

Professor Anil Kumar Questions and Answers in Illinois

(Video Conference Talk with Cincinnati and Dayton, Ohio)

May 28, 2009

OM...OM...OM...

Sai Ram

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Sai Ram! Good to see you all here. *Pranams* to Swami and dear friends, I thank Swami for this opportunity to talk to you on this pleasant evening. I know most of you--the faces seem to be quite familiar. I am also sure that you can see me from there as I see you from here.

I recall the year 1975, when I visited Cincinnati, Ohio, under the international understanding scheme, sponsored by the Rotary International Foundation. I visited Cincinnati University and I have happy memories of the university campus. I am so happy when I think of those days. I also recall my visits to Aurora, Indiana, Bloomington, Corridon, and Teravut in that same year, 1975.

We are so fortunate to have come to know Bhagavan today. All of us should be highly grateful to Him. Had we not been exposed to Baba, we would be nowhere. We follow this tradition and culture of *Sanathana Dharma* because of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

I see children sitting there, listening to my talk. Here is a question, who will tell me now? Raise your hands, children. I will ask a question. Who will give me the answer? Raise your hands.

OK. Good.

INDIA IS THE COUNTRY WHERE THE LORD'S GLORY IS SUNG

First question: To which country does Bhagavan Baba belong? Who will tell me the name of the country? Anybody? Nobody?

Children: India!

Good. Come on, clap! Now for my second question, what is the other name of India? India has another name. What is it? Who will tell me?

Children: Bharat!

Good answer! Come on, clap!

In the word 'Bharat' there are three letters, *bha*, *ra*, and *tha*. *Bha* means 'feeling', *ra* means 'raga or tune', and *ta* is 'tala or the beat'. And so *Bharat* is a country where people sing the glory of God with all the *bhava*, feelings, sentiments, and emotions, in the correct tune, and according to the beat. Bharat—a very good answer.

INDIA'S NATURE IS TO STAY AWAY FROM VIOLENCE

India has yet another name. Who will tell me? What is the other name?

Children: Hindustan.

Very good. Now I see you clapping. Here there are two letters, *hin* and *du*. *Hin* means 'himsa or violence', and *du* is *doora*, which means 'away from'. *Hindu* means 'the country that is away from, or does not accept, *himsa* or violence'. So *Hindu* means 'non-violence', or 'one who hates violence'. That is what *Hindu* is.

PUTTAPARTHI, LAND OF ANTHILLS

Good, children. So after 'Bharat' and 'Hindu', another question: What is the name of the place where Baba stays?

Deepa: Puttaparthi!

A very good answer. Come on! Clap! Puttaparthi means 'land of anthills'. You know anthills, or *putta*, have been associated with many gods in the past.

Another simple question, what do you find around Shiva's neck? Anybody?

Alekhya: Snakes!

Good. Clap for her! Snakes stay in anthills, and anthills are associated with Lord Shiva, because the snakes which adorn his neck stay in anthills or *putta*. Very good.

Another simple question: what is the name of the God of Tirupati? Who will give me the name of the God of Tirupati?

Children: Balaji.

Very good. And Balaji has another name, Lord Venkateshwara. Lord Venkateshwara or Balaji stayed in an anthill for a long time, secretly drawing milk from the udder of a cow every day. Therefore, Balaji is associated with anthills or *putta*, as well as Shiva, who is also associated with anthills.

How many of you have heard the name of Subramanya? Anybody? What is the other name of Subramanya? Who will tell me?

Children: Murugan.

That's the correct answer. Come on, clap! There is one special festival called *Nagula Chavithi*. On that day, people offer milk; they pour milk into anthills on that festival day. So Lord Murugan is also associated with anthills.

So children, there are three forms of God closely associated with anthills. Who will tell me all three names now?

Children: "Shiva, Balaji, and Subramanya."

Good! You said it. Clap! (*Applause*) So we have three god-forms now—Shiva, Subramanya, and Balaji—who are closely associated with anthills.

