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Interactive Session between Young Adults and Prof. Anil Kumar

High Point, North Carolina, USA

“Explore, Experience and Enjoy Sai”

May 30, 2010

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

Sai Ram

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of our most beloved Bhagavan

INTRODUCTION BY A YOUNG ADULT

We have heard from Anil Kumar about his wonderful experiences with Swami – “Explore, Experience and Enjoy”. But as doubting Thomas’s we have a lot of questions. We now have the opportunity to have a one-on-one interaction with Professor Anil Kumar. If you have any questions such as how to proceed in your life, or how to practise the human values, feel free to ask him. (Applause)

Swami always tells us to keep our thoughts, words and deeds in mind and I don’t always have good thoughts. But at the same time, it doesn’t feel good to speak or act on the bad thoughts. So how do we practise that teaching correctly?

When thoughts, words and deeds are out of sync, what do I do? Bhagavan says that when the thought comes, exercise discrimination: is it good or bad, right or wrong? Would Swami approve? In order to discriminate, the thought must pass through the intellect. Thought is of the mind and has to connect to the intellect. Then you will realise what is good. Next comes determination. With that determination you can do anything . . . and that is dedication. Therefore: thoughts . . . discrimination . . . determination . . . and dedication.

Living away from the physical presence of Swami we sometimes perform seva, attend bhajan sessions or go to the Sai centre. But I wonder why Swami always tells us to look inward. We take the time out of our busy work schedules to go to Puttaparthi to see Swami. I wonder, what’s the point of going to Puttaparthi if you are supposed to see God within you? Can you not just practise looking inwards wherever you are?

Good question. The same question was put to Ramana Maharshi. Somebody asked him, "Swami, what is the role of a *guru*?" Ramana Maharshi said, "Out of man's devotion to God, He incarnates in the form of a *guru* or *Avatar* to teach you that He is inside. So God from above comes down to tell you that He is within. You go there to see His form, in order to realise that He is formless.

The problem that I have noticed with myself is that when I go to the retreat, I pick up the teachings, and follow them for just three days. (Laughter) After that I am already longing for the next retreat because I have forgotten the promises that I made. How do I maintain the will power?

This is a problem in Puttaparthi too. Swami said, "People bring mats, sit there after *darshan* saying *Hari Om Tat Sat* . . . and then leave." The reason is a lack of conviction. An example: to get a promotion you need to do more work. Do you show interest? Where there is incentive, there is sincerity and commitment. But in Puttaparthi you don't see any incentive. So Swami says, "Look within so that you will experience Him in your daily life."

Another example: for fifteen years, I and the Head of Department at A. C. College, Guntur were at loggerheads. We never confronted each other, but the time came when I became the State President of the Sathya Sai Organisation. Now we needed to cooperate with each other. What was I to do? I prayed within, "Swami, You should save me." Believe me, you can also contact Him. A week later the Head of Department called me to his room. He said, "My wife had a dream last night of Venkateshwara as Swami. She saw Sathya Sai Baba on the chest of Venkateshwara. In this Department you are the union leader for Sai Baba, therefore I called you. Please could you enlighten me about this?"

Now I got the picture. So he was caught now, easier to handle. Then I said, "Sir, as this is college time, can I see you this evening?" For the first time in fifteen years I visited his house, with some Baba pictures and the book "Man of Miracles" . . . all the Sai ammunition! From that day onwards, he never failed to meet me. When I was late for college, he engaged my class. When I forgot to sign, he didn't mind signing on my behalf. (Laughter) So Swami will take care of us. No problem.

I live in a very conservative area where people do not accept different beliefs. The first question people ask you is, "What church do you go to?" Some of my close friends know that I am a Baba devotee, but some don't. Once I asked this question and the answer was, "Swami says, open up and tell everyone." I had somebody ask me, "What are your beliefs on God?" and I told him everything about Swami and ended up with him trying to baptise me and convert me to Jesus! (Laughter) That had many negative consequences for me.

