

## Kodai Kanal interview Q&A Satyam Sivam Sundaram Character Building Through Education

### Part 1

( 1 2 - 3 4 ) That was an interview with Prof. Anil Kumar giving us all a thrilling glimpse of the wonderful Kodai experience. As Prof. Anil Kumar mentioned, in Kodai, Swami answers questions from students. We now present a small collection of the answers that Baba gave during such sessions to various spiritual questions.

**Q:** Swami, these days imitation has become very common. This is also responsible for young people to go in search of new fashions. What are Bhagavan's views on this?

**A:** It is not good to imitate. Swami often tells the boys "Imitation is human, whereas creation is divine. Imitation diminishes one's own interest, abilities and masks one's intrinsic nature. An example, once a crow tried to walk like a swan. It kept on trying for a long time, but could not succeed. In the end it got fed-up and gave up the imitation. But in the meanwhile, it had also forgotten how to walk like a crow. This is the ultimate fate of those who try cheap imitation. Always be your own true self.

**Q:** Swami, some people say that there is no happiness in their lives, and that they can never be happy. Why is that?

**A:** The mind is the reason for such a feeling. Happiness can be attained only if the mind is turned towards God. If the mind is turned towards the world then life would become painful. An example, take a hand fan and move it towards you. Then the breeze will come towards you. If, however, you move the fan away from you, how can you get breeze? In the same way, only the mind is diverted towards God can you get happiness.

**Q:** Swami, what is it that humans should give up?

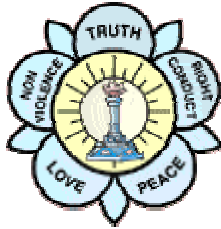
**A:** People think that giving up means that one must renounce life. What one must give up is *attachment*. This is the true meaning of *renunciation*. Swami Ramanandathirth had a wife and son before he became a renunciate. After he became a renunciate, his wife once came to see him. The swami turned his face and said that he was a renunciate and therefore the lady should not come to see him. Hearing this the lady replied that she had not come there to see her husband, but a holy sanyasi. Ramanandathirth was humbled by the reply and felt regret that he had spoken proudly to the woman. You don't have to give up properties, instead what is important is to develop *proper-ties* with God.

**Q:** Swami, why don't we receive God's Grace?

**A:** This is a totally wrong notion. God treats everyone alike. The fault lies with individuals. For example, if it rains and you want to catch the rainwater you must place a vessel in the rain with the mouth of the vessel facing the sky. Only then will the rain water collect in the vessel. If on the other hand, you place the vessel upside down, how can you expect the rainwater to collect in the vessel? Your mind is the vessel and God is the sky. Turn the mind towards God then the water of Grace can surely be collected.

**Q:** Swami, what is the difference between **Bhakti** and **Surrender**?

**A:** **Bhakti** is a state of dualism. In this state there are two entities - God and the devotee. The two are so close that they cannot ever be torn apart or separated. **Bhakti** binds the devotee to God. **Surrender**, on the



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other hand, is a state of monism or advaitam. Once the devotee says there's only God and nothing else, he ceases to have an independent existence. He does not exist as a separate entity. The devotee never ever considers anything as his. He moves completely away from the "I" feeling. An example, water and sugar differ, both in form and properties. This is dualism or the path of **Bhakti**. Suppose, sugar is added to water and the water is stirred. The sugar will dissolve and spread throughout the water. In this condition, there's neither pure water nor sugar. Instead there is syrup. This is **surrender** or advaitam. The devotee offers everything to God and keeps nothing for himself including his mind.

**Q:** Swami does love come after faith or does faith come after love?

**A:** There can be no question that faith must come first. It is faith that takes one to love. One loves one's own mother or friend because of the faith one has in those persons. If there's no faith can there be love for those people? Therefore, if the question is which comes first that faith comes first.

**Q:** Swami, some say that experience is the basis for faith while other's say that faith comes before experience. Which is correct?

