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Prof. Anil Kumar in Illinois, USA

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Sai Ram

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

HAPPENINGS ARE DIVINE

There are two kinds of situations in our life. The first kind are called 'doings'. These are things we aim, plan and work for in our life. The second kind are called 'happenings'. These come into our life unexpectedly, unscheduled, and without planning.

Doings take effort, planning and a schedule; they have a target or a goal. So, 'doings' are on the physical or human level. But the second kind, 'happenings', are not in our mind or thoughts at all. They are not planned. Happenings are Divine and spiritual. They are gifts of God. My visit to Chicago this evening is a 'happening', and not a 'doing'! (*Applause*)

I am all the more happy to be here today because I was informed that the twenty-third of every month is observed as the birthday of Bhagavan. Some people follow the calendar year; some, the lunar system; others, the solar system. You follow the monthly date of the twenty-third. Some way or another, we should think of Bhagavan. It is very good of you to have a plan like that.

THE U.S. TALKS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE SAIWISDOM.COM WEBSITE

Before I actually commence, I should express from the bottom of my heart my deep sense of gratitude to brother Ravi Avasarala who contributed a lot to the saiwisdom.com website. The entire trip right now in the U.S. is covered in that website for your information—www.saiwisdom.com.

In fact, a program that occurs on the previous evening can be on the website by the next day. Unbelievable! I pray for Bhagavan's choicest blessings to be showered on Ravi Avasarala and his family, forever and ever more. (*Applause*) Personally, I am highly indebted to him for this act of service in making the talks so available. There are many people who visit the website, and these talks are translated into ten languages for the benefit of the Sai world of devotees. Thank you Ravi, once again. (*Applause*)

WE SHOULD ASSESS AND EXAMINE OURSELVES

Bhagavan often makes it amply clear that we should take time to evaluate, assess and examine ourselves. This is an appeal that He perhaps makes every New Year's Day, or on His Birthdays in particular. This being the twenty-third, let us examine and evaluate ourselves.

Firstly, let's look at to what extent we have imbibed His message; and secondly, to what extent we have put His message into action in our daily life. I am afraid to say that we cannot give a mark of 100% to either, though we are quite generous to ourselves in the marking!

There is still a long way to go. You see this when people ask certain questions, and we are not able to give them the answer. It is time that we go deeper and deeper into the message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

SAI'S NAME IS KNOWN EVERYWHERE

Baba is known as God all over the world. Name the country, He is there. Down in the valley, on the mountain tops, the slopes, villages, places, continents—Sai's name is known everywhere. Therefore, you and I don't need to speak of His Divinity or share our experiences; not that we are forbidden or prohibited either.

Sai is known all over the world today. For instance, heads of nations are making a beeline to stand in queue for *darshan* (seeing Baba and receiving His blessing). I very well remember Bhagavan's visit to Delhi. It was most interesting and unbelievable. Bhagavan was staying at the residence of Shivaraj Patil, the then Home Minister. Outside was a very big *shamiana* (temporary marquee) under which were seated members of parliament, cabinet ministers and former prime ministers. These people no longer had entrée to the inner circle, so they were waiting there.

Suddenly, Shivaraj Patil opened the door, requesting them to come in. Like high school children, they started running—cabinet ministers, former prime ministers, former presidents. So nice to see that—a rare and interesting scene! I stayed there just to enjoy the sight! And inside they were all waiting, and some had to stand; Najma Heptula, the Speaker at that time, did not have a chair.

THE ONE WHO SAYS HE KNOWS SAI BABA DOES NOT

The worst tragedy that can happen in anybody's life is the deluded feeling that 'I know Him'. This can happen perhaps by living in Prashanthi Nilayam and seeing Him every day, or from a long association. If anyone thinks that he knows, please take it for granted from me that he *does not* know.

One should know that he does not know. The *Upanishads* (the essence of the earliest Hindu sacred texts) clearly and repeatedly state, "The one who says he knows, does not know." This is particularly true in the case of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We are often deluded and often mistaken. Because of nearness and familiarity, we may think we are able to estimate Sai Baba. But that is so often wrong, 100 % wrong!

