

Part 04 | Experiences with Swami | Prof K Anil Kumar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8VR-rgrLOQ>

How ever many people know Sai Baba, that many people would know your son." "Do you understand? Because he is doing my work, it is My duty to do his work. Don't worry."

I will tell you something. Even if I could make footwear for Him with this skin, I would not be able to repay the debt. This debt is impossible to repay.

"Call everyone. I will show who Sai Baba is," he said. It was like a challenge. "Everyone should know who Sai Baba is, call them."

Venkatagiri plays a great role in Swami's history. Swami delivered His first discourse in Venkatagiri.

The first Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajnam was performed at Venkatagiri.

Swami's Suprabhatam was written by Dhupati Tirumalachari garu, who was the court Pundit of Venkatagiri.

Rama Sharma garu wrote poems and songs on Swami, and he is a resident of Venkatagiri.

Swami used to sing Rama Sharma garu's songs. I have the whole list of them.

This is my work. I find out all these things, and then tell them to everyone. So Venkatagiri is important. They invited me for Swami's Birthday. At that time I was in Andhra.

I went. Venkatagiri Maharaja's palaces were amazing. They took me to one palace, the royal palace.

They took me upstairs. There was a large hall that spanned from this end to that end. There was a bed there and they asked me to sleep there.

Ours was a combined family. With grandmother, grandfather, mother, father, and four children, our house was like the Bezwada railway platform.

Me in this big hall? As the night was falling, I was starting to get scared. It's like a ghost house.

I think there might be bats here. Where can I sleep? I could hear some music from downstairs.

I could hear the drums and Veena. I thought there might be some ghosts here, Oh my God.

I slowly came outside. There were some scholars there who were practicing.

Slowly I packed up all my things and came downstairs. I slept in a corner with the rest of them.

But those kings should not see me. So I woke up early in the morning and went back to lay down.

It would not look good if they thought I was incapable. I'm incapable, but I don't want them to think that.

So I laid down like normal. On a cart on wheels, they brought Upma, Idli, Puri, Dosa, Chapati, Coconut Chutney, Ginger Chutney, and Sambar.

Is my stomach a pond to be able to eat all this? "Sir, I would not be able to eat all this," I said.

"We didn't ask you to eat it. This is the tradition in the Raja's palace. It is the respect accorded by the palace. That's why we brought it."

"Take what you want and leave the rest," they said. In the Raja's palace, all the queens are in seclusion.

There are windows all around. Strings of beads are hung in front of the windows. So we cannot see them, but they can see us.

They are women from the inner palace. They can see from up there. And there was music practice downstairs for 24 hours, yes.

For 2-3 days, it was like that. I didn't understand why my speech was included. Would it even look good?

I don't know why Swami sent me, maybe to embarrass me? I did not understand.

Me give a speech, when there is so much music? They said, "Swami told us, so we invited you."

Meaning, "We don't need you, but because He said so, we must tolerate you."

I thought it was fine. I delivered my speech somehow, and I came back. I was to leave in the afternoon.

During that time, there was someone called Raja Gopal. These incidents happened 45 or 50 years ago.

These are not from the last few days. Even after I leave, those memories will remain.

So this person called Raja Gopal came, who was a Revenue Inspector. "Sir, I need to talk to you."

I said, "Please come. I'm at the palace. Let's meet in the hall." Not at nighttime, during the day. So I wasn't scared.

He said he would come to the palace and he came. He started narrating his experiences.

Raja Gopal said he had come to Puttaparthi after 10 or 15 years. He went after a gap of 15 years and sat in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

Swami came to him and said, "Raja Gopal, even if you forget Me, Swami did not forget you."

"Swami will not forget. You may forget," He said. That motherly love, "You might forget, but I will not forget."

Then He said, "Raja Gopal, is your older son a bank manager now?" 15 years ago, he might have been a child. Now He's asking.

"Yes, Swami," he said. Then He said, "How is your second son? I carried him when I came to your house."

"When I picked him up, he soiled My clothes. Is he doing well?" Swami asked.

He told me all this while crying. "How much love, Sir," he said. "Swami came to our house."

I asked, "He came to your house?" He said, "Ours is a clay tiled house. He said, "Raja Gopal, I'm coming to your house.""

From where? From the Raja's palace. He asked all the Rajas to stay behind. Swami alone came in a car.

"Raja Gopal, I asked the Rajas to stay behind. The shadows of the kings should not fall on our houses."

"That is the code. So I asked them to stay behind," He said and came inside and sat on an ordinary chair.

That's when He picked up the second son, and he did the honours. That's what happened.

Raja Gopal told me this. In those days, even the cart drivers of Venkatagiri knew music and rhythm.

It is wonderful to see that performance. Everyone is a Pundit. They were Tamil Nadu Pundits, not ordinary, but extraordinary.

Each one was an honouree of several awards. When they tap to the rhythm, I used to wonder if they were gearing up for a wrestling match.

My goodness, what are these beats? Then Raja Gopal said that Swami stays in an upstairs room.

There is music going on here for 24 hours, including Veena, violin, singing, batch after batch.

One day, as the day dawned, some devotees started singing a song. "Welcome, O Lord of Parthi"

"Why delay? Come and grace us, O Lord of Parthi." Meaning, "Swami, please come here, why the delay? Please come."

"You are the celestial ruler. Why don't You have mercy on us? O Lord of Parthi, Why be a stranger? Please come."

"Please come, O Lord of Parthi." As they sang, He said, "I'm coming, coming," and came running downstairs.

