Swami for supplying all that material, which served as proper answers to their questions.

Do you feel that this spiritual movement will move more quickly hereafter than in the past? Have you had any special opportunities by this experience?

Yes. The movement is growing very, very fast now. But excuse me if I am wrong—the movement needs a change in the leadership. A dynamic leadership is necessary. A leadership full of devotion and awareness, full of a thorough understanding of the Sai message, is required today. We need spiritual leaders in the Sai movement more than ever before, because the movement is spreading; but the leadership is not catching up with the speed of this change. So I personally feel that the leadership should take shape to match the fast-spreading spiritual movement. The movement is spreading like an intercontinental ballistic missile, like the Concord airlines. The leadership should match this speed. That's what I have to say about this.

Did you see any difference between cultures in the U.S. and India? What were these differences?

Well, the cultural differences are basically social—differences in food and dress habits naturally exist. Even within India, there are differences. In India, it is not all the same pattern. In Tamil Nadu, they wear *lungis*, while in Andhra, they wear *dhotis*. In Punjab, they wear *kurtha* pyjamas. So even here, there are dress differences, differences in food habits, and the state-wise languages are different. Yes, we felt there were so many differences.

THERE IS A SPIRITUAL THIRST IN THE WEST NOW

Did you notice any changes in the attitudes of the people in the U.S. towards their current life experience?

Yes. Now in the U.S. there is more spiritual thinking, more religious involvement. The movement towards faith is a little more, and their understanding is more. They have more of an Eastern bent-of-mind, while living in a competitive, materialistic society. In an advanced nation like the United States of America, we find people with a religious bent of mind. There is a spiritual fervour. That is what I noticed on this recent trip.

WORLD IS A SMALL VILLAGE

Right now, the world is going through the effects of a continuous process of migrations of people from their original home to other areas of the globe. In history, all big changes have taken place during such huge migrations and geographical shifting patterns. In addition, in the field of communications, there is the huge influence of the Internet and the World Wide Web. So do you feel the impact of all this migration and worldwide mass communication in America, and in the world in general? Is the world becoming really more like a small village?

There is no doubt about it. The world is a small village, a global village. I give you my experiences. I hail from Andhra in India, from a town by the name of Guntur. I used to come to Puttaparthi every month for twenty years. Every month! It took nineteen hours to reach Puttaparthi by bus. In the meantime, a fellow could go to London, have his breakfast and return before I reached Puttaparthi. Today, it is not like that.

And I can state another fact. Children living in India see their parents less often compared to children in America. Children in America see their parents more often than the children here, because in America they feel that emotional attachment. They are more sensitive, and they care more for their parents. They see their parents more often, and help them more.

I don't know about other States, but at least in Andhra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, I am sure middle-class families are leading a higher standard of life because their children are in America. Their children are leading a comfortable life. I am very happy about it. The children there in U.S. care for their families here in India. In this way, migration has helped their families improve their standard of living. We also have stronger bonds of love because of separation and the long distances involved, due to these geographical population shifting patterns.

SPEAK OBLIGINGLY

We also learn something about the American style of expression. A simple example: one boy is absent from class. Here I will tell him, "You were absent from class." But in the American style: "Boy, I was missing you yesterday." It is a nice way of putting things. In the Indian style we say, "You did not submit your laboratory record." The same thing, stated in the American style: "I am yet to receive your record. I am waiting for your assignments." Nice style.

So these styles change. In America they have learned now how to do *namaskaram* and say, "Sai Ram, sir." They have learnt to greet people. They have also learnt to sit on the floor, and learnt how to lead a simple life. This exchange is going on. Many of the Western people are adopting the Indian way of life. In Puttaparthi, don't you see them taking *sambar* and *rasam* (hot Indian soup dishes eaten with the rice meal)? Oh, excellent!

Have you felt any special effects from this trip? Has this experience changed you in anyway? Have you noticed any new perceptions?

Yes. Let me admit frankly, after I returned from the U.S. this time, I decided to pass on the message exclusively for the youth. What does Baba say that is for the youth? What are His views on dress? What are His views on their psychology? I have decided to talk especially to the youth and write some articles especially for them.

And the second thing is that there should be some spiritual input that will get into the Western mind, with less Sanskrit jargon. Let it not be pedantic; let it be practical and simple. This also I

have decided: to transmit spiritual ideas in the Western style, in a very simple way, so that people will be able to understand and catch up with Indian philosophical thought.

For you, this must have been a very deep experience. Probably you are still integrating it. Can you tell us, has any new door opened through this experience that allows you to diffuse the message of Baba even better now?

Yes. I have learnt one thing. Hereafter, I shall not consider any question put to me indecent. Simple example: people asked me about dating in America. What's wrong with that? Suppose that question had been put in India; I would have taken a strong objection to it. Why can't we wear jeans? Here, if that question had been put to me, I would have taken some objection. But now my outlook has changed. I appreciate their openness: "Come on, this is my question, have you got any answers?" Openness, frankness, freedom . . . hats off!

