

# Part 01 | Experiences with Swami | Prof K Anil Kumar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGD0m56-ok>

There are winding iron steps inside when you enter the interview room.

Swami stood there and said, "Hey Anil Kumar, come in." I went running. "You will fall. Walk slower. No rush."

I came halfway and said, "Swami, in what?" He said, "In English." "Alright Swami."

I had thought I would speak something about Bhakti, devotion. "Not devotion, talk about Jnana (knowledge)."

He put both of His hands on my head. "May you live long, healthy, and spread Sai's message across all of Andhra Pradesh, Bangaru," He said.

Om Sri Sai Ram. I first offer my hundred crore Pranams at the divine lotus feet of Bhagawan, and then continue with our programme today.

I must mention another thing. Sathya Sai Media Centre is advancing day by day, spreading, and enchanting countless Sai devotees.

For all Sai devotees, it has become an organisation to be proud of.

Knowing that Swami's limitless compassion and blessings are on them, the staff and the administrators, we are experiencing and enjoying it.

My gratitude to them. Secondly, I pray that Swami's blessings are always on all the Sai devotees who are eagerly, enthusiastically, anxiously and joyously anticipating these programmes.

Everyone in your family must listen and enjoy them. This is not only for the elderly, or the young, and not just the children.

Know that this is for the entire humanity. When we listen to it with our entire family, there is an opportunity for all our families to become ideal Sai families.

Therefore, as your brother, I am respectfully praying that you listen to them with your entire family.

They are offering programmes in many different languages, which is something special.

We should be happy that in today's technical age, they are examining everything and offering to us in so many languages, areas, sections, directions and perspectives.

My gratitude to Swami. Coming to the present, Sathya Sai Media Centre has commanded me to share my experiences with you all.

This is a very happy occasion for me. You may ask why. Our generation is slowly dying.

Which means our destination is nearing. The time has come to pack up our bags.

Therefore, I take it as my responsibility to share my knowledge and experience with you.

My intention is that it can be in some way useful, encouraging and helpful in your lives.

Before I start, I have a humble and heartfelt request. A few people may get the opportunity to share their experiences.

But everybody has these experiences. There is no one who does not have these experiences.

Everybody has them. Please recognize that there is no chance that one person's experience is great, or another person's experience is small.

There is no one who does not have experiences. Everyone has them. Those experiences are what brought us here.

Those experiences are what make us be considered as Swami's devotees.

Therefore, just because I'm sharing my experiences, don't think that my experiences are special.

Everyone has them. I just got this opportunity, so I'm sharing them, that's all. For example, you may greet any of the devotees across the world about Swami.

Apparently, there are pillars in Hampi which produce music when we strum them. In the same way, when we touch Sai devotees, it is a garland of experiences, a grand succession of experiences.

Therefore, I would like to let you know that everyone has them. No one has any superiority here. Another interesting thing is that each person feels that they are special or close to Swami.

We also think someone else may be close to Swami. There is ignorance and innocence in this.

Can He be God if He is close to some and distanced from some? God is one who is close to everyone.

When we are close to the 5 elements, the Creator of the 5 elements, that God, that Supreme Being, that Lord Sai, must be close to all of us.

If He is close to you and not to me, then He would be biased. He is all inclusive, not biased. He exists in every place in the world.

The One who pervades over the entire universe, the One who is close to His devotees, the all-powerful One who grants protection, why wouldn't the Lord of Parthi embrace you?

This is Swami's poem. Where is Baba? He is pervading over the entire universe.

He is pervading over the entire universe. The world would be smaller. You must use the word for the universe.

Once while Kasturi garu was translating Swami's discourse, when Swami said "the universe," Kasturi garu's English translation was "the world."

Swami said, "No, no, no, the universe." So the entire universe, meaning all the planets, stars, moons, the One who pervades all.

So who is close? Who is far? This is all merely our illusion and delusion.

Next, when we share our experiences, this is not our superiority. Swami's grace. If the Sun's rays are falling on me, how can I say it's my greatness?

They would throw me in a mental hospital. That is the Sun God's grace. Sai Aditya's rosy-red rays of grace are falling on me.

I did not make the rays come, nor did I bring them. So these experiences are Swami's kindness, Swami's power, Swami's grace, Swami's will, and nothing else.

Lastly, we are mere human beings, what can we do? Our bodies are made of the 5 elements.

We are part of the society. And most of us are householders. This kind of pride comes in through the back.

Like a black cat. If we chase it away from the front door, it will jump in through the window.

In the same way, we cannot say which way our ego might enter. While narrating these experiences, our ego might show up.

There is scope for that. So what we should remember is that only when Swami is there, we have value.

Otherwise, none at all. A zero has value only if it follows a number. The great One said it so well.

A zero has value only if it follows a number. If we place a 0 after a 1, it becomes 10. Two 0's makes it 100. Three 0's makes it 1000.

Take away the 1. Then even if you add ten 0s, all of them amount to zero.

In the same way, only when Swami is there as the hero, does this zero have value. Otherwise, no value.

Only after the Lord, does this world have value. Don't think it's me.

I wanted to share these as introductory statements. You may take me as a brother and friend, an older brother who spent 51 years on Swami's path.

I wanted to share these with you in that spirit, so don't think otherwise. I do know that you are all experts and kind hearted.

Coming to the present, they asked me to talk about my life in Swami's path, Swami's word, Swami's way.

With Swami's grace, I will share with you what He speaks through me.

In this context, I think it would be necessary to briefly talk about my family background.

What is Swami's will? Our family belongs to the Brahma Samaj. We are not traditional, orthodox Hindus.

We are not dogmatic. Brahma Samaj was started in West Bengal by Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Rabindranath Tagore, Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Pundit Sitanath Tattwabhushan, Sarojini Naidu who belonged to Brahma Samaj.

In those days the mainly Bengali state shook up the country of Bharat with the Brahma Samaj movement.

In order to advance education, women's progress, and spreading of English education, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the Brahma Samaj helped implement many reforms in India by working with the then Viceroy Benting.

That is our tradition. We believe that God is one. What Baba says is also the same thing.

"There is only one God who is omnipresent." Brahma Samaj says all religions are one. No religion is better than another.

What did Baba say? "The essence of all religions is Sai's accord." Swami's agreement is for the essence of all religions.

That is why, all religions are indicated in the Prasanthi flag, or in the establishment of organisations, or the logo.

That is also a principle of Brahma Samaj. Thirdly, Brahma Samaj is against differences between castes.

Against casteism. No discrimination against any castes. It is the same in Prasanthi Nilayam.

There is no caste discrimination in Darshan. There is no caste discrimination during meals.

There is no caste discrimination in the prayer hall. There is no topic of caste at all with Swami.

That is what is the brotherhood of man. Our Baba is the embodiment of the fatherhood of God.

Fourthly, progress of women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed that women need education and self-power, and worked hard for it.

In today's age, the One who put in the most effort into women's progress is Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba varu.

In Anantapur, the first ladies college was started, at a time when there were none. There are 5 colleges belonging to Swami.

I feel that we may not be able to withstand the standard of education and the discipline in those colleges.

Swami established them at that level, and then nurtured and developed them. Bhagawan Baba earned them fame across the world.

When we see these characteristics, I feel that there is a similarity between Brahma Samaj and the activities of the Sathya Sai Baba movement.

I fully believe that perhaps that similarity is what had attracted me to Swami's feet, and helped me live near those feet.

Another thing is that God does not have birth or death. He is God who does not have qualities, nor a form.

Swami says divinity is formless, devoid of qualities, eternal, boundless, immortal, flawless and pure.

The foundational tenet of Brahma Samaj is also the same. Perhaps Swami's spiritual message has bound me here in spirit.

His spiritual message is completely in alignment with Brahma Samaj. Brahma Samajists might think that Anil Kumar has left them.

I will say fearlessly, "I didn't leave. I arrived there, after coming to Him."

I will tell you a secret. Whatever religious text you want to understand, whatever tradition you want to understand,

whatever complex spiritual question you want to understand, read Sathya Sai Baba literature, and it will be easy like fruit in hand.

Whatever it is. All kinds of traditions are included in Swami's discourses. This was something that attracted me a lot.

He Himself said, "He is One with no beginning and no end, eternal. He cannot die nor be killed." He does not have any of those.

"He is the all-pervasive eternal witness." Who do you think Bhagawan is? He is the inner witness.

When I think of these principles, my hair stands on end. I would like to share one more thing on this subject and then move on to the next.

I worked for a year in Swami's college in Bengaluru. The first year. At that time, as everyone was listening, Swami said,

"What is happening, Brahma Samaj?" I said, "Yes Swami, I belong to Brahma Samaj."