He came from upstairs to downstairs. That is the bond that exists between Swami and Venkatagiri.

In the same way, Swami also sang a song there. These are songs that were taught in the 1940s and 1950s.

It was just one stanza, but Swami would sing it at several different beats. "Great devotion to Puttaparthi Baba,

"Purity of mind, an Avatar born..." Swami is a great scholar. Do you know that Swami is a great scholar?

Classical music, wow! If you combine music and literature, it becomes Sathya Sai Baba.

He made them all sing a song. When Raja Gopal told me these things, I was overjoyed.

From there I returned to Puttaparthi. I was still a State President at that time.

At that time they were digging to lay the foundation for the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Sai University, Puttaparthi.

They were digging to lay the foundation. I know one thing. Where there is Seva being conducted, Swami would come there.

My desire was to be seen by Him. I too went, since I knew everyone in the Sevadal. One of them gave me a crowbar to dig.

I stood there. The car stopped by me, and Swami said, "Aha, how well you're acting."

"What drama. You can't even lift the crow bar but you want to dig?" He said. I said, "Somehow Swami, since I thought You would come..."

"I know. So you are coming from Venkatagiri? Very happy. They would have done well. Why were you afraid upstairs?"

"There were so many people downstairs. Why be scared?" He asked. I said, "No Swami, I'm from a combined family."

"What to do?" I said. "That's alright. Did the meeting go well?" Speaking about Venkatagiri, Swami said,

"As I was returning from Venkatagiri, the dust was rising as the car drove." Venkatagiri only has dirt roads.

When the dust rose, the Venkatagiri Raja would roll on the ground, the ground that the Lord touched.

The ground that the Lord walked on. "He would roll on the ground with that kind of Bhakti, that Venkatagiri Raja," said Swami.

Tell me, are there devotees of that order? If anyone tells us, would we believe them?

In the Puja area of the Venkatagiri palace, He created blue coloured crystal idols of Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman.

To this day, they are being worshipped there. These are things that Swami narrated.

"A lot of devotion," He said. He also told me another thing. It won't be appropriate to name names, so I'll say a great Guru.

He came to Venkatagiri, it seems. Not when Swami was there. Swami told me what happened.

A great Guru, with a large following, orthodox and austere. When they all arrived, they were all served meals.

All the leftover rice was dumped into a pit and covered up. Because apparently, no one else should eat what the Guru ate.

Venkatagiri Raja told about this to Swami, "Swami, they threw away rice in a pit. I did not like it."

He said, "We won't send any rice from the palace." Swami said, "Look Bangaru, that's their tradition."

"Why should we bother? You stay as you are. That's their practice," He said. It was neither a rebuke, nor an endorsement.

That is Sathya Sai Baba, who said it so beautifully. Venkatagiri Raja had that much devotion.

One time Raja garu asked... back in those days some magazines would write negatively about Swami, in a horrible way.

Venkatagiri Raja said, "Swami, We will write a response to this." Swami said, "Very good. What do buffaloes eat?"

"What do cows eat? They graze on grass. What does a pig eat? What does a man eat? You eat your food. Why eat that?"

Meaning, "Don't go as low as they did. Live as a man. Why behave like an animal?" Swami said indirectly not to respond.

These are things I heard. Venkatagiri is great. Whenever I think of it, I marvel at it.

This is about Venkatagiri. I also told you about Madras. There is a place called Sullurpetta, in Nellore District.

They invited me to their district anniversary. Believe me or not, the anniversary of even a small Bhajan centre in Andhra Pradesh is like a wedding.

Like a wedding, 10-15 sweets, coconut water to wash our feet, a wonderful welcome, and grand gestures of respect.

We can get overwhelmed. In that way, many activities happen in a wonderful manner in the state of Andhra.

I'm only talking about some important ones, that's all. Sullurpetta people invited me. So I went.

As a guest, they also invited movie actor, Kantha Rao, along with me. Two of Kantha Rao's grandsons studied in our college.

They're both in England. I went and sat down. I said to Kantha Rao garu, "Sir, you are an elder, an important actor."

"But I'm the State President. Somehow or the other I must stay. You speak first, we'll see later," I said.

The words I'm speaking were the words he said, I heard, as it is. I will tell you what Kantha Rao garu said.

Kantha Rao garu is a devotee of Swami. Swami also helped him financially, many times.

He is a hero of folk movies. Vittalacharya and so on. Once he was part of a shooting in Madras. Two ships are sailing on the sea. He should jump from this ship to that ship, while fighting with a sword.

They are both next to each other, so he thought he could jump. He was performing the stunt of jumping.

He didn't jump into the other boat. He fell in the middle of them, into the water. Finished, that's it. At that time he felt that someone had lifted him out. Who could it be? He thought it would have to be Baba.

When he came to Puttaparthi, Swami told him, "I rescued you the way I rescued Prahlada."

"I lifted you with both hands and saved you," said Swami. If we compared with their experiences, who are we?

If we compared with their devotion, who are we? Lord Sai made it possible to be eligible to have their Darshan.

He is the Lord of all those who don't have anyone. We are getting their Darshan. Whether we are eligible or not, He alone knows.

I said I received the eligibility. Who are we in front of those elite people? I thought, "Wow!"

Kantha Rao garu then spoke about a second miracle, on the stage. What is it? He performed his daughter's wedding.

He was to leave her in her in-laws' house. He had shooting here. He called his wife, "Drop our daughter off."