Swami is not interested in propaganda, publicity, baptism, conversion or evangelism. I worked in a Christian college very successfully. (Laughter) How to introduce Baba to a newcomer can be a problem. My advice is not to mention Baba's name. Visit the church, and speak on Christ more eloquently, authentically and with a new interpretation. Please consult Peter Phipps books; Peter Phipps wrote three books on "Christ and Baba". Best to speak on that and don't mention Baba's name. At the end of the talk, people will run after you. Then you say, "I will talk to you later." (Laughter) "Where did you get all this?" they will ask. Just wait. Slowly befriend them and

when somebody says, “That was a very good interpretation” pass on the book discretely. *(Laughter)* You will be a super star. By mentioning Baba’s name you could be antagonising the other man. Don’t do that.

There is a place, a Rama-Nama-Kshetralu, where at least twenty thousand people attended a function, a week long celebration. Twenty thousand! They were all non-devotees. Unexpectedly they invited me to speak. But I am a botanist, not a student of literature or Sanskrit. Only scholars speak there. I am a non-scholarly master of plant sizes — how can I speak of the *Ramayana*? Nonsense. I said, “Sir, please think twice before you invite me to speak.” They said, “We will take the risk.” Then I took the *Rama Katha Rasa Vahini* – two volumes, *Atma Rama*, and Baba’s Sri Rama Navami discourses.

I am a teacher you know, we prepare. *(Laughter)* No teacher worth his salt goes without preparing. As a teacher I know how to speak publicly. At the end of the talk it was difficult for the organisers to make me leave the stage. Afterwards people said, “Appa, what an explanation. Rama . . . *Rama Katha!*” They never knew these things, because Rama’s story is written by biographers—Valmiki, Tulsi and Kamba *Ramayana*. Baba’s *Rama Katha Rasa Vahini* is an autobiography. What Baba speaks of in His story as Rama has the original gems. From that year onwards, they started inviting me every year. Well, what did I think of for the second year? “*Ramayana*, as interpreted by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.” *(Laughter)* Third year: “Sathya Sai Rama.” *(Laughter)*

How do we do our duty as a seva when our job becomes a routine and we feel bored?

Look here, your job is also seva. Nobody will say, “I worked for twenty years.” You are not a worker. I served in that institution . . . twenty-five years of service to my credit. Your parents will say, “Twenty years of service.” A machine works, but man serves! Work is time-bound, while service is time-less. Work is a routine; service is beautiful. Thus work is service. The students of the Sathya Sai Institute know how hard the teachers work there, and what salary they get. That is service. So whatever you do in the office is also service, don’t differentiate.

I try not to accumulate karma, so as to avoid having to be born again and again. When I talk to my wife I say, “Let’s not do this as it is going to add bad karma.” Or, “Let’s do this as this is going to add good karma.” That is my dilemma!

This world is so beautiful! Why not come back? *(Laughter)* Human life is very precious. It doesn’t matter if we are born again. When your *karma* and another man’s *karma* coincide you could be accumulating and he could be finishing, or he could be accumulating and you could be finishing. You meet at a point determined by *karma*. An example: Ahalya was cursed to remain as a stone. She was waiting for her *karma* to be completed, and Sri Ramachandra was passing by. It just happened that Ramachandra, who spent time exiled in a forest and should by then have been king, had to pass by. At that time, completion of *karma* coincided. Rama stepped on the stone and Ahalya came back to life.

Should we avoid action, altogether?

You cannot avoid action. The same problem is raised in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 3 on *Karma Yoga*, where Arjuna says, “Swami, I can stop work; why accumulate *karma*?” Krishna

answers, “Breathing is *karma*, digestion is *karma*, thinking is *karma*, believing is *karma*.” You cannot live without *karma*. Some are voluntary, while some are involuntary.

If you lose your love for Swami or God in general, how do you regain that love?

If you lose love, do you regain love? Love, first of all, cannot be lost. Suppose you are angry with your mother so the love is gone. The next morning, with compound interest, you love her doubly! (*Laughter*) Your father says, “You cannot go to the movies” so you lose love for him. But the next morning: “Hello Daddy!” (*Laughter*) Love cannot be lost. Attachment can be lost, but not love. Attachment can be gained and it can be lost. But love cannot be gained or lost. Love is energy. It can neither be created nor destroyed.

