

Thank you so much for providing a forum to share our memories of our beloved Professor Anil Kumar. Here is what Fiona and I have put together. We knew him for 25 years and there are so many memories that it is hard to know where to start, but we thought that the stories below may help devotees to deal with the grief of his loss.

Like devotees all around the world, we were very sad to receive the news from Prashanti Nilayam that our beloved Professor Anil Kumar had passed away. He will be sorely missed by all Sai devotees. It was through Him that so many of us were able to hear and understand Swami's divine discourses. It was through him that we saw the shining example of a Sai devotee who had learned love, kindness, selflessness and happiness from Swami Himself.

We were blessed to have known Anil very well since December 1997 and every year when we were in Prashanti Nilayam, he would have my wife and I visit his house to spend time talking about Swami and His teachings. He was so kind and loving to us and the groups we brought to Prashanti Nilayam. We are grateful for all that he has done for us and for devotees everywhere, and we have so many beautiful memories of our time with him.

He was unfailingly kind. In the late 1990s he once came to us while we were in the Pink Twin's room in Round House 5 in the ashram. Uncovering the big steel plate in his hands, he revealed that he had brought some of the food from Swami's dinner to share with us and our group, as Swami's prasad. The food was delicious, though it was so hot for our Western tongues that we could barely eat it. But it was Swami's prasad so we all ate



as much as we possibly could until it was all gone! Over the years we knew him, it became obvious that his highest joys were spending time with Swami, spending time with Sai devotees in speaking about Swami, and singing bhajans.

I remember that even during Swami's life, so often, Anil was so eager to be with bhaktas and tell stories of Bhagawan that he would stay with us until the very last second, before rushing off to keep an appointment with Bhagawan Himself!

And this is exactly what has happened at the close of his life too. He stayed with us, telling stories of Bhagawan untiringly until the last moment of his life, then rushed off in answer to Swami's call to come and stay with Him permanently. In reality, that is all that has happened.

Anil Kumar's life illustrated what Swami said - that Bhagavatha, bhaktha and Bhagawan are one and the same. Anil showed us that he enjoyed the same bliss from being with Sai bhaktas and from telling Sai stories (Bhagavatha), as he did from being in the presence of Sai Himself.

I remember sitting on the veranda of the Mandir on Christmas morning 1999. We were all waiting for Swami to come and give Darshan. Anil saw me sitting there from where he sat opposite with the students, and he immediately came up and sat beside me. For the next hour as we waited for Swami, we traded stories of our experiences with Him. He was so absorbed in the stories of Sai that it wasn't until the very last moment, when Swami was only about 30 feet away that Anil remembered to rush back and

sit in His place with the students!



Swami stopped in front of Him and, gesturing towards me, said with a grin, "What have you been up to? I

saw you sitting up there talking."



Anil shared so many divine stories with me over the years, about Swami and the divine, Krishna-like mischievous miracles He performed which showed Anil that Baba was omnipresent!

One of those small stories he told illustrates a very deep truth: Once during a festival in Prashanti Nilayam, Swami had the students distribute Prasad. Swami was standing at the far end of the Mandir veranda on the men's side, blessing the Prasad as the students brought it to Him before distributing it. Seeing the boys getting this loving attention from Swami, Anil

told me that he wanted to 'get in on the action.'



So, as the boys

distributing the Prasad brought back the empty steel bowls, Anil would collect all the large bowls from them, then take them and stack them in front of the interview room. Anil said to me that at the time his body wasn't as young as it used to be, and carrying the heavy stacks of bowls was starting to make his back a little sore. After putting down a particularly heavy load of Prasad bowls, Anil's back protested, and as he stood up, he exclaimed in a whisper under his breath, "Appa! Narayana!" From the other end of the veranda, Swami immediately turned around and called out something to Anil.

Anil didn't hear what Swami said, but knew that Baba had called him. He ran to Swami, knelt at His feet and said, "Yes Swami." Swami looked down at him with a quizzical smile and said "What 'yes'? You called out to Me! What do you want?" Anil was puzzled and replied, "No Swami, I didn't call You, You called to me, that's why I came running."

Swami looked at Anil compassionately and said lovingly "Yes, you did. Those bowls were very heavy for you, weren't they? When you put them down, you called out 'Appa! Narayana!' Then Swami pointed to Himself and said emphatically "**I Am That Narayana whom you called to!** That is why I called out to you "Yes, what do you want?"

And the lesson for all of us from this divine experience? It is to know with absolute certainty that, even when we call Swami in a whisper that no one else can hear, He hears us. And even if the name we call is not Sai, but another name of God, it is He alone who responds to our silent prayer.

And on the morning of April 3rd, Anil no doubt prayed again for Swami's help. And just as it happened so many years before, Swami heard his prayer and called Anil to come to Him. And in response to Swami's loving call, our dear Anil Kumar immediately rushed to be at His Feet.

Yet, while we all mourn the loss of this great soul, who was blessed to spend his entire life serving Swami, we must also be happy for him. Because this time, Anil Kumar, who is so greatly loved by all Sai devotees, is now blessed to stay permanently with the Sai he fervently loved with all his heart.

His separation from our loving Lord is finally over.



Aum Sri Sai Ram

Shaun and Fiona Brown