Have you heard of the *Ramayana*? How many of you have heard of it? Very good. Who composed the *Ramayana*? Who wrote it?

Children: Valmiki.

Correct answer. Valmiki means 'anthill'. The very meaning of Valmiki is 'anthill'. The reason is that this Valmiki did *tapas* or penance for a long time, and during that period of penance, an anthill formed around him. That's how he got the name Valmiki.

Do you understand? Good! Valmiki is also associated with anthills.

Baba stays in Puttaparthi. *Putta* means 'anthill'. Just as Shiva, Subramanya, Balaji, and Valmiki are associated with *putta*, Baba is also associated with *putta* or anthills. Is it clear now? Very good.

PRASHANTHI NILAYAM, ABODE OF DIVINE PEACE

What is the place in Puttaparthi where Baba lives? What is it called?

Children: Prashanthi Nilayam.

Very good. Clap. Who will tell me what *shanthi* is?

Children: Peace.

Very good. Now, children, *shanthi* means 'peace', but the name of the place is 'Prashanthi'. What is the meaning of *prashanthi*? What is *prashanthi*? Can anybody tell me?

Peace is *shanthi*, but *prashanthi* has *pra*, an extra letter. The meaning of *prashanthi* is 'supreme, permanent, Divine, spiritual peace'. That is *prashanthi*. Am I clear? Raise your hands those that follow me. You are great, smart Americans, I know—naturally active and smart! So Prashanthi Nilayam is 'the place of supreme peace'.

And inside Prashanthi Nilayam, immediately as you enter the gate, what do you see? Anybody?

What or who do you see just inside the gate?

Children: Lord Ganesha.

Very good. Ganesha is the god who is there at the entrance. Whose son is Ganesha? Anybody? Who can tell me? What is the name of Ganesha's father?

Children: Shiva.

Correct answer. So, Shiva is the father of Ganesha. Father Shiva is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and Ganesha is in Prashanthi Nilayam today with His father Shiva, who is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Do you understand? Raise your hands.

Who is Shiva in Prashanthi Nilayam?

Children: Swami.

Why do you say that? How else can we say Shiva? Anybody? Just now I said it.

Children: Ganesha's father.

Good answer. His father, Swami, is there in Prashanthi Nilayam.

SWAMI IS MYSTERIOUS, DIVINE, AND SPIRITUAL

All right. What is Swami's full name? Who will tell me? Come to the microphone and tell me.

Children: Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Very good. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Bhagavan means Divine, it means God. *Bhaga* means 'mystery, miraculous, mysterious, totally Divine, the one with Divinity'. So Bhagavan means 'Divine' or 'Divinity'.

SWAMI IS THE BESTOWER OF ALL PROSPERITY

What is the next word?

Children: Sri.

'Sri' means 'wealth, property, name, reputation, power, knowledge, and wisdom'. All of them together constitute the meaning of the word 'Sri'. So Sri means wealth, reputation, knowledge, and wisdom.

What are the next two letters?

Children: Sathya.

Good. I see the children, but I don't see them giving the answers. I am afraid the adults are giving the answers. It generally happens like that. What to do?

Moderator: Sir, we are not telling them the answers. The children are behind, so they have to come in front to answer.

Anyway, I have been a teacher for the last forty-five years and this habit of being a teacher shall continue till my last breath in this life. Old habits die hard, you see. A teacher naturally believes in questioning and eliciting answers from students. That is what I am doing now.

Who will tell me what Bhagavan is? Just now I told you. What is the meaning of Bhagavan? Come on get up. Yes?

Bhagavan means 'mystery, mysterious, Divine, spiritual, God'. Bhagavan means God. Is it clear now?

The next word is 'Sri'. Can anybody tell me what 'Sri' means? Come and tell me what 'Sri' is.

Children: Sri is Lakshmi.