When I was translating Bhagavan's talk, He said those who do not experience God are, "Fools, fools, fools!"

How am I to translate that? I said, "Fools, fools, double fools, triple fools, and multiple fools!"

Everybody enjoyed it. So to feel that we know Baba, well, we can just call ourselves multiple fools, if I may say so. He is impossible to know!

*Kanididani Cheppanga Galaru Kaani,
Brahmamidryani Cheppanga Valanu Kaadoo,
Sathya Nithya Gnana Mananthambhaina Brahmambhu Vakḥunaku Alavi Kaadoo,
Sathya Nithya Gnana Mananthambhaina Brahmambhu Vakḥunaku Alavi Kaadu.*

You can understand by the theory of negation that this is not God.

Is this miḥe God? No.

Is this wall God? No.

Actually when you face God, expression fails.

Where expression fails, experience begins.

DIVINITY IS BEYOND EXPRESSION

So, those who describe God to us from their own experience should first of all understand that it is clearly said that Divinity is beyond expression. That is, the only expression is inexpressible, mysterious, and incomprehensible. It cannot fit into the framework of the human vocabulary or of human comprehension. It is not possible to estimate, to think, or to express. Why? Because Divinity is beyond . . . beyond all that we know. Bhagavan is like that.

When He listens to you, you are carried away with the illusion that Bhagavan does not know about you and therefore you feed Him information. Suddenly in a flash, He will say, "You do not know that I knew all these things before?" He knows everything. Then we understand that it is time to keep our mouth shut.

But the question arises, "Why then should He listen to us?" When Bhagavan knows everything, when nothing can happen in this world without His knowledge, why does He ask, "Where do you come from? How are you? What did you have for breakfast? How are your children? What is your son doing?" Why should He ask these questions?

The answer is so simple. He does it in order to come close to you, to establish contact with you, to establish a kind of rapport, that's all! It is not that He does not know. But His queries can make us miss the track altogether.

Therefore, Bhagavan Himself said that you cannot say, "This is God, this is not" when talking about your experience of God. Instead, when you really experience what God is, you will be speechless and dumbfounded.

ALL THAT YOU SEE IS NOT REAL

This being the twenty-third, let me also add a note here. Bhagavan said:

*Teranu Dagina Sathyammu Telusukonaga,
Visramimpaga Naa Toda Vedalirandu Kannulakagupadu Dhrushyambhu Gaanchi,
Nithyam Sathyamani Sambharapadaku*

All that you see, all that you encounter, all that is around,

*Don't be mistaken.
Don't think that's all real.*

Kannulakagupadu Dhrushyambhu Gaanchi.

All that is seen in front of you, all that you see – do not consider that real. It is just false, that's all.

Teranu Dagina Sathyammu Telusukonaga,

To know the depth, to know the reality, to know the significance behind this creation,

Visramimpaga Naa Toda Vedatirandu.

*I want you to walk with Me.
I want you to be with Me as I lift the curtain,
So that you can experience the mystery.*

He says this because we are so busy in this creation that we forget the Creator. This dual creation is interesting and fascinating with all its digressions and diversions. But one has to experience the Creator with focused attention and concentration, and by meditation.

*WALK WITH BHAGAVAN BY LIVING HIS MESSAGE
Teranu Dagina Sathyammu.*

To know the mystery behind this curtain of illusion, I want you to walk with Me.

As this is the 23rd, an important monthly day for you, let us determine to walk with Him so that we will know the reality hidden behind this screen of illusion.

What is meant by walking with Him? It is not literal. It is not a physical act. You see some people walking with Him, one on either side of His wheelchair, and two behind. That's not 'walking with Him'. That's only physical. So, the physical is not the reality; spiritual is the reality. 'Walking with Bhagavan' means 'living according to His message'.

