

Below is an article, specially prepared, [a bit long perhaps], which offers a detailed, strongly reasoned and emphatic rebuttal of the false and malicious allegations made recently against Swami and His Mission. This article is the result of many letters we received. We hope that devotees would not only take time to study the points made in this article, but also use them to rebuff disinformation, should they be presented with it. An appeal is also made to devotees to give this WIDE circulation, especially among the younger set, so that they become better informed about the Avatar, and what He has done and is continuing to do, for the benefit of mankind.

Unfortunately, there is not sufficient awareness of Swami's Missions as well as His teachings. No doubt Swami has come down to shower His Love. But we should not merely enjoy His Love; we are also expected to regard it as His *Prasaadam* and share it with as many as possible. We hope that by reading this carefully, you would get a better appreciation of the Sri Sathya Sai Avatar, His Glory, and His Mission.

00—00—00

GOD, THE AVATAR AND THE DOUBTING THOMAS

Prof. G.VENKATARAMAN

1. INTRODUCTION

I had no intention of writing this article but have been forced to in view of a couple of nasty anti-Swami articles in the press and a talk show in which many anti-Swami views were expressed. Elsewhere, I have offered philosophical reflections on such incidents that appear to occur with increasing frequency. In this article, I shall deal specifically with some of the comments made against Swami, because they too need some rebuttal.

Attacks on Swami have been made by many. While the original spear-headers of the campaign were inconsequential men of obscure and even shady credentials, not all can be dismissed similarly. On the other hand, the fact that they join the motivated mud-slingers merely shows that even normal people can become blinded when they do not enquire sufficiently and become slave to prejudice. A prejudiced person, however intelligent that person may be, is as much a bigot as the one who rushes to conclusion without a second thought.

There are basically three sets of comments I would like to dwell upon. One set by Vir Sanghvi in the *Hindustan Times*, another set by Swami Agnivesh in the NDTV talk show and third by magician P. C. Sorcar, once again in the talk show just referred to.

Some of these comments are not new, for example the one about Swami saying He is God, and the other about miracles. In fact, such comments go back many, many decades. The somewhat “new” allegations are related to “assaults,” a campaign of slander started some years ago by people with a sick mind.

2. CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

Let me start with the “assaults” business. Sanghvi says that the lists of complaints run into triple figures, and that even if some of the complainants are liars, not all can be liars. Let me say this. All these years, I have stayed away from this nonsense because I have absolutely no reason to believe a single word of it. For years, I have enjoyed close proximity to Swami, and that is something none of these people who throw accusations can claim. I can say **with all the emphasis at my command, that there is absolutely no basis, indeed not even an iota, for such foul and motivated accusations.** Of course, critics will bash me for saying this but I am not bothered.

There is a reason why I am bringing this up, although I refrained from writing about this nonsense all these years. Recently, an ex-student dropped in to see me – old students do this all the time. During our conversation, I was shocked to hear from this old student that he was in the list of people supposed to have been “attacked”. I asked him what he was doing about it, since the allegations were totally false. Helplessly he said, “I really do not know how to respond.” He then added, “If you see the net, you would be surprised to learn that not only me but so many of our old students are in the list. It appears someone has just got the list of alumni and simply typed in many names – that is all!”

I was stunned. Trained to be careful and thorough by my profession, I did, after this ex-student left, a search in the internet and was stunned it threw up names of many who are actually employed here in various capacities. These are people whom I know very well, indeed for years. In fact, I have even recorded for our archives, their recollections of their student days. And every one of them is absolutely devoted to Swami. These boys recalled wonderful moments from the past, I mean going back as much as 25 years, and with what love they relived every single moment of those days! It was stunning for me to see that these boys are being cited glibly by the perpetrators of the myth. Mr. Sanghvi, committed as he perhaps is to his point of view, might dismiss me, but I would like to assert that in my entire life of seventy-five years, I have adhered to truth and have nothing to gain by being a party to falsehood. He may believe I have been hoodwinked, but I prefer to believe in what I have seen and experienced living continuously here for fifteen years now since my superannuation. Moreover, I personally know so many of these boys whose names figure in the internet lists. In fact, many of them do not even know that they are in such lists.

Robert Priddy who was one of those who started much of this slander claimed that two Vice Chancellors of Universities in Australia supported the allegations. The wide world accepted this. But I would like to ask: “Did these

Vice Chancellors ever visit this place even once? Did they talk to any of our teachers and students?” I do not believe they have; in fact their names and affiliations are not given; and we are supposed to believe what this man says. I have served as a Vice Chancellor here for one term and have been a teacher for the entire stay of fifteen years. Even now I teach. Are my words supposed to be less credible than those of unnamed persons who have never even visited?

I am most reluctant to state this but Mr. Sanghvi can talk to senior members of the Indian Physics Community, including the Indian Academy of Sciences and the Indian National Academy [of both of which I am an elected Fellow], and check my credentials as well as my integrity. He can visit BARC, IGCAR in Kalpakkam, and ANURAG in DRDO Hyderabad to find out about me and what people have to say about my passionate commitment to values. In particular, my credentials and integrity can be checked with all the surviving Chairmen of the Atomic Commission, all people who have served Director of BARC, and in particular with Dr. Vinod Sahni, Director, Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology as also Professor A. K Sood, [winner of many awards including the Bhatnagar Award] now at the Indian Institute of Science. All this is not to boast about myself but to stress that I am not hiding behind any cloak of anonymity.

When I reached the age of super-annuation, the Government actually offered me two years extension of service. I politely declined since I wanted to come here to Puttaparthi so that I could serve the public. Why did I make that choice? Because I was inspired by Baba. He did not ask me to but what I saw of this place was enough for me.

I am not the only one who has preferred such a change. There is Dr. Safaya, who for eighteen long years served in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi. In 1991, he took voluntary retirement [he was then serving as the Director] to come here to head the Super-speciality Hospital. And he has been here ever since. Somehow, our credibility does not seem to count for anything. But people seem to believe allegations when they come from people in the “advanced” countries because they are so “open”. They may be open but when it comes to certain matters like child abuse, a person is guilty first and then only innocent after they are convinced. Thus, the unnamed Australian Vice Chancellors appear to have straightaway associated themselves with false allegations because they seemed so true. Actually, I doubt if there were really two such Vice Chancellors. Once again I ask: If there were really two such Vice Chancellors, then why were their names and affiliations not disclosed?

Mr. Sanghvi alleges that at least some of the allegations must be true. Is he aware that one such person who starred in the notorious BBC documentary, making all sorts of allegations, filed a case in a California Court and when confronted with a witness who exposed inconsistencies in his allegations actually withdrew his case? Mind you, this was the star witness, and everyone touted this by saying: “Here is this fellow who has gone before TV cameras. Do you mean to say he is lying?” I ask: “If his allegations are true, then what

happened in the Court? Why, if he had a cast-iron case, did this person withdraw, agreeing never to file such a case again in any American or Indian Court?" [By the way, we have reported in detail the withdrawal of this case in H2H.]

Somehow, if people of dubious credentials make allegations, the allegations must be immediately investigated. But if people like me refute, then we are all interested parties, or that we have been hoodwinked, or we are dumb idiots. The manner in which Sanghvi contemptuously dismisses Dr. Kalam says it all. I have no desire to drag our President into all this, but since I have known Dr. Kalam for nearly twenty years, I feel it my duty to tell Mr. Sanghvi a thing or two. Dr. Kalam has done the country proud far more than a hundred people who consider they have done a great service with their unresearched journalistic writings. For years, I have seen Dr. Kalam provide inspired leadership while he was in service. After he became President, I was wondering how he would fit into such a different job. And he has answered my doubt in a brilliant way, by constantly meeting with young students and firing up their minds. Every single day, he meets at least five hundred of them. By the way, Kalam has always been like this - idealistic. I recall that when Agni was test fired successfully for the first time, Dr. Arunachalam, the then Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister simply embraced Dr. Kalam and said, "You have done us all proud. What do you want? Ask and I shall do it." Do you know what Dr. Kalam said in reply? He said, "I want the funds to plant thirty thousand trees in our Hyderabad lab complex and have a deer park there!" That is Dr. Kalam, whose name has been unnecessarily dragged by Vir Sanghvi. The purveyors of half-truths on the other hand simply poison young minds and perhaps also old minds.

It is not just Dr. Kalam who has been drawn to Swami. It goes back a long time to Field Marshal Cariappa. From the armed services itself, I can count so many who have come to Bhagavan, all top men. Similarly, from the Judiciary I can again count so many starting from Justice Bhagavathi, who by the way became, after serving as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission. I ask Mr. Sanghvi and his likes: "Are you seriously suggesting that a man like Mr. Bhagavathi would associate himself with a person and an organisation like that of Sai Baba, if there was even an iota of truth in the allegations? Would he not worry about his own reputation? Does Mr. Sanghvi know that not only Bhagavathi but also late Mr. Nani Palkhivala were members of the Trust that oversees the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, the University founded by Baba?"

Dear reader, I am simply unable to understand why intelligent men suspend their intelligence and without thinking readily swallow the line peddled by mediocre men with vested interests. Is it their line that all men must prove themselves before the public just because X or Y says something? Even if they believe that, should they, I ask, write nasty things without examining allegations themselves? Rusi Karanjia, an arch critic of Baba did precisely that. He had the professional integrity to do so. What happened to ethics of journalism or have they become irrelevant in this internet age?

3. SWAMI'S SOCIAL PROJECTS – THE SUPER HOSPITALS

I next wish to refer to the supercilious comments made by some of these critics on the social projects of Swami. Sanghvi says: "I accept that he has built hospitals, colleges [and, incongruously enough, a planetarium] for the people of Puttaparthi. But all that proves is that he is a philanthropist of some description. Nor is religious philosophy novel to Hinduism. The Ramakrishna Mission does much more than Sai Baba has ever done or ever will." Sanghvi adds some more acerbic remarks but I shall ignore them.