And what does Lakshmi mean? Wealth, reputation, grain, milk, prosperity, plenty, money—that is all Sri or Lakshmi.

TRUTH IS GOD

So after Bhagavan and Sri, what are the next two words? Who will tell me? Come on.

Children: Sathya.

Good. What does *sathya* mean? Can anybody tell me?

Children: Truth.

Good. Sathya means 'Truth'. What kind of truth? Permanent, changeless Truth. Truth is changeless, permanent existence. Truth is God and God is Truth. Do you follow me? Do you understand?

That girl is moving here and there. Look at me and I will look at you. *Ah!* Don't I look good! Why don't you look at me now? No? Yes or no?

Audience: Yes!

Naturally I look good to you, but how about the children? (*Laughter*) Of course I was quite presentable twenty-five years ago! (*Laughter*) I was so handsome then!

Audience: You are still handsome!

Is that so? You better put it in writing and pass it on to me! (*Laughter*)

SAI IS THE DIVINE MOTHER

Now Bhagavan, Sri, and Sathya, I explained the meaning of these first three words. What are the next two words? Who will tell me?

Children: Sai.

Good. *Sa* means 'Divine'. *Aayi* means 'mother'. And so Sai means 'Divine Mother'. God is your Mother; therefore Sai means 'God, who is your Mother'.

Mother is God, God is Mother. Baba loves you so much. Your mother loves you, doesn't she? Your mother serves you, combs your hair, helps with your homework, washes all the dishes and prepares your food, dresses you, and gives you some snacks for lunch and all that. She also sends you to school. Your mother loves you, doesn't she? Is this right or not?

Children: Yes.

Right! So Sai is your Divine Mother. Just as your mother loves you, God as your Divine Mother loves you a thousand times more than your physical mother. Do you follow me?

GOD IS BEING AND AWARENESS

What are the next two letters?

Children: Baba.

Right. What is the spelling of Baba?

Children: B-A-B-A.

Right. BA is a degree. Baba has two degrees—one BA and then another BA! (*Laughter*) Double graduate! What does it mean?

In the first BA, B is for 'being', meaning *sat* or existence. The next letter, A, means 'awareness', and stands for *chit*.

Children are always asking questions like, "What is this?" "What is that?" "How does it happen?" "Why?" "Why not?" This is a kind of curiosity to know. An interest in knowing is *chit* or awareness.

So, the first 'B' is 'being': I am here and I am. I am a human being. So B is 'being or existence', and A is 'awareness' or inquisitiveness to know. Am I clear?

BLISS AND HAPPINESS ARE THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

In the next BA, B means 'bliss' or *ananda*. Who will tell me what *ananda* is? Tell me, what is *ananda*?

Children: Happiness.

If bliss is happiness, why should there be another word like bliss? You could simply use the word 'happiness'; so why then the word 'bliss'? Why have two words if the meaning is the same?

A simple example: happiness is fractional, short, and temporary, while bliss or *ananda* is vast, infinite, and permanent. So, happiness is temporary, but bliss is permanent. Happiness is short, while bliss is infinite. Happiness is from the world, bliss is from God. Am I clear? Now, what is the last letter?

Children: 'A'.

'A' stands for *Atma*. *Atma* means 'soul, spirit, or consciousness'. What is His full name?

Children: Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

So the meaning is: God, always with plenty and prosperity, who is Truth itself, a Divine Mother, a Divine Father, representing all names and reputations—that is God Himself. This is the meaning of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

I explained the meaning of Bharat, then Hindu, Prashanthi Nilayam, Ganesha, Sathya Sai Baba, and Puttapparthi. Will you remember all these things? Tell me, will you remember or not?

Children, will you remember these things? I will come to Cincinnati next time and ask you these questions, OK? So note down these things, learn them by heart, and next time I will definitely visit Cincinnati and put these questions to you! (*Applause*)

SATHYA SAI IS THE GOD OF KALI YUGA

Therefore Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the God of today. Now I will ask some simple questions. Children, you are ready?