That's what Christ declared: "There is no point in just practising the rituals, no, no. Walk with Me." He meant, "Follow the path that I have shown you. Follow the teachings that I have told you." That's what Jesus declared in His teachings. Therefore, my friends, we should walk with Bhagavan by following His teachings.

WITHOUT DEVOTION, LIBERATION IS NOT POSSIBLE

How do we follow His teachings? Are we following His teachings? To know this, we have to examine point after point.

*Vidvamsudani Birudulandene Kaani,
Pudami Addaniche Mukti Raadu.*

You may be a great scholar with a number of degrees,

*With all recognition, name, and fame everywhere over.
That is not at all a passport for liberation.
That is not the way towards liberation.*

Scholarship is nothing. That's what Baba said clearly:

Vidvamsudani Birudulandene Kaani,

As a scholar, you can have any number of titles.

Pudami Addaniche Mukti Raadu.

It is not a gateway toward liberation.

Balamunnadani Mittipadavachune Kaani,

Pudami Addaniche Mukti Raadu.

Because you are a wrestler, you think you can fight with everybody.

No, no. That is not the way to liberation.

Padavi Kaddani Palukubadi Choopanagune Kaani,

Pudami Addaniche Mukti Raadu.

Because of your position, because of your authority, you may have all kinds of influence,

But yet that is not the gateway to heaven.

That will not take you to liberation.

Bhakti Leniche Raadu Mukti.

Without devotion, liberation is not possible.

Therefore, let us choose the path of devotion on this day. Let us choose that which is beyond scholarship, authority, or physical strength. Let us choose that which is beyond all the physical, momentary, mundane things which we consider great—because Divinity is beyond all these things. That has to be grasped and lived. People only say, “I know” because of their ego.

EGO WILL TAKE US AWAY FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF DIVINITY

A newcomer visits Prashanthi Nilayam for the first time and he returns to us with bubbling enthusiasm and dynamism. He wants to tell us of his experiences, but we don't allow him to open his mouth because we are seniors. In the service register, we are very senior!

If he says, “Swami gave me *vibhuthi* (sacred ash)!”

The reply is “He gave me *vibhuthi* a thousand times, so what?” (*Laughter*)

“Swami gave me a ring!”

“Oh! I have a ring for every finger.”

My friends, this means, unfortunately, that ego has raised its ugly hood in spirituality also. We are doomed for life if there is ego in the field of spirituality. We should all declare openly, “Oh ego, get out of my life!”

The spiritual essence, the spiritual effort, the true *sadhana* (spiritual practice) lies in overcoming ego. But most unfortunately, ego has become thicker and thicker—thicker than a blanket, thicker than a rug. So the person dies of suffocation.

Therefore, let us see that we get out from the ego. If you drive it out through the front door, it will enter through the back door like a black cat! You cannot drive it out altogether; unnoticeably, it will raise its head. So, one has to be very cautious about this ego, which will try to take us away from the experience of Divinity.

THE INNER SELF IS DIVINE

There are two selves in every one of us. One is the outer self, the other one is the inner Self. The outer self is for identity and to eke out our living. It is for interaction and mingling in the community. This is the ego.

The inner Self, which is reality and non-dual, is Divine. Unless the outer self is withdrawn, the inner Self cannot be experienced. But what we have chosen is, “Leave the outer self as it is, forget the inner Self, and let me be selfish!” That is our life path, and a convenient path it is indeed!

My friends, this kind of realisation is most important because many times Bhagavan repeatedly says to people, “How long would you like to continue at the primary school level? How long would you like to continue at the elementary level? Why don’t you understand? Why don’t you experience? Why don’t you go deeper and deeper to experience God?”

You can witness this when some people are called for an interview. They are not bothered to look at Bhagavan. They are not bothered to listen to Him. They are only bothered to hand over a rose which they carry, or a letter. So, it is letter concentration or flower concentration, but not concentration on God or the Divine.

DESIRE TO BE DESIRELESS

My friends, Baba said, “I grant you interviews, and I do so many things. Why? To direct you Godward, so that you think of God. That is My job.”