It is lucky for Vir Sanghvi that he has open to him the pages of a newspaper that is uncritical. I can tell you that in the scientific world, we just cannot get away with that kind of sheer nonsense. I should know because I have nearly seventy scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals published all over the world. In the scientific world, if one writes untenable things the paper is summarily rejected. It is astonishing that journalism prides itself on integrity and what not. However, current standards seem to allow people to say anything they want, just because they are a brand name. I can tell you in the scientific world, we are far more objective. A man might have won the Nobel Prize, but the next paper he writes is refereed as critically as that of anyone else.

Let us consider some of the remarks quoted above. Sanghvi says that Swami has built the Hospitals for the people of Puttaparthi. It is certainly true the Hospitals are physically located in Puttaparthi, but where the General Hospital is concerned, people from all over the State of Andhra Pradesh come there. As for the Super Speciality Hospital, I am sure all readers of H2H know what the score is. Yet, for the sake of record I must mention that not only do people come from almost all the States of India but even from Nepal. Everyone who comes is treated, including people from other countries, irrespective of caste, creed, race or religion. We had recently a Marxist from West Bengal. He too underwent a heart procedure just like other patients who had a similar complaint. Mr. Sanghvi, Love knows no boundaries. It is a pity you write irresponsibly about Baba the Embodiment of limitless Love, without having the faintest idea of what is it really means.

Mr. Sanghvi appears to dismiss Swami's Hospital as if it is just a routine affair. Does he know, for example, that in the fifteen years of its existence over fifteen thousand cardiac surgeries have been performed in the Puttaparthi Hospital alone?

Here are some numbers, which, I hope opens eyes of the public as also that of detractors, who wish to down play this Himalayan gesture of compassion.

CONCERNING THE SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL IN PUTTAPARTHI

[From inception on 22/11/1991 to 30/09/2006]

Total number of patients who attended

Cardiology Dept. OPD	6,85,731
Total number of cardiac surgeries	15,844
The break up of this number 15,844 is as follows:	
Bypass surgeries	1,997
Valve surgeries	6,178
Congenital surgeries	6,988
Aortic aneurysms	55
Cardiac tumours	171
Other surgeries	495
	----- 15,884 -----
Total number of Urology Surgeries [From 22/11/1992 to 30/09/2006]	30,020
Total number of Ophthalmology Surgeries [From 22/11/1994 to 30/09/2006]	29,564
Total number of Laser Surgeries in Ophthalmology	6,328

CONCERNING THE SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL IN BANGALORE

[From inception on 21/01/2001 to 30/09/2006]

Total number of patients who attended Cadiology Dept. OPD	2,58,734
Total number of patients who attended Neurology and Neuro Surgery Dept. OPD	1, 37,742
Total number of cardiac surgeries	7,063
Total number of Neuro surgeries	6,326

The above is just a bit of the iceberg of statistics, full details of which would be published elsewhere. The point about these details of treatment offered is that it is hundred percent free. No charge for OPD consultation. No charge for Echo and Doppler scans, blood tests etc., for catheterisation, for medicines, for doctor's consultation, for surgeries, for stay in the wards, including ICU, for food, etc. People have walked in without a wallet and walked out without a wallet. Dear reader, please check out how much it would cost in a private hospital in Bangalore or Mumbai or Delhi, for a surgery involving heart valve replacement, including the cost of the original consultancy, the various tests prior to the surgery, the surgery itself, the medicines administered, the ward charges and so on. And don't forget the tips that are mercilessly extracted by the lower minions in the hospital. Some of you might remember we did an entire Sunday Special on that entitled Inhospitable Hospitals, based on a Guest Editorial by Shobha De in a **Sunday Times**.

I challenge Sanghvi to show me one **private** Hospital anywhere in the world from the North to the South Pole, where such free treatment is offered to one and all on such a large scale. By the way, there is no two tier system with the people who can afford being charged and others who cannot being exempted from payment. Mr. Sanghvi, would you have the intellectual honesty to pay a visit, if you want incognito and see where the cash counter is? If you did, you would find not only is there no cash counter in the Hospital, but also constant announcements in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam etc advising patients all the time that the treatment is completely free and that if anyone tries to collect money the matter must be immediately reported to the authorities. Once again, there are absolutely no fees charged for examination, for investigations like CT scan etc, for procedures like angiography or even valve replacements, that there are no ward charges, nor charges for medicines, that diet is given to the patients absolutely free, as prescribed. And, you will also not find one single notice board anywhere soliciting any funds.

Indeed, if you come to the Ashram, there too you would not find any such announcement seeking or soliciting funds. We broadcast 24/7. Have you ever heard us carry any appeal for funds ever? Does our TV program on Sanskar channel ever carry appeal for funds? [By contrast, so many others who present programs on the same channel regularly appeal for funds.] Similarly the *Sanathana Sarathi* does not ever carry a single appeal for donation, even if there is a tsunami. [By the way, during the tsunami, over a crore was spent for relief and we have published detailed accounts of that in H2H.] Indeed, throughout the world, there are no collection boxes in any Sai Centre. That single fact not only amazes many overseas devotees, but also draws a lot of them to the Centre.

Continuing on the medical theme, does Mr. Sanghvi know that there is a mobile clinic that goes out every day for the first twenty days of the month to many villages near Puttaparthi, along with a team of eight doctors, who render free service? That these doctors are from a panel of six hundred doctors from the State of AP alone? That this van has a Doppler scan unit and a x-ray unit? That the service is absolutely free?

Is Mr. Sanghvi aware that medical camps are routinely run by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation not only in all parts of India but even abroad? That, for example, medical teams from New Zealand visit Fiji to run medical camps there? That doctors from UK goes to Africa to run Medical camps there? In fact in 2005 [the year of Swami's Eightieth Birthday], there was a year long campaign by UK doctors during which they performed in all 8,000 eye operations spread over many countries of Africa, all under the auspices of the Sai Organisation in Africa. Similarly, in Kenya, there is a project called SaiNet the purpose of which is to distribute special treated mosquito nets to the poor as a part of the malaria prevention campaign. Indeed medical camps are run all over Latin America too, throughout the year.

4. SWAMI'S SOCIAL PROJECTS – THE DRINKING WATER PROJECTS

Consider next the Drinking Water Projects of Swami. One gentleman contemptuously dismissed this in the NDTV program by saying, "Oh yes Sai Baba supplies some water through pipes." This is not merely an irresponsible statement, but a crime in as much as the person has no right to talk in public with zero facts. What are the facts? We have presented them all earlier [in H2H] but let me highlight once again a few of them so that readers appreciate how glibly Swami is attacked without even the slightest basis.

During the years 1994-1996, Swami did His first major Drinking Water Project in Anantapur District. About Rs. 300 crores were spent, and as a result, over nine hundred villages got safe drinking water. This involved the construction of seven huge summer storage tanks, laying about 2,500 km of pipes some of them about 20 inches in diameter. Also, water had to be brought from the North to the South against a gradient of nearly 500 feet which meant a lot of pumping. This was a **massive** project. After completion and operating the system for one year, the entire project was handed over to the people of the State on October 19, 1997. Not one paisa was charged. It was a gift of Love. I was present on that occasion and it still makes my hair stand on end when I think of that occasion, almost ten years later.

Anantapur was just the beginning. After that came Medak and Mahabubnagar, following which came the Chennai Project. You know what happened in the case of the Chennai Project? Something phenomenal but the world hardly bothers to know that, partly because we hardly bother to tell. So let me now put it all in black and white.

Chennai always had a huge water problem even in the British days. As early as 1954, it was realised that the only hope was to bring water from the Krishna River in far away Andhra. Politics came in the way, and finally in 1983, a project was launched, with much fanfare of course, dominated by three famous personalities, Indira Gandhi, N.T. Rama Rao and MGR. About a dozen years later, a crucial canal, the Kandaluru – Poondi canal as it was then called, a part of the Telugu Ganga scheme was completed, but little water flowed to Chennai. Reason? The canal was entirely of earthwork and

simply inadequate to transport huge quantities of water over a 150 km distance. There were huge losses due to silting, seepage and erosion of the canal walls. Over five hundred crores had been spent but Chennai continued to be thirsty. Meanwhile, the NE Monsoon failed repeatedly and Chennai was in real deep trouble such as it had never before gone through.

And then, on January 19, 2002, Swami announced that He would bring water to Chennai. The rest is history. Within about fourteen months a brand new canal was built, on the ruins of the old one, employing the latest in technology. And on Swami's 79th Birthday, water was released into the new canal for the first time. Four days later, it reached the Tamil Nadu border and since then if there is water in the Krishna, there is also water for Chennai. For the first time in seven years, water flowed out of taps in the houses of Chennai. No more need to buy dirty and polluted tanker water at high costs. By the way, Chennai's population is seven million.

Subsequently, Swami has done the wonderful Godavari Drinking Water Project that has, within the short span of about fourteen months, brought safe and treated drinking water from the river Godavari to about five hundred villages in East and West Godavari Districts. East Godavari was a particularly difficult place to work in. Not only is the place hilly but also heavily forested. A lot of tribals live there, which presumably is part of the reason for its long neglect. A lot of water flows through the Godavari all the way to the sea, but the tribals had none of it. It was Swami who built collection wells, filtration plants and an elaborate network of pipes in difficult terrain to bring water to the tribals and other villagers. You know something? When the project was completed, there was no inaugural function, no VVIPs, no speech making no nothing. People did Bhajans, opened the taps and collected water.

That simplicity, by the way, prevailed also when the Puttaparthi Hospital was opened. I was present then. Boys in their hundreds chanted Vedas, the then PM Mr. Narasimha Rao flew in, entered the hospital premises, did *namaskaram* to Swami, cut the tape and the door was opened. He then entered the Hospital along with Swami who then lit a lamp. After that, both went upstairs to where the OT was. There inside the OT, a patient was ready for heart surgery. Anaesthesia had already been administered, and Dr. Venugopal [now Director AIIMS] was waiting to make the incision. From outside, Swami blessed, and the surgeons knife touched the skin of the patient. No speeches, no fanfare. Four operations were done on that day. And the saga of free cardiac surgery in a village that in 1945 did not even have a road leading to it had begun.