Children: Yes.

Good. What is the name of the God who lived in *Tretha Yuga*? *Tretha Yuga* is a period of time in this universe. The first period was *Kritha (Sathya) Yuga*; the second period was *Tretha Yuga*. Life on earth is divided into *yugas*, periods of time, a bit like BC and AD. The first period was *Kritha Yuga* and the second *Tretha Yuga*. So who was the God of *Tretha Yuga*?

Children: Rama.

Very good! So Sri Rama is the name of God in which *Yuga*? Sri Ram lived in which *Yuga*? Yes?

Children: *Tretha Yuga*.

And what is the name of God who lived in *Dwapara Yuga*?

Children: Krishna.

Very good! What is the name of the present *yuga*? In which *yuga* do we live?

Children: Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sathya Sai Baba is the name of God, but what is the name of the *yuga*? What is the name of

this age?

Children: *Kali Yuga.*

Good. So the name of this *yuga* is *Kali Yuga*. The name of God in the *Kali Yuga* is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. God in *Tretha Yuga* was Sri Rama; in *Dwapara Yuga*, He was Sri Krishna. The name of God in this *Kali Yuga* is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Is this clear?

Children: Yes.

Good.

NAMASMARANA AND BHAJAN ARE THE WAY TO GOD

Now, during the time of Sri Rama, what did people do to please Him and to get His blessings? What did people do in *Dwapara Yuga* to get the blessings of Sri Krishna? What should we do now to be blessed by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba? You should know these three things.

In *Tretha Yuga*, people did *yagnas* and *yaga* to please Sri Rama. In *Dwapara Yuga*, people did all kinds worship to be blessed by Sri Krishna. And today people do *bhajan* and *namasmarana* to receive blessings from God in *Kali Yuga*, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

So people did *yagna* and *yaga* in *Tretha Yuga* to be blessed by Rama, worship or *archana* to be blessed by Sri Krishna in *Dwapara Yuga*, and today in *Kali Yuga*, we do *namasmarana* and *bhajan* to be blessed by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the God in this age. Do you follow me?

Children: Yes.

All of you children?

Children: Yes.

That's good. Now, what is it that you most like in Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba? Anybody? Tell me what you like about him.

Children: His hair.

Good. His hair is nothing but *jata jata*, the hair of Lord Shiva. Shiva also had such hair on His head. At the centre of Shiva's hair was Ganga, the sacred river. The sacred river is located in the centre of Lord Shiva's head, and Shiva's hair is called *jata jata*, the same hair as Swami. Therefore Sathya Sai Baba is Lord Shiva.

DEVELOP DETACHMENT AND RENUNCIATION

Anybody else? Does somebody like something else? Yes?

Children: His clothes.

What colour are His clothes? Who will tell me?

Children: Red.

No, they are saffron. You see, every colour has a meaning. The colour blue is the sky and the ocean, and represents vastness or infinity. That which is vast is blue. The colour white represents purity. The colour saffron represents wisdom, and *vairagya* or renunciation. The significance of the colour saffron is detachment.

A simple example: though He appears attached, He is completely detached. It is the same with electricity: the current is in the wire, but the wire is not in the current. The current is in the bulb, but the bulb is not in the current. Electricity is there in the fridge, but the fridge is not there in electricity. Electricity is detached from the fridge, the bulb, the mike, and all these things. But it is attached to the bulb; therefore you get the light. It is attached to the fridge; therefore it keeps things cold.

So electricity is attached to these electric gadgets; but left to itself, it is detached. It is detached attachment or attached detachment. That is the meaning of the colour saffron that He wears.

One child has said that she likes His hair; another has said that he likes His clothes and hair colour. Anything else that you like? Come on. I see children running to give answers, so I feel happy. Yes?

Children: His Feet, His *Padam*.

