

Special Talk by Prof. Anil Kumar in Kobe, Japan

“Personal Experiences with Sai Baba”

June 6, 2010

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

Sai Ram

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of our most beloved Bhagavan,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Friends! I am going to share with you certain personal experiences as demanded by the organisers. Sri Lachu Chablani has every right to command and demand. Being a member of Sai Kobe family, I am obliged to him.

How I entered the Sai-fold is a surprise. Some of the members known to our family in the past are not able to accept me as a Sai devotee even today!

FROM SAMAJ (SOCIETY) TO BRAHMA (GOD)

There is a faith called Brahmo Samaj. It was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Along with Viceroy Benting, Raja Ram Mohan Roy brought many reforms to India: abolition of *sati*, (that is, the custom of a woman killing herself when her husband died), emancipation of women; law and education were all reformed by Lord Benting at the instance of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed in the unity of all religions. He expressed that God has no name or form, He has no beginning or end. No religion or religious text can exclusively claim to be the standard. This religion, Brahmo Samaj, does not believe in the caste system. It does not accept rituals, and it will not permit idolatry. It does not accept *Avatars*.

I belong to that religion: Brahmo Samaj. For three generations our family has belonged to Brahmo Samaj. Both of my grandparents are Brahmo Samaj missionaries. They went to Calcutta to receive training as missionaries. They sacrificed a lot—their families and their comfort. As they did not observe any rituals like *Upanayanam*, their parents treated them as outcastes. Girls were prohibited to read in those days, yet my mother was the first lady to graduate from a university in Andhra Pradesh!

To such a faith I belonged! My grandfathers expected that I would also be a Brahmo Samaj missionary. As Baba put it later, “From Samaj you have come to Brahma.” Samaj is ‘community’. Baba meant that He is Brahma or God.

A MARRIAGE OF OPPOSITES

Many Brahma Samaj people were not able to reconcile with the fact that I was running after Baba. I was also a very head-strong fellow. It was not easy to convince me. Even now I have very strong views! I used to give a number of talks on Brahma Samaj. I accompanied my grandfather. Whatever spiritual knowledge I have, it is the gift of my grandfather.

But times changed. I got married to a woman who is hundred percent Hindu--she is completely ritualistic and has total faith in the rituals. She is hundred percent loyal to calendar and almanac. She loves to worship, runs after temples and idols, and reads *Lalitha Sahasranama* every day. It is somewhat like a Muslim married to a Hindu woman: both of us incompatible, following opposite directions! Pakistan and India may get together, but not our ideas!

When I was married, there were only black and white photographs. I have only three pictures of our wedding with me. In one photograph, my mother-in-law has both her hands on our heads, feeling pity upon her daughter given in marriage to a Brahma. When I look at the pictures today, I do not see any smiles on the faces of the bride's party! They might be under the impression that Brahmans are terrorists! But my father-in-law made thorough inquiry about my character. I think they gave him a bearably comfortable certificate of conduct that ended up in matrimony.

In a Brahma home, you won't find any pictures of Rama, Krishna, or Venkateshwara. There is no worship and no flowers. We have daily prayers with some songs of a nameless, formless God of eternity—that is all we do. It is all based on the *Upanishad* teachings. Debendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath Tagore, and Raja Ram Mohan Roy made some collections from *Upanishads* and compiled a text called *Brahma Dharma*. That's all we have.

UNDERGROUND WORSHIP

So this lady who entered into our home as a newly married bride found no place to worship and there were no pictures to worship. So she secretly brought a small picture of Venkateshwara and hid it in the bedroom, offering prayers in a hidden, silent, confidential way. It was somewhat like an underground activity, because worship of pictures was not openly permitted.

One day my grandfather gave her some beautiful flowers. She was taking the flowers to the bedroom. My grandfather asked her, "Where are you taking these flowers?" She said, "To place in front of the picture of Venkateshwara." My grandfather said "No! Nothing doing! The flowers are given to you to put it on your head, not on Venkateshwara's head!" That was the background for three generations.