By the way, Sanghvi sarcastically remarks about the Planetarium. Does he know about a University here and that the Planetarium is an asset of the University? Is it a crime for a University to have a Planetarium? Literally, hundreds of thousands of people come to Puttaparthi every year. In fact, they come from all parts of the world. They go the Planetarium and see the show there, presented by our University staff. Many of the visitors are poor villagers. Are poor villagers unworthy of seeing Planetarium shows? Should Planetariums be located only in the Metro cities and is it only the city folk who

have the privilege to see them? What utter contempt this man seems to have for the villages of India!

Sanghvi makes a reference to the Ramakrishna Mission [RM] and I have to respond to that. Let me for a start say that I have the greatest of respect for that Mission and hold it in the highest esteem. Way back in the forties of the twentieth century, my father used to work in Karachi. He then regularly attended the lectures of Swami Ranganathananda, who was then stationed there. Subsequently, my father was transferred to Madras, and I did my last two years of schooling in the Ramakrishna Mission High School in T.Nagar Madras, a well known school, I might add. I have from time to time, bought many books published by the Mission and even today read occasionally some of its journals. I have read the teachings of Ramakrishna and have felt inspired by them, even as I have felt and continue to feel electrified by the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda. I might also add that many I know here have come to Swami via the Ramakrishna Mission. Perhaps the most famous example among such people is late Mr. Kasturi.

5. SWAMI TRANSCENDS RELIGIONS

I am all for the RM being given the highest of praise. However, using the RM to slight what Baba has done is gross injustice. The objectives of the two are different. Mr. Sanghvi may cast Swami as a Hindu philanthropist, but we know that Swami rises above religions to the higher realm of Spirituality. How many know that in the mid seventies, Swami built a Mosque in Puttaparthi so that the Muslims of this place did not have to walk six kilometres to Bukkapatnam to say prayers in a Mosque there?

Mr. Sanghvi, please be informed that people of **all** religions come here, including people from Israel. The First Lady of Kazakhstan has come here twice by a chartered flight direct from Almati to Puttaparthi! People come here regularly from Iran and Turkey. Buddhists come here to celebrate Buddha Poonima. Chinese come here to welcome their New Year. Just a few days ago, not only was Christmas celebrated with much religious fervour [as always] but Father Charles of Nigeria [now in Zambia] celebrated mass here! I mention all this to stress that there is a cultural as well as spiritual difference between the RM and the Ashram here. Of course, *Vedanta* always receives the highest attention since it is so comprehensive, but all religions are respected and recognised as based on Love, forming thus equally valid pathways to One God. Which is why Swami tells Christians, "Be a good Christian." Similarly, to a Muslim He says, "Be a good Muslim." Which is also why Begum Parveen Sultana and Ustad Amjad Ali Khan regularly come here to have Darshan and offer Musical concerts. Which is also why we have now regularly, symphony orchestras performing here once every six months. And to remind everyone that Prashanti Nilayam is for all, there is a beautiful Sarva Dharma Stupa here. Similarly, there are in the Poornachandra Auditorium, depictions from major religions. In the Hill View Stadium, one can similarly find statues of Buddha, Jesus and Zoroaster. Murals representing the spirit of different religions similarly adorn the walls of the auditorium of the College

here. By the way, I might also mention that we have run articles on various religions in H2H at various times; in fact, our article on Zoroastrianism attracted special attention from Parsis the world over, many of whom wrote to say that they learnt more about their religion from this article than from other sources.

6. SOME ASPECTS RELATING TO THE AVATAR

Having considered the service aspect in some depth, I now wish to deal with three topics together; they are, Swami as an Avatar, the acts of materialisation that He performs [popularly called miracles] and the transformations He effects. In a manner of speaking, they are inter-related. They are also connected with the statement attributed to Swami regarding His being God.

Let me start with the remark attributed to Swami, where He is quoted out of context and that too only in part. The detractors say: "Sai Baba says He is God. What nonsense! If He is indeed God, then why not this, why not that?" etc. The first comment I would like to make is that whenever Swami talks of God, it is always in the **Vedantic context**, and not in terms of how X or Y might think of God. This is an important point because the world is full of people who have all sorts of ideas of what they think God is or ought to be. Unfortunately, most people have the foggiest notion what the concept of God is in *Vedanta*, and I doubt whether Swami Agnivesh [who, by the way, has chosen to make some rather nasty and what I would regard as unwarranted remarks], has bothered to read *Vedanta* and analyse all these matters in that context.

In *Vedanta*, the central concept is that everything is God, and, as Swami reminds us often, there is nothing except God. Having said that, I must also add that in the manifested Universe, God is not directly visible. What is visible are physical entities, be they inanimate or animate. Whatever they are, one thing is certain, God is immanent in them. What do we mean by that?

I shall consider that by starting with a famous remark that Gandhi once made and one which I am very fond of quoting. Gandhi said: "There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I cannot see it." This power, *Shakti*, call it what you will, is identified by Gandhi with God. He bluntly declared that he knew very little about God but knew two things very well. The first is that God exists and is Omnipresent. The second idea is best conveyed in Gandhi's own words. He said: "He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect. God to be God must rule the Heart and transform the senses." Later, Gandhi identifies God with Love, which all religions also do incidentally.

In short, if we want to talk of God in the abstract, then we must talk of Consciousness or better, Universal Consciousness. If we talk of God in relation to the physical world then we must talk of Love. Are there two levels of Divinity? Krishna emphatically says there are. He says that He exists as

Immanent Divinity in the manifest Universe, and also as Transcendental Divinity in the Unmanifest Cosmos, when the physical Universe ceases to exist. If we want to understand it all in the context of Science, I would say, in the manifest Universe, God is immanent as the energy of the atoms of every entity, both inert and animate. Further, in living beings, He is manifest as the life force or *Praana*. In the *Gita*, Krishna explains all this to Arjuna using two important words: *Adibhautika* and *Adi Daivika*.

According to Science, our Universe came into existence about 13.7 billion years ago. For many decades there was much uncertainty about the exact age of the Universe but thanks to the COBE satellite, there is now very precise data that confirms that the Universe was born about 13.7 billion years ago. By the way, this year's Nobel Prize in Physics went to the people who conceived and designed the COBE and later made this incredible discovery. The question becomes: If the Universe was born 13.7 billion years ago and our Space and Time came into existence then, there must have been a state when our Universe did not exist. Krishna confirms that He [read Universal Consciousness] existed even then, and that is what Unmanifest Divinity is all about.

Let me say something more about manifest Divinity. Swami says everything is God. The same thing was told to young Narendra by Ramakrishna. That was before Narendra had become Swami Vivekananda. Narendra was cynical and indeed describes graphically how when one afternoon he was making his way to his Guru's place he was frustrated by the remark that everything was God. In fact, he said, he went on telling himself, "I am supposed to believe this fence is God, this cast-iron gate is God. What nonsense?" But do you know what happened when he came to the presence of his master? Ramakrishna gently tapped young Narendra on the shoulder, and suddenly everything around began to dissolve one by one into a strange Cosmic Oneness. Narendra now found himself in a state of incredible peace, tranquillity and bliss from which he did not want to get out. But another tap on the shoulder and he was rudely pulled out of his incredible trance. The Guru said that Narendra had many things to do before he became eligible for permanent Bliss. You do not have to take my word for all this. It is all there in the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda.

Now what is the point of this recall? Simple. There exists a state of Universal Consciousness. This state not only exists when the physical Universe is absent but overlaps in a subtle manner the Universe even while it exists. All the matter one sees in the physical Universe came from this original Consciousness – that is the central thesis of *Vedanta*. As George Wald, Harvard Biologist who won the Nobel Prize in Medicine once declared, everything is a materialisation of this 'mind stuff'. The human being is the ultimate Avatar of this Consciousness, being capable of cognizing this Consciousness, besides allowing it to flower in many ways via literature, art, science and so on.

So we come to this: Every material entity is an aspect of Divinity. This Divinity is not patently manifest but is certainly latent. Particularly in humans, it is

latent as *Medha Shakti* or worldly intelligence [that permits great achievements in Science], it is latent as the power of Creativity [that results in great works of art, music, literature etc.] and finally as noble virtues. In inert matter, Consciousness, which is the essence of the Divine Spark within, is present in a passive aspect. In living beings, while the passive aspect is present in the constituent atoms, there is in addition an active **aspect** that confers awareness. A living being is aware it exists. In a human being the capacity for Self-Awareness is the highest. In other words, a human being has the potentiality of 1) discovering the Divine Spark within, and 2) living his or her life in accordance with the latent Divine nature. That is the very first lesson that Krishna taught Arjuna. He said, "O Arjuna, you are thinking of life in terms of the life and death of the body. You are not the mere body, which is but a transient casing for the embedded *Atma*. Your true nature is that of the *Atman*. Thus all your actions in life must be in accord with that nature." And that precisely is also the very same lesson being taught to us by Swami any number of times, especially when He raises the question: "Who are you?" Like Krishna He reminds us that we are not the body but separate from the body. Likewise, we are not the Mind but separate from the Mind. We are the Eternal *Atma*.

This brings me to the statement of Swami quoted out of context by all and sundry. "I am God." Yes, Baba does say that; but He does not stop there, does He? Does he not also add the following important remark: "**YOU** also are God; the only difference is that I know it and you are yet to realise it"? God comes in human form, as *Saakara Brahman*, just to teach this lesson. Rama taught it in one way, Krishna did it in yet another. Sri Sathya Sai Baba also teaches that very same lesson but in a style best adapted to this current age. In other words, there is absolutely nothing wrong, at least in the **Vedantic** context, in Baba saying that He is God. Equally, there is nothing wrong in His reminding us that we too are God. And He wraps it all up with the fact that while He is AWARE of His Real Nature, we continue to remain ignorant about it. Indeed, it is because of that fact that some devotees say, "The one refutes also is God," in accordance with the spirit of the famous *Brahmaarpanam Sloka* in the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*.