Why? Why do you like His Feet? Have you seen His Feet? They look cool. His Feet are like the petals of a rose flower, so cool and soft, like butter or cotton.

Tellanaina Padamu Adi Chillanaina Padamu

His feet are white and His feet are so cool,

Idhi Shirdi Sai Padamu

They are the feet of Shirdi Sai Himself,

Idhi Parthi Vasuni Padamu

They are the feet of Sathya Sai Baba!

Aptha Janulani Uddaripaka,

Avani Cherina Padamu

The Feet are present on Earth today to save the world. His Feet save the world. If we touch His Feet, all our desires will be fulfilled. His Feet are like a boat that will take us from this shore of the river to the other shore. Therefore, His Feet are precious. The whole world or universe rests on His Feet. A very good answer! Come on, clap! (*Applause*)

BABA'S SMILE

Some like His hair, some like His clothes, and some like His feet. Anything more that you like in Him? Yes? Come on.

Children: His smile.

Ah! His smile! A very good answer! His smile is full of innocence. His smile is like that of a child. When a child smiles, it is so beautiful, like a flower that blossoms, like a dewdrop on a lotus leaf in the morning. When a dewdrop settles on a lotus leaf, it looks like a pearl. When a child smiles, it is like moonlight. Baba's smile is also like moonlight, like the beautiful smile of a sleeping baby in a cradle, full of innocence and love.

Do you know the pomegranate fruit?

Children: Yes.

Have you seen those seeds inside it?

Children: Yes.

Swami's teeth are like those pomegranate seeds. They are so beautiful from a distance, and, I tell you, His teeth are still strong even today. Who will tell me Baba's age? Anybody?

Children: "Eighty-four."

Correct! Does anybody have strong teeth at the age of eighty-four? Your father does, but does your grandfather have strong teeth at the age of eighty? Any grandfather with strong teeth? No. Nobody has strong teeth in their old age.

Teeth are lost and replaced by dentures; but here is Baba, whose teeth are strong even today. Why? He is Divine. Our hair is gray, but Baba's hair is black. Why? He is Divine. At the age of eighty-four, His hair is black and His teeth are strong because He is Divine.

THE SWEET FRAGRANCE OF SWAMI'S PRESENCE

Yes? Anybody else? Anything more you like in Baba?

Children: The fragrance when Swami gives *darshan*.

Yes! The fragrance! A simple example: when you pass by a rose or jasmine garden, you feel the smell and fragrance of the flowers. When you light an incense stick, you smell the fragrance. The fragrance of the flower is felt from a long distance. Similarly, Baba has fragrance in Him, with Him, and around Him.

Therefore, when you concentrate, you can feel His fragrance. At home, in *bhajans*, as we drive on the road in our car, we can smell His fragrance. Fragrance is the presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Now we have just two or three more minutes for the last response from the students and children here.

SWAMI'S LOVE IS INFINITE

What else? What do you like about Him?

Children: His heart.

When did you see His heart? Have you seen your own heart? If you haven't seen your own heart, so how do you know?

Children: His Love.

Very good! Heart means love. Baba's love is experienced by everybody today. He gives education to all children and students. He gives medical treatment to the poor. He gives water those who don't have a drinking water supply. He gives drinking water to those who are thirsty. He provides educational institutions for children to study, and He has built hospitals for poor people who are really sick. Therefore, Baba's heart is love. His heart is Divine love. Come on, all of you, clap! (*Applause*)

Children, I really appreciate your response. You have said that you love His hair, His smile, His clothes and its saffron colour, His Feet, and His heart. You children from Cincinnati have said all the things that could possibly have been said about Baba. Hats off to you! Hip hip hurray! Very good!

I see all of you smiling and clapping, and so I feel very happy.

Do you see me? Oh I see. How do I look? Let me know. How is my hair? Like Baba's hair?!

Children: Nice and beautiful.

