

**Sai Pearls of Wisdom,
Part 34-A**

**ROTARY INTERNATIONAL INTERVIEW
July 22, 2022**

**Om Sri Sai Ram
Prasanthi Sandesh**

Om Sri Sai Ram.

Prasanthi Sandesh, Sai Pearls of Wisdom welcomes you.

I was teaching Medical Entrance Examination going students in the year 1975. Suddenly at 8'o clock in the evening, I received a message from the President, Rotary Club, Guntur Region 315. All of you know Rotary International Club sends annually 4 selected members to America on Group Study Exchange Program. These 4 members will be headed by a Rotary member. The selected 4 members should not be the members of any Rotary Club and they should not be related to any Rotarian also. They will be selected on the basis of merit – one representing Education; one representing Agriculture; one representing Industry; one representing Commerce and Business. These 4 members will be headed by a Rotarian who is again selected by The Rotary International.

Seeing that message that I am selected and that I should send my application, I went to the residence of the then President of Rotary International, Guntur who happens to be Sri. P. Srinivasa Murthy, Advocate. I met him around 8.30 in the evening and he looked at me and just put just formal questions and told me, "Mr. Anil Kumar! You are known to many people here. You don't need to be interviewed. You are selected. You can send your application form tomorrow!" Usually we send the application form, then we will be interviewed, later we received the letter selecting us – that you are selected now.

Well, this appears to be rather strange – selection first, application next! I could not believe that, but anyway, next morning I sent my application form. Mind you, this had happened in the year 1975. And later after sometime, I received another circular from The Rotary International asking me to appear for an interview at Hyderabad in Ritz Hotel. I was so busy teaching these Medical Entrance students, completely engaged – no time to stand and stare! But yet I wanted to appear for the interview. I could make it convenient and I was travelling by train to Hyderabad. There in the same train, I saw some youngsters also getting ready for the interview. They were studying books like

'*Manorama*', 'India – Who is who', 'Competition Master' – such journals they were reading because they were preparing for interview.

Let me be very, very honest in this matter. I was not at all prepared. I have not gone through any book for the interview. I just decided to go to Hyderabad and appear for the interview, that's all! Watching this, a person asked me, "Sir! Would you like to read this book?" '*Manorama*' - a book with full of data and statistics meant for those who are getting ready for an interview.

Well, I was fresh into Sai fold. I just visited Prasanthi Nilayam in the year 1972 and that's a fresh period of entry into Sai path. And as you know, most of Sai devotees, in the first, early period of their entry, they go on singing Sai bhajans. In the railway compartment, I started singing Sai bhajans. Maybe that boy was preparing for examination; he is disturbed with my singing and asked me to go through book, '*Manorama*.' Then I told that boy, "Don't worry! I know that you are disturbed. I don't sing aloud hereafter. Don't worry! You please proceed in your own way!"

Then another person, a senior man from The Rotary Club who is also appearing for the interview for selection as the team leader; he is also known to me very well and a distant relation also! He asked me, "Why are you not reading any book? What preparation you made?"

I told him, "Sir! Let me be very honest with you. I have not made any preparation. I have not read any book. Still I am appearing for the interview!" That man laughed. He is quite elder to me. He laughed and laughed and said, "Then why do you waste your money for this travel? And time? I know you are busy with Medical Entrance classes there.

Then I told him, "Sir! My sister constructed a house there in Hyderabad and I could not attend their house-warming function – *Gruhapravesam*. So at least, I want to see their house. On this account, at least in the name of this interview, I want to take full advantage and visit her and their house also! That is my idea!"

Well, he laughed wholeheartedly and said, "Alright! Let us see!"

Well, it was the time, I was still having my very good Raymond's' woollen suit – a wedding suit, which was well ironed and I wore that suit - the blue colour suit with orange colour shirt and the blue tie and went to Hotel Ritz straight and appeared for the interview.

Well, they were calling one after one. Those of the great people, prominent leaders of Rotary International who interviewed us happened to be past Rotary Governors - Rotary Governors, who were all highly experienced. So we were called one after one and those who completed their interview were coming out of that hall and others were eager to appear for the interview.