The question then might be asked: "Well, if that is the case, where is the need for this long rebuttal?" Fair enough, but there is a point. You see, life is a Cosmic Drama in which we have to play our parts. True, it is all God everywhere, both the one who accuses and the one who is being accused. But, says *Vedanta*, like actors in a drama who stick to the script, we have to do our bit. Unknown to themselves, those yet to be awakened by spiritual light, would act so as to support *Adharma*; but those who have some inkling of what True Reality is all about, have to pitch in on the side of *Dharma*. In the Ramayana, we have the classic case of Ravana, who though well read and devout in his own way, nevertheless took to the evil path. And when a crisis was brewing, Vibhishana dared to contradict Ravana and give good advice. That was speaking for *Dharma*. In the Mahabharatha, we have a classic example of massive failure of duty as also a laudable illustration of duty come what may. Bhisma, the patriarch, well read and a noble person in his own way nevertheless failed to speak at a crucial moment when he ought to have and

when his word would have carried a lot of weight. On the other hand, we also have Vidhura, who did not hesitate to speak sharply to Dhritarashtra [whose advisor Vidhura was], and call a spade a spade.

These examples are not without any meaning. I can say that in the years after Independence when slowly but surely, our educational establishment was being severely corrupted, there was no strong voice to speak out against it. When values drain out of schools and colleges, what can one expect from that Society? What it all boils down to is simply this: As far as I am concerned, I am a part of the Prashanti Digital Studio, established solely for spreading the message of love, peace and global harmony. Not having sufficient resources, we cannot reach out to millions but certainly thousands do lock on to us daily, deriving solace and comfort in their own way in this troubled world. Hurt and deeply pained by the attack on Swami, many have written to us to do something. I simply cannot ignore it saying that Baba does not need any defence. True, Swami is above this but then we have also a duty to perform, and by performing which we can also redeem ourselves.

In the Ramayana, when Rama is about to invade Lanka and Vibhishana is arraigned and brought before Rama, He is asked to get rid of Vibhishana. Rama listens carefully to all the advice and then says: "I appreciate your concern for Me which has prompted most of you to suggest that Vibhishana ought to be put to death. I am afraid I cannot agree. If it is just a question of getting rid of Ravana, I can do it without the help of any of you. In fact, I do not have to invade Lanka. Indeed, I could have done it from Ayodhya itself. However, I have gone through this particular procedure for certain reasons. One is that it gives a chance to all of you to redeem your lives by fighting for *Dharma*. Another is, it gives Me a chance to teach some lessons. Thirdly, by staging the Drama in this manner, I have ample opportunities for showering My Grace on you!

Right now, the lesson I am going to teach is that when a person comes to you and surrenders, you simply cannot abandon him. The person might in fact be acting and harbouring evil intentions. But the *Dharma* of a king is that once his protection is sought, he ought to give it unconditionally. And that precisely is what I propose to do, having been born in a Royal family." It is guided by that spirit of duty, and with much humility, that I am taking the trouble of writing this long piece so that devotees everywhere can get some idea of the complexity of the Divine Drama, and not get rattled by what ignorant people might say.

I am not through yet, for there are some more things I need to say, all related to the Avataric aspect of Swami. By way of starting on this topic, let me describe what happened during the very first Interview that Swami gave me and my wife, in 1990, I think. A few years prior to this, tragedy struck us, with the sudden and untimely death of our only son and child. He was eighteen when he suddenly left us. Our lives were shattered, and we sought solace by joining a Sai group near our house in Hyderabad, and regularly attending Bhajans. One thing led to another, and thanks to Prof Sampath, the third Vice Chancellor of Baba's University, a fine gentleman whom I had the pleasure of knowing for many decades, I visited Prashanti Nilayam and finally was called

to Swami's presence. I had briefly met Swami earlier at the time of the Summer Course, but for my wife it was the first direct, face-to-face meeting, shall I say. At this point, I shall simply reproduce the following from one of my Musings broadcasts, given some years ago over Radio Sai.

That [during that Interview] was when I first got to know what sweet Divine intimacy really means. But I also got a stunning revelation, when Swami disclosed some details regarding the untimely death of our son, about which no one knew anything, we two excepted. After that, Baba asked my wife, "Why are you regularly fighting with Me?" My wife was stunned by this remark and so was I. When my wife recovered, she said, "Swami, how could I have ever fought with You earlier? This is the first time we are meeting face to face." Swami smiled and continued, "No, you have been regularly fighting with Me!" This time she remained silent while I was most perplexed. Then Baba said, "Is it not true that every night when others are asleep you go to the Puja room, stand in front of the deities and demand, 'God why on earth did you take away my son? What harm did I do to You? On the other hand, I have always worshipped You. And yet, You have done this to me. You are most unkind, and unjust.' Did you not say such things day after day?" I was simply stunned. Till then, I knew nothing about the daily mid-night confrontation between my wife and God! My wife bowed down her head and said softly, "Yes, Swami, that is true." Swami smiled and said, "See, I know!" In His own way, He was conveying to us that He was Lord Almighty and knew everything, all the time.

I am mentioning this just to convey to you that when Baba is hailed as an Avatar, there is a lot of meaning behind it. You may not believe it; others might simply dismiss it as a made up story and so on; but I do not care. I really have nothing to gain by creating or concocting a story. And my scientific training has taught me to be quite sceptical unless, there are strong grounds for believing. Which brings me to the question of what are popularly called miracles, and which are contemptuously dismissed by those who have never been exposed to such extra-ordinary events.

For years, I did not simply believe in Sai Baba. I too dismissed Him like many others did [and continue to do so]. What made me reject Baba at that time were primarily the stories of His miracles, which I completely distrusted. Later, when tragedy struck our lives, I concentrated on Baba's Message of Love, which was perfectly acceptable to me, having been brought up for decades on the writings of Gandhiji and of Tolstoy – remember, Gandhi himself was influenced by Tolstoy, and even named his farm in South Africa after Tolstoy. At that point, I distinctly recall having an argument with my uncle about Sai Baba's miracles. While I quoted why this ought to be impossible according to the laws of Physics, my uncle dismissed me by saying, "Bigger scientists than you have turned around. So I am not going to be persuaded by you kid!"

And then in May 1991, 22nd of that month to be very precise, I got the shock of my life. I had gone to Bangalore, to give a talk in the Summer Course organised by Baba's University. Prof Sampath was the Vice Chancellor then,

and he had invited me. I arrived on the morning of May 21st. That night, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. Next morning the whole country was in turmoil and my talk scheduled for that morning, was cancelled. Instead, on Baba's instructions, I gave a private talk. While asking Prof Sampath to arrange such a talk, Baba told him, "Tell everyone that I would be attending. Otherwise, some might skip the talk!"

At 3.00 PM, we all assembled for my talk. Swami did not come. He was then very busy with matters connected with the Super Speciality Hospital that was then under construction in Puttaparthi. However, as is usual, a chair had been placed for Baba. While introducing me to the audience, Prof Sampath turned to me and said, "Dr. Venkataraman, that is Baba's chair. It might seem empty to you but be assured that He would be listening to every word of what you speak." I did not take that seriously. I spoke on the importance of values, being guided mostly by Gandhi.

After my talk was over, Prof Sampath took me to Swami's presence. I had to take leave and rush to the airport to catch a flight to Hyderabad. There were disturbances everywhere, and I was not even sure if I could reach the airport and that if I did, whether there would be a flight at all. As soon as I walked into Swami's presence, the very first thing He said to me was, "I heard every word of what you said!" That was knock-out blow number one. A doubting Thomas might say, "Oh no, it was all rigged thanks to an earlier understanding between Baba and Sampath." To such people I would say that not only would that be wholly unjust to Baba but also to Prof Sampath, a finer gentleman than whom is difficult to come across. For those of you who do not know, Prof Sampath studied electronics in Stanford, came to Bangalore in 1955 to teach in the Indian Institute of Science [in fact that is where I first saw him; but I did not know him then]. Later, he moved to IIT Madras, where he served as Deputy Director for many years, as also Professor and the Head of the Dept of Computer Science. After that, Prof Sampath served with the Union Public Service Commission, Director of IIT Kanpur and so on. His laurels are too long to recollect here. But he was a perfect gentleman and it would be a heinous sin to accuse him of any complicity in this incident I am now narrating.

A few minutes after this came my second knock out blow. I took leave of Swami and prepared to leave for Bangalore Airport. I remember that scene very well. We were both standing near the door of Trayee Birndavan. Swami waved His hand and created vibhuti for me and poured it into my palm. The moment had come to wake up from the slumber. This shock was more than the shock of my son's sudden death or of Rajiv Gandhi's most unexpected assassination. I was too numb from the experience. Later I realised that I had to do some serious thinking to figure out what it all meant; that I shall come to in a minute.

The vibhuti materialisation that I witnessed on that day [and innumerable times later] made me realise that there were many things far beyond what I had known till then. Sorcar alleges that this vibhuti is just a salt pellet that is first hidden and then crushed. Let me tell Mr. Sorcar something. I have, since that occasion, witnessed vibhuti materialisation on over a hundred different

occasions, in all sorts of places. I have also been personally given materialised vibhuti on many occasions. And I have tasted it on all these occasions. IT IS NOT SALT POWDER BY ANY STRETCH OF IMAGINATION. That is my first point.

I have seen vibhuti materialised in the most unexpected circumstances. Here is an example. In March 1999, Swami went to Bombay and I was included in the party. Over there, He went to the houses of many and one afternoon, He visited the house of Mr. Sunil Gavaskar in Worli. Swami was seated in a large room, full of Bombay celebrities many, of course, drawn from the sports world and some from the film world. The room was packed and as per our unwritten code, we the members of the party sat outside. There were first Bhajans, and then a lot of small talk, after which Baba was led to a Dining hall for being served some snacks. People were giving Him letters and all that. As He came near the door, I could see Him clearly. Seated there were Polly Umrigar and G. S. Ramchand, cricketing heroes of my era. While Gavaskar was introducing them, Swami asked them casually as He often does, "Do you like vibhuti?" Without waiting for their reply, He materialised it on the spot. I can't see how anyone could have anticipated that and carried salt pellets hidden between the fingers all the way during a long ride from Andheri to Worli, gone up a lift, sat for one hour and so forth. May be Sorcar can do it. There are many such occasions but I shall skip that. However, I would like to reproduce here an extract from an interview with Capt. Oberoi that we did for broadcast over Radio Sai. For those of you who might not know, Capt Oberoi served in the Indian Airlines, first as a pilot and later in the Commercial Department. He rose high before he retired. After retirement he came to Puttaparthi, where he was the airport officer here for over a decade. I knew him well.