DIVINE ILLNESS

As God willed it, as destiny decided, she fell sick and we consulted many doctors. They all recommended a hysterectomy. She was 30 years old at that time. All the doctors said that surgery was a must. Since it was the common opinion of all the doctors, we decided to get her operated upon.

It was a very hot summer. Guntur, where I come from, is a furnace, but still we are very comfortable there, eating hot chillies and spices! One day prior to the surgery, I was with the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, a man named Khandubhai Desai. I was asked to translate his talk

at a public meeting. You can imagine my weakness by now: my wife was to have surgery the next morning and here I was busy with my public obligations!

The operation was successful and she returned home safe and secure. After some days, she started complaining of some problem: a burning sensation in the abdominal region. She could not eat anything.

You see how busy I am today, so you can imagine how active I must have been at that young age! I was very busy, very active, giving talks at the Rotary Club, Lions Club, or wherever I was invited. I was director of the drama association, science association, and editor of the magazine board at the college, which is a co-educational institution. I was quite young and good-looking then. I dressed in suits for 25 years! But when I returned home, every day my wife used to cry, saying she was not well. She was bothered about the children and worried how to bring them up. What could I do? We waited and waited, consulting many doctors, but all of them said in one voice that nothing was wrong with her. Thus both of us became a laughing stock at home—a joke! Some doctor even suggested that I do the cooking at home instead of my wife!

Finding life extremely difficult, I had a beautiful idea. This lady comes from an orthodox Brahmin family, running after temples and worshipping idols. Why can't I take her back to her own tradition? So every day we visited one temple. I would take care of the children outside the temple and she would go into the temple alone. So it started with democratic understanding: you go your way and allow me to go my way. Somehow she started enjoying some peace in the evening as we visited one temple after another.

PULLED TO THE PICTURE

One day when we were passing by the railway station, we heard a *bhajan*. We climbed up a staircase and went upstairs. It was the Sathya Sai Baba *bhajan* group, with Baba's picture in the centre. So now, a fellow who did not believe in Rama, who did not accept Krishna or Shiva, had to stand in front of the picture of Sathya Sai Baba! It was neither believable nor acceptable!

As a young lecturer in those days if any student asked, "Sir, please tell us some important questions for the examination," my usual reply was, "I am not Sathya Sai Baba to leak question papers!" If any fellow came with long hair, my usual comment was, "Are you Sathya Sai Baba?" When some girls came to the class with Baba's ring and a chain with Baba's medallion, I very well remember asking those two girls to get out of the class!

Moreover those were the days when the *Blitz* magazine was wonderfully edited by R.K.Karanjia, a leading journalist from Bombay. With poetic excellence and beautiful English, he published articles against Sathya Sai Baba. I love the English language; I love literature, though by profession I am a biologist. That is the irony of life. I used to memorise a portion of Karanjia's article written against Baba.

But that day I had to go to the *bhajan* hall and see Baba's picture! And in the *bhajan* hall I saw those two girls that I had thrown out of the class. They came to me and asked, "Sir, what happened to you? Because we wore Baba's rings, you asked us to get out of the class." I said, "That was true then, and this is true now!" Even now, whenever those two girls meet me, they have a hearty, mischievous laugh, or a sarcastic smile.

BRAHMO HOME BOMBARDED

Anyway, we returned home and my wife told me, “I am very peaceful, and I feel healthy. Let us go to Sathya Sai Baba.” That was something like heavy bombing in Hiroshima, Japan! It was a bomb blast in a Brahma Samaj family! We belong to a joint family. How to tell the other members and how to go to Puttaparthi? Grandfather, grandmother, mother, father, all Brahma elders were around us. It would be easier for Armstrong to go to the moon than for Anil Kumar to go to Puttaparthi!