They were asking me, "What questions they asked? What questions they asked?" And they were telling, you know, "they were asking questions on Aryabhata. Aryabhata is a satellite, I believe, launched into the space, and it seems they were asked, "Why India, a peace-loving country sent Aryabhata like that?" And another boy was telling, "They asked me about Indo-Soviet Treaty." All these questions they were telling and these people were listening and also quite anxious what questions they would face when they have their turn.

I did not ask anybody. I was just listening to them. In fact, I have no answer to these questions. Alright, let me see! Then I was called. I went inside and sat cross-legged, highly confident, because I had no preparation at all!

And then one Rotary Governor asked me, "Mr. Anil Kumar, Where do you come from?"

I said, "Sir, I come from Guntur. I am a Professor working in a Christian College."

Then another Rotary Club President asked me another question, "You are going to America now if selected and you may get certain questions and people may ask you several questions. Just relax yourself! If you know the answer, Yes! You can give that answer, respond. Or just don't worry!"

"OK, Sir. Doesn't matter, you can ask me any question!"

The question put to me was this. "In India, India is a large populated country – people, people everywhere. We understand that there are many Gods also. People worship so many Gods in India, equal to the population. If that question is put to you, what answer you have?"

Then I told them, "Sir, God, God is one. The forms are many! In India, people may be worshipping many forms - same God in many forms!"

That man, "Oh, good! Well, would you explain that statement?"

Then immediately I said, "Jewels are many but gold is one! Flowers are many, worship is one! Names and forms are many, God is one! Paths are many, goal – destination is one! There may be difference in the yarn, in the yarn or the threads but the cloth is one!" Like this, I went on substantiating my statement.

And that Rotary Governor said, "Well done! Well done!"

Then another Rotary Governor, past Governor has asked me another question, "Then why one God is short, why one God is so tall in India?"

I could understand he meant Ganesha and Ramachandra. Then I gave the answer this way, "The garments are stitched according to our measurements. The same shirt will not suit everybody. It should be stitched according to measurements. In a similar way,

depending upon on the *samskara*, the aptitude - likes and dislikes, one has got a chosen form; one has got a liking for one form and he worships. All people will not have same choice, same likes. Therefore, depending upon *samskara*, the idols, the forms are different!”

“Oh! Well done!”

And then another Rotary Governor has put me this question, “If that is the case, why do you find so much of corruption in India? You speak of Gods. You speak of spirituality in India. Now if anyone asks you this question, why so much of corruption, black marketing in India?”

I said, “Most perhaps, we need God to improve us and also to progress in our life. You find the doctor where there are patients!”

“Oh, I see!”

Then another man has put me this question, “How do you explain that all *Avatars* are born in India? Why, why not in western countries?”

Then I said, “The western countries are after the materialism while India is after spirituality. The West wanted progress in ‘*Padaartha Jnana*’, the material wealth whereas India is after ‘*Paraartha Jnana*’, the spiritual wealth. You find gold in Kolar mines, not elsewhere! In a similar way, the saints and seers, aspirants in this country prayed to God and therefore this land has become a land of spirituality, full of wealth of scriptures like Epics, Mythology, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, so on and so forth.”

“Oh, I see! Good!”

Then another man asked me, “Why there are no divorces in India? Should you live with the same person throughout your life?”

Then I gave the answer, “There are no divorces in India. No divorces at all! The reason is, of course there is the least number, I can say. The reason is this! Marriage is an institution in India that takes you from one shore of the river to the other shore. This river is family life. This shore of the river is this world on earth. The entire river is family life. The other shore is our destination – life after death. So it is a travel from *Aihika*, life on earth to *Amoshmika*, life beyond. It is the one that takes us along the path of four objectives of life – *Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha*. Marriage is not simply for marriage sake. It has got higher goals. Therefore, there are no divorces in India.”

Then another question was posed to me, “Why don’t you eat beef in India?”

“We don’t eat beef in India because cows are revered, sacred. Cow is considered, ‘*Mata – Gomata*’ Yes! And the four feet are considered as four Vedas. The Cow stands for sacrifice. (S)he partakes grass and yields us the milk. It stands for *Satvik* quality or

piousness and such a cow worshipped in India cannot be killed and eaten. Therefore, beef is not accepted in India”.