Once when he was in service and stationed in Madras, Capt Oberoi came to Bangalore, having heard that Baba was going to Hyderabad. As the Chief Commercial Manager, he could just hop in and go anywhere on duty in his region. He wanted to see Swami urgently because he had a big problem. Swami told Oberoi that He was going to Hyderabad and would speak to him on the flight. So Oberoi joined Baba on the flight to Hyderabad.

At that time, Capt. Oberoi was having a severe problem – he had been diagnosed as having throat cancer. We now hear Capt. Oberoi himself recalling what happened next:

During the flight, Swami called me and asked me to sit next to Him. Radhakrishna who was in that seat vacated it to enable me to sit there. When I was seated, Swami asked me about my health. I replied, "Swami is Antaryami [the In-dweller], and He knows my problem."

Tears came to my eyes; I was moved. Swami wiped my tears and said, "I know, but I want you to tell Me. It would lighten your burden when you talk about it." I then told Him that the ENT specialist had diagnosed my problem as Throat Cancer.

Swami called for a glass of drinking water. He then materialised a blackish powder, dropped the powder into the glass, stirred the water with a spoon, and then gave the water to me to drink. The taste was very bitter but I drank it all. Swami then rubbed whatever was left of the black powder on His finger-tips, on my throat.

It was very soothing. The pain disappeared immediately, and the hitherto uncontrollable cough was almost gone. Swami then asked me to consult Dr. Kameshwar in Madras and get a second opinion about my problem. I pleaded that since I was now better, why go through another painful physical examination? Swami insisted and said, “Apne Swami ka agya palan karo aur second opinion lo [Listen to the command of your Swami and seek a second opinion]”.

Oberoi went back to Madras and, as advised by Swami, consulted an eminent specialist, Dr. Kameshwar. This doctor was different from the specialist who had done very detailed tests and diagnosed the cancer. Dr. Kameshwar took a look at the test reports that Oberoi had brought with him and asked why he wanted another examination, especially as some of the tests were quite painful. After all, barely ten days had passed since the earlier test; what great miracle could happen in the short period? Oberoi told the doctor that he had been specially asked to consult Dr. Kameshwar, and was doing so as per his instructions. Reluctantly, Dr. Kameshwar went through the testing. When he was through, he did a double take - there was absolutely no trace of cancer – Swami had already cancelled it. Oberoi explained to me why Swami wanted him to go to Dr. Kameshwar instead of the doctor who had originally examined him. Kameshwar did not believe in Swami and after this incident, he completely changed! Just to repeat, the words of Capt. Oberoi I have reproduced are exactly as he recorded them for us for broadcast over Radio Sai some years ago.

I know Capt. Oberoi very well. He is a very good bhajan singer, and a simple, straight talking man. Sorcar may declare this also to be trickery, although I do not know how black and bitter salt powder can cure cancer in one go. May be Baba knew Oberoi was going to come to Him with a problem, and He therefore carried a black tablet in advance!

I must here also refer to Sanghvi's sarcastic remark: “Rich devotees got Omegas, the poor just got sacred ash.” It is only the spiritually ignorant who would talk like that. Speaking for myself, I would any day value vibhuti more than an Omega watch. A watch is useful and I certainly wear one when I go to work. But an expensive Omega promotes attachment and I certainly would not prefer anything of that nature. What about vibhuti? As Baba explains, when things are burnt, they turn into ash but ash itself cannot be burnt. It is thus a reminder of the state of ultimate spiritual purity that the scriptures recommend humans should aim at. The vibhuti is thus a symbol of ultimate purity.

No matter what I say, I am sure there would all kinds of arguments regarding how naïve I am, and how I have been fooled and tricked by Baba, that I am

too inexperienced to see through tricks of conjurers and so forth. Well, let me narrate this experience of mine. This happened about four years ago. It was early March I think, the time of the afternoon Darshan, and Swami was seated on the veranda, in full view of the Sai Kulwant Hall where several thousands were seated. It was damn hot; no wonder, summer was fast approaching. After about nearly an hour, suddenly during the course of the conversation with a few of us seated near Him on the veranda, Swami, in full view of all the people assembled there, waved His hand and produced a fig, a real fig, not a plastic one or a clay model. He then passed it around to the few of us near Him and when I received it I held it in my palm and saw it. It was absolutely fresh and cold, like it would have been if it had just been removed from a deep freeze! How do I know it was a real fig? Because Baba asked the fig to be made into small pieces and distributed. I got a piece that I ate. I do not remember who all were there besides me, but I do recall Mr. S.V. Giri was there because he was the Vice Chancellor then, and of course one or two boys, who go with Swami to be of assistance to Him. They too got a piece of the fresh and chill fig, materialized. All this before a huge crowd of several thousands. I mention all this because Sorcar, in the NDTV program not only alleged that Swami was a trickster, but added that Baba materialized things in His room behind a curtain. One can allege that the fig had been brought earlier and kept hidden in the sleeve – the favourite explanation. But how did Baba keep it ice cold? May be he has a deep freeze also hidden in His sleeve?

CONCERNING MATERIALISATION

I have seen so many of these things, including materializations during flight, and in all odd places. When He suffered a hand injury and His right hand was in a sling, He produced vibhuti [which is what most devotees really wish for] using His left hand. The question now becomes: “Is there any explanation for this?” Drawing upon my scientific background, I venture to put forward a hypothesis, based on my current understanding of the bridge between physics and meta-physics. The last few decades have seen staggering progress in the last frontier of physics namely, the bridge between the micro and macrocosm. I have spent several years absorbing these developments in the context of a series of books I have been writing. [A very brief glimpse of this fascinating horizon would be offered in the H2H serial SEARCH FOR INFINITY.] It turns out to be amazing in one sense, and perfectly understandable in another, that the physical Universe exhibits a remarkable but very subtle Cosmic connectivity between entities that appear different to us. So much so, as one physicist puts it, there is only one electron but it appears to us as many simply because of the effects of Space and Time. This can be beautifully explained with the help of what are called Feynman diagrams but I do not wish to digress into that. Let me just state that in the process of exploring what is called the Einstein-Podosky-Rosen [EPR] paradox, in the mid seventies, some remarkable experiments revealed this Cosmic substratum. This discovery was most unexpected. Einstein in fact had ruled it out, but that was because he believed that different entities had separate existence. Nature now says: “To your senses they may appear so; to your scientific instruments

which are nothing but extensions of your senses, they may appear so. But there is a hidden Cosmic connectivity, as a result of which all become one! And it is because of this, there is an apparent violation of the theory of Special Relativity!"

This is, in my opinion, a stunning discovery, and a few who have thought deeply about it have realized that Nature is actually validating the intuitive concepts of Cosmic interconnectivity through the *Atma* and all that, which our Rishis of the past spoke about.

Now comes another question: "If the Universe had a beginning, and we do believe that our Universe was born about 13.7 billion years ago, then where did it come from? Where did the initial deposit of energy for this Universe come from?" There is much speculation in the scientific world concerning this, but using the language of the *Gita*, I venture to suggest that beyond the Space and Time that define our Universe, there is an "Unmanifest Something" from which our particular Universe was born. That our Universe could have had a "mother" is something many Cosmologists now freely accept. According to me, that "mother" is Universal Consciousness, strongly advocated by *Vedanta*.

I admit this is just a speculation but a fairly plausible one nevertheless. The concept of Consciousness cannot be summarily dismissed, as some upstart and immature scientists of today tend to. Many modern physicists have reluctantly come to the conclusion that material reality did indeed flow from Pure Consciousness. As far as this Universe is concerned, no less a person than Freeman Dyson, a brilliant physicist who provided so much insight into quantum electrodynamics in the early days, went so far as to write a serious paper in the prestigious journal *Reviews of Modern Physics*, on life without flesh and blood. Dyson speculated that even if the planet earth became inhospitable to life as we know it, life could serve in a primordial form in the Universe as cloud of Consciousness. These profound investigations were carried out by Dyson when he was holding the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship.

What I am trying to say is: 1) Our Universe was born out of Consciousness, 2) our Universe evolved against a backdrop of Universal Consciousness that pervades the entire Universe, and 3) this Consciousness is immanent in every atom of our Universe, being most evident and in its richest form in humans.

Now why all this long digression into Consciousness? For the following reason. First let me point out that according to Sri Aurobindo, the energy of Pure Consciousness cascaded down many steps into the energy that created our Universe. This is an interesting thought. *Vedanta* starts way up in the abstract realm of Pure Consciousness. Somewhere below it is the physical Universe we occupy. Energy [somehow] cascaded from the "super-abstract level" down to create our "level". Nevertheless, Pure Consciousness pervades our Universe also, present everywhere, rather like the concept of ether [now discarded] of classical theory. The discovery of quantum connectivity in the experiments carried out to check out the EPR paradox, allow one to state with

a certain amount of confidence that there is indeed a subtle connectivity underlying the entire physical Universe, which could well be Pure Consciousness, as I claim.

The story does not quite end here. About 20 or so years ago, a Professor of Aerosciences in Princeton University named Robert Jahn, was asked to take care of a graduate student engaged in some experiments in parakinetics because her guide was going on leave. This student's experiments involved exploring Mind-matter interactions. Jahn personally did not believe in such phenomena but as a courtesy to his fellow professor agreed to. Basically he was to supervise the electronics aspects of the experiment and also the statistical aspects. It turned out that in due course, Jahn became fascinated by the research and himself plunged into it fully. He made strange discoveries – basically that the Mind could influence matter [I shall presently describe what this means]. At first, he did not believe his findings; and so he tightened and tightened the controls; but he kept on finding that the Mind *could* influence matter! Jahn then came to the conclusion that the Consciousness latent in humans was able to influence inert machines, because it too was pervaded by Consciousness, though in a passive form. This led Jahn to write down a mathematical theory of Consciousness as a field, rather like the fields that form the basis of quantum electro-dynamics and quantum chromo-dynamics. I am not too sure I agree with the details of Jahn's mathematical formulation, but about his basic premise, I have no doubts whatsoever.