He also gave a bundle of jewellery. Who would allow their daughter-in-law to come with empty hands?

They sent those too. She was going in a train. When she got out at the station, the bundle of jewels was gone.

This man was in the shooting. His wife called him immediately and scolded him.

"If you came along, this would not have happened," she said. "If you had looked after them, this would not have happened," said he.

Both of them had heated arguments. They both didn't want to fight, and wanted to get Darshan of Swami, and came to Bengaluru.

Her on that side, and him on this side. Swami was coming. The Lord of all those who are forlorn, Lord Sai, was walking towards them.

He came to the side where Kantha Rao was sitting. In Bengaluru, there is a large banyan tree in the centre.

There was a shed built around it. It was called the Sai Ram Shed. He sits there, and the Bhajans are conducted there.

Swami comes walking this way and enters the shed and gives Darshan to everyone and sits on the throne.

As He was walking, Kantha Rao saw Him from a distance. Kantha Rao was in the 4th row then.

He immediately got up, jumped and fell at His feet. Because he was a folktale hero. "What? Do you think this is a movie shooting?"

"If you behave this way, I will send you out. Everyone will do the same thing. Do you have no sense?"

Now he even got scolded. He cried. After walking around, He said, "Kantha Rao, you and her, come inside."

He called them both for an interview. He scolded them both loudly. Swami has an excellent equation that only He knows.

When he called the husband and wife, He says to the husband, "If you've grown so much, do you think it's because of you?"

"It's because of her. She looked after everything. Otherwise, how would you have come up?"

"Everything because of her," He praises the wife. So then, what can we say about women?

She thought, "Oho," as she looked at her husband. If only she had a moustache, she would have twirled it. She goes like this. He is crestfallen. "If she is this bloated, will she listen to me when we get home?"

At the end, after talking about this and that, as they were leaving, "Amma, your husband has really good qualities."

"He is a very good person. However much work he has in the office, you are on his mind."

He said that, materialised Vibhuti and sent them. No fights. "If He praised you, He praised me too," they both said.

That's how His equation works. I want to write an article called, 'Sai, the Chemist.'

No chemistry equation could ever equal to His calculation. That's how He is. He called both of them and scolded them.

He consoled both of them and said, "Look Kantha Rao, you could have accompanied your daughter to her in-laws."

"Shooting even during that time? Don't worry," He said and pulled up His sleeves and circled this way.

That bundle of jewels came to His hand. "This is yours, right?" He asked. "Yes, Swami," they said.

"What did you think Swami is? Would Swami let you cry? Don't worry," He said. This is what Kantha Rao spoke on the stage.

In this way, I had many experiences in the places, Sullurpeta, Venkatagiri, and Madras.

I saw them all. In Sathya Sai organisations 1988 was a historical moment. It was the Silver Jubilee of Sathya Sai organisations.

I used to be in Andhra back then. Ask anyone who saw those celebrations at that time and they would tell you.

Across the country. Everyone knows this. I gave one item to each district. Folk dance for some, stick dance for some,

classical dance for some, I distributed all kinds of items to all of them. I came to get Swami's permission.

"Hmm. Bring them, bring everyone," He said. Oh my God, it flooded like the river Godavari. It was full of people.

Everyone came from their towns. These dances and processions, to give you an idea of what they were like,

it was like a Republic Day parade in Delhi, or an Independence Day Parade in Delhi, how those cultural programmes move in front of the stage, in the same way, district after district performed in front of Swami.

How delightful. Swami stood at the Dashavatara gate. They would come through the ladies gate,

go this way, and walked that way. I was a little nervous. Swami said, "Why are you there? You're the State President. Sit here."

I was watching everything. Swami really enjoyed it. He arranged meals for everyone.

He gave gifts to everyone. Among them, there was one item called the Chekka Bhajan.

They hold two wooden sticks and sing Bhajans with them. It's very nice. We invited them.

They were from the Munnangi village in Guntur district. Reddys. They were not poor beggars.

They came to do Chekka Bhajan, and Swami liked it. He wanted to teach it to His students.

There was a person called Sambu Reddy who was their head. Swami called him and asked, "Will you teach it to my students?"

"Of course, Swami," he said. As soon as Swami said He would like it to be taught to his students, 50 sets of Chekkas arrived.

They were overjoyed that Swami liked it, so how could they resist? Devotees kept sending them until we told them, "Please stop."

They all arrived. At that time I think our Vedanarayana was still studying. He too learned the Chekka Bhajan.

Singing as well. It's good. Swami came to the college on the final day to watch the rehearsal. He took me along in His car.

I sat. He watched the dance. Because it's His students He was very delighted. "They're dancing well."

"You taught them well. Very happy," He said. After it was done, all the boys came, about 25 at least.

"Hey, who was the Guru who taught you?" He asked. "Reddy garu," they said. "He taught you this art."

"So what should you do?" He asked. So everyone took his Padanamaskar. "That's good. This is what you should do," He said and from His car, He sent for a shawl, fruits, 25,000 Rupees cash, everything was given to Reddy garu. "This is an offering to the Guru. My students are giving it to you, please accept," He said.

How? How to take it? I don't know. I don't know. I thought it was all good. He said, "Anil Kumar." I said, "Yes, Swami?"

"This Chekka Bhajan is very nice. Do one thing," He said. I asked, "What is it, Swami?"

At that time, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Padma Bhushan, Sitar artist, his concert was arranged in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

What did Swami tell me? There is a small space behind the Sarva Dharma Stupa. In front of the ice cream shop.