At certain times I pray to Swami to give me something. If Swami does not give me what I want, I fight with Swami inside myself. “Swami, why did You not give it to me?” So is it right for me to fight with Swami?

If at all we have to be romantic, let us be romantic with God, because romance with God is so beautiful. Romance with God is not repetitive. Romance with God is very fresh. And if at all we have to fight, let us fight with God. Where there is romance there is also a fight; where there is love, there is also hate. Hatred and love are opposites, reverse sides of the same coin. So life is a pendulum that oscillates between a tear and a smile.

I don't know what I really want in life. Sometimes I pray to Swami, “Swami, I want to come to USA.” But when the visa gets filed, I say, “No, I don't want to go. I want to stay in India.” One day I want to get married, the next day I don't want to get married. What kind of approach should we have in our thoughts, so that we can really know what we want?

This happens to everyone. When I was the State President in the organisation, Swami asked me to serve in Brindavan. I said, “Swami, please not me! I don't want to go there.” To live with Swami is like living with fire. Life with Swami is a challenge. It's like walking on a razor's edge.

AK: “Swami, drop me, I don't want to.”

Swami: “Come here as a Principal.”

So I went there, but I wanted to back out.

AK: “Swami, I have not brought my original certificates.” (*Laughter*)

Swami: “*Emi originalu?* What is that, original?”

AK: “Swami, my M.Sc degree and service.”

Swami: “I am the Chancellor. I am appointing you. Certificate is not necessary.”

Then the next day I said, “Swami, I have to apply for leave from my current position. I have served for twenty-six years in that role. I cannot simply come and join here. Now is vacation, but the next semester begins on 2nd July, so then I need to go back.”

Swami said, “*Emi oddu. Vacation, ikkada chei.* You don’t need to go there. On this vacation you can start to learn the job here. Swami’s college starts on June 1st. You will be here during your vacation. We won’t pay you; you will draw your salary from there. But you stay here and learn the work.” (*Laughter*)

I said, “Swami, my in-laws are there; my aged mother is there; my children are studying medicine and engineering. I have lots of responsibilities, so I cannot go there all of a sudden.”

Swami said, “I will come to the airport to see you off.”

On the way to the airport, I hoped to further my case.

Swami: “Anil Kumar, you go there on the 5th May. You don’t need to come to the airport.” (*Laughter*)

So when He catches you, nobody can save you. (*Laughter*) Therefore, this kind of to-be or not-to-be is not only the question for Hamlet of William Shakespeare. It is the question in our daily lives. To go or not to go? To marry or not to marry? To accept or to reject? At that moment, we simply pray silently.

A simple joke: There was an MBA student, Aravinda from Bangalore, a very good fellow.

He came to me and said, “Sir, I want to stay with Swami. What can I do?”

“What do you want to do?”

“Sir, I want to be in the university.”

“He will put you in the hospital.”

“Why, sir?”

“When you say you want the university, He will put you in the hospital. When you say you want the hospital, He will put you in the university.” (*Laughter*) “So don’t choose like that.”

He went to Swami: “Swami, I want to . . .” He is now serving in the hospital! (*Laughter*)

We have to learn to accept what is given to us.

If we have multiple opportunities in front of us—say for example, we have an opportunity to go to graduate school, take a job, or do volunteer work—and we pray and pray for direction but nothing comes, how do we know what path to take? Or is it just a gamble?

You see there are a few options. First, wait for some time, for some intuition, inner voice or God’s directive. Second, identify your preferences, your temperament and preferred choice. This is what I did. My mother wanted me to become a Class I Officer, like a District Collector, but I was not interested in that role. She brought a number of job application forms home for me to fill in, which I never did. Once she went away for twenty days, and in the meantime I secured a job as a lecturer at my parent’s place of work, where I had also been a student!

When my mother returned home she saw me wearing a tie. “Amma, I took a teaching job.” I said. “You useless fellow! I want you to come up in life, and all you do is settle down here. *Chalta hai.*” (Laughter)

“Why are you disappointed? This is what I wanted.” I exclaimed to her. But she had wanted something different for me, because for four generations our family had all been teachers: parents, grandparents and great grandparents. She wanted at least one son to be an officer; but I became a professor. Sometimes we cannot accept what happens.