The whole world is not equal in freedom. I appreciate that Western love for freedom. From this background, I shall not now take any question to be silly. I shall not object to any question put to me from any other viewpoint. But I shall take it from the viewpoint of the search for Truth, and that I am always ready to encourage. I am quite happy that my perspective has totally changed towards freedom, openness and frankness.

In other words, this is a new movement for you. Has this trip inspired you to discuss and share in a more universal way? Perhaps it was essential for you to visit this part of the world to give birth to a more worldwide form of communication?

Since the question is raised, let me tell you. I want to go next time fully equipped with separate sets of talks for the youth. A few talks on the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, the *Holy Bible*, Ramana Maharshi, Buddha and finally, a comparative study of all these. Finally, I want to be equipped with the materials next time so that I can give a series of talks, and organise some workshops.

I told them this in St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. They said, "Anil Kumar, next time we will have a meeting on a cruise ship on the sea. We will hire a ship that can accommodate five thousand people easily."

Then I told them, "We will have it. We will organise a workshop, organise a meditation camp, so that it is not merely talking and listening. It will be a workshop of effective participation and understanding in depth—one of profundity. The art of Self-discovery, a universal mind, and an awareness of universal consciousness—we will discuss these things."

You know what they said? "Anil Kumar, we are ready! Give us the date now." So they are very eager to have it. I am eager to go there more equipped with information, with slides and charts. I have a lot of homework to do in the light of Western requirements and needs, in the field of spirituality and religion from Baba's viewpoint.

GOD IS ENERGY AND LOVE

Is the idea of God the same everywhere? Is the idea of spirituality the same everywhere?

Yes. There is no difference. The point is more of analysis or investigation. A thirst to experience is there now more than ever before. The idea of God is the same, but the idea of God—not as a concept but as an experience—is there now. Spirituality—not as a matter of scholarship, but spirituality for realisation—is the new approach we want now. So whatever we talk of hereafter should be in that direction: not scholarship, but understanding and experiencing God; not a concept, but as energy or love. So our concept of the presentation should be in tune with the requirements of a Western mind.

Did you meet any Americans outside of the Sai movement?

Yes, many of them. I am telling you the truth. There were many who hugged me. “Anil, would you give me a hug please?” I said, “Why not?” They love people. I liked one thing in America. When they love you, they say, “Let’s hug” or else they will say, “Hi, we will see you later.” No question of pretensions. Openly they will say, “I don’t agree with some of your points; something needs to be discussed a little more. A little more elaboration is required on certain points.” No pretension. When they agree, it’s 100% agreement; when they disagree it is 100%. There is no hypocrisy or double-standard. This I liked very much. I met many people outside the Sai movement who were very anxious to meet Baba and who liked Baba’s message very much. Some of them wanted me to visit their centres also, and go there exclusively to talk to them. I said, “Next time.” I think Swami will help me to meet them next time.

INWARD PEACE AND OUTER COMFORTS SHOULD GO TOGETHER

What is your suggestion for the West? What is your message to Western people?

My only message to Western people is to make more effort to come out of psychological limitations. The Western mind is very tired because of competition, economic recession, and the market that has gone down today. The American mind is very tired. The competitive mind is very tired now. The American mind now needs some peace and relaxation. The best thing that the American mind can do today is to develop the art of meditation. When the American mind develops meditation, in addition to their scientific and technological excellence, the Americans will be ideal citizens of the world. There is no doubt about it. Their mind, which has been extroverted and outer till now, should turn inward hereafter so that outward luxury and inward peace can go together. Outer happiness and inner bliss can come together. So today the American mind needs more meditation than ever before.

SPIRITUALITY IS FULLNESS

You have come back now from the most developed country in the world. There are both good and bad effects that come with this material development and advancement. How can we combine material advancement and spirituality? How can the individual integrate both these aspects?

We have discussed this question many times. Let us not separate materialism from spirituality. Why do you think materialism is not spiritual? Why? Materialism is nature, for example. Spirituality is God. God expressed is materialism; materialism unexpressed is God. In other words, the whole of creation is expressed, and Nature is the expression. God is not expressed; God is hidden like the director. So if Nature is not expressed, God remains. If God expresses, it comes out in the form of creation. The root is God, while the fruit is materialism; both are part of the same tree.

Why can't you have materialistic comforts and spirituality? Why not? Do you think that poverty is spirituality? Do you think that being naked is spirituality? Do you think that hunger, thirst, poverty, and famine are spiritual features? No.

Spirituality is fullness. Spirituality is totality of life, including both this and that. Day and night make 24 hours. You cannot have light all the 24 hours, nor are all 24 hours dark. It is darkness in the night and light in the daytime. Similarly, materialism and spirituality make the totality of life. They are only one. Don't split it. That is what is required here.

OUR WORLD NEEDS HUMAN VALUES NOW

Today, how can spirituality improve human society all over the world?

It is true that spirituality has nothing to do with ritual. Religion and rituals go together, but spirituality is the spirit of the ritual. Spirituality is based on values—*Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi, Prema, Ahimsa*—Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence. These are the human values. On these pillars of human values, which constitute the quintessential essence of spirituality, the mansion of humanity can be built. So all over the world, what we need is the spread of Education in Human Values. The Sai movement of Educare, Education in Human Values, should be taken to doorsteps everywhere, so that we have a better society in the near future.