**A:** It is only when there is faith that one can have experience. Faith is the basis of everything. An example, if someone who wants to learn swimming says "I'll first learn swimming and then enter water, it would be absolutely ridiculous. Can you learn swimming on sand or on a road? You necessarily have to learn it in water. Swimming is like experience and faith is like water. Know for sure that faith always comes first.

**Q:** Swami, detachment seems so difficult. It is not at all easy to give up one's attachment to one's family, relatives' etc.

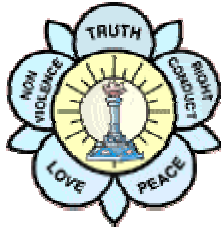
**A:** Actually, detachment is quite easy. In Swami's view holding on is more difficult. See here, I'm holding on tightly to this handkerchief. Now I let go. The kerchief falls. Which is more difficult, to hold on tightly or to let go? To hold tight I must exert pressure with all the five fingers. This calls for effort, but to release the hold it is so much easier. Hence, attachment is more difficult than detachment.

**Q:** Swami, why is it that we do not immediately get the rewards of sadhana?

**A:** Your approach to spiritual practice is not correct and you must understand some essentials. Let me give an example, children commence their studies in the kindergarten. Then go through school past the 10<sup>th</sup> standard, then the 12<sup>th</sup> standard, then enter college and study for the BA, BComm degrees etc. How many years all this takes? And how much effort is required to earn a University degree? If one must struggle so hard for a mere worldly degree then is it correct to expect instant results and rewards when one is going in the quest of the Infinite and the Eternal? It's wrong to expect immediate rewards.

**Q:** Swami, how to give up the feeling of "I" and "Mine"?

**A:** A small example will make this clear. There's a rich man living in a mansion. For protection he maintains a fierce dog. If you want to enter the mansion, there are only two ways open to you. One method is for you to become friendly with the dog. This is the path of Karma Yoga. Or else, the rich man must come to the gate and take you inside. If he does not come the dog will not let you inside. This is Bhakti Yoga. These are the only two ways of getting rid of the feelings of "I" and "Mine". Bhakti is the best way of destroying Ego, which is at the root of feelings of "I" and "Mine".



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**Q:** Swami, what is meant by **Jnana** or spiritual wisdom?

**A:** **Jnana**, does not mean bookish knowledge. It has nothing to do with scholarship. To acquire **jnana**, you do not have to master numerous books. Truly speaking **jnana** is attained when you investigate all your shortcomings and get rid of them totally. Spiritual wisdom is not attained by stuffing the brain.

**Q:** Swami, it is said that we are responsible for our actions and that we cannot escape its consequences. Under the circumstances, what benefit can **bhakti** confer?

**A:** After creating everything, God gave man complete freedom to do as he liked. But God has imposed a condition. You may do what you want and enjoy what you desire, but you cannot escape the consequences. You have to face the result. Therefore you alone are responsible for what happens to you. The good and the bad that happened to you were brought about by you yourself alone. You ask why then should we have **bhakti**? There's an example that will provide the answer. You have some land. You may grow onions on it or jasmynes. That depends entirely on your wish. But whatever it is you must pay land tax to the government. In the same way you cannot escape the consequences or karma of your actions. Here there's an important point your income tax is dependent on the amount you earn. But there are also tax exemptions. In the same manner devotion, service, sadhana, bhajans, etc., all fetch you some rebate from the consequences of your past actions.

**Q:** Swami, some say God has no form, while others worship God with form. Please explain what the difference is.

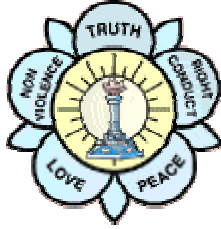
**A:** This is where many make mistakes. How can one even think of the formless if there is no form to start with? So form cannot be summarily dismissed. You have a form don't you? Therefore you must worship God with form. If a fish were to worship God it would think of God as a very big fish. The same with a buffalo. It would think of God as a super-buffalo. In the same manner, man must think of God in human form. As a matter of fact, the worship of the formless itself originated from the worship of God with form. Without form, the formless has no meaning. An example, you are here conversing in this room with Swami. Here you are dealing with the actual form. Later when you go to your room, you recall this conversation and that mental recall does not involve actual physical forms. There are no forms now. This is the relationship between the form and the formless. Another example, you have milk and you want to drink it. You need a cup for that. In the same way for devotion you need the cup called the form.