"From the Samaj (society), you came to Brahma Himself. What else do you need?" He said.

"From the society, you came to Brahma," He said. In that way, He drew me close with His divine, invincible, incomparable, unsurpassed, divine, auspicious, pure will.

I would like to let you know that I am forever indebted to Swami, life after life.

The incidents I narrate may not be in chronological order. They may not be according to the years in a calendar.

There is no necessity for it either. It is enough to narrate the incidents. That's why I know that no one will mind that they are not in order.

It is enough to know the important incidents. So I was born in a family with the traditions of Brahmo Samaj.

There won't be any pictures of Rama or Krishna in our house. There won't be any Pujas, rituals, Yajnas or fasting in our house.

But during festivals, my grandmother would prepare sweets for us. We did not have the divine wedding of Sita and Rama, but we had plenty of Prasadam.

She thought we children should have them, and so she prepared them. That's it. We didn't know anything else.

But every evening, exactly at 7 O'clock, we had prayers. Everyone had to attend the prayer. All the children, in-laws and everyone had to be seated.

If we did not attend the 7 O'clock prayer, it amounted to committing a crime.

So we would sit there in fear. We had that prayer. And then the essence of Upanishads were written down.

The one who wrote the foundational text of Brahmo Dharma, was Debendranath Tagore.

All the principles in the Brahmo Dharma were from the Upanishads themselves.

There's something even more surprising. My mother's father was Palaparathi Narasimham garu.

My father's father was Kamaraju Hanumantha Rao garu.

Both of them had obtained Brahmo Samaj training in Bidhan Sarani in Kolkata.

While one of them helped develop Brahmo Samaj in the Godavari districts, the other one helped develop it in Guntur and Krishna districts.

Both of them were classmates since 3rd class. Friendship changed to relationship in later times.

Then, Kamaraju Hanumantha Rao garu served for 45 years as the editor of Dharma Jyothi magazine which had its headquarters in Rajahmundry.

As the headquarters of the Hithakarini Samajam, their house still exists there.

My other grandfather, Palaparathi Narasimham garu ran a magazine called Dharma Sadhani for 45 years.

Both of them were great pundits in English, Telugu and Bengali languages.

We can say that both of them had authored several hundreds of books.

Brahmo Samaj had spread to every atom and every second of their lives.

I am their grandson. You might wonder what this fellow is doing here. What's wrong with that?

I can respond to them. Brahmo Samaj families may refuse me or even exile me.

What differences exist once we have reached Brahma Himself? The one that has been divided is not Brahman. The one that is undivided is Brahman.

One alone is Brahman, Brahman is not two. Brahman is truth/existence, knowledge/wisdom and limitlessness/endlessness.

Because none of these exist in that situation, I consider myself a better Brahmo now than ever before.

Today I consider myself as a practitioner of Brahmo Samaj, and as someone who is a strict follower.

Many years ago, the members of Media Centre asked me about my lanes of memories, my net of memories, and to remember every vine, and walk through every lane.

In a way, this brings me happiness as well. We must never forget our past.

I studied in the Andhra Christian College in Guntur, and worked there for 26 years.

So the blood of Andhra Christian College is in my body. I ate their salt.

I feel that perhaps that Christian mission, that Christian commitment, that Christian zeal, the bubbling enthusiasm seeped into me from the Christian missionaries.

I believe being in a Christian college, the steadfastness of those religious leaders, their staunch faith, and their hard work without rest are in my body.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my mother institute. Incidentally, a large conference happened in Guntur.

When? In 1970. Where? In Guntur Medical College. Who were the chief guests. Two of them.

They were not ordinary people in all three worlds. One of them was Justice Valluru Parthasarathi, High Court Chief Justice.

He was one of the speakers. The second speaker was Dr. Suri Bhagavantam garu, who had served as a Vice Chancellor in several universities,

an advisor to the Central Ministry of Defence, and a world renowned physicist. That was Dr. Suri Bhagavantam garu.

These two had come as speakers. My father said, "Let's go to that meeting." I asked, "For what?"

"They are saying it's a Sathya Sai meeting. You also want to go. Why?" I asked him.

He said, "I'm Bhagavantam garu's student. I would like to see him. I would like to pay my respects. Let's go together."

My father was a student of Bhagavantam garu. He had done MA in English, MSc Honors in Physics, BEd Diploma in laboratory science, and retired as a Deputy Director of Higher Education.

If he says he wants to go together, what can I do? So I went with him to the Medical College and sat in the auditorium.

That must have been a blessing from past lifetimes. Such great men don't exist these days. Such great conferences don't happen these days. We may be able to gather crowds as heaps but not in quality.

There should be qualitative rights, and not simply quantitative rights. Those elders from that conference were of that stature.

The hall was fully packed with Medical College students and professors. It was a large auditorium.

Who was the one who invited them to the conference and to the stage? Dr. Chaturvedula Narasimha Sastry garu,

whose pen name was Amarendra. In later years, Dr. Amarendra garu worked as a Principal for the Sathya Sai College.

Amarendra garu was a great speaker in English and Telugu. It was so sweet, sweet. Even today, his students feel thrilled remembering him.

He was the Principal of Swami's college. Look at the type of person Swami selected. Who was the President of Andhra State?

For the organisation, it was Justice Valluru Parthasarathi. Who was the Principal of the college in Puttaparthi? Amarendra garu.

They were heavyweights, exceptional and extraordinary people, and not some no-name batch.

Swami's selection is like that. Amarendra garu introduced them to the audience,

"The one who is attending this conference is the famous lawyer, judge, and justice, Valluru Parthasarathi garu."

"The second speaker is the famous world renowned scientist, Dr. Suri Bhagavantam garu."

"I'm requesting them both to make their speeches. This conference has been arranged by the Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba organisation."

He spoke briefly and sat down. Whether you believe it or not, these were recorded in books in cassettes.

There is no necessity for me to imagine and concoct these things. It is not my age to do that either.

Then Parthasarathi garu spoke and said, "Amarendra garu made a mistake. He said Justice Parthasarathi garu came here."

"He made a big mistake. I did not come as Justice Parthasarathi. I came as a Sai devotee."

"Rather than call me Justice Parthasarathi, I was called here as a Sai devotee. After that, you can say anything else."

That is what humility of elders is like. What did Suri Bhagavantam garu say in his speech?

"What Parthasarathi garu said is the truth. I did not come as a scientist either. I did not come as a famous, world-renowned physicist."

"After I came to Baba garu I understood what my status is. After being close to Him, I understood what my knowledge and expertise is.

That is how I came. I too came as a Sai devotee," He said. Bhagavantam garu's speech is very characteristic.

He is a great man, a scientist, a world renowned scientist. He is not a local man. He is a global scientist.

I liked his style. Many of the audience members were new, and that was the first time they were hearing about Baba garu.

How to explain to them? That is useful for us all as well. With the intention that it will be useful for future generations, I'm sharing with you.

Bhagavantam garu said, "I said I am a Sai devotee. I said I came in that status. Let's set that aside for now."

"Imagine from my situation. If you were in my situation, how would you behave? What would your reaction be? Imagine and let me know."

What did he say? "As Baba garu and I were walking along the seashore, when Swami said, "Bhagavantam, shall we sit here?"

"I was suspicious. Why is He saying He wants to sit here? Maybe He hid something here. Maybe there is something hidden here."

He said clearly, "I am an agnostic. I don't have any particular beliefs. He said he was a rationalist."

"As soon as Swami said He wanted to sit somewhere, I thought there was something hidden there."

"I said, "Swami, I want to walk for a little while. He said, "Is that so? Let's go." We walked a bit further."

"After we walked some more, He said, "Bhagavantam, shall we sit here?" I thought He might have hid something here too and said, "Let's walk further.""

"We walked a bit more. "Swami, let's sit here,"" said Bhagavantam garu. Bhagavantam garu wanted to sit where he decided.

They sat there. Is Swami an ordinary person? Can't He understand what goes on in our brains?

"Bhagavantam, you know Sanskrit very well. You know Bhagavad Gita very well. Do you want Bhagavad Gita?" said Swami

"Why not Swami? Who would not want Bhagavad Gita? It's an extraordinary book. I know it very well, Swami," he said.

"Swami dug His fingers into the sand and started probing into it and said, "Look here." It was Bhagavad Gita."

"A copy of Bhagavad Gita just materialised on the spot by Bhagawan Baba. He shown it then and there."

"My body quivered in ecstasy. Imagine yourselves in my situation. Tell me how your reaction would be."