But most people say, “You are God, but I have a list of things I want. Please see that I get them; please fulfil my desires.”

*Kaamitardhamulellanu Kalpatharuvuvalenu,
Dayacheyu Devunndu Kaladu Manakoo,
Dhurlabhambhagu Nara Janma Doraku Kathana Athani Kanchutaye Parama Lakshyambhu Manaku
Athani Kanchutaye Parama Lakshyambhu Manaku.*

The human life, naturally being a householder, will have so many desires.

It is not so easy to get out of this desire. It is not so easy.

The more we want to give a desire up, another desire comes forth. Here is a common experience: in the evening, we decide to diet; but we smell extra delicious dishes being cooked in the kitchen. So the dieting is postponed. It is true with me—I do not know in your case. Therefore, desire is endless. It is not so easy to stop desiring. So, desire to be desireless; desire to have the desire which takes us to a state of desirelessness.

He is there to fulfil our desires without our asking. He is there to see all desires are granted without begging.

Kalpatharuvu Valenu

Like a wish-fulfilling tree, He will bless you with all your desires.

Durlabhambhagu Nara Janma Doraku Kathana

Having been born as a human being, which is the rarest of all!

Of all the sixty-four *lakhs* (six million four hundred thousand) of species in this creation (because of hybrids, the number might have gone up by now!), the human being is unique, the rarest birth of all. The life of the human being and the purpose of the human life is:

Dhurlabhambhagu Nara Janma Doraku Kathana Athani Kanchutaye Parama Lakshyambhu Manaku.

The aim of aims is to have the vision of God, to experience Him, to understand Him, to be with Him, to serve Him.

That is the purpose of human life, as declared by Bhagavan, which is a kind of spiritual obligation or spiritual responsibility for each and every one of us.

SPIRITUALITY IS TO REALISE THE DIVINITY WITHIN

But we have to be cautious about one thing. Sometimes we imitate other people. 'Because one person goes around Ganesha one hundred and eight times, let me go around a thousand times!' 'Because one gentleman is fasting on Thursday, let me fast on Saturday also.' This fasting has nothing to do with religion. Going around the temple has nothing to do with spirituality.

It will cleanse your mind. It will purify your thoughts. It will engage you in a healthy way rather getting involved in gossip, and tinsel and trash. But as Bhagavan said, whatever we do in the name of spirituality—worship, meditation, reading the scripture, or the observance of rituals, whatever it is—they are all sacred acts, but nothing to do with spirituality.

Spirituality is to realise the Divinity within. As long as you think God is outside you, as long as you think that you need the blessings of God from the outside, there is still a long way to go. To experience God within is the ultimate purpose of the spiritual journey. It is the height, the climax, the zenith of religious endeavour and pursuits. That's what Bhagavan has said.

THE SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOUR WHICH SUITS US IS THE RIGHT PATH

My friends, let us not imitate the spiritual pursuit of others. After all, as Baba says, a particular garment or dress suits you because it has been made according to your measurements. This dress will not fit the body of anybody else. If a very lean person wears it, it will be too loose. A person with the build of King Kong can't fit into it; it will be too tight.

Similarly, our path of religion, our path of worship should be in accordance with our *janma samskaras* (the spiritual way or pursuit we have adopted over the past several lives). Let us not blindly imitate anyone. "Imitation is human. Creation is Divine," says Bhagavan Baba. By imitating, you will be unsuccessful and lose your identity in the process.

Bhagavan gave one example. The summer season is known for mangoes, as all of you know. The mangoes here (I have tasted them!) are quite good. I don't miss Guntur mangoes anyway, nor have I missed Guntur *aavakai* (a variety of mango pickle) because that is nearly everywhere. But during the cold weather, I am practically at Guntur for dietary purposes and nutrition!

So, Bhagavan's story is that, being the mango season, all the shops are selling mangoes.

One fellow has "Good Mango Fruits Sold Here" written on a board in front of his shop.

Another fellow came there and said, "Arre, why do you say 'good' mango fruits? Is there anybody who would sell rotten mangoes? What do you mean by 'good'? You seem to be a headless fellow! Erase that word."