TO BE SPIRITUAL IS TO DISCHARGE YOUR DUTY SINCERELY

Spirituality, duty, morality, and righteousness, when taken separately, do they lead you to confusion?

Certainly not! A spiritual man will be more dutiful. A man of duty is always spiritual, because what is spirituality? Discharging one's duty to the best of one's ability is *yoga*. Excellence is *yoga*. So there is no confusion between duty and spirituality.

Then morality and righteousness: righteousness or *karma* has so many dimensions. One dimension is the dimension of bachelorhood. As a bachelor, I have my *dharma*, the code of conduct expected of me. As a householder, there is some moral code of conduct expected of me. As a recluse or a renunciant, some different kind of life is expected of me. And then as a teacher, I have my own *dharma*. As a citizen, I have my own *dharma*. So, righteousness has got very wide implications and ramifications.

But morality is an individual code of conduct. Morality is ethics: how to be good for one's own self. How to observe the individual's code and the societal norms? I might follow my own discipline, but I shall also follow the social norms. This is what morality is. So there is no confusion between morality and righteousness. All that is righteous is moral. All that is moral is righteous. So, to observe righteous morality is one's duty in spirituality. All of them go together. They are complementary to each other. One emphasises the other, supports the other, leads to the other. One is never opposed to the other.

I understand that the meaning the Webster pocket dictionary gives for 'love' is 'mutual attraction' . . .

Yes, the dictionary gives the meaning for the general public and for all literates, but there is something deeper. The dictionary might give the meaning for a minimum basic understanding for worldly use, but the word has got spiritual dimensions, which we can understand more deeply thorough enquiry. So love is something deeper. The dictionary defines love from a physical point of view. But spiritual and philosophical implications require deeper understanding and complete enquiry.

VALUES ARE ETERNAL

Morality, virtues, and moral principles of a particular system . . .

Yes, it is different depending upon the culture of the nation. What is accepted here may not be accepted elsewhere. What is correct there may not be correct here. The culture of nations is totally different. We have to understand this. Variety is the spice of life. Moral principles will go on changing with the growth of civilisation, but virtues are changeless. Virtues are eternal values, whereas moral principles change depending upon the civilisation.

LET US THINK GLOBALLY

When we speak nowadays, we note that sometimes language seems empty of content. Language patterns in many cultures are changing, especially with the youth. For example, young people in America often say, “I went to the city and we had like a great game. It was like cool weather.” It seems this is also happening in Spanish and other languages. What is the reason for the change in the way of expression? Do you think it has any meaning? In Spanish, the word for “See you later” actually means ‘Go with God’. But this is all forgotten nowadays.

Well, this is all something to do with linguistics, or the history of the language. The words change their meaning from time to time. The same meaning is not in use today. Some words have disappeared from usage altogether. Some new words have come to settle into usage. This is because of our interactions. The Oxford dictionary goes on adding words. The English language goes on accepting words from different languages. In this way, language grows.

We should not have any objections. We cannot be what you call limited or fragmented. Let us be universal, let us be global. We can accept any words from any language. In Brazil, I saw the Portuguese museum. They exhibited many different words absorbed into the Portuguese language, and also the contribution of Portuguese to other foreign languages. This interaction goes on. Don't you accept changing scientific laws? Don't we accept the latest engineering skills and agricultural methods? Why not changes in language? Language is communication.

LAUGHTER AND FUN MAKES LIFE ENJOYABLE

Why are jokes and funny stories often against *dharma* and spiritual values?

No, no! They are not against them. Not in the West. In the West, I find there are more jokes and funny stories than in the East. I have yet to come across an American with a serious face. Americans love to smile. Even at work, they enjoy themselves. There is so much laughter and fun in their life. Take for example Joyce Meyer, the evangelist. She gives talks full of jokes and humour. Take for example, Wayne Dyer. He is a philosopher who gives a number of talks, a very popular man, and full of jokes. So yes, funny stories and jokes will make things more acceptable. Life is already heavy, serious, and burdensome. If spirituality is added to that, we will fall sick, leave alone liberation!

In the wider sense, where do you personally feel this world is going?

Let's not worry about where the world is going. Let me know where I am going. Let the world go. The world will take care of itself, because the world has been going along even before I was born. It will continue to go even after I leave this world. So let us not worry about how the world is going. Let me think about how I should move. Let me plan what direction I should take.

LET THERE BE HARMONY AND PEACE EVERYWHERE

Do you have something for the Americans to hear?

Arrey, does an American want to hear from me?

Brothers and sisters, you are born in a lovely land. America is a land of unity. America is a land of people and immigrants from different countries. You live in total harmony and peace. Let there not be any fight, conflict or hatred. Let American society maintain its highest standards of brotherhood, fraternity, love, unity, equality and justice. I appreciate very much the love of freedom in America, and their work culture. The dignity of labour is fantastic. May you be the leader not only on the political and economic fronts, but I wish that America should lead the whole world in spirituality also.

May Baba bless you. Thank you.

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