By the way, Jahn published his findings on Mind-machine interactions in the prestigious Journal IEEE, published by the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers in America. It is a top peer-reviewed journal and the paper must have some calibre if it is to be published there. True, Jahn's findings are not universally accepted, but the fact is that Jahn has, without any prior knowledge of *Vedanta*, origin of our Universe etc., established the possibility that Mind can interact with matter.

Now what exactly is it that Jahn did? He conducted many experiments one of which [the most compelling one I would say] is the following. In this, Jahn had an electronic machine called the Random Number Generator [RNG]. Left to itself, this machine would keep on generating random numbers. There are very precise tests to check if the numbers generated do follow the distribution expected of purely random numbers. Jahn now had volunteers sit before the machine for hours and concentrate on the machine, almost telling it mentally, "O machine, I am asking you to deviate from the random distribution." On the face of it, such an experiment would be deemed crazy and a total waste of time. Jahn himself started with such a view. But he told himself, "I shall not be prejudiced about the outcome. I do not expect anything to come out of this but let me try anyway." And when he did, he found that people were in fact able to influence the machine! Naturally Jahn did not believe it at first but after innumerable trials he came to the conclusion that there was something in it and that is when he started actively developing a theory of Mind-matter interactions, mediated by the field of Consciousness, as described above.

What am I really driving at is simply this. If Nature created matter from the Consciousness field at the time of the birth of the Universe, then it is conceivable, especially given Jahn's experiments, that a person could directly connect to Pure Consciousness and materialize objects, and indeed will various things to happen. Question: "Can anybody and everybody connect to this Pure Consciousness and do "miracles" as we call them?" The answer is not everyone can but one who has trained himself or herself to dwell in the realm of Pure Consciousness can. *Vedanta* clearly identifies such powers as *Siddhis* and there are in fact many types of them. *Vedanta* also cautions that the true seeker should not be dazzled and distracted by the *Siddhi* powers for they can easily derail the person in the quest for the Ultimate.

What Sorcar calls a cheap trick is, in my opinion a manifestation of *Siddhi* powers, known throughout history. Baba says, that when a Pure Person wills, it simply happens. History records that Jesus performed many miracles. I see no surprise in that. Many mystics are supposed to have performed miracles – once again, quite possible. The ability of a person to will and have that will fulfilled or realized is dependent solely on the **spiritual purity of the person**; it has **nothing** to do with religion. Thus it is that there are stories of saints and prophets in all faiths performing what are referred to as miracles.

I went into this elaborate digression merely to convey that while I strongly disbelieved in miracles earlier, once I saw it and that too under so many circumstances – I wish I had the time and space to recount them all! – I had to find an explanation. It took years for me to come up with a plausible scenario based on Consciousness and while I cannot prove it, I assert it cannot be disproved either. All theories about the origin of life here on earth would fall into that category. Similarly, all theories of where our particular Universe came from would always remain a matter of speculation with a few convincing possibilities. As in the case of the Universe, we would have to say that extraordinary occurrences including the direct creation of matter via Mind power are not impossible; they can and do occur in certain circumstances. One can speculate about the various scenarios that make miracles possible and leave it at that. We might never be able to know the entire truth – indeed in this Universe, there will forever be many things [including "miracles"] we would never know fully about it. Oh yes, charlatans can take people for a ride – these things would always happen. But that does not mean all are charlatans. It is dangerous to get trapped by pre-fixed convictions in the belief that one is being rational.

Rationality as presently practiced, is within the confines of Space and Time. Yes, our ordinary lives are bound by Space and Time; but on that score can one totally dismiss as rubbish experiences that transcend and reach out to beyond? Einstein declared that he pursued Science to have the feeling of Cosmic religiosity. Was he talking rubbish? Was he a nut? May be some of those pouring scorn on Swami might think Einstein was a nut; in which case, let me say I am very happy I chose to be in that same nutty profession instead of in pseudo-journalism!

Talking of experiencing Cosmic religiosity, I should remind you once again that Einstein describes it as an experience **beyond** words and the Mind, a remark amazingly similar to the words used in the *Upanishads* to describe the Supreme One! Our Vedic seers also sought this by going into a trance through meditation. Ramakrishna, Ramana all had experience of this state of Supreme Bliss, the State of Cosmic Consciousness. *Vedanta* has another name for this state of Absolute Reality namely Brahman. *Vedanta* further asserts that by going within oneself, one can ultimately discover Brahman within. Thus the “God” within is the same as the God without, a truth embodied in the statement that *Atman* is *Brahman*. After a deep study of *Vedanta*, Nobelist Schrodinger came to precisely that conclusion, and I am drawing particular attention to it to drive home the fact that a *Poorna Avatar* is a human form of this Abstract and Formless God, referred to in the scriptures as *Niraakara Brahman*. By contrast, the Avatar having donned a form with flesh and blood is referred to as *Saakara Brahman*. And Krishna very clearly describes that God does indeed don the human form and descend when it becomes necessary.

Now if for a moment we keep all this in mind and reflect, then it is not at all difficult to see the following:

1. All are aspects of the *Atma* – this by the way is the very first thing that Krishna taught to Arjuna.
2. The Avatar is a particularly special form of the Embodiment of the *Atma*.
3. While humans try to rise to the level of the Divine through self-purification, *Bhakti* and so on, the Avatar comes down to teach humans this very process and encourage them in that endeavour. Indeed Krishna makes it very clear.
4. God comes down as man so that man can ascend to the level of God. In this drama, the Avatar is like pure fresh water coming down from above as cool rain, while the evolving soul is like water on earth’s surface evaporating and rising above, leaving behind dross. That is the difference between an Avatar like Krishna, say, and a devotee like Ramana who seeks to ascend.
5. By the way, Sri Aurobindo recognised the descent of God in the form of Sri Sathya Sai in 1926, made a terse remark to that effect and later substantially withdrew into himself.

What it all boils down to is the following:

1. Devotees of Sathya Sai Baba ardently believe that He is indeed an Avatar.
2. An Avatar comes with His full complement of powers, as for example Krishna did, and as such, it should be no big deal that some of His actions appear miraculous.
3. However, while ordinary people are wonder struck by these miracles, Baba Himself says they are nothing but expressions of His Love.

4. Not all need believe that Baba is an Avatar. However, that disbelief does not give them the right to support unsubstantiated slander or cast aspersions on His social missions, and that too without even having bothered to become acquainted with the basic facts – anybody with decency would concede that there is no private charitable Trust that has done so much for the poor and the underprivileged of this country on the health and drinking water fields as Baba has done.

For a long time I did not accept Baba as anything more than a very good and saintly person, till I analysed deeply and studied carefully the life of Krishna. I also studied carefully the various books written by Baba, read transcripts of all His old Discourses, and listened carefully to many where I was present. Along with this, I studied the *Bhagavad Gita*, bits and pieces of the *Upanishads*, writings of Vivekananda, teachings of Ramakrishna, Ramana and so on. It was then that I realized that Sathya Sai Baba was something unique, not in external form but in dimensions that go far beyond the mere form. The famous Pakistani Physicist Abdus Salam, a devout Muslim by the way, was once asked how he a scientist could believe in God. Salam gave a terse reply. He said, “I see no contradiction. Through Science, I try to understand the outside world. Where God is concerned I explore inside. Where is the problem?”

Earlier I pointed out that Gandhi says that He is God who rules the Heart and transforms. That precisely is what Baba did to me and for me that is enough to accept Him as God. If that criterion was good enough for Gandhi, it is good enough for me. I have seen so many transform but those incidents are hardly known. The President of the All India Sri Sathya Sai Organisation recently told me that when he went to Chattisgarh recently on routine organizational work, he met a man there who is employed as a Sales Tax Officer. This man told our President that before he discovered Sai Baba he used to accept bribes freely and in fact demand it. But now the Love of Sai has changed this person for ever. There are any number of stories and they are nothing new; such transformations have occurred throughout the world at all times, to people belonging to all faiths – after all, there is only one God and we all are His children.

8. THE POWER OF DIVINE ATTRACTION

One thing about Divinity in human form is its power of attraction, which manifests in extra-ordinary ways. Here is a personal recall of one story from my own personal experience. This incident happened in 2004, I think; it was definitely after the invasion of Iraq by the Coalition forces. How do I know? Read on and you would find out.

It was summer and Swami was in Brindavan, and I too happened to be there. One day, someone told me, “Hey there is a man from Iraq and you ought to meet him.” I was excited. Man from Iraq here, and that too at this time? I sure must not miss him! I then arranged for this man to meet me in the Guest House adjoining Swami’s residence [Trayee] one afternoon. Sai Prakash who

handles the camera in our studio [Prashanti Digital Studio] was there and I asked him to come with his camera.

The man came at the appointed hour, with his wife – I did not know his wife was with him – and we started talking, even as Sai Prakash was rolling the camera. What unfolded was an amazing tale, and yet not altogether surprising. We have shown this clip on Sanskar TV and I believe it can also be viewed in Saicast. But anyway, here is the story of this man in brief.

His name is Suleiman Dawood, if I recall correctly, and in the seventies, he used to be the Inspector General of Baghdad Police, an important and powerful post. Saddam Hussein had become President and once ordered him to do something that went against his Conscience. Suleiman refused, resigned and fled the country along with his wife. He first went to Turkey, spent many years there engaged in business; he then went to Bulgaria, once again to do business. After Saddam was deposed, Dawood and his wife returned to their native land. The Americans asked him to head Baghdad Police once again but he refused; as he told me, he did not want to serve the conquerors. He now had enough money and could afford to be without a job. But he was far from happy, as he saw misery and suffering everywhere. He was troubled and constantly prayed to Allah.

One day, he heard a voice that said, “Go to India.” Suleiman was stunned but later dismissed this experience as an imagination. But the voice persisted, over days. Suleiman decided he would go to India. He told his wife who thought her husband had become mad. She asked, “Where to in India?” “I do not know!” “What do you mean I do not know? Whom do you want to see in India?” “I do not know!” “You mean you simply want to land in India without knowing where to go, and whom to see?” “That is right!” “Why do you want to go?” “Because holy man is calling me, that is why!”