So the shopkeeper called the painter, who erased the word 'good'.

Then what is written there? "Mango Fruits Sold Here"

Another fellow came along and said, "This is the mango season. Every shop has them. Where is the need for the words 'mango fruits' on your board?"

So he called the painter once again and got the words 'mango fruits' erased.

Now what is left there? "Sold here"

A third fellow questioned him, "What are you selling here? Are you going to sell out your customers? Or are you on sale now? Let me know. *Chi!* You seem to be a headless fellow!"

So he got the word 'sold' also erased.

Finally, what was left? "Here"

This caused another person to query what was on the board, "What do you mean by 'here'? Remove it!" So it got erased also.

On the last day, the painter came and gave him a double bill. The first bill was for writing "Mango Fruits Sold Here" and second bill to erase all those words. So, he lost that money and he lost the board also.

Therefore, my friends, let us be fully aware that imitation will never take us anywhere. The spiritual endeavour which suits us, our temperament, our attitude, our practice, will over a period of several years take us on the right path. Don't have any kind of blind imitation.

THIS WORLD IS EPHEMERAL, TRANSITORY AND MOMENTARY

I can also tell you of another instance that Baba relates. It was a personal experience of mine, though I speak about it here not to advertise myself or with any pride. It is just an incident that has a message behind it.

In those days, we used to travel by bus to Puttaparthi. It took us only nineteen hours—not much! During the same time, people can go to London, have their breakfast, and return, while we will still be on our way on only one bus. There are three seats on that side and two seats this side, so you cannot sleep, though the neighbour will be sleeping on your lap. That will be the situation.

On the way, the bus stops around eight o' clock for all the passengers to have their dinner. So, I got down. It was at a place called Giddaluru in the Prakasam district. I went into a hotel and asked what was available.

The fellow told me there is mutton *korma* (stewed meat) and *pulav* (rice dish), and all other words which I have never heard of before.

I said, "I don't know. I have not tasted those things," and I left. Then I went to another hotel and asked what was available.

That fellow said, "You can have these egg dishes, that omelette, this omelette."

"Arre, I don't want that, thank you." I left that hotel, too.

Then I went into the village and found there a house where the food was manageable.

Afterwards, I went directly to Prashanthi Nilayam. It happened to be Dassara (a ten day festival to the Divine Mother, commemorating the triumph of good over evil) season, and Swami was about to start His discourse. I changed my clothes and sat in the fiftieth or sixtieth row. Swami started His talk like this:

*Anithyam Sukham Lokam Imam Prapya Bhajasvam,
Anithyam Asukham Lokam*

*This world is anithya—ephemeral, transitory, momentary, that definitely passes.
It will not last long.*

Asukham means 'you cannot get any kind of happiness or pleasure here'. That is the nature of this world.

And Swami said, "*Deenikoka Chinna Vudaharana*," which means, here is a small illustration. He went on to say this: "Some fellows go into a hotel and expect *sambar* (a spicy dal and vegetable

dish), and *idlis* (small steamed rice cakes) without reading on the board that it is a military hotel!"
(*Laughter*)

Then the cat is out of the bag! (*Laughter*) I understood that He meant me. "You should have seen the board. It is a military hotel. How can you expect *idlis* and *sambar* there?"

Therefore, *anithyam, asukham lokam*: this world is full of misery, repetition and monotony. But you forget that. Instead you expect an everlasting, blissful state to be present in this world. How is it possible?

BHAGAVAN'S ILLUSTRATIONS ARE RELEVANT TO OUR DAILY LIFE

Bhagavan's illustrations are so apt, relevant, and applicable to our daily life situations; only He can do it so well and simply.

I remember this example which happened a long time ago. A group of devotees went to Bangalore to invite Bhagavan Baba. The driver refused to go with the group. He stayed watching his bus and keeping an eye on its security.

Swami looked at everyone and said, "Where is the driver?"