Good. Do you remember all the things I mentioned about Hindu *desha* and Bharat? Do you remember all these things? When I next visit Cincinnati, will you answer my questions?

Children: Yes.

I will certainly ask these questions. Let all the *Bal Vikas* teachers teach them and tell them who Sathya Sai Baba is.

Moderator: We have the *Bal Vikas* teachers here, so let them come to the front.

Let them come up to the front, let me see them. Oh, he is a *Bal Vikas* teacher? What is his good name? Sir, do you follow and understand what I say? Do you like it?

Bal Vikas Teacher: Yes.

Who is the other teacher?

(The moderator mentions the teacher's name.)

Do you follow me? I have not yet picked up the American accent. We Indians speak British English, not American English; but still I think you can make sense of what I have said.

Bal Vikas Teacher: I understand you completely.

Oh, very good. What a compliment to me!

Now the floor is open to others. They can put some questions. I am ready to answer. Before we start that, let us give the children a good round of applause. (*Applause*)

Now they can go to the back and let the others come to the front. The children can have the food that is ready for them, pizza or some such thing. I don't know what has been kept for them. Children, go back and let the others come to the front.

Moderator: They were there very nicely in the front. You made it very interesting for them.

I am a teacher. What to do? It is my regular job.

Moderator: Mr Anil Kumar, the first question—I am sure a lot of people have asked you this question: *Do you see yourself as an interpreter or a translator for the Lord? Do you ever get nervous?*

I always get nervous—always! Every time I get up to translate one of Baba's discourses, I feel that I am translating for the first time. I never take things for granted because we may go wrong anytime. I take every occasion as a first opportunity. But Baba is great and kind, and He makes you feel at ease and balanced.

He doesn't allow you to be tense or have tension. He will give you a beautiful smile so that you are relaxed. And He makes a joke in between, drawing you closer to Him. Therefore, though I feel full of tension, yet Swami keeps me in a relaxed mode because of His kindness and compassion. Am I clear?

Moderator: A follow-up question: *Have you made a mistake while translating, and, if so, how does Swami react?*

Oh . . . only one mistake? I make mistakes every time! And when I commit a mistake and Baba corrects me, all the devotees laugh and clap! So by committing a mistake, I am providing entertainment to all the devotees! (*Laughter*)

Bhagavan's discourses are for enlightenment. Anil Kumar's mistakes are a sort of entertainment. And He corrects me because of certain Sanskrit words. A simple example: *Atma* is spirit or consciousness. *Chaithanya* is awareness or conscience. So we have these words, *Chaithanya* and *Atma*, where we have to use the appropriate words rather than the ones that we use conventionally.

When Swami uses the word *chit*, I immediately say 'awareness'. Swami corrects me, "No, no, it's conscience!" The next time, when I say 'conscience', He says, "Constant integrated

awareness!" (*Laughter*)

So what is *chit* now? Is it conscience or consciousness or awareness or constant integrated awareness? Baba corrects me because the word that He uses fits into the context correctly. His word choice 'hits the nail on the head' directly, so that it goes deeply into our hearts. Therefore, He corrects me. It is not that the words I use are wrong; rather, that for the correct connotation appropriate to that particular context, He wants these specific words to be used.

And the third point: People know that Baba knows English. Baba knows English better than all of us. He has corrected professors of English like Professor V.K. Gokak, and Anil Kumar, after all, is a botanist, a student of science! So, I stand corrected every time to my pleasure and to the delight of the devotees! (*Laughter*)

GOD SPEAKS ALL LANGUAGES

Moderator: *Next question, how many languages have you heard Baba speak?*

Good. I have heard Him speak fluently in Tamil. I have heard Him speak quite fluently in Kannada. I have heard Him converse with others in Hindi. I have heard Him correct people's wrong usage in English. These are the four languages besides Telugu in which He is quite fluent.