"By His grace, I'm still alive. Otherwise, my heart would have stopped when I saw it. That was an incident that filled me with wonder and surprise."

He also said another thing. Swami and Bhagavantam garu went to a Shiva temple.

Swami smiled and said, "Bhagavantam, come inside and pray." Bhagavantam garu prayed. Then He circled His hand and materialised a diamond.

He attached that diamond to the Shiva Lingam. It got stuck. Swami kept smiling as an embodiment of bliss. He is Shiva.

He started thinking, "Would a diamond get stuck to a stone? Can metals be stuck to stones? It's not possible."

"How did He stick it here?" thought the scientist. Is He any less? He knows even before your thoughts arise.

"What Bhagavantam, how do you think this came? The One who can create, can He not stick it too?"

"The One who could create the diamond, can He not stick it too? What's your madness?" He said. "Yes, Swami, yes, Swami," he said. Then Bhagavantam garu said, "If you were in my situation, tell me what you would have thought."

This was his process. A technique that appeals to all newcomers, agnostics, and doubting Thomases.

He explained it so well. He said another thing too. Swami was walking along the beach in Kanyakumari

"Come here, Bhagavantam. You are a Sanskrit pundit. What is another name for the ocean?"

He said, "Ratnakara Swami." Swami said, "If the name is Ratnakara, where are the Ratnas (gems)?"

"There is nothing here but stones and snail shells?" And he responded, "I don't know Swami, I can't say."

"But Ratnakara is another name for the Lord of the ocean." Swami walked with Bhagavantam further saying, "Let's walk some more."

I'm telling you in Bhagavantam garu's own words, "A wave came from afar. Surging bounding waves."

"The waves came spilling over themselves, with even greater enthusiasm. It came and touched Swami's feet."

Then a necklace of gemstones came and decorated Swami's feet. "It's the One who has gemstones within Him. Did you see the gemstone necklace?"

"Swami said, "The Lord of the Ocean came to see God. He came to see me and sent me this necklace of gemstones.""

He lost his mind. How can the Lord of the Ocean come and gift a necklace of gemstones?

To see God and to gift a necklace of gemstones? His body shook. "If this happened in your life, how would you behave and react?"

Bhagavantam garu spoke in this way, sweetly, beautifully, and in a modern way. Everyone was happy.

After that meeting, my father and I went and met Bhagavantam garu. That was the first speech I heard about Baba garu, in the Guntur Medical College.

My excitement started already. Although I was acknowledging the truth, I had the arrogance of youth.

Maybe that was natural. A raw mango must be sour and a ripe mango must be sweet. So acidity and arrogance must be part of that age.

And this sweetness should be part of this age. If a ripe mango is sour, we throw it away.

When a raw mango is sweet, we throw it out. It must be sour to pickle it. Perhaps I had that acidity and arrogance in that age.

For some reason, I had an interest in oration. I'm telling the truth, while I was a student, I never received first in school or college, nor did I get any gold medals.

I never got those, but I never had any sadness about it. I made sure I never got less than 60.

The marks made sure that they would not be greater than 70. But I studied in Majeti Guravaiah High School.

Since that time in 1st form, until MSc final year, I won in all inter-school and intercollegiate, inter-university elocution competitions in both English and Telugu.

This is what I came 1st in. For studies, 60 was enough. If I got less than 60, my mother would not let me go. She would ask me to study.

If I make sure that I don't get less than that, then I can go. Because I had an interest and experience in the art of oration

I would go to all the school anniversaries, all the college anniversaries, to the Rotary Club, Lions Club,

as soon as they called me, I would go everywhere. Because that was the sort of interest I had, and that age was such.

By the end I became such that wherever there was a mic, there was Anil Kumar.

I would speak that way. Slowly I started hearing about Baba garu, and Suri Bhagavantam garu's speech attracted me a lot.

Especially his style and procedure, how to attract newcomers, how to introduce Baba, how to bring His life into our lives.

I really liked that technique of how to bring Him into our lives for the first time.

After this happened in 1970, we're now entering into '72. That was a turning point in my life.

We cannot say how He will draw each of us in. In order to soothe your troubles, He appears in your dreams.

He will appear in your meditation and draw you close. He is goodness itself, and He guides you on the path of good.

Sathya Sai is the giver of eternal peace. We cannot know how He will draw each of us.

I will tell you the incidents that happened in '72. Since we are all Sai devotees, there is no need for hiding anything.

Also, as we talk more about the truth, we are curious to hear more. If we talk about them like sugar coated homeo pills, it won't sound good.

It will feel artificial. So I'm telling you the truth. In '72, in my glory days, my wife was indisposed and fell ill.

She is from a very traditional family. Rituals and fasting and Pujas, even to this day.

Calendars, auspicious dates, stars and planets, she still follows them all, to this day.

I don't have any of them. I just sit in meditation for a little while and think of Swami. She has all those, but she fell sick.

She said, "I have some pain, I have some pain," but what can I do? I took her to the doctors. It was summertime.

Summertime in Guntur has a reputation that it can make rocks explode, especially during the Rohini season in Guntur.

She is ill. I thought what to do. There was someone called Dr. Subhadra Raj at that time. She was an international gynaecologist.

A very great person. She worked as a Principal for many colleges. I took her there.

We went and she examined her. "Sir, operation is inevitable. If we don't do it, there is a risk of getting cancer," she warned.

I got disheartened. We had 4 children, and our first daughter was 7 years old. Our last daughter was still only months old.

And here she was, ill and in pain. I was going to clubs and meetings and other things of that sort.

As soon as I came home, the same song again, "I'm in pain, I'm in pain," this was her complaint.

I thought, "Oh God, why did you do this?" Since Subhadra Devi garu told us, we agreed.

But we thought it would be better to get a second opinion, so we went to Dr Rama Murthy garu, a gynaecologist who is now settled in America.

We went to him for consultation. He said, "When are you getting her operation performed?"

We thought, "My God, he's even talking about dates." He said it was inevitable.

In this way, we consulted 3 or 4 doctors. It was not a decision that we made immediately.

After all these consultations, we went to Dr Subba Rao garu who was known to us, an upright man, who was a devotee of Lord Hanuman.

I had her surgery performed by Dr Subba Rao garu. Subba Rao garu's children were my students in AC College.

So there was some bonus because of it. He performed the operation, and then said, "Your wife is braver than you are."

"Why do you say that, Sir?" I said. He said, "She seems happy and comfortable. Why are you shaking like that?"

"Alright Sir, maybe she doesn't know what's happening because you gave her anaesthesia," I said.

He said, "You'll never change, you'll always be like this." That operation was performed in the month of May.

In April of 1972. The operation was going to be the next morning. I joined her in the hospital the day before.

As I said, every person has a weakness. The weakness and vice I have is conversation, sharing my feelings, and making speeches.

I started public speaking as a hobby. It has become a habit later. It ended up as a vice.

It started as a hobby, changed into a habit, and then got stuck to me like a vice that I could not let go.

Even to this day. Her operation was scheduled for the next morning, when the Guntur Municipal Commissioner (Collector) sent a letter.

Khandubhai Desai was the Governor at that time. "We need you to translate Khandubhai Desai's speech into Telugu. Please come."

I thought the operation would be performed today or tomorrow anyway, so I went to the meeting.

All my friends probably did not think I was human.

I went anyway, I participated in the translation, and by the time I got to the hospital she already went into the theatre bravely.

That was when Subba Rao garu had said, "You don't have the courage that she has." It's true. She was discharged and she was fine. I thought she looked fine.

But God did not put on a normal brake. He put on a hard brake. Maybe the speed of my activities was too fast.

Then He did it. Again the pain started. Since the operation was over, what was this pain?

Why was there pain? Which part is in pain? Whatever had a problem was operated on.

If there is still pain, is it her imagination? An illusion? How can we say that to a person who is suffering?

She would not eat anything except rice and buttermilk. This was going on. Once again, we started going to the doctors.

Even today I feel ashamed that I had showed her to 10 different doctors. Guntur is known for medicine.

First on the list is Visakhapatnam. Second is Guntur. Third is Kurnool. These were the different levels of medicine in the state of Andhra.

We went to 10 doctors and all of them said she was fine. She looked fine externally.

She says she was in pain, but is there a form for pain? They all smiled and said she was fine. Who would listen to her?

One doctor said, "Anil Kumar, you work at home and ask her to rest. She will get better sooner."

I said, "Sir, I'm not used to doing work at home. So what can I do?" I was thinking this and worrying.

During that time, one of my students, whose surname was Advocate Rayaprolu, might have been Rayaprolu Venkateswara Rao.