He asked me to arrange the Chekka Bhajan there. He liked it. So Ravi Shankar there, here was the village dance, Chekka Bhajan.

Both were going on. Swami is my witness. More people watched our programme.

Who would understand Ravi Shankar's? Would we understand Sitar strumming? We must understand music first.

Hindustani, otherwise you cannot appreciate it. So the crowds were drawn here, they were watching it.

It was exciting here. Swami came slowly after 8:30. He watched. In the meantime, He had sent apples to the Chekka Bhajan performers.

He sent them sweets. So they were even more energised. They were villagers. Swami sent them for Chekka Bhajan performers.

So instead of jumping this high, they started jumping that high, after having ice creams and cool drinks.

He went smiling. Swami went upstairs. Then Bhagavantam garu, Gokak garu, Kasturi garu, Karunyananda garu,

Sudarshan garu, Kamal Sahani were all with Him upstairs. What's it to us? We kept doing Chekka Bhajan.

At one time Swami sent word, "It's almost 9 O'clock. There should be no noise in the Ashram after 9."

"Ask them to stop," He sent word to me. I didn't have the guts to tell them. They were all Reddys.

They were in full swing. If they gave me a kick, I wouldn't get up the next day. Oh my God, I thought.

I said, "Swami said to stop." They said, "Let Swami tell us Himself, then we'll see."

Apparently Swami had to tell them Himself. I went upstairs. He said, "What did they say?" As if He didn't know.

"They said Swami should tell them," I said. "See? That is devotion, understood?" He said.

"I understood very well, Swami," I said. "Do one thing. Tell them to stop for now. I will let them do it again tomorrow," He said.

"In front of the Mandir. In front of the Poornachandra Mandir, in the open space, I will let them do it again," He said.

"Tell them. Ask them to stop for now. Will they still be here tomorrow? Tell them," He said.

"Find out and let me know what they said," He said. I went downstairs and told them, "Please stop for now."

"He will send us all outside. So listen to me. We'll have another chance tomorrow," I said. They said, "Yes, Sir."

And then I said, "Swami asked if you would still be here tomorrow?" They said, "Why do you say that Sir?"

Swami asked. They came in a special bus. The bus permit was going to expire that day.

The bus owner said, "The permit has expired. We must leave tonight. We cannot stay until tomorrow."

"Please inform Swami," they said. I went upstairs again. "Swami, their permit is expiring. They will be leaving."

"So what if the permit expires?" He asked. I said, "I don't know, Swami." He asked, "They will charge more, that's all, correct?"

"Tell them I will give them. Ask them to stay," He said. It will be 1 lakh Rupees. "Tell them I will give them."

So I went and told them, "Swami said He would pay for it. Please stay." They said, "If Swami gives, would we take it?"

"Is that why we came? Swami is God. Would we take money from Him? What did you say? Did you take money?"

"Oh no, don't doubt me. I didn't," I said. They said, "Tell Him we don't need it. Tell Him we will stay."

I said, "But the bus driver is saying he wants to go?" They said, "We'll see. We'll see how those tires will move without us."

It was a tyrannical batch. I went upstairs and told Swami what they said. He said, "See? They said the tires won't move."

"They don't need money. They will only stop if Swami says so. That is the devotion these villages have."

"That's how much devotion they have," Swami was telling them. And then He shot an arrow at me.

What did I do? Swami was in the hall in Pandit Ravi Shankar's concert. I was at the back.

As they were doing Chekka Bhajan, I too started to dance with them. How would Swami not know? He knew.

He said, "Call Anil Kumar." I went. All of them were there, the troublesome attendants. "What Anil Kumar, you are the State President."

"You wore a big coat and everything. Why the dance then? You danced along with them? What will the other State Presidents think?"

"You must look noble. What is that?" He said. Believe me, I said, "Swami, for these villagers' art movement,"

"for this dance and for this joy, if this State Presidentship gets in the way, then remove me from the job. I don't need it."

"I don't need to be a State President. I will stay with the villagers, I will dance with them, I will sing with them."

He said, "Very happy. I asked so all of these people would know. Are positions important? Swami is important."

"See what he says? When everyone is wanting to be a State President he is saying to fire him," He said.

"He is saying singing Swami's praise and dancing is important," Swami told them.

What can I say? How can I describe that love? The next day dawned. Then the dance started in the quadrangle.

They came. Swami sat and watched for the third time. But He was still watching like it was the first time.

All the dancers were asked to sit in a row and He gave them chains, to every single one of them.

Gold chains. Now would they listen to me anymore? If I said anything, they would squeeze me like a bird.

He gave them to everybody. He gave clothes to all of them. He blessed them and sent them off.

That's how the Silver Jubilee celebrations happened in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

I feel like my life has become a part of history. And then He said, "Look, I'm giving you a suit."

"You may think they are getting shawls, but you're not getting anything. Sour-faced. I'll give it to you too, take it," He said.

I said, "I'm not sour Swami, they are my people." He said, "I know. Take it. Take it and have it tailored for the Puttu Pandaga (Birthday)."

I now know what is Puttu Pandaga. I didn't know the first time, but now I knew. So I wore it and came for the Birthday.

"It's very nice. Where did you have it tailored?" He said. I said, "In Guntur, Swami." He said, "Is that so? Very good."

I said, "Very happy, Swami." In that way, the Silver Jubilee celebrations, the great celebrations, the supreme celebrations, the joyful celebrations

were spent with excitement and jubilation. As memories, I have at least a hundred photos.