Success depends upon accepting that which is given to us. The mind says, ‘It would have been better for me to have worked in America rather than India.’ Nonsense! You would have been worse off. What is given to you is best, so accept. Make use of what is given to you as an opportunity to come up in life.

Take for example Puttaparthi: three hours morning *darshan*, three hours evening *darshan*, six hours college. And you have to live in staff quarters with one room and one kitchen where rats and cockroaches co-exist! (Laughter) All five elements are against you—no air, no light, no nothing. Shall I cry and bale out? (Laughter) How can I make use of this opportunity? This is what He has given me. What can I do? I can publish books, I can write articles, I can give speeches, and I can meet friends. There are so many options.

Instead of cursing what is given to you, reconcile and accept. Then find avenues of expressing your skills and talents to find fulfilment. If you go on fighting with what is given to you, nobody will like to meet you because you’ll be wearing a castor-oil face and your performance will be poor, so life will be frustrating. So remember two points: accept and improve on what is given to you ungrudgingly.

I pray everyday. After I pray, I take a look at a Sai messages book. Over the past month I have picked the same message several times. It simply says, ‘Why fear when I am here.’ I started to think about it, but I am not sure if there is a deeper meaning to it?

Baba comes to our rescue. In the year 1975, I visited Indiana, USA. I went to Corydon, Bloomington and Indianapolis. I was sponsored by the Rotary International, for international understanding. I was still young and presentable, unlike how you find me today. (Laughter) I will let you in on a little secret. I am afraid of cats and dogs. (Laughter) When I left India for Indiana, I did not know that I would have to stay with a different host each day. Each host had cats and dogs. (Laughter) These fellows love their cats and dogs more than they love human beings.

One of the hosts introduced me to the family. The children said, “Hi, I’m Sinclair”, “Hi, I’m David,” and then I heard, “Hi, Julie” and a dog came! (Laughter) That dog was my height. (Laughter) “Julie, why don’t you say ‘hi’?” the host said. Julie was very friendly—she graduated from California. (Laughter) He went on speaking about Julie and wanted me to say ‘hi’. She started climbing on me! (Laughter) ‘Still one month to go,’ I thought. (Laughter)

This was the first day’s experience. ‘Swami, why have You put me in a place with cats and dogs? I would not have appeared for the interview at all if I knew it would be like this! It is my bad luck to be here.’ Helplessly I drove in the car, singing *Sai Mahadeva, Sathya Sai Mahadeva,*

Parthipureeswara Hey. “Swami, save me from these cats and dogs!” A simply awful, silly and shameful thing to say.

The next day, without me mentioning anything, I was told, “Mr. Anil, my doggy is in the den. Don’t worry, relax.” Before I went to bed, I checked my room to ensure that nothing was around. *(Laughter)* I was lying on the bed. Then suddenly at 10 pm I heard a creaking sound. What was it? A Burmese cat was on the bed! *(Laughter)* Then I opened the door and heard another creaking sound. I thought there must be a number of cats here, but it was the guy brushing his teeth. *(Laughter)*

Then I came out and said, “Sir, I think the cat is uncomfortable on my bed. *(Laughter)* It is finding it difficult because I am lying on the bed.”

“Oh Mr. Anil, I understand.”

So, even simple, silly things will be answered. Don’t worry. He knows our weaknesses.

I am wondering if there are any stories that Swami has told you pertaining specifically to young adults that we can incorporate in our daily lives.

Swami has told many stories; they are in His discourses and the *Summer Showers in Brindavan* books. His talks to His students are all available on the *Heart2Heart* website: <http://media.radiosai.org/www/index.html> and His convocation addresses are all available in print.

Firstly, He expects young adults to be obedient to parents and please them, though that is a difficult thing! *(Laughter)* It’s impossible to please parents, especially Indian parents. *(Laughter)* If you say, “I got seventy marks” they won’t say, “Good.” They will say, “How about the other thirty?” *(Laughter)* It is very difficult to satisfy Indian parents. But anyway, try to please your parents; try to make them happy. That is the first stipulation of Baba.

Swami said to the boys and girls, “Students, you say you love Me. I am not going to believe you. You know your father and you know your mother; you know what your father likes and you know what your mother likes. If you cannot act in the way your father and mother want you to act, if you cannot please them, and if you sit here and say, “I love Swami” — stop it.”