He was my student. As I sat there, he said, "Sir, what happened to you?"

"You're always cheerful. But today you look sad. What happened?" He asked.

"What can I say? This is how Auntie is. I took her around to several doctors. But it's no use. What can I do?" I said.

"She looked fine on the outside. But I didn't know what her pain was on the inside, and neither did the doctors."

"She is suffering from pain. What can I do?" I said. He said, "Sir, if you don't mind, can I say something?"

I said, "Please say it." "There is someone called Sathya Sai Baba garu. He is being considered as God."

"He lives in Puttaparthi, which is near Anantapur, in the Rayalaseema region. Get a Darshan of Him, and if Aunty does not get well, then ask me," He said.

I was not interested in Rama and Krishna, and I do not even have photos of Rama and Krishna in my house, who is this Sathya Sai Baba?

On top of that, my behaviour was so stubborn that there was a person called RK Karanjia, the editor of the Blitz magazine.

His English was very good. It's said that even Jawaharlal Nehru read the Blitz magazine as soon as it was delivered.

It was poetic English, and it was very good. He was in opposition to Baba. He would criticise a lot.

I was a Brahmo Samajist, so I liked his writings. I memorised them and would say them in opposition to Baba garu.

Today when I think of it, I feel shameful, embarrassed, and equivalent to committing suicide.

That's how my words were in those days. This Blitz was like adding fuel to the fire.

To such a person as me, my student is talking about Puttaparthi Sai Baba.

He is telling me to go there. How? My mind is this way. My brain's personality was gone and became a municipality.

I was worrying about what I should do. If I wanted to go, I should get permission at home.

Since I had these problems of getting permission from the time I was a child, I'm able to move in this kind of environment.

They said I needed this permission. But how to ask mother and father, and who will ask?

Who will ask grandfather? He was a Brahmo Samajist, a chief Brahmo missionary. Can I ask him that I wanted to go to Puttaparthi?

So instead of approaching them, I caught hold of my grandmother. At home, if we catch hold of grandmother, our work will be easier.

This is something everyone knows. I told her, "She is unwell, so I want to go to Puttaparthi. We want some good health"

"But I have 4 children. Who will look after them? Besides these, I have classes in college."

"Medical entrance classes at Ravi Tutorial College. Private tuitions at home. With all these things, it is difficult for me with her."

"Let's go to Baba varu one time, what is wrong with that?" I told my grandmother and did Pada Seva for her, made her smile, and said to give my petition to my grandfather.

To recommend me. She slowly went to him. Women know these tactics well. They can transform even a piece of iron into butter.

They have those techniques, especially housewives. So she started with my grandfather, "You joined the Brahmo Samaj."

"How unhappy your mother and father must have been then. Veeresalingam Pantulu garu performed your wedding."

"You married a widow. How unhappy your mother and father must have been then. You said you can't do idol worship."

"You said No to Pujas and rituals. How unhappy they must have been." In that way she slowly introduced it to him.

Slowly she turned up the heat. He then asked, "So what do you want?" She said, "He wants to go. Granddaughter is sick."

"He will go and see him. What's wrong in that? His wife is important, and his children are important."

"What can happen? Let him go and come." With Baba's grace, he was in some favourable mood and said, "Alright, go."

I got the permission and felt like I got the approval stamp at the immigration counter. I thought that was good and started. As I said, my eldest daughter was 7 years old. My last daughter was months old.

I had to travel with all 4 of them. Who can I leave at home? And if I did, who would look after them? They're all elders.

They're all working people. My mother was a District Educational Officer. MA Lit. in English, from Madras.

Since everyone had jobs, who would take care of them? So I took all 4 of them and went. I also took my mother-in-law along, since she would come along because of love for her daughter.

She came too, and we slowly started our journey to Puttaparthi. We didn't know the way. We didn't know which train or which bus to take.

Someone said, "There is Omkar Type Institute in Guntur, Brodipet. He is a devotee of Swami. Ask him."

I thought I knew the place and went there. He said, "Oh no, you haven't gone there yet, Sir?"

"You must certainly go. Baba is not an ordinary man. Whatever you think of will happen. In Guntur, take the Amaravati Express."

"You must change trains at Guntakal. From there, you should get off at Dharmavaram, and then take a bus from Dharmavaram."

"You will reach Puttaparthi." 3 trains and buses, this was a lot, I started to curse myself.

But my selfishness was that I wanted her to be healthy. What to do? I wrote down the directions he told me.

We got on the train and got started, and got off at 1:30 in the afternoon. In these days, we could go to London,

get a shower, breakfast, and then come back in that time. But to go from Guntur to Puttaparthi it took me that long.

We must take all these trains. So I came in the afternoon. I didn't know anything. Maybe there would be Swami's Darshan in the evening.

I saw the idol of Ganesh. Where to stay? Who would talk to me? Where would the children stay? This was my thought.

As I thought this way, I saw that there were some sheds in the front, near the gate. I went to the first shed.

I saw an old man there, wearing a Dhoti as white as the insides of a coconut, and a shirt also as white as a coconut.

Vibhuti stripes, and a bald head. An older gentleman. Perhaps Valmiki would have looked similar, I thought.

I said, "Namaskaram, Sir." He asked, "Is this the first time you came?" I said yes. He asked us to sit there.

These days, no one knows those metal pots with screw on lids. He gave us one full of water, and glasses and we drank the water.

He said, "Baba garu's Darshan is at 4:30 or 5. I shall take my leave," meaning "don't stop here, you can go your way."

Where would I go? Where would all the devotees be? I didn't know. Slowly I came out of the gate.

They call it the Ganesh Gate, and right after crossing the street, the first building belonged to Rangappa.

That Rangappa had a Sari shop. He would rent out some rooms. So I slowly went there.

"Sir, we want a room." He gave us a room and we stayed there. What a room that was! Why? Because the Sun and the Moon give Darshan there.

The doors and windows can be taken down or put back up. If you don't want a door, take it off. If you want it, put it back.

Think of it as a super star hotel. I abused her in my mind because it was due to her that I was in this situation.

Besides that, everything had to be done in outside areas, all our daily washing up. There were no bathrooms.

Open university, go outside, that's it. So we had to wake up very early. They would give us a bucket of hot water for 25 Paise.

That too must be done early in the morning. No bathrooms. Like the Digambara Jains.

Everything including our bathing must be done before dawn. My God, somehow we got through it.

One day was over, and the next day I sat there and Swami was looking at me.

It might be my horoscope, but for the first 7 years, I never got first row. Ours was always at the back of the class.

Always. I would get 25th or 30th rows. That was fine. I would stay at the back, take Darshan and leave.

I thought why is my situation like this? The next day I was supposed to leave.

That too, it was a Christian College. They were strict disciplinarians. They don't give us leave. If they find out that I came to Baba garu, they might pull me out of my job. I had that fear too.

Swami's Mandir had a balcony then. He would walk back and forth on the balcony in the morning and in the evening.

He would come for coffee in the morning, and then He would come again for lunch in the afternoon. He would go for coffee again in the evening, and then again for dinner in the evening.

At that time, Swami had a habit of drinking coffee. He would pace back and forth on the balcony, and we would get Darshan.

Wow, that's the meaning of the song, "Tamboola Ranjita Mukharavinda, Sacchidananda, Sai Mukunda,"

How well they sang. Back then, He would take Tamboolam (Paan) too. The Paan itself got its beauty.

You should see Him rub betel leaves, what grace! I've never seen even women display such grace in preparing Paan for their husbands.

I don't know whether Goddess Lakshmi prepared it that way, but Swami would do it so beautifully, I thought.

As He rolled it up and put it in His mouth, that sight was to behold! It was a vision to behold! I watched Him as He walked on the balcony. I was to leave. "If You are God, grant her health. I don't have any faith."

"I don't disbelieve either. I'm open. I have 4 children. She also came with me. What will you do, Swami?"

I thought in my mind as I walked back and forth. Swami waved His hand and went into the interview room.

I shifted from one place to another. I didn't know anyone around me. That was my first time. Next to me was the Headmaster of Easwaramma High School then, Naidu garu, whose name I only found out later.

He was sitting next to me. I was looking around. He said, "Babu, is this the first time you came here?"

I said "Yes." "Why are you looking around in wonder?" He asked. "What can I say? There's no Arati platter,"

"So where is He getting so many donations and funds? How did so many mansions come up?"

"When these were written in magazines, I read those critiques. I'm not finding the answers."

Then he enquired about my background and history and explained, "There is an iron merchant in Bombay by name Poornachandra Kamani."

"He didn't have children. His wife got abdominal cancer. He took her to foreign countries for her treatment."