All of them related to it, and standing next to Him and talking to Him. I still wonder if that was real or if this is real.

In 1972, I went for Bhajans in Amarendra garu's house. There was a small postcard size photo hanging on the wall.

Swami's discourse and Amarendra garu's translation. He does it very well. His English is really poetic.

Poetic, it's never prosaic. It's full of style. Diction, erudition, and scholarship. It is wonderful.

I looked at that photo and thought, if only I had one photo like this in this lifetime, like Sir's photo.

Would Swami give me a chance? "Play it again, one more time," prayed the Gopikas to Krishna.

"We want to listen to your flute. With fondness and feelings, and a fire in our hearts, we worship You, Have compassion," they prayed.

I thought, "Give me a chance too, Swami." Today I have some 600 photos with Swami.

That's my entire wealth. Whether my children want them or not, these are what I will distribute to them as my legacy.

That is my wealth. In this way, I don't know what this excitement is, this bliss. Here, with your permission, don't think I'm an exhibitionist.

It is not a thing narrated as a matter of pride, pomp and show. I'm not narrating it as an exhibition.

I should tell you about a personal incident. I don't know whether my family would like it or not.

Once I leave home, it's enough if I like it. I don't need anyone else's approval. My mouth does not have limits, what can I do?

Still, I'm telling you a personal incident. This was before coming to Brindavan. In '88. Swami came into the verandah and scolded me profusely.

"Your ways are not good. I won't let you come to Puttaparthi. Go, get out. Don't come," He said.

If Swami scolds me, that's fine, I'm happy. But next to me were other State Presidents. I'm also a State President.

What would happen to my reputation? As soon as I step out, everyone will ask, "Swami scolded you, right?"

No one hears it when He praises me. They'll note it when He scolds me. That's what they want.

I just looked at Swami. Then Swami said, "You have daughters. Have you started looking for matches?"

"You have no sense. You keep coming to Puttaparthi again and again. Everyone in your town is saying you're not getting your daughters married."

"You're bringing Me a bad name. Look for a match and come. Otherwise don't come to Puttaparthi," He said.

Then He looked at me and said, "How many places you tour. Can you not look for an alliance?" I said, "Who comes to my meetings in these towns, Swami? Will bridegrooms come to my meetings?"

"Those who have lost their teeth, their eyesight and their hair, those are the ones who come."

"Hey, shut up. Everything is a joke to you. Go and look for a match. Go," He said.

I said, "Yes, Swami," and came back. I found an alliance. He was a Robotics specialist, and living in America.

I went to look at the match. They said, "Anil Kumar garu, you?" and hosted us with all niceties.

I explained why I was there. Immediately his wife, meaning the groom's mother, called her husband, "Come inside."

That's what women do. Inside is where they deliver instructions. "He gives speeches. He won't give any money."

"He won't give any dowry. Is it enough to give speeches? Ask him properly," she said.

I could hear it faintly. He came back and said, "Sir, our son is in America. He's doing Robotics."

"I recently got one of my daughters married. I have another daughter and another son. We can arrange a meeting."

"But..." he said. I thought the wife must have said this. Then he said, "If you can give a dowry of 5 lakhs, it will help me with expenses later."

At that time I used to teach the Medical Entrance course like a superstar. There were years when I taught 13 periods.

But after I became State President, I stopped all those, in order to make Swami's activities happen.

I said, "I will ask Swami. Give permission for 1 year. I will earn it and give it to you." They said, "We don't know who that Swami is."

"How can you put that on us?" she said. I saw the boy and he looked good. I came straight to Puttaparthi.

Swami, as soon as I came into the verandah, said, "Anil Kumar, come here. Did you see? Did you see?" What did I see? "Yes, Swami, I saw the guy. He is doing Robotic Science." He said, "I don't like your Guntur words."

"Why are you talking so casually about him? You have no sense. That boy is the groom, equal to Lord Vishnu," He said.

"Why do you refer to him so casually? Can't you respect him?" He gave me an additional two doses. "Forgive me, Swami, it's just a habit," I said. Then He said, "So what is the problem?" I said, "They asked for a dowry of 5 lakhs."

He said, "Is that so? If the dowry is 5 lakhs, what would be the cost of the wedding? Another 5 lakhs, is that it?"

"Total 10 lakhs, correct? Let's do it," said Swami. Who would say that? Then He looked this way. There was Radhakrishna there.

He brought a bundle of currency notes. 10 lakhs. "Take this and perform the wedding," He said.

"My devotee, not being able to perform a wedding because of not having enough money?"

"What do you think? Do it," He said, giving me 10 lakhs. I gave it back to Him immediately and took Padanamaskar.

"Forgive me, Swami," I said. He said, "What happened?" I said, "My daughter did not like him, Swami."

He said, "Give that as the reason. Don't give money as the reason. If your daughter doesn't like him, we can look for another."

"Don't say money is the reason. Go," He said. I said, "Yes, Swami." He said, "Go, look for another alliance."

I came back to Guntur again. There was a person named Kummareddy Bhaskar Rao, West Godavari District President.

He recommended an alliance. I went to look at them. That boy was a bank manager. His father was a Sevadal Convenor of Sathya Sai Organisation.

He works well, and I know him. I went searching for their house. The groom's mother came as we were eating.

"Brother, I have two daughters. You should at least give 10,000 each. What do you think? You should give some for the daughters."