Somebody said, "Swami, the driver is not a devotee."

Then Baba said, "Are you a devotee? First, let Me know." (*Laughter*)

He said, "Swami, I think so."

"You may think so, but I don't think so," He said. (*Laughter*)

Then Swami told, "Come on, go and ask the driver to come here."

The driver was persuaded to come, and Swami asked him to sit close to Him.

Swami said, "I would like to talk to you, but you are an awful smoker. I cannot bear the smell. Why don't you stop smoking?"

The man said, "Swami, I cannot drive without smoking."

"Do you think all those who drive smoke?"

The driver replied, "Swami, my body engine won't start without the smoke."

"I see. You think that smoking helps bowel movements. Your body has got used to that. Stop smoking. The body will start working on its own. Naturally, the body has to unload; it cannot stay like that for a long time—it has to send out. Don't say that body can't work unless you smoke."

THERE IS ONLY ONE LANGUAGE—THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

The examples that suit our life situations are important, because spirituality is not anything 'Sanskrit-ised.' Some of us feel that Sanskrit *slokas* (spiritual verses in the ancient Hindu language) are very important to know.

Somebody said to me, “Anil Kumar, I don’t know Sanskrit. It seems people are learning this *stotra* (hymn of praise) and that *stotra*.”

I told him, “God knows English also!” (*Laughter*)

So do not think that Sanskrit is the only language He knows; it is a misunderstanding to think that. If you would like to learn these *stotras*, very well; if you don’t like to, better. You will learn spiritual truths better in the language that you already know well. Also Sai literature is available in every language. And He Himself said, “There is only one language—the language of the heart.” So, how can anyone say that the language of the heart is only in Sanskrit?

GIVE UP BAD HABITS SLOWLY

Who else can help you for a hundred lives to come? My friends, people are very close to Swami because of this particular reason—He is the very closest to our lives, our situations, and our daily experiences.

A person went to Swami and said, “I am not able to give up my bad habit. In spite of serious attempts, I still can’t give up my weakness.”

Another *guru* (spiritual teacher) would have said, “Get out!” Or someone else might have said, “You are doomed to hell for a thousand lives to come!” No relief at all! But He is Baba, the compassionate God. What does He say? “It is good to give up bad habits slowly, not all of a sudden.”

If we stop bad habits all of a sudden, the habits will spring back with compounded interest. As Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa described it, habits are like curly hair: pull it out straight, but it springs back on release.

Or they are like sitting on a cushioned chair that sinks down when you sit. The moment you get up, it rises up again. A habit could be even more like the American sofa seat. Once you sit there, you are in a well! (*Laughter*) It takes time to get up out of it. I can’t understand these kinds of sofa seats. (*Applause*) I don’t know . . . it appears to be fine. You sit and . . . “Hari Om!” I think it is all *Maya Sabha* in action! (*This is a reference to a palace of illusions built by Maya, where men could not imitate it, even after examining it with care.*) And those beds are also so nice! It takes fifteen minutes to get out of bed! (*Laughter*)

So when we stop a habit suddenly, it will return just as it was before. Swami wants us to understand the fact that slowly, slowly we can curtail and check our bad habits. To make it better understood, Swami gave a beautiful example. When you switch off a fan which has three blades, or any sort of functioning fan, what happens? Slowly the three rotating blades come to a halt—slowly, not all of a sudden. Similarly, we have to exercise that kind of check on our habits and weaknesses, slowly, slowly.

Off the record, I’ll tell you a common observation you can make. You should watch those who have observed austerity over the forty-one days of the Ayyappa practice of *deeksha* (*a penance done for Lord Ayyappa with a strict vigil on controlling one’s senses.*) (*Laughter*)

Before this *deeksha*, they used to carry a pack of cigarettes with them. But after forty-one days, they carry a pillow case full of cigarette packets because, “Oh God! You did not allow me to smoke for forty days, but now I can!”

Therefore, those things that come to a halt all of a sudden never stay halted. Our habits, temperament and attitudes have to metamorphose and evolve in due course of time. A sudden change cannot be enforced.