"They went to the UK and the US but she did not recover. There was no use. In the end he came to Puttaparthi."

"Baba garu gave her Vibhuti and rubbed some of it on that area, and gone was the cancer."

"Nothing remained. He made a pledge of 1 crore Rupees. These are buildings that he built."

My eyes filled with tears. I criticised Him without finding out the truth, what sin I committed.

What an illusion I was in. I felt saddened within myself. Since I had time, I went to the stores.

Back then, the stores were in small rooms, the bookstores. They would throw the books in gunny bags.

I went to the stores and bought a book. Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 5. On the cover was a picture of Sesha Sai reclining.

I took that book. I sat in Darshan and started reading it. Everything in that book was in alignment with Brahma Samaj principles.

There was nothing against it. "Wow, what a great man, is this what You're saying? That God is one? That He is formless and quality-free?"

I felt very happy. I came back to the stores. I bought 10 books and came back to the room.

My wife looked at me like I was crazy. "You said you didn't want to come at all, you were cursing all the way long,"

"I don't have enough time to listen to your cursing. What are these books? What happened," she said.

"That was true then, and this is true now. That was before I knew anything, now this is after finding out a bit more."

"So I'm not saying that it was a lie. This is the truth now," I said. She thought the stubborn man accepted it.

Then it was time for us to leave. We started in Puttaparthi and came back to Guntur. With Swami as witness, I'm telling you, she recovered her complete health. Completely, and without even a speck of illness. Oh, who could have brought about this much change? She used to not be able to eat anything other than some rice and buttermilk.

Today, she's eating tamarind pickle and mango pickle. What's going on? I was surprised. He is God. I heard that His Bhajans are conducted somewhere. I wondered what it would be like if I went.

At that time, the Principal of the Higher Secondary School here, Siva Ramakrishnayya, was my student.

He was studying BSc with me at that time. They had Bhajans in their house at that time. I was just walking along the street. Siva Ramakrishnayya garu's uncle called out to me, "You can come in. Baba's Bhajans are going on."

That was the first time we went to their house. I went and participated in Baba's Bhajans. I went mad. "How great You are!" Only He can make everyone be able to sing the same songs. I heard many Bhajans. I went to many temples. My tongue cannot sing them. Those Ragas are different.

He granted us these universal songs, accessible to all languages and all countries equally. The greatest Prasadam Swami granted us are Bhajans. The Sai movement started with these Bhajans.

'Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam.' I got used to the Bhajans, and enjoyed them. I started going to Bhajans. I would find out where Bhajans would be conducted on each day. Sometimes I thought that was enough. How many can I go to? As soon as I stopped going, she would say her pain started.

He kept this kind of remote with Him. I should not slip away, so if He pressed a button on the remote, I was finished.

So I would keep going. If I stopped, she had pain. So we kept going to the Bhajans. In this way, I was immersed in the bliss of singing. I would sit at the back in the Samithi. I thought why would I need to be in the front? Two of the women were my students. They would sing Bhajans.

What's the connection between them and me? One girl's name was Leela, and the other girl's name was Kamakshi.

Their family were Sai devotees. They saw me at the door. They said, "What happened to you, Sir?"

"You used to say whatever you wanted in class. You sent me out of class because I wore Baba's locket."

"You sent me out of class when I wore Baba's Vibhuti. So what happened to you today?"

I said, "That happened then, and this is happening now. What can I say?" And they said, "Is that so, Sir?"

Those were two I knew. In that way I started going to Bhajans. Then, I started wanting to have another Darshan of Swami.

By then my family members also adjusted to my being this way, "It's as if River Godavari opened a strait and he's following it."

I won't say that they lost hopes in me, but I don't think they were thinking that I would still stay in Brahma Samaj.

Because whoever is in devotion to Baba, all of them, our mouths won't stop talking in the beginning.

Our mouths won't stop singing something. Even if the person next to us asks us to shut our mouth, we won't.

Even if our neighbours ask us to vacate the house, we won't. Sleeping people wake up but we still don't stop.

That's the sweetness in Baba's Bhajans that make us go that mad. I heard someone singing yesterday,

The Sai name is sweet, The Sai form is sweet, Sai is sweet, everything about Sai is sweet.

Whether it was the bathroom or the classroom, it was the same sweetness all the time. Now the brain is filled with it. Especially since I was new, I was like a new beggar who didn't have a schedule.

That's how I was in those days. In this way, I was singing and spending time. I wanted to see Him again.

I was thinking when to see Him and how. There were some who were used to my obsession with oratory conversations.

They thought, "He gives speeches, and he went to Puttaparthi, let's hear about his experiences."

Then people from the village and others started inviting me. My call sheet list was getting long.

Slowly I stopped attending high school anniversaries and college anniversaries. I only stayed with Sathya Sai organisations.

Going to those organisations, talking about them, what I experienced in Puttaparthi and what I read in books,

I started talking about these. In that way, I was introduced across the district and started making rounds in Sai organisations.

There are 3 great men in the state of Andhra. Don't ask if there are only 3. These are the most important 3.

One of them was Karunasri Jandhyala Papayya Sastry garu. His soft and subtle poetry was as if he dipped his pen in sugar.

That was how his poetry was. He was a great devotee of Swami, and my Guru.

The second person was Jammalamadaka Madhavaraya Sarma garu. A philosophy scholar, a gem of a character.

Jammalamadaka Madhavaraya Sarma garu used to say in meetings, "I'm a Rowdy Pundit. Come on, whoever wants to take me on!"

He would only speak in Sanskrit. The President of that time, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan invited him to the Rashtrapati Bhavan,

and had a conversation with him. He was my Guru. The third person was Dr. Amarendra. He was the District President of Sathya Sai organisations.

My salutations to the one full of the best qualities, a poet supreme, Amarendra, who was a friend of Lord Indra, Lord Vishnu, Himself.

I said that about him in a meeting. The three of us would go to every meeting, to all districts. These three were very close to Swami,

Papayya Sastry garu and Madhavaraya Sarma garu, both. The speech that became dear to me, and introduced me to many places,

the same speech sent me near Swami's feet. Many devotees from the villages would invite me.

I stopped everything and started speaking only about Swami. Also, I still have that Christian College discipline in me, even today.

I never spoke about another topic with the same mouth that speaks about Baba. Before that I would speak about everything. My life was a mashup.

I would speak about everything, like the dish Avial. Once I started speaking about Swami, I said goodbye to those.

I started speaking only about Swami. That is the missionary spirit I got from the AC College.

We must speak about Swami with that missionary zeal. We must campaign about Swami. If you know Anil Kumar is coming, you should think that he will speak about Swami. A small example: Would Bishop Arulayya speak about the Bhagavad Gita? He wouldn't. Would OIC speak about the Ramayana?

Would Chinna Jeeyar Swami speak about the Bible? You should know that Anil Kumar speaks about Baba.

No other topic. Let me be a Sai Sevak, a Sai missionary for lifetime. The reason for that is both my grandfathers went to the Andhra Christian College.

I believe that Swami's rain of blessings, Swami's rays of bliss, and His blessings are the reason.

I would go to all kinds of places with these 3 Pundits. The bond of love bound me to Swami.

I would come all the time. I was always in the last row, or in the 40th row at the back.

Should I stop? No, I wanted to see Him. I wanted to hear His discourses. Let's see what He's like, I felt.

That was how the attraction was. You cannot resist it. You cannot stay away. You cannot see Him.

There is no one who doesn't know the name of the great poet, Devulapalli Krishna Sastry garu.

He said, "I don't know how I found this good life, it is an eternal, precious blessing."

"Whoever made me hear that sweet name, I cannot let it go even for a minute. That sweet name."

He was a poet of sweet emotions. As Krishna Sastry said, whoever is hearing God's name, we cannot let go of it for even a minute.

We cannot stay without thinking of Swami's Bhajans. That's how it is.

I would go and come and go. Some people would ask me, "Sir, Swami is not looking at your face. You're not even getting the first row."

"Why are you still coming here so many times?" they asked. I'm familiar with everyone.

I don't stay away like a cobra or a tiger. Cruel animals keep their distance. I'm not.

Especially with Sai devotees, we should be close to all of them. I said, "You asked a good question."

"We're teachers. If someone fails in March, he'll retake in September. He doesn't have to die. If He doesn't speak to me in this lifetime,"

"we will meet in the next lifetime. I'm fine with that." They would wonder why I talked this way.

That's how I would talk. When I went back from Puttaparthi to Guntur, I wouldn't say that I just returned that day.

Because our devotees are not ordinary. "Did you have an interview? Did He give you Vibhuti? Did He talk to you?"