"I'm a mother. You should give me at least 15 or 20. And for the groom, you should give silver plate, glass and pot.

She gave me a list. I started sweating in the soles of my feet. I said, "Alright, very happy, I'll take my leave."

She said, "How can we not know you? You give a lot of speeches..." all this empty talk.

I thought, "Reduce your request for cash. Don't talk about my speeches. What is this?"

I came to Swami. He said, "Oh, come, come, come," as if He was waiting for me.

"Did you see?" He said. I said, "I saw." Even before I opened my mouth He said, "You are worried because they asked for money."

"Is that true? They have two other daughters. They need dowries. They asked for extra money for the daughters."

"You must give something for the mother of the groom too. So they asked. They also have expenses."

"They are also Sai devotees. You are one eye, and they are another eye. If one eye cries, the other cries as well."

Swami started talking Vedanta to me. "Hmm, how much will it be? It won't be more than 10 lakhs."

"But Anil Kumar, your Brahmin community has gone bad." What did the Brahmins do?

I asked, "What happened, Swami?" He said, "Did Brahmins ever have dowries of 10 lakhs?"

"If this has come up now, it is you. You have gone bad and you have ruined the society."

"I will do it. Don't worry," He said. I caught Swami's feet and said, "Swami, my daughter did not like him."

"So say that. Why did she not like him?" He asked. I said, "Apparently, the groom's complexion is not that fair." He said, "Oh?"

"So he is not fair? That's why you didn't like him. Is that true? I have some paint cans. Get her married to a paint can," He said.

"Is this how you raise your children? Chee," He scolded and then said, "Alright, look for another match."

So I came one more time. I had not looked for any alliances. My list was completed, and there were no more.

Even if someone brings a list, to tell them we did not like him, and get scolded by Him, it became a routine for me.

So I didn't do anything. I just sat. He said, "Come here." I went in. He also called someone else. He talked something to everyone. He asked everyone to leave. He told me to stay in the room.

"Did you see the boy who was here just now?" He asked. I said, "I did not see, Swami." He said, "Why?"

"What to see Swami? My concern is only if You would call me, or not. What does it matter to me which other guys You call?" I said.

"There! Why do you call someone else so casually? Change your language," He said.

He does not like our Guntur dialect at all. "That guy, that dude, what is that?" He said. I said, "I did not see that boy, Swami."

"Hmm. That boy is an MTech from IIT. He studied in Madras. When I was in Sundaram He used to serve My meals."

"Very good Sevalal. A very good boy." I think he was earning 15,000 Rupees or something in those days.

In '88. "He's earning 15,000. Everything is good," He said. He said that, came out of the room and called one boy.

"Where are you coming from?" He asked the boy. He said, "Madras, Swami." And He said, "Oh?"

Check, cross-check. He was telling me to check everything He had told me. "What did you study?"

"MTech, Swami." He responded, "Oh, MTech?" He heard and asked, "Where are you working?"

"HAL, Bengaluru, Swami." He said, "Oh, HAL? Very good. What is your salary?" The boy said, "15,000." He responded, "Oh?"

"Very good. You can leave," He said to the boy. Then He asked me, "How is he?" I said, "Why Swami, he is alright."

"I will fix with that boy. What do you think?" He said. I said, "Once You fix it, what would I say, Swami?"

"Ask your wife to come," He said. I sent a telegram and asked them both to come. Swami went out and told the boy to call his parents.

We can't talk about this, and they can't talk to us about this. I don't know who they are.

My last daughter, who is a doctor in Bengaluru now, was with me then. I wanted to show him to her.

He really likes canteen service. Even the day before his wedding, his feet were caked with Sambar.

Always interested in canteen service. So I took my daughter to the canteen. I called the boy.

Because I was the State President, he came saying, "Sai Ram, Sir, Sai Ram." I asked, "Wasn't it you who Swami called?" He said, "Yes, Sir."

"Are you an Engineer? Very good. I just wanted to see you again, that's why I called you," I said.

"You're doing Swami's Seva? I should not disturb you. Thank you very much," I said and sent him off.

I asked my daughter later, "How does he look? Swami selected him. How does he look?"

She asked, "What do you think?" I said, "I think he might be somewhat short. And I think his complexion is not that fair."

She dressed me down, "Do you know what is MTech? Do you know what is IIT? Do you know HAL?"

"Do you know what is an aeronautical engineer? Do you know what it means to get a job there?" She slated me as an uneducated thumbprint signature kind, and dressed me down completely.

My daughters are very free with me. My son, whether he listens to me or not, he at least stays silent.

They set up a parliament right there. I sat for Darshan that evening. Swami came and asked, "Was the boy good?"

"Did you like him?" He asked. I said, "Yes, Swami, of course." He said, "That is a lie. What did you tell your daughter?"

"Did you not say he was short? Is Swami tall? Are you tall? Is your wife tall? What is this madness? Are you all tall? Chee" He said.

"Didn't you also say he wasn't fair?" He said. I said, "That's true, Swami." He said, "It's nothing. He has been working in the canteen for 15 days."

"He is always doing canteen service. That's why he looks like that, but he is of good complexion, it's all good" He said.

I thought it was all good. I asked them to come, so we sat here and they sat there.

Swami called both parties. We didn't know who they were, and they didn't know who we were.

He asked the boy's father, "So, what are you doing?" He said, "Swami, I'm a Commodore from the Navy, Swami." He said, "Oh?"