Like this questions were posed to me. I answered and returned. Now I must open the Pandora’s Box, my friend! All the answers I could give to the questions posed to me are all from Sai literature only! From the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba only! How is it others are asked questions on politics, the science, other developments but all questions put to me are from the literature or from the field of religion? As I was familiar with Sathya Sai literature, well I could answer them all! All answers from Sai literature and teachings only!

Why has it happened? How has it happened? Then I had to conclude that it was Bhagavan’s mercy, that Bhagavan Baba’s will, that made them put these questions.

I forgot to mention one thing. The Rotary Governors - one gentleman at the end asked me this question, “Who is the Governor of - I am sorry - Who is the President of Israel?” See that, all the questions were based on religion and spirituality, how is it that they put this question at the end?

I said, “I don’t remember, Sir! One gentleman was the President till recently. Now a lady is in his position. She is Golda Meir!” That is what I said.

They said 50% answered, you may go now!” That’s the end of the story of the whole interview I faced for selection as a member of Group Study Exchange Program on behalf of Rotary International Region 315 to visit the State of Indiana in United States of America.

Well, I returned home, thanked Bhagavan Baba within myself, “Swami! You saved my prestige. Had they asked me some questions on politics or “What is the capital of Denmark?”, “What is the capital of Turkey?”, such questions – well, I cannot answer because I have not prepared anything at all. But how is it that You made them ask questions and I could answer them because they are all from Your discourses and literature. Thus I thanked Swami immensely.

Then after some time, after 15 days or 20 days or so, some of the people asked me to enquire what happened to the result. I said I am not prepared to enquire. Why, because I have not made any preparation. If I am not selected, well and good! If I am selected, the credit goes to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and not to me.

Believe me, my friends! On my word of honour I am telling you, all newspapers brought with this small bulletin, saying, publishing all our names. Among the selected people, I stood first. It is Baba’s selection. Well, how I got selected I told you, it is purely Bhagavan’s Grace.

There in Southern Indiana, I visited several places like Terre Haute Indiana, Aurora Indiana, Bloomington Indiana, Corydon Indiana – so many places; went around the

whole state! And the fellow members who were quite youngsters, well they wanted to see sightseeing in America, they went around. But my business is to introduce everybody to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in letter and spirit.

Well, I addressed one or two Rotary meetings there, while others felt, “Mr. Anil Kumar!” All members said, “Hereafter, you alone will be speaking at every meeting!” So I started speaking on different topics all over the state. One day while I was going in a car, I was singing Sai Bhajan and that man who was there in the car happened to be a white man, American. He was very much surprised.

“Mr. Anil Kumar, what are you doing?” He might have thought I was almost collapsing because I was having only vegetarian diet completely. As there was no rice available, I had to eat some nuts, biscuits, ice cream like that.

I told, “Sir, I am not collapsing. I am singing Indian bhajans in praise of God!”

He said, “Would you do me, would you do the same thing at my residence?”

I said, “I will, provided you invite all Rotarian families also, so that they would be happy to listen to these hymns or bhajan songs!”

“Why not!” He jumped in joy.

Please believe me. The Rotary Club meetings were attended by about 20 to 30 members; whereas evening gathers - evening gatherings, where I spoke on Baba and sang bhajans – they were all attended by 200; 100 to 200 people every day. And the newspapers published, “Here is the man who is sponsored by Rotary Club but he says, “Sathya Sai Baba selected me, selected him to go over here!” With my photograph, they are published. Their description – American description was also typical. “A man with the hair parted at the centre sits cross-legged quite often wearing beach sandals, speaks more of Philosophy than Botany, his field of specialisation.”

Like that I was interviewed on TV. The journalists also published newspapers. Why I am telling is Baba’s ways are mysterious. They are very strange. Unbelievable! Unbelievable! This wonderful experience I had in the year 1975, which I wanted to share with the members of our Prasanthi Sandesh group.

I gave you just salient points, though there are several other points associated with my trip to United States for the first time in 1975.

Thank you for your time. Meet again.