As if this Avatar came only for me. To escape this gang I would not go near them for 10 days.

We cannot answer them. If they ask me what I received, what can I say? In one trip, Swami was calling people from here and there.

I was not visible. I'm like an atom to Him. Even with this large body there, He was calling other people.

I'm not a thief, I did not break any bank locks, I'm born in somewhat of a good family, why then? But He is that way, I thought.

If I have His grace, that's enough. Let Him be His way. A person was sitting next to me. Who was it?

Srimannarayana, who was in the Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School. He was my student.

Siva Ramakrishna was my student, and Srimannarayana was also my student. He said, "How are you, Sir?"

"Why are you looking around like that?" he said. "What am I looking at? I'm just looking around at what's happening," I said.

"No Sir, He is calling everyone, but you're wondering why He's not calling you." I thought he seems dangerous.

I thought I should not sit here, and that I should shift to a different spot. This place (mind) has crooked ideas.

If I talk about them all, how can I live? I said, "You are right in what you said." He said, "Sir, don't think that way."

"Swami talked to Naxalites, dacoits. Swami does not discriminate. Everyone is equal to Him."

"He greets you based on need. A doctor might ask one person to skip a meal, for stomachache. He might ask another to take a pill."

"He might operate on another person. Will one person think why did he not perform an operation on me?"

"You don't need it, stupid. Why do you cry? He needs it. So Swami too grants it based on need, not based on competency."

That gave me some relief. And so life went on. Slowly, the neighbouring villages too started inviting me.

I would study well and go. If I'm talking everywhere now, it is because of my experience then.

Because for 40 or 50 years, it's the same profession and inclination. So how can I forget?

While speaking in this way, I got an invitation from Hindupur. A member from the Hindupur Sathya Sai Seva Samithi called me and invited me.

The administrator at that time called me and said, "Anil Kumar garu, we are conducting a seminar on Ramayana in Hindupur."

"We are doing it for one week. You should come and speak as well," he said. As I said, I have an addiction for speaking, so I said I would come.

Because I'm a teacher, I started with Rama Katha Rasa Vahini. I learned Atma Ramam by heart.

I extracted the essence. I should connect it to Swami. Because I'm a teacher, I know that.

I thought I would connect it to Swami. When it was 2 days away, I received an invitation.

It was a paper invitation that contained a programme for one week. Who was participating in it? Prof. Rama Raju garu, Dr. Hemalatha garu,

Divakarula Venkatavadhani garu, Prof. Kothapalli Veerabhadra Rao garu, Prof. Ratnakara Bala Raju garu, who were Sanskrit Pundits.

I got scared. For the first time, I knew what heart palpitations felt like. I thought, if I don't participate, I'll have some respect left.

What can I say at the level of those Pundits? What I studied was Botany. Should I speak about Botany?

They were Pundits chanting Shlokas, while I was just sad. What I had was sadness, not Shlokas.

I thought about what to do, and called Muddanna. If you ask anyone about Anil Kumar's issue, they will tell you.

Everyone in Hindupur knows. I called Muddanna garu and said, "Sir, can I ask for a favour?"

He said, "Sure, go ahead." I said, "Please let me go, Sir." He asked, "Why do you say that?"

"Sir, there are mighty Pundits who are Telugu and Sanskrit professors. I'm a Botany teacher."

"If you could please let me go, I would forever be grateful," I said. The people those days were staunch devotees.

They talk loudly. "Sir, we put your name on the invitation card. You are coming. That's it," he said and hung up.

What would you say? So I came. There was a Vysya Marriage Hall in Hindupur. The meeting was held there and it was fully packed.

I'm a teacher so I spoke eloquently about the connection between Swami and Rama.

In my opinion, any speaker speaking about Swami should speak about Swami in relation.

I don't like holy water and holy offering to be separate. What can I talk about Ramayana?

There are Pundits outside, can I talk to them about it? What can I speak about Mahabharata?

There are those who have dedicated their lives to Mahabharata.

What can I say? What I must say is to combine Ramayana with Swami's history and say that Swami is Rama. That is the proper presentation of Swami.

So whatever I speak about, I must relate it to Swami. That would be beautiful. That is our Dharma as well.

Otherwise, just because I studied Ramayana, if I wanted to speak about it, they would tell me to sit down. They would tell me that they listened to many Ramayanas. They tell us about Ramayana in any temple.

They would tell me that there are others who do it much better, so sit down. That's what they would have to tell me.

If I can relate it to Swami, no one else can do it. If we have that interest, He will guide us Himself.

He says, "Speak, why worry?" "I'm here, so get the chariot ready. Get up, Dhananjaya," said Lord Krishna.

He said, "I'm here, get up my boy, be ready to shoot an arrow," said Krishna. In the same way, we just have to take one step.

And He will come running. He will make you run. That's my life, all of it. He will make me run.

He makes you not simply walk, He makes you gallop. We must gallop like horses. And so I went.

I spoke eloquently. After that, I thought Hindupur was close by. First halt after Hindupur is Puttaparthi.

If we get on the train in Hindupur, the next stop is Puttaparthi. What would it be like to get Baba's Darshan?

So I came. Back then, we could leave our suitcases anywhere. They wouldn't be lost. That's how it was in those days.

I left them somewhere, and sat. Again, I would get 40th or 50th row. Will He see me? I was thinking what I should do.

While I sat there thinking that, I think his name was Majeti Hanumantharao, who used to live in East Prasanthi.

He had heard me speak in Eluru, and when he passed by he saw me and asked, "Sir, how come you're here?"

I said, "I just gave a speech in Hindupur." He said, "Is that so? Then come on, Swami will be happy," and took me to sit on the verandah.

Back then, sitting on the verandah was like being in the abode of Lord Vishnu. Not anyone can sit there.

I felt very happy as I sat there. Now He was coming, with a gentle smile on His lotus-like face.

He came smiling. He held His robe with one hand, and He was waving His other hand as if indicating the wide open beautiful blue skies.

He came walking along. He looked at me and said, "Oh, Anil Kumar." I thought, "Did you not know Anil Kumar for the last 7 years?"

For 7 years, I used to come every year, was I Yellayya and Pullayya then, and now I became Anil Kumar?

My insides were burning. I was happy that He greeted me, but I was sad that He did not speak to me for 7 years like a period of Saturn.

"Oh, you're coming from Hindupur? Very happy. You spoke so well. Very happy," He said, but did not stop there.

"What happened before coming here?" He said. I thought I was finished. As I was coming from Hindupur to Puttaparthi, the driver said,

"To Hindupur College? Swami is here, you can go here." So I got off the bus to go to Swami.

I knew that Anantapur College was a women's college, but they wouldn't even let a male mosquito enter.

Even the mosquitoes can be male. Not even male mosquitoes. I didn't know that. Because in AC College, we had 2,000 women.

Are these women better than them? Not really. As I was going in, someone said, "Hey, stop."

He was a Rayalaseema local. I think his name was Somappa or something. He said, "Don't go, stop."

I asked why. He said it was a women's college, so I said, "So what? I have 3 daughters and there are many women students in my college."

"You cannot go in," he said. The way he spoke looked like he might use his strength on me if I pushed him.

On top of that, being from Rayalaseema, they eat Ragi balls. If he gave me a shot, I would remember it until my next life.

I thought I didn't want to mess with him. I asked, "Will you at least let me stand at the gate?"

He let me stay. I saw Swami. At that time, a managing committee meeting was going on in Anantapur.

Do you know who were the managing committee members? Not ordinary people.

Dr. Bhagavantam, Dr. Balakrishna, the Director of NGRI, President Craxi of Italy, Challa Subbarayadu garu, the Municipal Minister.

These were the members. They were not ordinary people. After the meeting Swami came out and stood there in the verandah.

All the members were standing around, and Swami was in the centre, and I was way outside near the gate.

The gate is very far out at Anantapur College. As I said, not even male insects could go inside.

That's why they are so far away. I was watching from a distance. How wonderful He looked.

If He looks this beautiful even from so far away, how beautiful would He look up close? I thought in my mind.

I'm speaking with Swami as my witness. Everything should be filled with nectar, not lies.

That is why I'm saying this. The Lord who was standing in the verandah called me, "Anil Kumar, come here."

Who is that Anil Kumar? I asked the watchman, "Is your name Anil Kumar?" He said, "No Sir."

Is He calling me? What is going on? He said, "You, Guntur College Professor, come here."

Immediately I ran inside as quickly as I could. My legs were fine then. Today my knees are taking rest.

I went running inside. Swami was standing there like a king of kings, who is the source of delight, Lord Sai worshipped by the world.