"Good. This boy is your son, correct?" He asked, to which he replied, "Yes, Swami." Then He said, "Will you not get him married?"

"Oh, we should get him married, Swami," he said. Then He said, "Hmm, good. Very happy. This is Anil Kumar, our State President."

He said "our" as if He is from Andhra. If He wants to lift us up, look at where He can lift us up to. That's where we fall. As soon as He says, "You sing well," that person would think he could teach private tuition to Ghantasala.

If He says, "You spoke well," that person would think he was better than Sarvepalli Radhakrishna. That's how high He will lift us. That's when we slip and fall. And we will never recover from that fracture.

"He is our State President. He speaks very well," He was lifting me up. He wanted them to know about me.

My daughter was also there. "So, will you give your son in marriage?" They said, "Your grace, Swami."

"By the way, do you have any desires? You can say it. There's no mistake in that. You can say it now. Say how much you want."

"You can say it. It's alright," He said. They said, "Oh no, Swami, why would we take money from You?"

"Not from Me, Anil Kumar will give you. Say what you want," He said. They said, "No Swami, we don't want anything."

"Alright, go inside," He said. He gave them an interview. I don't know what He spoke with them.

Then He called us in and said, "Anil Kumar, I told them properly. If they ask for even a Paise I will send them out."

"They said they don't want it. They should stand on that word. I will perform the wedding. All the wedding expenses are Mine."

"You don't need anything. Understood? I told them. They won't ask for anything. You can perform the wedding," He said.

Swami said, "Let's do it." My wife said, "It's very good that You will perform it, Swami, but I will bring pickles from Guntur."

"I would like to bring pickles, Swami," she said. He said, "Oh, pickles? Bring them. But you cannot bring even a handkerchief."

"If you bring it, I will send you out," He said. He turned to me and said, "Anil Kumar, do you know why I set the date now?"

"Your brother-in-law and sister-in-law came from America. Your mother and your father-in-law are not devotees yet."

"They are elderly. Invite them all. I will show them who Sai Baba is," as if He was making a challenge.

"They should know who Sai Baba is. Invite them," He said. But I did not want to bring them.

They are elderly people. If a heart or something stops, what will I do? I said, "Swami, they are elderly people, Swami."

"What elderly? I'm asking them to come, so why do you say they are elderly? That's a lie. I will arrange an A/C bus."

"I will arrange A/C cars. Ask them to come," He said, as if He meant to hang me if I didn't bring them.

Oh God, I brought all of them. Brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and everyone else came.

By the time we arrived, Kutumba Rao garu and Chiranjeevi Rao garu stood in front of me like this.

Normally other people stand like this in front of them. But they both stood in front of me.

I don't know whether to believe it or not. They said, "Anil Kumar is coming. Give him as many rooms as he wants."

"Whatever he needs, do it. If he sheds a tear, I will send you out," He gave them a warning.

That's why they were like this. "Take whatever rooms you want, Sir." I took them and allocated them to everyone.

I went to see Swami. "Anil Kumar, for the groom's party, what should we do for their breakfast?"

"How many items should we serve for lunch? What to do about snacks? What shall we do for dinner?"

Swami started, "What presents should we send them?" I don't know all these things. I'm saying this with Swami as my witness.

Other than speaking on a stage, I never even bought vegetables with this hand. To this day.

It has been 58 years since I've been married. I never bought vegetables or any kind of goods with these hands.

My only work is speeches, Swami's organisations and activities, that's all. When Swami asked what to do, what should I do?

I said, "Swami, I don't know anything, Swami." He said, "Chee-chee, you don't know anything. Ramana Rao, come here."

Ramana Rao garu was from East Godavari. East Godavari people know hospitality and respect very well.

In the state of Andhra Pradesh, hospitality anywhere else can only come after the Godavari districts. "Ramana Rao, this man does not know anything. Arrange breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner. Have them prepare as many items as you want."

"How many ever you want. You should do it generously," He gave him a free hand.

"Anil Kumar, did you bring a priest?" He asked. I said, "I did not bring one, Swami." He said, "Do you think I will be Your priest?"

"Is that true?" He asked. I said, "No, Swami." Then He said, "Alright, I will arrange for one. Do you have any traditions in your family?"

"Gowri Puja or something?" He asked. I said, "I don't have any of those, Swami." Then He asked, "Does your wife have any?"

I said, "If I don't have it, how can she have it, Swami?" He said, "Alright, I will see, go." He arranged everything.

The marriage hall, the decorations, the priest, the band, the cameraman. Swami asked Padmanabhan to come and take photos.

Everything was happening. He said, "I have two cars. I will give both cars to you. One car for the groom's party, and one car for the bride's party."

"You can go to the marriage hall. Because Swami is performing the wedding, many cars will come."

"They will also come there. I will come," He said. Swami came and we went in the cars.

The wedding was going on. Swami came and sat on the stage. He greeted everyone, including my mother, mother-in-law, father-in-law.

He greeted everyone, my sister-in-law, my brother-in-law. He sat on the stage. What beauty!

We talk about the bride and the groom, but Swami is the eternal groom, like Lord Venkateswara.

Lord Venkateswara is always the bridegroom. That's how our Swami is. His freshness, and His clothes, which don't even wrinkle.

It should be straight. He is always adjusting like this. It shouldn't look ugly the way we have.

Always like this. If you want to be disgusted by us, we should look at Baba. That's how disgusting we are.

The arms should not be seen. Legs should not be seen. That fold should be there. He sits like this.