But there was another occasion in a place called Tumkur, quite close to Bangalore, when I was working with Baba where I saw Him speaking different languages. To a Russian, He spoke Russian; to a person from Japan, He was talking in Japanese; to someone from China, I saw Him speaking Chinese. And then Swami walked close to me and said, "Why are you looking like that?"

I said, "Swami, You speak all languages?"

Swami said, "You have seen that. Why do you ask me?"

Then I said, "Swami, when You know all languages, why have You brought me here to translate for You?" (*Laughter*)

Baba said, "I know all languages, but you should know that I know. Therefore, I brought you here." Am I clear?

Moderator: *Next question, this is a good one.*

The other questions were good ones—you can say it is a better question?

OK, it is a better one. You are an interpreter for Baba. Has He ever mentioned to you what you were in Dwapara Yuga or Tretha Yuga?

Once He was about to say what I was in a previous life, and then He laughed and didn't say anything. (*Laughter*) Another time He said, "You know what you were in the previous life?" He looked me straight in the eye and kept quiet. (*Laughter*) So He was about to say, but He didn't disclose, for reasons best known to Him.

ALWAYS THINK OF SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH GOD

Moderator: *How can we practise continuous namasmarana?*

Very easy. We can have *bhajan* cassettes in our car. We can have DVDs, instrumental music, and Sai *bhajans* playing in our offices at a low volume as background music. We can have these Baba *bhajans* at our residences. We can carry Baba's literature with us and read it during lunch hour or during our travel time to engage ourselves. Right?

Any questions on that? Please feel free to ask any questions, I have no reservations. Please. If you have no questions, I have to doubt whether I have made myself clear.

Moderator: *How can we cultivate good thoughts and avoid negative ones?*

At the origin, our thoughts are good. The thoughts of a child are pure. When we were young, we were pure. But as we age, as a student of a college, and later as an employee, our thoughts become impure. Why? Because of desire, attachment, and selfishness. We were pure, now we are impure.

We should go back to the original pure state. We were in a pure state, we will be in a pure state, and in between we are impure. That is what we should understand. Am I clear? Any follow-up questions to that?

LOVE GOD IN EVERYBODY

Moderator: *How does one cultivate the habit of "love all"?*

It is a simple thing: when we think Baba is God and when we have experienced Baba as God, we feel that He is in everyone. God is present in everyone. So when Baba is God, He should be in everyone. When He is present in everyone, we should love Him. That is "love all".

This kind of "loving all" is possible only on the spiritual plane. Physically, we may or may not love someone. We are attracted to some people, but not attracted to all. You are close to some people, but not close to all for your own reasons. But once you feel that God is there in everyone, you start loving everyone. Love God in everyone.

Baba said, "Even if you pass by the house of your enemy, if there is Baba's picture on the front door, what do you do? You do *namaskar*." It is the house of your enemy, but you do *namaskar* to the photo hanging above the main door.

This means that it is not the enemy that matters; rather it is Baba in the house that matters. Similarly, it is not the person that matters; it is God in the person that counts. That way we can love everybody. Am I clear?

THINK OF GOD WHILE YOU ARE IMMERSSED IN ACTIVITIES

Moderator: *As a response to that, while we are immersed in worldly activities, how do we remember our true Self, that we are Atma?*

Baba has given many examples for this. Number one: a taxi driver drives the car, but at the

same time, follows the conversation of those who are seated behind him. He listens to music, and at the same time watches in all directions, being very careful with the steering while applying the brake. So, just as the driver has full concentration while he is driving, we can also have full concentration while we are living in this world.

Number two: while cooking and washing dishes, a mother thinks of her baby. She always remembers when the baby requires feeding. The mother knows even while she is doing work in the home and domestic chores.

Third example: you must have seen dancers standing with their feet on a plate and, at the same time, keeping so many vessels on their head. They dance, moving their hands and their lips, showing their teeth, and moving their eyes; yet they maintain their balance perfectly.

And yet another example: a boat floats and sails across the river. The river water does not get into the boat. So similarly, we may live in the world, yet be above the world. Am I clear?