SWAMI SEES TO IT THAT YOU ARE SET ON THE RIGHT PATH

It is also interesting to note that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, without saying anything, inspires everyone. That’s really fantastic. He never asks you to do a particular thing, but He’ll see to it that you do it. He won’t tell you what to do, but you will start doing it.

A simple example on a personal note: it so happened that I was invited by Radio Sai in Prashanthi Nilayam to give a talk—just that one talk. I gave it and did not tell anybody about it. It’s not such a big thing because I was there, so they asked me. That’s all.

Three days later, Swami said to me, “The talk was very nice.”

What does it mean? “You be ready for the next talk.”

Alright, on the third day, I prepared and gave the next talk.

After a week, Swami came and asked, “Why are you here? I thought you were in the studio.”

What does it mean? “You be there in the studio!” (*Laughter*)

Without telling or instructing, He sees to it that things are done. You are set on the right path; you proceed in the correct direction. You cannot waver or change.

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA SAVES LIVES AND SOLVES PROBLEMS

Some of the Telugu people here who have been to cinemas and seen some early films would have known about an actor called Kanta Rao. He liked fighting and horse-riding, so most of his pictures are of that type. Those of you who saw his films are trying to look as if you never would watch such films, but I am not fooled by facial expressions! (*Laughter*) I know! There is a hidden agenda to everybody. He is a *Janapada* (folk hero) and a devotee of Bhagavan

It happened once that a film shoot was taking place. He was on one boat fighting a villain, who was standing on an opposite boat. *Taka, taka!* They were fighting. Kanta Rao went to jump over onto the other boat, but instead fell in between the two boats. (*Laughter*) Good for the film, great suspense! Where was he? Nothing could save him in the middle of the swift Godavari River. He was finished!

But suddenly he felt a force lifting him and placing him back on the boat. He said in a meeting which I attended a long time ago, “It was Bhagavan Baba who saved my life.” And he further added that in an interview he had later, Baba said, “You should be careful while fighting!” (*Laughter*)

But this is not all. Another thing happened in the life of Kanta Rao. When his daughter was married, she took all her jewellery with her when she first went to the in-laws' house, this being the tradition of the family. But our gentleman-hero did not escort his daughter there because he was very busy that day making a film. So the daughter arrived at the in-laws' house without the jewellery, which had somehow been stolen.

So his wife sent him a telegram saying, "Come home immediately!"

This fellow had no alternative. (The wife is the Musharraf in every family!) He immediately went there and said, "What's wrong with you?"

"The jewellery is gone!"

Both of them started into a heated argument as if they were in parliament. But they could not arrive at any solution. So, instead of going to the in-laws' house, they straightaway went to Bangalore. Baba did not look at him for three days. (He ignores you to make you cry more sincerely—whether it is real or pretend crying.) So this fellow went on crying. On the fourth day when Swami was passing by, Kanta Rao, being a film hero, jumped from the fourth row over the three rows in front, and fell at His Feet. (*Laughter*)

Then Baba said, "This is not cinema shooting, sir." (*Laughter*) He granted him an interview and said, "*Bah!* What a pity it is you are crying! You are an irresponsible fellow. You should have followed your wife, and you should have followed your daughter until she at least reached her in-laws' house."

He could bear all that, but he could not control his grief and sadness. The tears rolled down continuously. On one side (of his face) was Godavari River and on the other side was Krishna River—ever-flowing. The two taps were opened!

Baba said, "Don't worry. Don't worry." He looked at them with sympathy, went inside and came out with a bundle. "This is the jewellery you lost. Open it."

When they opened the bundle, the exact jewellery that he had bought for his daughter was there! He was so surprised. This he declared at a public meeting. Yes! Later, I checked with Bhagavan on what Kanta Rao had told us. I thought I was telling Him a great story.