Slowly I spoke to my grandmother. Grandmothers and grandfathers are good. They listen to grandchildren, whereas most fathers and mothers do not listen! So I went to my grandparents, slowly, softly, sweetly, nicely, pleadingly I requested them to permit us to go to Puttaparthi with a promise given to them that I would not be converted and I would not change my religion either. Somehow they took pity on me and allowed us to go to Puttaparthi.

FIRST TRIP TO PRASHANTHI

With four children—the eldest aged 7 years down to the youngest who was one month old—we went to Puttaparthi and stayed outside the ashram in a privately-owned room. In those days, the rooms outside the ashram given for rent had replaceable doors—you could keep the door on or take it away! You could fix the window, or put it down, or it could fall on its own! There were no toilet facilities. Everything was like an open university! You had to buy a big container of hot water for 25 *naya paise* and take a bath in the open air before the sun rose. You can imagine: had we been in Japan where the sun rises at 3:30 in the morning, I would have had to take a bath at midnight!

Anyway, we chose to stay there on two conditions. I told my wife that it is not possible for me to stay for more than five days. If we stayed longer, I would lose my job and the family would be out on the street. And the second condition was she should not force me to do *namaskar* (salutation) to Baba or insist I go inside Prashanthi Nilayam. So this two-point agreement was duly signed between us. Every night at dinner time, there was a hot discussion. She used to say, “Why can’t you come inside?” My answer was the same: the condition was she should not insist I go inside. Both of us stuck to our firm stand. Believe it or not, I never went into Prashanthi Nilayam for four days. I let my children play outside Prashanthi Nilayam. They never attended any *bhajans*, (devotional singing) and never attended any *darshan*. The children and I remained outside.

THE FIRST NAMASKAR, UNWILLED, UNKNOWING

The evening before we left, while *bhajan* was going on, I was standing with the children near the *Gopuram* gate, far from the *Mandir*. *Bhajan* was going on as Swami sat on the chair. Suddenly He got up and started walking towards me. My legs were trembling, and my heart beat doubled, I felt like running away from Prashanthi Nilayam. The reason is the mind is full of nonsensical ideas: I was afraid that He may ask me something now. So I wished that He would not come that way. But He walked straight towards me and stood in front of me. He stared at me, from top to bottom. I also stared at Him, from top to bottom. He went back and sat for *bhajans* for some time. Again He got up, walked the long distance, stood in front of me, looking at me seriously. I was left with no other alternative. Slowly I lifted my hands and unknowingly both the hands joined, unwillingly ending in a *namaskara*. Then He said “Hmmm.” That was the only thing that happened.

Next morning I dared to get inside and started watching Him: how does He look? We were to leave that afternoon. I felt this thought within me, “If there is anything great in You, if You are special and Divine, I want You to make my wife hale and healthy, so that she can take care of the family properly.” Baba never looked at me, never walked towards me. No chance to touch His feet because I was sitting in the 50th line—a very comfortable, safe zone. Just as watches are heat-proof or magnet-proof, I was spiritual-proof!

UNASKED QUESTIONS ANSWERED

I was wondering why He called a few people for interview: what was their greatness? What do they have, that I don't have? I was upset with this kind of selection! I was just questioning within myself when a man sat by my side. He was a bank manager. He was my student long ago. He said, “Sir, what are you looking at?”

I said, “I am not looking at anybody! I'm only looking at you!”

He said, “Sir, are you thinking why has Baba not called you for an interview? Are you worried that you have not been called for interview?”

Then I asked him, “How do you know this? I did not tell you anything. Anyway, since you brought it up, give me the answer.”

That gentleman said, “Sir, those given interview need not be special or unique. Naxalities, terrorists, men of violence from Bengal are also given interviews to bring in a transformation in them. Worst-of-the-fellows also are called for interviews. So don't worry, sir.”