Now which woman in her senses would accept that? At this point in the narration, Dawood’s wife intervened to say, “I decided to accompany my husband. I did not do this out of any faith but because I thought he had become crazy and needed someone to be with him and help if needed.” And so the two started on a journey literally into the unknown. Imagine the situation then. It was hotting up, though the Americans had conquered Iraq. Baghdad airport was closed – no flights to anywhere; only military flights. So Dawood decided to travel by land – first to the border with Iran, then through Iran to the border of Iran with Pakistan then cross into India, to go where he did not know! But he started on that journey because something was pulling him. He travelled by train, bus and taxi.

As he was telling me this amazing tale, his wife was constantly praying. Roughly eighteen days or so after starting from Baghdad, they crossed into India at the Wagha border and went to Amritsar. There someone told him that holy men were only in South India! So the couple went to Delhi. There in the New Delhi Railway station, Suleiman was trying to find out to which place he should go. Some one said, “Go to Puttapparthi, but for that you must first go to Dharmavaram”. This man then tried to buy tickets by some train or the other

to go to Dharmavaram. But the girl at the counter did not give him the ticket. Instead she said, I think you want to go to Puttaparthi because that is a holy place and not Dharmavaram. I will put you in a train that goes to Puttaparthi,” and gave him two tickets by a train going to Bangalore via Puttaparthi.

A day or so later, the couple landed in Puttaparthi station; it had taken them 23 days to come there from Baghdad. When they started they did not know where they were going; but did they know now? The answer to that came when Suleiman turned and saw a big picture of Swami with a smiling face at the station. Suleiman was excited and told his wife, “We have come to the right place. Look there; that is the holy man who was calling me!”

Suleiman went to the Ashram but was told that Swami was not there but in Brindavan; however, that did not bother him because a German devotee was just then going to Brindavan and promised to take the Iraqi coupe there. When I met these people, they had been in Brindavan for about a week and they were so happy. There was joy on the face of this man who kept on referring to Bhagavan as Baba Swami. He was most keen to seek Bhagavan’s blessings for the people of Iraq, about whom he was very concerned.

The above is a prosaic description of an extra-ordinary experience of mine, hearing the story of a man drawn by an unknown but powerful and irresistible force, out of his war-torn country, to something he could not describe but which was drawing him nevertheless. That is an example of the **CALL** that comes to the blessed ones, in many different ways, unfailingly, if the yearning is there within. That is the Divine “OUT THERE”, calling to the latent Divine within. In this case, “the Divine out there” was Swami, as it was in the case of James Sinclair, much earlier. [Many of you may know that story and I shall not repeat it here.]

9. DIVINE GRACE AND KARMA CANCELLATION

These are amazing incidents, hardly known, but which would be summarily dismissed by the non-believers as made-up or as hallucinations at best. That is to be expected. My own experience of the Avatar is that He often plays the role of an examiner. He would test and see if we pass the test or flunk the test. Swami says that when a carpenter drives a nail into the wall to hang a picture, he first shakes the nail to see if it is firmly in; if it is not, he hammers some more and only when he is absolutely sure, he hangs the picture. He does that test to protect the picture. In the same way, the Grace of God comes only when there is deservedness.

This is an important point, not easily understood. I too went through this phase of innumerable doubts: “God is unreasonable; why does He do this and not that?” and so on. All the time, we are designing tests to check out God, unaware of the fact that He too is engaged in testing us! In the old days, we used to have a system called Grace Marks; I do not know if that system is still there but the way the system worked is as follows. Let us say the pass marks

is 35 out of 100. Let us say a candidate taking the exam gets 34 out of hundred. On the face of it, the candidate can be declared to have failed in that subject. But this ignores one crucial fact which is that when subjective evaluation is being done, there is a margin of error. In science, we call this experimental error. All observations are prone to such error and when an experimenter quotes a result, he is also obliged to quote a precision. In the case of exams, this fact that there could be a margin of error in assigning marks was taken into account by giving to a competent authority, the power to grant Grace Marks. Thus, a Vice Chancellor could give an extra mark to a boy getting 34 instead of 35, so that his fate is changed from failed to passed; an enormous difference really.

It turns out that God also follow such a system. People talk about Karma cancellation, without understanding the ABC of it. God having stipulated the Law of Karma, lets it run all by itself; He seldom intervenes. However, there are two exceptions. **Exception One:** The person concerned has almost atoned for all past bad acts and has only a bit of Karma left. In this case, God can and does do Karma cancellation just as banks sometimes offer credit cancellation. Rich countries did this recently to many poor African countries which could not pay back the money they had borrowed. In the NDTV program that I mentioned earlier, one lady angrily exclaimed, "I was in the room when Sai Baba gave an Interview. There were two very sick people; Baba ignored them and instead created a ring for the American Ambassador, as though the diplomat badly needed a ring." This is a classic case of we trying to judge God rather than realizing it is all the other way around.

So much for Exception One. What about **Exception Two?** That was revealed a long time ago, and is clearly documented in the *Gita*, if people who sling mud would care to take a look at. Right in the middle of the *Gita*, in the Ninth Chapter to be precise, Krishna gives the Eternal Assurance that if one constantly thinks of God, then God would take care of that person. This He follows up with another emphatic assurance in the last Chapter wherein He says that if a person surrenders unconditionally and totally, then He would grant full protection to that person.

In practical terms what this means is that the Avatar does not necessarily have to cancel Karma on all occasions. It is not His duty, as some people seem to imagine. Cancellations too are bound by certain considerations and it is an ignorance of those that lead to all kinds of doubts. Many years ago, I have myself seen one afternoon, two people come out of the Interview Room on wheel chairs. Swami asked one of them to get up and walk in full public view, and he did. But the other man continued to remain on the wheel chair. I was surprised and felt sorry for him. Next morning this other person was called for Interview and I told myself, "Ah, this man's turn is coming in the morning shift," but alas he did not walk; he still is on the chair but his devotion has not diminished one bit. To many who have prayed, Swami has said, "I can cure but the Karma cannot be washed away. Only, the suffering would get postponed to the next birth; do you want that and carry forward the luggage or do you want to get rid off it once and for all?" So you see, this Karma

cancellation is not a simple matter and it is not surprising that those without any deep knowledge of it talk rubbish.

Having said all this, I must also mention one other thing. In some cases, patients with bad cases of cancer, Swami has willed that they shall not suffer pain. My wife died of cancer, and she did not suffer the unbearable pain that cancer patients often have to in the last stages. Her brother, an oncologist himself, and who incidentally diagnosed her first attack of breast cancer, sent me a lot of morphine pills for the last stage [that came seven years after the first surgery], but they were not used at all. Swami took good care of her, and when she died, I did nothing about the funeral; it was entirely taken care of by Him, right down to the last detail; He even arranged for a large number of ladies to go along with the funeral procession, singing Bhajans all the way. Just prior to death, He personally visited her in the Hospital and materialized vibhuti for her and put a bit of it in her mouth. And He has done it so many times to so many who were with Him, serving Him in one way or the other. In other words, when deserved, Swami does grant a partial rebate.

Talking of Karma, I must recall one case which was described by Baba Himself when He addressed students many years ago. It was His personal meetings with students, and a few of us elders were present; I was present because I was the Vice Chancellor then. Swami said that in the early days there used to be a person who took care of the Canteen in those days. This man loved Swami intensely but was pretty nasty with all others. He was repeatedly warned to be loving, but his natural tendencies or *Gun*as ruled him. In his last days, he became very sick but no one would help him. There came a point when he lay in his own excreta, and his body full of puss began to stink. Swami then went to him, cleaned him and attended on the sick man. The fellow wept, "Swami I served you so much; is this how my life must end?" Baba replied, "You showed love to Me and that is why I have come. But I always warned you not to abuse others; you never paid heed to My words. What can I do if your Karma chases you like the bloodhound from hell?"

Dear reader, people who know little of *Vedanta* and have merely picked up a word here and there, may talk rubbish. We could ignore them; but I am writing all this so that at least you get some idea of how this inviolable Law of Karma works. The reference to the case of the rude man brings me to another point that many raise. They say: "Listen, Baba all the time talks about Love but you see here so many people talking rudely. Is this not a contradiction?" This sort of remark is nothing new and indeed used to be made regularly in the old days directly to Swami Himself. Often, Swami would laugh it away with some humorous remarks but on occasions He has given the correct explanation for why such things happen. He says, "This Ashram is just a part of the wide world outside. People come here from outside. Some stay for just a short while and return, while others stay here wanting to do service. I give them the chance, hoping that they would use their stay to transform. It is up to them to change for the better. If they want to stay attached to their undesirable habits including getting angry easily, all they are doing is to add to their Karmic burden. They can never escape that. I do tell people to improve but their

Gunas have a strong hold on them. Man must struggle to rise above his *Gunas* – that is the teaching of the *Gita*. But who cares?”

Complaining about the Ashram is nothing new. Someone did the same to Ramana who asked in reply, “Have you come here to improve yourself or to improve the Ashram? This Ashram is a microcosm of the world outside. If you learn to improve yourself here, then you can go into the world and stay improved; that would also enable you to improve your environment!” And believe me that is actually true. I have talked to many who have vouched for this. Dr. Jeevanandam is a famous surgeon who works in the University of Chicago. He has done nearly three hundred heart transplants, and some of you might have heard the interview with him that we have carried on Radio Sai. He told me that earlier, he used to be very impatient, but having come to Swami, he learnt patience. I can similarly say that I myself have been helped in many important ways. I am not perfect I agree, but I do honestly believe that I have less baggage of undesirable habits now than I had in the past, thanks entirely to Swami.

Nowhere is this transformation most marked as in Swami’s students. So many of them have been so beautifully transformed that they go out into the world and set very good examples. I have heard Samir Bhatia [then of HDFC Bank and now heading Barclays in India] tell me that after he recruited Swami’s students in large numbers for HDFC, he found them making a change in the company’s ambience. During weekends when other members of the bank staff partied, our ex students would simply disappear. Later it was found that they went to nearby villages for doing some small service. Attracted to the idea, others slowly joined and soon the Bank itself adopted a few villages for development. This story has repeated itself in so many places.