But Baba said, "Oh, oh! You don't believe these sorts of things can happen until Kanta Rao tells you about it. So Kanta Rao should certify your faith. Kanta Rao should stand as a testimony. *Chi, chi.*" Then He said, "He is good man. Kanta Rao is a good man." Meaning on that day, I am a bad man. (*Laughter*) Baba showed an excellent level of understanding!

You must have also heard of Anjali Devi. Anjali Devi made a fortune with the picture *Suvarna Sundari* in all languages. (I see some senior faces with a broad smile because that picture is known for good music also.) But she produced another film where she lost heavily, running into debt. With no alternative left, the husband and wife, Adinarayana Rao and Anjali, went to Mahabalipuram (a town on the coast, outside of Chennai) to avoid the people asking for the money owed to them.

They ultimately decided to commit suicide. They sat in the car and started driving into the sea. They were going deeper and deeper when suddenly they heard a shout. "Stop the car there!" He stopped and reversed.

A man came and said, "Why do you drive like that? You seem like a mad guy. Go! I won't allow you to commit suicide."

Adinarayana Rao drove straight to Prashanthi Nilayam. There Baba said, "Had I not saved your lives, your children would have been left without parents. Both of you would have died." Who can possibly save lives like that? Only Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba!

He is close to each and every one of us. He follows each and every life intimately, solving our problems, while at the same time directing us along the spiritual path, taking us toward our spiritual goal.

EGOLESSNESS IS THE FIRST PRINCIPLE ALONG THE SPIRITUAL PATH

The purpose of life is to lose your ego. Your travel on the spiritual path should be such that you lose your ego and your identity, so that you don't feel separate from others. When you feel separate from others, or more than others, then you are worse than all. Religion wants you to understand that you are a drop in the ocean, a sand particle in the river bed or on the sea shore. After all, you are nobody.

Self-effacement, self-denial, or egolessness—this is the first principle along the spiritual path.

*Veda Vedangamulu Valle Vesivunna,
Padya Gadyambhu Goorpagaligivunna,
Chitta Suddhi Lekhayunna Chedunu Veedoo,
Chitta Suddhi Lekhayunna Chedunu Veedoo.*

*You may know all mantras and all books;
But without purity of heart,
You are going to ruin your life.*

That's what Bhagavan cautions.

QUALITIES OF INDIVIDUAL AND UNIVERSAL ARE ONE AND SAME

Therefore, let us be egoless, feeling that we are one among many, that all are equal. For instance, a drop of sea water is as great as all the waters of the ocean. A drop of water is small in quantity; but in quality, the drop is the same as the mighty ocean. *Poornamadah Poornamidam*: "That is full, this is also full."

In basic qualities, the drop and the ocean are identical. The spark of the fire and the fire are identical. The spark is red, the fire is red. The spark will shed light, and so also the fire. The spark will burn, and so also the fire. The three qualities shared by the spark and the fire in general are identical.

So the quality of an individual and the quality of the universal are one and the same. The three qualities are *sat*, *chit*, *ananda* (being, awareness, bliss). That is Baba. B-A-B-A: 'B' for 'being' or

sat, 'A' for 'awareness' or *chit*, 'B' for bliss or *ananda*, 'A' is for the Supreme Self (which is what you are, what I am). So, the Self is one and the same in everyone!

BABA SAID THE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION IS VERY INTERESTING

I hear Sri Ravi asking me to wind up my talk and proceed to invite questions from you. I may tell you right now that the "Question and Answer" sessions have drawn the attention of many people.

In 2004 and 2006, Bhagavan Baba said, "The question and answer session is very interesting." (I had not reported anything to Him about it.) Afterwards, Goldstein sent a circular to Sai centres that they should organise a meeting in a central place, so that many people can be benefited from a question and answer session. So this is a 'must have' now!

Therefore, honouring what Ravi says, I will certainly invite questions from you. I will be honest enough to say "No" when I don't know. I do not bluff. No! Instead, I will take the earliest opportunity to get the appropriate answer from Bhagavan. The answers I do know are not from my scholarship or scriptural excellence. They all come from Sai literature only. So now the floor is open to you.

Thank you. Sai Ram!

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