**Q:** Swami, some people say God is omnipresent. Please explain this?

**A:** In the Gita, Krishna says, "I'm the seed from which everything came." This means that God is the primordial source of everything. For example you plant a mango seed in the ground. This then becomes a small sapling, grows into a big tree and then flowers. Then there are fruits and in each of these fruits there is a seed. The tree represents creation, the fruits represent beings and the seed in the fruits represent God.

**Q:** Swami, if God is present in all beings, why then are there differences?

**A:** The Vedas declare that God is one. There's no question of there being a second. Your doubt is if there's only One who's present everywhere, why then are there so many differences amongst beings? A small example will explain the point. The current that flows through various bulbs is the same. But the



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light outputs vary so much don't they? Some are bright while others are dim. Why? That is because the voltage of these bulbs is different. God is the indweller. He's like the current. He is the same in all beings. People are like bulbs; they differ in their gunas, intrinsic tendencies. And hence, the differences.

**Q:** Swami, if we have to progress further on the spiritual path, how much of the spiritual knowledge must we have?

**A:** Not much really. Many people are always reading books on spirituality. They'll be a) listening to discourses or b) giving discourses themselves. But what is the use of all this. Such people do not seem to change at all and spiritually speaking remaining where they are. They do not put into practice what they hear or learn. In truth there's no need at all to read many books or hear many discourses. Progress can be achieved by sincerely following just one or two important teachings. To commit suicide, a small needle is enough. It is only to kill others that one needs bigger weapons like knife, sickle or sword. Those who wish to preach to others have to read a lot. Those who want to improve themselves don't have to read much. They only have to practice the little they read.

**Q:** Swami, what is this Maya?

**A:** There's no such thing as Maya. It is all one's imagination. To think that you are the body is Maya. You mistakenly believe that you are something body that you really are not. That is Maya. Truly speaking there's no Maya. It is all one's imagination. Maya is like the shadow of a tree. What casts the shadow? The branches of the tree and not the rays of the sun. If there are no branches there is also no shadow. The shadow called Maya arises from the branches called human desires. If there are no desires, then there is no Maya as well.

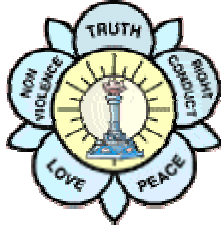
*That was a glimpse of the spiritual wisdom that students receive in divine proximity in Kodai Kanal. As we heard in the interview with Prof. Anil Kumar, students receive so much in Kodai Kanal.*

*Here is a poem by C.R. Singh of South Africa describing how lucky the students are. The poem was written in 1988 in Kodai.*

O Sai angels in uniform white  
Torch bearers of the Divine Light.  
Worthily you play your role,  
Pursuing excellence, your goal.

The sheep are worth their weight in gold,  
When they gather in Baba's fold.  
The Shepherd keeps watch round the clock,  
Over his fine hand-picked flock

O lucky, lucky, students all  
At the Lotus Feet by Divine Call.  
The Lord Himself, now your guide



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Is seen so often at your side.

O singers of Sai celestial song.  
He has laid your foundation strong.  
What gifts Sai has for you in store,  
To self-realize and self-explore.

You are the instruments in Sai hand  
Chosen to transform your motherland  
And humanity as a whole,  
Through the Universal Soul.

May you play your future parts  
Duty bound with devoted hearts.  
And may you serve wherever you are  
Each shining like a guiding star.

Dictation: Avni Kaushal

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