You sing it, have you seen that form? He stood there like the king of kings. He was introducing me to the managing committee members.

To all those great people, He said, "He is a college professor from Guntur. He is coming from giving a speech in Hindupur last night."

"He spoke very well. Rama Raju went, Avadhani went, our Hemalatha also spoke, and Anil Kumar spoke at night."

"Very nice. You spoke very well," He could have said that to me, but He was saying it to them.

"He spoke very well," He said. I thought, maybe this is His way. Maybe He won't say it to my face.

He is telling it to them. If He told it to me, I would have been happy. That is His way.

When He praises, He does it indirectly. His scolding is done directly. If you do anything wrong He will tell it in Poornachandra Auditorium.

If you do something good, He will call you inside and give you a ring. That is His divine style of functioning.

He introduced me to everyone and then His first question was, "Is your wife well?"

I said, "Swami, I came because of her. I'm suffering in many ways." He said, "Good, give her this Prasadam," and materialised Vibhuti.

"Come for Dasara," He said. I had planned not to come for Dasara. Who would give me accommodation?

Wherever you go, it's "No, no, no." "Sir, can I sit here?" "No." "Sir, will you give me a room?" "No."

"Would you give me a spoon of Sambar?" "No." I got used to these 'No's.

Everyone says that here. They never say, "Yes, sure," even by mistake. If they say "No," who would give me a room?

He is asking me to come. I said, "Yes, Swami." I took the Vibhuti and went home happily.

I went to Guntur. I was supposed to come here for Dasara. So I came back with my family.

I had the same problem again, where would we stay? All along the way I worried about getting accommodation.

As I was going home, all the talk was about Swami. As I was coming here, it was all about accommodation.

This was the problem in those days. Once again, we boarded at Rangappa garu's rooms.

The air was flowing freely, we had complete independence, and a closeness to nature.

That was how the environment was. I went and sat for evening Darshan. I got 5th or 6th row.

Swami came walking by and said, "When did you come?" I said, "Swami, I came this afternoon."

He said, "Where did you board?" The surprising thing with Swami is that when He is on stage, He speaks in Konaseema dialect, and off stage He speaks in Rayalaseema.

When He speaks, it is completely in Rayalaseema dialect. When He is on stage speaking in Konaseema dialect, even Pundits are terrified.

That's His language. He asked, "Where did you board?" I thought what was this style but said, "Yes Swami, I'm outside."

He said, "Ayyo Paapam." There was Kutumbarao garu then and He called, "Kutumbarao, come here."

"He is a college professor from Guntur. Whenever he comes, give him accommodation. Don't take payment."

"Give him accommodation immediately," He gave standing orders.

Until today, I never paid even a single Paise for accommodation. Until today.

Regular bank standing orders may come and go. Sathya Sai's divine standing orders will stand forever.

"By the way, where did you board?" I said, "Outside Swami." He said, "Where outside? I will give you inside."

"Will you come back right away?" I said, "I will come back, Swami, but I gave advance at the other place."

Can we say such things to Swami? If He is giving us accommodation, would we talk about advance payments?

How foolish. "Oh you gave advance? Oh no! Tell them that Sai Baba gave you rooms inside," He said.

"They will return your advance to you." I said, "Alright, Swami." I immediately shifted inside to South Prasanthi, middle floor.

So we stayed there. I went and sat everyday. One day He came to me and said, "I sent it, did you receive it?"

What did He send and what did I receive? I said, "I don't know Swami, I don't know if You sent me anything."

"I didn't receive anything Swami," I said. I was still coarse. All of Guntur is coarse. Coarseness starts at Guntur.

When we come to Rayalaseema it is completely coarse. Our words are coarse.

Our spices are also like that. By the time I came back to the room she was crying.

I asked, "What happened? Why are you crying?" She said, "Swami sent me a silk Sari."  
"I still did not get Darshan from up close. I did not get to speak to Him. I don't know the room address."  
"He didn't ask me. He sent the Sari through Kutumbarao garu." I said, "You cry when you're called, or when you're not called. I'm tired of it."  
I asked what happened and she said Swami sent her a Sari. I said, "You don't need to cry about it. Be happy."  
The next day, He came close and said, "Anil Kumar, it is fine, but I heard you move around your hands too much?"  
That means He knows that I wave my hands. That means He is listening. He was listening and watching, but still did not notice me for 7 years.  
I said, "The people who saw me wave my hands might know it, but I didn't know it." He said, "Yes, that's true. I'll see."  
He said that, and I'll tell you what happened the next day. In those days the Headmaster of Easwaramma School was Ammanna Sastry garu.  
He used to live in Janakiramayya buildings, in front of the staff quarters. Since I've been going around the villages, I knew him well.  
I went to his house. There we were talking about Swami. And then I came back. The Dasara meeting was starting at 5 O'clock in Prasanthi Nilayam.  
All the Sevadal members were running. I asked what was happening. They asked, "Who is Anil Kumar?" I said, "That's me. What happened?"  
He said, "Swami asked you to sit in the front." I see, until 2 days ago, I had to sit at the back. Today I'm in reservation quota.  
I thought this was great. Swami climbed down the steps in the Poornachandra Hall. With the blue curtain in the back,  
and the beautiful arch in the front, and light bulbs decorating the arch, He came walking down. He climbed down the steps. As the great poet described, "Come, come, O Lord, finally You have come today, bring your wishes and desires."  
When Swami came, I was very happy. He said, "Where did you go? I sent word to your room. They said you were not there."  
"What to do?" Did He have to call me only when I was not there? Did I have to be not there when He called me?  
What is this drama? I thought in my mind. It was all new to me. "That's fine, stay," He said.  
"I was going to ask you to give a speech this morning. But you were not here. That's fine," He said and left.  
That day, at the time when I was supposed to make a speech, Dr. Sudarshan who was the Warden of Sathya Sai Hostel... he was a great saint...  
Swami asked him to speak, and he was also Swami's translator. He was really good at translating.  
Swami made him do it. That was over and I was coming home. I was suspicious that I lost a great chance.  
It would have been nice if I had been there. After a penance of 7 years, this is what happened. I thought that and went to Kasturi garu and said, "Sir, Namaskaram." He asked what happened.

You cannot back an unlucky horse. Who can set right an unlucky person? "Swami sent word for me today," I said.

"I think I lost a precious opportunity." He said, "Are you mad? Everyone is fortunate with Swami."

He said, "Why do you say that? I'm just coming from the dining hall. Swami asked me, "Kasturi, do you know Anil Kumar?""

"I said, "Yes, Swami." He said, "Where did you see him?" I said, "I saw him in Madanapalle, Swami, when we both spoke on the same stage."

"He said, "Show me how he speaks," so I had to do mono-action in front of Him and He said, "Is that how he talks?""

"Does he wave his arms and legs like that?" He said. So what if you don't speak?" I said, "I didn't know Sir."

"That's why I was feeling bad," I said and came back. After I came back, the next evening I sat in Poornachandra Hall at 5 O'clock.

A Sevadal member came and said, "Swami is asking you to come." For 7 years there had only been people who said to go, and not come.

I went onto the stage by the backdoor. Swami came walking straight to me and said, "Very happy." In Rayalaseema, they say "Ee Poddu," for "this evening."

I was new and was just hearing that word here in this context, because where I come from, 'Poddu' means morning.

He said, "You can speak this evening." I said, "Yes, Swami." He came on stage and sat down.

Who was on the stage? Bhagavantam garu, Gokak garu, Kamavadhani garu, and Kasturi garu. These were the people on stage. As soon as I think of their names, I start sweating.

Swami walked that way and started talking to two boys. One of them was Ruchir Desai, a lecturer from the Bengaluru college (Whitefield).

Swami was having him give a speech. Swami was encouraging them and telling them how to talk.

I could hear it from a distance. He asked me to speak, and He is encouraging them to speak. Am I Your step son?

What is this step love? What can I do? I just sat there. In those days there was opportunity to garland Swami.

I didn't bring a garland. Who knew that I would be called? In the meantime someone brought one from backstage and gave it to me.

Stage etiquette. I went and garlanded Swami. Even today, when I think of it, my body shivers.

He looked at me. I cannot describe how His love flowed from His eyes. Accompanied by His raised hand, the rays of His grace fell on me.

He said, "Speak this evening." I foolishly asked, "What should I speak about?" He said, "What will you speak about?"

"Speak about Swami," He said. I said, "Yes, Swami, in which should I speak?" meaning English or Telugu.

He said, "Why anything else, speak in English. This is an international platform." I said, "Yes, Swami."

I spoke in English. I'm used to it, and that's what I teach in. After I was done, Swami looked at me.