What a pose! What style! Wow, Yours is the life, Swami! I thought. He called me, "The time is approaching."

There was a Dr. Krishna Reddy. He called Dr. Krishna Reddy and said, "This Anil Kumar is a dancer."

"He simply runs back and forth on the stage. What if his Dhoti slips? Tie his Dhoti tightly."

"Tie it and then put a belt on it. Then he will be careful," He said. I had a doctor to tie a belt on me.

The wedding arrangements were by Ramana Rao. For a person like me, would I catch someone else's feet?

Nothing doing. I will die with these memories, that's enough. That's enough for this life.

After everything was completed, Swami blessed everyone and left. I went along with a food carrier.

"Do you know hospitality? Did you ever perform a wedding? Don't you have to look after the groom's family meals?"

"You bring a carrier? Leave it here and go," He said. I went and checked and everyone was good.

In the evening, He called everyone for an interview, both the groom's family and us. He gave silk Saris to everyone.

What can I talk about their prices? For my mother alone, He gave a chair. She sat on a chair, and everyone else sat on the floor.

The groom's parents as well. "Do you know who she is? Anil Kumar's mother. She has an MA from Madras."

"Very strict. If he is like this, it is because of her. Very strict. English standard. It's her first time coming."

"Not even a devotee. She says Swami is a great man, but she won't say He is God." She did not say it even on the day she died.

"She is still in Brahmo Samaj." So praising her, He said, "Mother, here." He gave her diamond studs.

"Hmm. come here," and He gave her diamond bangles. He gave her a diamond ring. That's it. I felt like an entire jewellery shop was there. My worry is that this would fan the flames of jealousy in the other party.

What to do? One after another He gave them to her. He gave clothes to everyone.

To the groom and bride, He explained what is marriage, how a household should be, how to understand each other,

and other good teachings. Then Swami asked them, "Did Anil Kumar perform the wedding hospitalities well?"

What did Anil Kumar do? He only ate. He did not do anything. "He did very well, Swami," they said. "Yes, he did well," He said. "Are you satisfied? I sent you presents. Did you receive them?" He asked. They said, "We received them, Swami."

"Is the size of the Laddus good?" He asked them. The Laddus were this big. "They were good? Very happy."

"Tomorrow I will arrange a bus. You can see all of Puttaparthi before you go," He blessed everyone.

After everyone left, Swami asked me to come in the afternoon. I went alone. From inside, He brought a blue Sari and a gold Sari.

He came walking with both of them. I don't know any women who can walk that gracefully.

Even movie actors who are like buffaloes, they should learn to walk from Him. How gracefully He walks!

That loveliness, that beauty, that radiance, those gestures, that smile, only after His. He came walking.

He came to me and said, "Anil Kumar, Is this Sari good or is this Sari good?" I said, "Both are good, Swami."

"Chee-chee, you are brainless. How is she living with you? This Sari is from Kanchi and this Sari is from Dharmavaram."

"Tell me which one is good," He said. I said, "Swami, Kanchi Kamakshi, Dharmavaram Baba, why would I want to fight with You?"

"My Namaskaram to both. Both of them are good," I said. He said, "If I touch you, you give a speech."

He said, "Did I ask you? I asked which one is good, and you give me a speech?" I asked, "For whom, Swami?"

He said, "For your mother." I said, "I don't want it for my mother, Swami." He said, "If I'm giving her my money, why do you cry?"

I said, "It's true, Swami, You already gave her, along with everyone. If You send her another Sari, politics will come up among the women."

"I can't bear it, Swami, please give it to her another time," I said. "Shut up! Tell her I gave it," and He gave the gold coloured Sari for my mother.

My mother was a college beauty in those days. Oh, yes. As soon as she saw that Sari, she cried.

I said, "Mother, why do you cry when Swami gave you a Sari?" She said, "I bought 3 Saris of this colour."

"Every time, I had to give them away to someone. I could not wear them. Swami knew that and sent this," she said.

Then He gave an interview, a final interview for everyone. "Sarojinamma, what news?" She said, "Swami, everything is good."

"My only problem is with him, Swami," she said. She was talking about me. He said, "What did he do?"

"Isn't he alright?" She said, "Not that Swami, he has daughters, and he runs around saying Sai Baba, Sai Baba."

"He leaves his family and runs around all the villages. How, Swami?" she asked. "Do you take Sai Baba lightly?" He said.

"You will see. I'm telling you, listen. How many ever people know Sai Baba, your son will be known to that many people."

"Understand? Since he is doing My work, it is My duty to do his work. Don't worry," He said.

He stood by His word. He stood by that word. Whatever airport I go to, someone or the other comes saying, "Sai Ram."

Where did all of this come from? What are we? Equivalent to a blade of grass. Not even worth a grass blade.

Not even worth of a sand granule. Not even equivalent to a granule of sand. But how He performed my eldest daughter's wedding in a grand way.

There used to be a Narsimhan garu, the Editor of Sanathana Sarathi. "Narasimhan, you have a house in Bengaluru, right?"

"You're living here. Give that house to Anil Kumar's daughter and son-in-law. They will stay there."

"They will give you rent, don't worry." So Swami arranged a house for them as well.

I will say one thing. Even if I made footwear for Him out of this skin, I would not be able to repay the debt.

This debt is impossible to repay. My heart cannot hold all of that joy. These memories are enough, for lives and lifetimes.

There is one more incident, and after that is my entry into Swami's college. We will talk about those, certainly.