So He wants us to make our parents happy. But it is difficult, I know. I too made my parents dissatisfied. But I don’t want history to be repeated. So please them.

Secondly, be respectful towards elders. If any elderly guests or relatives come visiting, we should not boast about ourselves. They have come as guests, and you don’t need to pester them with your bio-data. Respect them. You may be great person, or you may be highly accomplished. But their age demands respect.

Thirdly, patriotism: love your country wherever you are. I love India in America. *Adhellam Mudiyaadhu... Adhellam Mudiyaadhu ... Paithikaaran Maadhiri Pesakoodadhu.* Be a Roman when you are in Rome. If you are in America, yes, love America by all means. If I am in Puttaparthi, I should be a *pukka* citizen of Puttaparthi. So love your country, wherever you are. Tradition and culture is very important.

Fourthly, make some time for service. That makes life meaningful.

Finally, you also need some personal time and space. Sit alone and meditate, reflect, listen to music, dance. I saw a person in Dallas who was dancing whilst I was dining. ‘Why is this fellow dancing like this when there is no music? Is he a crazy fellow?’ (*Laughter*) When I looked more closely at him, he was wearing ear phones. He was doing some exercises. “Can you teach me?” I asked. Be a part of the society where you are, yet have some time for yourself. But be sure to have some time for humour, for fun. People have forgotten how to smile.

Some people ask me, “Anil Kumar, why do you always smile? We always see you smiling in Puttaparthi. Why?” I said, “I don’t have any reason to cry, and crying won’t help me.” (*Laughter*)

There are times when we pray to Swami for something and it happens, and times when we just think of it and we immediately receive. But there are also times when we keep on praying for something and it is not granted. I heard you say in a speech that you also had a similar experience that lasted for seven years, when He didn’t talk to you. So how did you deal with that period?

Swami may not talk to or even look at you—in my case, for seven years. But I never stopped visiting that place. I attended every festival. Why? Because whatever you need, you get. In 1975, I was selected to go abroad during that seven year probation period. I know Baba selected me. Why? I did not prepare for the interview because I was very busy engaging in medical entrance coaching classes in college. I was busy till 11 o’clock at night. Where was the time to prepare? I never even read the book, “*Manorama*”; I simply applied. I sat there calmly and fired all my answers back. Then I returned home without any hope. But all five interviewers selected me as their first choice!

Baba never spoke to me, and He never collected any letters from me: the silent God. He is within us. He is within a Revenue Officer, a Mandal Officer, District Collector, everybody. He doesn’t need to talk from His own form. Does Venkateswara Swami talk to you? If you tell everybody that Venkateswara Swami from Tirupati talks to you, then they will keep you at a distance. (*Laughter*) “Oh, please continue to talk to Him!” (*Laughter*) So He is within.

With families being so dynamic and different today, what is the purpose of marriage? You see two people living together like a married couple, who are happier than some couples who are married. So I was wondering what the purpose of marriage is?

The purpose of marriage, as per *Sanathana Dharma*, is different. One: marriage is an institution, not merely a coming together of two opposite genders. The two individuals become closer, get married and bring two families together. It is a blend, togetherness, a union, a combination of two different families, not just two individuals.

Two: institutional marriage is an instrument to sustain and maintain the culture and tradition of the land. Tradition is maintained because of marriage, and culture is maintained because of marriage.

Three: the institutional marriage will teach us how to adjust, how to understand. Most bachelors don't fully understand problems, whereas married people know how to adjust, how to understand. That's why people say, "Arre, he has children, so he won't harm you."

So institutional marriage will help us to cultivate and maintain values. Marriage is like a boat to travel from this shore to the other shore, towards liberation. In marriage you have somebody to share with. Institutional marriage supports *brahmacharis*, all *sanyasis* and people who are aged, and maintains social norms and culture.

My question is about this organisation. Often Swami says that it is very important to express the universality of Swami's message in our Sai centres, but sometimes it seems that we fail to do that. Can you provide some advice on how to make the Sai centre friendlier to newcomers?