Though the answer was comforting, the place where I sat was unnerving. If this fellow goes on reading all my thoughts, what will happen to me? I got up and left that place and sat somewhere else. By my side was seated an elderly person. He said, “I am Naidu, Headmaster of Eswaramma High School.”

I said, “Glad to see you, sir.” No further talk. I thought it was dangerous to talk to these people in Prashanthi Nilayam!

Just as I was looking around, this Naidu asked me, “Are you thinking how Baba could construct all these buildings? Are you interested in knowing how He got funds, although money is not collected here?” That exact thought was in my mind at that moment!

I said, “Sir, I did not tell you anything! Why are you telling me these things?”

He told me, “Don't worry.” Then he said, “A very rich man in the iron business had a wife who suffered from cancer. He took her to different countries abroad, advanced countries like UK and USA. She had repeated surgeries but was not cured. That iron magnate, on hearing about the miracles of Baba, came to Prashanthi Nilayam. Swami gave them an interview and He applied *vibhuthi* (sacred ash) on the abdomen. She was not only cured, she later became the mother of two children. Out of gratitude that man constructed all these buildings, worth about one *crore rupees* in those days.” He is Poornachandra Kamani, in whose name the auditorium exists today.

BABA'S IDEAS IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH BRAHMO SAMAJ

After listening to how Baba could get funds without any donation and how buildings could come up, for the first time in my life, I felt ashamed of myself. I said, "Thank you for the information," and I left that place. I was afraid this man might bring out some more ideas!

I purchased one book from the bookstall, *Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 5*. I read some talks of Baba. All the ideas expressed by Baba were in full agreement with the principles of Brahmo Samaj. He says one has to travel from idol to the ideal. Even if Hindus follow idol worship, they have to reach the ideal--this is the quintessence of Brahmo philosophy! So I was not converted; I could continue to be Brahmo!

I purchased a few more books and returned home. By that time, my wife was totally cured, no more health problems. We adjusted or got used to attending *bhajans* every day. Even in heavy rains we used to go. One day my grandparents said, "You better not go in this heavy rain." So we did not go to *bhajan*. Suddenly my wife's pain returned! So we had to go to *bhajans*. Whenever we didn't go, there was some health problem! So Baba managed a remote control operation to keep me tight in His grip!

INTO THE DEEP SEA OF HIS MESSAGE

I never stood first in class, in high school, college or university. I never got a gold medal. I never got less than 60 marks. Marks have taken care of themselves not to exceed 70. But right from my childhood and through high school, college and university, I stood first in elocution competitions, both in English and Telugu. Had I not participated in those competitions, I would have got 10 more marks.

So public speaking was a matter of interest in the beginning, evolved into a talent over a period of time, and has become a lifetime vice as of today! Because I was speaking at different places on several topics, people came to know that Anil Kumar is reading Sai literature now. So all Sai centres started inviting me to speak. Being a teacher, I know how to prepare for the class. Sai literature being infinite, I did not have to repeat myself. So for every talk I read a lot, prepared and went there. That's how I got into the well of Baba, into the deep sea of His message.

For seven years I visited Baba and attended all the festivals. He never looked at me. He never passed by my side. On the other hand, He successfully avoided the line where I sat. Whenever some of my students met me in Prashanthi Nilayam, I would tell them, "Sit anywhere but don't sit by my side, because Baba will not come near me!" This continued for seven years. It may be that I am a hard nut to crack! It was a very long probation period—seven years!

DANCER GETS CALLED

Suddenly after seven years, during Dasara festival, a word was sent for me. All were searching, "Where is Anil Kumar, where is Anil Kumar?" I thought there was some other Anil Kumar. "Where is your Anil Kumar?" I asked.

"No sir, we are looking for a 'Professor Anil Kumar'."

"If that is the case, I am that Anil Kumar. I have not done anything wrong. I have not stolen anybody's purse. Please leave me alone."

“No, no, Baba wants you!”