Arati was given and He left. The next morning, a Yajna was being performed. It was Dasara celebrations.

That day was the 9th day. So my first speech was on Durgashtami. On Navami, the 9th day, He came to me.

"It was very good yesterday," He said that to me the next morning, "You spoke very nicely. Both young and old were happy."

"The women were also happy," He said. "Swami, if you say it that way, it makes me feel embarrassed," I said.

"How did I speak well? I only spoke about You. What do I have?" I said. He said, "That's fine, I said everyone was happy."

"It's Your grace, Swami!" I said. On Vijaya Dashami (the 10th day) again, He asked me to speak.

"Today, speak in Telugu," He said. Karunyananda Swami and other guests were behind me.

It's my mother tongue, and Swami speaks in Telugu also, all His writings are in Telugu, all His discourses are in Telugu.

I'm Telugu, so what else do I need? I went all out and spoke. After Arati He said, "Karunyananda, Anil Kumar's was good, isn't it?"

He could have said it to me. That didn't happen. That's how His divine wonder-filled actions are. The divine style is like that. "He spoke very well. He got a lot of experience both in English and Telugu."

And then He walked on. As if Karunyananda was His speaker of the day. And then He left.

I was to leave the next day. At that time, I took my bags and went to the bus stand and had the bags loaded on top.

Siva Ramakrishna came running. He is the Principal of Higher Secondary School. He asked, "Sir, did you let Swami know?"

"What should I say? Did I tell Him that I was coming? I've been coming and going for the past 7 years," I said.

"If I started telling Him, it would have been 7 years after losing my job. I can't." But he said, "No Sir, since you spoke, you must tell Swami."

He climbed on the bus and unloaded all the bags. What could I do? I came back for Swami's Darshan.

The morning Yajna was completed, Vijaya Dashami was over, and the next day, the devotees were still sitting in Poornachandra Hall.

Swami came and said, "Where will you go?" I said, "My leave is..." but He said, "Don't speak."

"Go and sit there," He said. Where? Where? Should I ask Him? I asked the Sevadal, "He is asking me to sit there, where?"

"Sir, He asked you to sit in the verandah." He said. In the verandah? Me? Is this a dream or Lord Vishnu's illusion?

Because Swami asked me to go, I went running. Who was at the Dashavatara gate? The Sevadal was from Delhi during that time.

North Indians are strong, because they eat wheat. I'm from the South Indian Sambar batch. We grow sideways.

They grow taller. That's your sign to recognize if someone is South Indian or North Indian. It's easy.

If he's wide, then he is from South India. If he's tall, he is North Indian. All those from Delhi were big and tall.

Each of their muscles were like large mangoes. They held their hands to block everyone. Who would let me go?

There were only people who said, "Go, go," not "Come, come." Even if I said Swami asked me to come, who would hear me?

As they held hands, I crawled through them and ran inside. I went and sat in the verandah.

Who can make me get up from there? I sat there. They were looking around for me, but I had already gone in.

Swami came walking from Poornachandra and said, "Oh, you're here? Very happy."

He went into the interview room and called me inside. He said, "Very happy. Keep coming back always, alright?"

He then tucked an envelope in my pocket. What was that envelope? This is not a post office.

No one gave me anything in an envelope. What is it? I didn't know. I still had the heat and arrogance of Guntur spices.

I was looking at the envelope and at Swami, what is that and what is this? He said, "Look Bangaru, have some clothes tailored for the Birthday."

What is "Puttu Panduga?" On our side, we call it 'Puttina Roju.' I asked, "Puttu Panduga Swami?" He said, "For the Birthday."

"My birthday is on the 25th of October, Swami," I said. "Not yours, Swami's Birthday," He said. I said, "Is that so, Swami?"

In my mind I thought, why should I take these for Your Birthday? He said, "Ayyo, look, I gave you money for 2 suits."

"One is for your birthday, and the second one is for My Birthday." He also gave tailoring charges.

"Come for Birthday," He said. He blessed me, gave me Vibhuti, and said, "Tell the girl I asked after her."

I have 3 girls. Which girl are You asking about? I didn't know. I said, "The girl?" and He said, "Your wife, that's who."

When I told her that, she could not stay on the ground. She was in that condition.

I took His leave. In 1978 was my first speech in Prasanthi Nilayam, in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

From then until Swami left His body, I got opportunities to speak at least 3 or 4 times a year.

Not only that, when He went to Bengaluru, I was the resident scholar. If Swami went to Kodaikanal, I would do them daily.

In this way, I cannot describe how many times He graced me with opportunities. In 1978, for the first time, let's call it a dance... Swami used to call me 'Dancer' for many years.

I thought why does He call me a dancer? What does it matter what Swami calls me? What else do I need?

During those times when it was enough to have a glance from Him, He called me a dancer, very good!

Why? Because God Himself is the Cosmic Dancer. God Himself is the Cosmic Dancer.

Swami performed dances in His childhood. We'll learn more about it later. How many are there, to talk about Swami.

We can talk about them in volumes and volumes. Creatively. It's not merely storytelling, but as applied to daily life.

So '78 was over, in '79 I came. In '79 my level itself was different. Before that, the Sevadals were like messengers of Lord Yama.

As soon as I gave a speech in front of Swami, they were like messengers of Lord Vishnu, "Please come Sir, please come." That was then, this is now.

Oh, so when His grace falls on me, that's how it will be, I thought. Every person says, "Come in, Sir."

Because they once saw me on the stage, that's why. I thought, this is how the world is.

So what is the meaning of this? If God looks at you, the world will look at you. If God recognizes you, the world will recognize you.

If He does not look at you, or recognize you, then you don't exist for the world.

I came in '79 and from then on, as I said, I came every year. In '79 He asked me to speak again. I prepared and came. "Swami, in what?" I asked and He said, "In what? In English." I said, "Alright, Swami."

I had originally thought to speak about Bhakti (devotion). He said, "Not on Bhakti, speak about Jnana (wisdom)."

Whether you believe it or not, Swami would give me a topic at that minute, there was no thinking about it.

If ever I thought about something, He would say, "Not that, speak about this." In that way, He carved me like a sculptor would carve a sculpture. In what way a sculptor carves a sculpture in a wonderful way,

Swami trained me in that way. Sometimes He would ask me to speak even without giving me a topic.

There will be more of these coming up. I spoke something. He was very happy.

Now I've gotten used to it, so on the day I was leaving, I sat on the verandah.

There was no one who would tell me to leave now. Back then, there was no one to tell me to come in, now no one to tell me to leave.

I went and sat down. Swami had already gone upstairs. Those who know about Swami's interview room would be aware of this.

There are winding iron steps inside when you enter the interview room. Swami stood there and said, "Hey Anil Kumar, come in."

I went running. "You will fall. Walk slower. No rush." I came in slowly. I saw His room there.

Wow, even the palace of the Raja of Mysore would be nothing in front of this. The President's Mansion would be nothing.

That's how wonderful His room was. He was pacing up and down. I looked at His solemnity.

I saw His royal nobility. I saw His splendour. I thought, how marvellous Swami is.

He was walking in this way, looking this way and that. I kept wanting to watch His beauty.

He turned and slowly started coming towards me. "Very happy. When is your trip back?"

"I will go in the evening, Swami," I said. He looked towards the gate in His hall. He kept signalling with His eyes.

To bring it. Someone brought a bag. In that bag were fruits, shawls, and silk Dhotis.

Why would I wear a shawl? What would I do with so many fruits? On top of that, they were silk Dhotis.

I don't wear silk Dhotis. I told Him, "I don't wear Dhotis, Swami." He said, "We give those to the Pundits. You spoke here."

"That's why I'm giving it to you," He said. I said, "Your grace, Swami." Then He signalled again saying "Hey."

The boy brought a Safari suit. He said, "You don't wear those, so have a Safari suit tailored." I said, Yes, Swami."

He put both of His hands on my head. "May you live long, healthy, and spread Sai's message across all of Andhra Pradesh, Bangaru," He said.

"Spread the message of Sai," He said and placed His hands on my head.

After that, I came home. From then onwards, I was never at home on any Sunday, or any holiday, or any festival.

It was all Swami's activities and travelling. In this way, He granted me an introduction to Swami, then closeness, and opportunities to speak on stage.

It was all His grace, not mine, it was His compassion. Maha Kavi said something beautiful.

"My emotion is Yours, and my language is Yours, my life that has become sacred is Yours, everything is Yours, O Lord of the Universe!"

"Time is Yours, so are the sky, water and fire, as well as time and place, everything is Yours, O Lord Sai!"