Is it a personal problem? Usually the youth are not accepted by seniors and elders. Particularly when you youngsters start speaking, a senior will say, "We used to stay there under the trees; we used to roll on the sand." (*Laughter*) There are many people who talk like that. They don't allow you to voice your ideas. He will say, "What do *you* know?" Swami does not like that." "We have been here since the fifties," some will say. "My grandfather was a devotee" and so on. (*Laughter*) And if this fellow likes singing, he only wants singing; if he likes service, then it is only service. This behaviour exists.

I too went through that, and did the following to avoid hurting anyone. Simple example: I was a State President, and my predecessor was a dictator. (*Laughter*) I am 100% democratic at home also. (*Laughter*) I don't want to dominate. I don't like it. My predecessor was a dominator. I was afraid that he may interfere with my work. So what can one do?

I did the following: when launching an activity, I asked that man to inaugurate it. He was happy ribbon-cutting. (*Laughter*) I organised a conference and asked him to preside over the function. He spoke some nonsense. (*Laughter*) I gave him some memento and said 'thank you'. And then I carried on in my own way, silently. "Help ever, hurt never." That is necessary.

I have often noticed that young adults about our age (but not us) tend to doubt God. Some of my friends say, "How can we believe in God when there is so much evil in the world?" I have always believed in God since I was little, and I have been told that there is a reason for evil in the world; but I never understood it.

We don't have to worry about the world; we don't have to worry about others. Somebody approached Ramana Maharshi and said, "Swami, there are so many bad fellows, evil forces. What shall I do?" He said, "That is my job, don't worry about it."

"Why are people like that?"

"Don't worry, it's my job. You just think about your Self."

Do you have faith? That's important. When evil things are going on, many people are bad. Don't worry, you can still be good. You can still pray to God. Be your true Self and be a model to others. However, if we look at the people around us, we lose our own identity and become lost in the ocean of the world. So look at your Self; that's necessary.

Many of us here are involved in service activities through the organisation as well as on our own. The general public are very much impressed by us and they start asking, "Who is Sai Baba?" What would be your short answer to them?

It depends upon the questioner. If the questioner is a Hindu, you can say Sai Baba is an *Avatar*, and he will understand. If the questioner is a Christian and you say He is an *Avatar*, he will say, "Nonsense, stop it." (*Laughter*) And if the questioner is a Muslim and you say He is an *Avatar*, he may become confused. The *Avatar* concept is widely known to Hindus. So it depends on the questioner.

Suppose a Christian asked you that question, what do you say? You can say Sathya Sai Baba is my *guru*; He is my role model. He teaches me how to lead a righteous life and supports me. I read His literature and I have confidence and faith in Him. You can speak like that.

Muslims believe in fraternity: the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. To a Muslim you could say, "There is a lot of brotherhood among His followers because they all feel the fatherhood of God. The followers of Sathya Sai Baba help each other." The questioner then becomes interested.

How do you remain in equanimity in all situations? For example, in certain situations we will feel angry, upset or hurt. How do you get away from all that?

That is the nature of youth. What should you do? I will give you Baba's prescription. First, when you are angry, drink a glass of cold water. If that does not work, stand in front of the mirror and see how you look. If that fails, come out of your home and walk in the fresh air, and then you will calm down. Temper and anger can be removed by following one or all of the techniques above.

Baba said, "If you are angry, you lose energy equivalent to one month's electricity." He also said, "By losing your temper, you lose the energy equal to what you have absorbed from food over a six month period. Moreover by being angry, you don't solve the problem."

Follow Baba. What does He do? If He appears to be angry, He won't talk to you. You feel you want to say, "Swami, please beat me; that is better than this. Why are You silent?" So when angry, be silent. That solves the problem. (*Laughter*)

We are done for now. On behalf of all the brothers and sisters, I thank Prof. Anil Kumar, sir. (Applause)

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

Asato Maa Sad Gamaya

Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya

Mrtymoraa Amrtam Gamaya

*Om Samastha Lokā Sukhino Bhavantu
Samastha Lokā Sukhino Bhavantu
Samastha Lokā Sukhino Bhavantu*

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

*Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji kī Jai!
Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji kī Jai!
Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji kī Jai!*

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