Sai Ram, Uncle. I am sure you have had several amazing experiences with Swami, having lived so close to Him. Could you please relate maybe a few of the most powerful ones that you have experienced?

Good. All experiences are powerful. No experience is powerless. This is enough of an experience, talking to the Cincinnati devotees from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, while watching myself on the computer and looking at those seated over there in the front. This is a miracle and enough of an experience to me personally!

In relation to Baba, I narrated this to our friends just now, so I will repeat it. This happened in Kodaikanal, where every day I used to have a friend by the name of Mohandas sitting by my side. We always used to sit next to each other. One day during breakfast, Swami walked very close to us.

Idli and *poori* were being served for breakfast. Swami walked close to us, picked up one *poori* from the plate of Mohandas, lifted it up, and said that the *pooris* were not properly fried. And then He tore the *poori* and at the centre, there was a diamond ring!

He picked up the diamond ring and presented it to Mohandas, who was seated next to me. As I was just next to him, I also expected a diamond ring; but I couldn't ask Swami directly. So what I was doing was eating the *poori* slowly—dead slow.

Swami looked at me and asked, "Why are you eating like that, so slowly?" I told him, "Swami, I am eating slowly because there is the possibility that there is a diamond ring in this *poori* I am eating now. So when I eat it, it might get stuck in my gullet." (*Laughter*)

Baba laughed and said, "I am not going to give you a diamond ring. Get it from your mother-in-law!" (*Laughter*)

I will tell you about another incident in Kodaikanal. When in Kodaikanal, Swami normally comes down around eight o'clock in the morning. Thinking I had enough time, I wasn't ready: I had just a towel around my waist, that's all. I hadn't yet brushed my teeth either.

Suddenly Baba opens the door and comes into my room. He stares at me, “Why are you like this?”

I said, “Swami, I’m not ready yet.”

And Baba laughed and said, “When everybody has come for My *darshan*, you are giving your *darshan* to Me.” (*Laughter*)

Sai Ram, Uncle. When did Swami pick you to start translating, and how did you feel when Swami asked you to do that?

He asked me to translate for the first time in the year 1988. I was serving as the State President of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Andhra Pradesh. We were all called to assemble inside the Mandir. It was the meeting of the Sathya Sai World Council, attended by all the state presidents and state trust convenors.

Suddenly Swami said, “Come on, you are a Telugu-speaking fellow. You translate now.” Somehow I translated. At the end Baba said, “You translated okay, but you are very fast. You are very emotional.”

Later, in 1989, having joined His college as the Principal of Brindavan Campus, Sri Sathya Sai University, I started translating His Divine discourses, and have done so up to this date.

Thank you, Uncle. We have a clarification question. You know Swami takes letters from us. There is always this question coming in my mind. Many times when you sit in the front row, other people give you their letters. Sometimes Swami takes the letters from you. Then there are others who say that you are not supposed to give letters through somebody else. Has Swami ever, during any of your interactions, said anything about this to you?

No. You can give letters on behalf of others. Particularly when foreigners come, when overseas devotees come, they pass bundles of letters collected from the devotees of their Sai centre to Swami, and Swami smilingly accepts them. To pray for somebody or to carry letters on behalf of somebody is an act of benevolence, not malevolence. It is an act of service and charity.

Yes, one last question please.

I have heard Sathya Sai Baba is more of Narayana incarnation. Is this true?

If you are devotee of Narayana, He is Narayana. If you are a devotee of Shiva, He is Shiva. If you are a Christian, He is Christ. He is only a mirror where you will find your own reflection.

Thank you so much. It has been my pleasure to talk to you and to meet the children, and also the adults, of Sri Sathya Sai Centre, Cincinnati, Ohio.

I prayed to Bhagavan for blessing me with an opportunity to be amongst you. May Bhagavan bless you. Sai Ram, and good night. Thank you very much.