“Don’t talk nonsense! Baba does not know me! For seven years He never wanted me. Why do you say He wants me now? Maybe He wants some other Anil Kumar, so go search.”

“No sir, He wants you!” Then they made me sit in the front row.

Baba came to me and said, “Hey, Vijayantimala, dancer, how are you?” Vijayantimala is a famous dancer in South India.

I thought, ‘Who is the dancer here? Is He referring to some other person, or to me?’

“No, you dancer, Vijayantimala,” He said.

I said, “Swami, dancer?”

“Yes, you are the dancer. You do all the dancing on the stage.”

Right from that moment, He always called me ‘dancer’. And He always called me by female names. “Yamini Krishnamurthy dancer, you come here!” Or, “Padmini, Padmini dancer come here!” Maybe I was a lady in my last life, or perhaps I am going to be one in my next life. Definitely I am not one now!

Then He said, “You speak today in Poornachandra Auditorium.”

I thought, ‘For seven years what happened to You? Seven years You never looked at me. Today, You call me ‘dancer’ and want me to speak?’ Then I said, “Ok, Swami.” I climbed up the dais and gave a speech. That was in 1978.

PROMOTED TO THE VERANDA

Next morning, Baba said, “Very good speech.” But I had been speaking from the beginning! He could have talked to me all those seven years! I did not become a speaker all of a sudden. Then He said, “Some more crowds will be coming: wait, wait.” He made me speak again that Dasara in Telugu.

Next day, He said, “You go and sit on the veranda.” Who will allow me to sit on the veranda? When Swami invites you, *seva dals* are messengers of Lord Vishnu from heaven! If you go on your own, *seva dals* are messengers of death, Yama Dharmaraja! Who will allow me to go there? At that time, Delhi *seva dals* were on duty. North Indian fellows eat wheat. Their bodies are strong, whereas South Indian people eat *sambar* (lentil) and rice. They are wide with a big tummy—they don’t need a table, they can sit and write on their tummy! On the other hand, North Indian people are quite strong, lean and thin.

The Delhi *seva dals* were holding their hands tightly. They wouldn’t allow me to go. So what to do? I waited for a very good opportunity, then ran in between their arms, and went straight to the veranda and sat down!

TWO BIRTHDAYS, TWO SETS OF CLOTHES

Baba came. "Oh, you are here? Come on, sir," He said. And He put an envelope in my pocket. He said, "Have a new suit for birthday."

I said, "Swami, my birthday is on October 25th!"

"No, no, no! Swami's birthday," He said.

Then I said, "Why should I have a new suit for Your birthday? I don't know!"

"You are innocent, so you don't know!" He said, "Don't worry. In the envelope I gave you enough money for two suits: one suit for My birthday and one suit for your birthday, and there is some money for getting the suits stitched also." Then He presented me with some silk *dhotis* and some silk cloth to wear on the chest.

"Swami, what shall I do with this? I wear safari suits. Why the silk cloth, Swami?"

"No, silk cloths are given to scholars. You gave two lectures; therefore I am giving you silk cloths, because you are a scholar."

I gratefully remember now, with eyes full of tears and a heart full of gratitude, the golden words He said on that day. Laying both His hands on my head, He blessed me saying, "May you live long, may you spread Sai message all over Andhra Pradesh. I bless you with a long spiritual life." Since that day, instead of Brahmo missionary, I have become a Baba missionary!

I beg to be excused, Chablani sir, I beg to be excused Dayal sir. You are responsible for asking me to share my personal experience, which I do not do usually. You have spiritually provoked me. You have religiously committed me, and you have philosophically electrified me. So I shared this long personal biography of Anil Kumar. (*Applause*)

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

Asato Maa Sad Gamaya

Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya

Mrtvormaa Amrtam Gamaya

Om Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu

Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu

Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji ki Jai!
Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji ki Jai!
Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji ki Jai!

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