10. STOPPING THE TSUNAMI

In the NDTV program that I referred to earlier, Swami Agnivesh said that if Sai Baba was God, He Baba should have stopped the tsunami. He also asked why Sai Baba does not do anything about corruption? I would like to respond to this at two levels, first about the tsunami itself and secondly about fighting evil [which is what corruption is].

As regards tsunami, Swami has made it clear many, many times, that Avatars seldom interfere with natural phenomena, except locally. Krishna did this and so has Swami in a little known incident relating to a big flood that swept Puttaparthi in the early seventies. We have carried a detailed account of this earlier in H2H and so I shall not repeat it here. But I would like to add the following. Krishna could have saved Abhimanyu, but He did not. All the Upa-Pandavas were slaughtered by Ashwattama; but Krishna did not do anything to stop it; He could have though. In the larger scheme of things, sometimes certain things happen.

On a short time scale, we cannot see the meaning but on occasions, on a larger scale some Divine design does become evident. Take the case of

Jesus, hailed as the Son of God. Could not have God saved Jesus? Of course He could have; then why one earth did He not? Because by sacrificing Himself on the Cross, Jesus became a beacon to millions later, when the world needed His teachings most. Many a time, there are hidden multiplier effects but we do not see them. And having failed to do, we jump to all sorts of conclusions. By the way for the record, may I say that research by a Sri Lankan scientist now in Princeton, and published in a leading peer-reviewed scientific journal, ***Geophysical Letters***, has revealed that in Sri Lanka, in one coastal area where the coral reef was blasted away for collecting gypsum and coral blocks for sale to tourists, the tsunami wave, with nothing to stop its fury, went far inside and swept a whole train with about 1700 passengers, kicked it around, killing all the passengers. In our Tsunami Special of H2H, we published a photo of this ill-fated train. What I am trying to drive at is that while Nature does lash out, man compounds the damage. We see this again and again where earthquakes and hurricanes are concerned. A big earthquake in California kills in tens whereas a smaller quake in Asia kills in thousands. A hurricane hitting Florida kills a dozen where as a typhoon hitting Philippines, kills in hundreds. When man does not bother about protecting his fellow beings then Nature cannot be blamed entirely.

As regards the complaint that Baba is not doing anything to fight corruption, I would like to say the following. Corruption is but one evil [an important one though] that afflicts today's Society. The fundamental cause is the deviation from *Dharma*. Avatars come to remind man about the need to adhere to *Dharma*. This is what Rama did in His own way, and so too Krishna. Baba also does the same in His own style. He does it thorough quietly spreading the Message of Love. Not many may be aware of how, many terrorists in the Warrangal District of Andhra Pradesh have changed their way of life and taken to peaceful living after coming under the spell of Baba. These are little known facts but I know them because I talk to the people doing Seva there; in addition, I have seen these people come here in batches of hundreds, to rejoice in their transformation. Alas, transformation is not a headline making process and how would anyone tuned all the time to the Blackberry, headline News and so on, know anything about it?

I respect the social activism of Swami Agnivesh but I do have to wonder whether the Swamiji had read anything of *Vedanta*. May be he feels he has no need to, but let me tell you that while man has the duty of waging war against *Adharma*, God who has no duty [Krishna makes it very clear, if swamiji would care to read the *Gita*], merely advises; that is what He did in Kurukshetra. And in this Yuga, the Avatar tells us to fight *Adharma* by using the "weapon" of Love. That is what the volunteers of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation do silently and quietly, throughout the year from Darjeeling to Kerala.

We do our best to carry these heart-warming stories, which I hope, at least some of you bother to read. I am sorry to say there is not much enthusiasm amongst many devotees for such stories dealing with selfless Love. People seem to enjoy gossip more and if that is the preference of many devotees themselves, can we blame Media if it is after rumour and unsubstantiated

material because they make good stories? Please go to H2H archives to see these heart-warming stories that we have carried in detail. All these form merely the tip of the iceberg of selfless service.

Swami Agnivesh, we do follow the strategy of activists, but work quietly and silently; they also serve who do so silently. I am not against what you are doing; sometimes one has to raise one's voice loudly against injustice to draw attention to it; but that does not mean that everyone has to do it that way. In cricket, there are fast bowlers and also spinners; it takes both plus good fielders and batsmen to make a team. So Swamiji, 1) please for heaven's sake do not simply slight us and ridicule us just because we do things differently, and 2) do not expect Sai Baba to take to the streets. He serves as a guidepost, even as Krishna did.

I will not mention here what Swami did to help at the time of the Gujarat earthquake and the Tsunami. However, I should say something about one little known incident when Baba provided protection, even as the country was facing great danger. I do not know how many of you recall the sudden and unexpected assault on India by the Chinese in 1962. I remember those days very well. I was in Bombay then and it used to be one long love feast with everyone chanting Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai, meaning that India and China were like brothers. Those were the days when India enjoyed great international visibility while the Chinese were universally shunned, thanks to the prejudice in the West. I still recall the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister Chou en Lai to what was then Atomic Energy Establishment and later became BARC. There was conference in Bandung in Indonesia, and Chinese leaders were brought there in an Air India plane that was blasted with a planted bomb; fortunately many survived.

We thought we were very friendly with the Chinese, but behind the scenes, the Chinese were not at all happy with the border between India and China as drawn by the British. There was much argument and finally, in October 1962, the Chinese actually sent troops into India. Nehru was shattered. But meanwhile, the invading troops moved swiftly especially on the eastern side, and were on the outskirts of Tezpur in Assam. This was unbelievable; the Chinese were actually almost on the plains of India and not just on the far off mountains. India made desperate appeals to America, which just then had gone through the Cuban Missile crisis with the Soviets. America sent help immediately and I vividly remember seeing American planes landing every 20 minutes in Santa Cruz airport [we could see these planes all the time in the sky] bringing guns for mountain warfare.

Now what has all this got to do with Sai Baba? Just wait! Even as the Chinese army was making short work of Indian troops [totally unprepared] some people went to Swami and said, "Swami, the country is facing grave danger. You must do something." Swami simply replied, "Have no fear; nothing will happen; this is Punya Bhoomi; the Chinese will just leave." Hardly anyone believed Him. But do you know what actually happened? On 21st November 1962, the Chinese who were just walking into India without facing any resistance worth the name, **UNILATERALLY DECLARED CEASEFIRE. Just**

two days before Birthday! Since then, the two countries have moved much closer to rapprochement.

Of course, sceptics would not believe that Sai Baba had anything to do with either the unilateral declaration of cease fire by the invading Chinese or their subsequent withdrawal; but then the Avatar is not here to convince people. He is here to help those who seek help. That is the way it always has been and that is the way it shall always remain. From my own experience I can add the following. 1) On occasions, the Avatar would do things we would consider illogical and undesirable. Maybe in human terms those actions are so; but not so when one sees matters in the larger perspective. Moreover, relationship with the Avatar is all matter of faith and unconditional Love. Krishna makes that very clear in the 12th Chapter, and the specs remain the same – no change, not even of a comma. Sometimes He creates doubts just to let us find out if our faith is firm or weak. The Avatar comes to help, to guide and to teach. But He also tests, bowling difficult googlies, if I might use a cricketing expression. Krishna describes this succinctly. He says [in the Seventh Chapter]:

O Arjuna, I know all beings of the past, the present and those to come in the future. But no one knows Me!

Concealed as I am by the power of My Creation, I am not manifest to all. The bewildered world does not recognise Me, birthless and changeless!

Deluded by the manifestations of the three Gunas [characteristics in-built into Creation], the world fails to recognise Me, the Imperishable, who transcends the transient aspects of Creation.

Verily, this Divine illusion of Mine [Maya] is hard to surmount. But those who take sole refuge in me, pierce this veil!

And in the Ninth Chapter Krishna adds:

Not knowing My transcendent nature as the Sovereign Lord of the entire Universe, fools slight Me when I incarnate in diminutive human form.

Vain are the hopes, actions and knowledge of those witless ones who have embraced a fiendish, demoniacal and delusive attitude.

But the great ones, O Partha, guided by their [latent] Divine nature and knowing Me as the Imperishable Source of all beings, worship me with their Minds always fixed on Me.

I hope that says it all. The Avatar weaves the web of Maya and filters out the Doubting Thomases; the faithful may seem foolish and illogical to the doubters; but where the Lord is concerned, they are the ones who are redeemed.

One who lives by the Head in the name of rationalism would flunk the test of the Avatar because this test deals with matters **beyond** the realm of pure logic. As Krishna makes clear, there is a Manifest Universe in which God hides in immanent form. But He does not cease to exist when the Universe ceases to; that is because He is Eternal, and His Eternal aspect is the Unmanifest form of Divinity, beyond Space and Time. That, philosophers declare, is the realm of the Heart that lies beyond cold logic.

This realm may lie beyond space and time; yet it is accessible even on earth, provided one seeks it not with the Head but the Heart. As I pointed out earlier, Einstein pursued Science with his Head but when it came to experiencing the wonderful feeling of “Cosmic religiosity” as he put it, he did so with his Heart. That same feeling was sought by Vedic seers via meditation, and many others, like Mother Teresa for example, via the simple method of showering selfless Love. The world of experience may be dismissed with words such as make-believe, hallucination etc., but even rationalists have experiences such as feeling thrill, excitement etc. The sublime bliss that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu experienced almost all the time was at the highest end of the experience scale. For the rationalist it might not exist but for Tyagaraja it existed when he was in deep communion with Rama through his soulful songs. I guess it must have been for many others in other cultures too. I distinctly recall the words written by Heisenberg, then a young man of about twenty two. Soon after making a break-through that led to the discovery of quantum mechanics, Heisenberg wrote a letter to his sister. As well as I can remember, he wrote: “I felt like I was looking over the shoulders of the Good Lord as he wrote the symphony of the Universe!”

11. COUNTERING MIS-INFORMATION

Dear Reader! We do have to worry to some extent if there are attempts in high quarters to derail us, but at the same time let us not be rattled by the riff-raff. For example, one of these rabble rousers says that Sai Baba supports the atom bomb because, according to this man, Baba’s close associate at one time was [late] Dr. Bhagavantam, “the father of the Indian atom bomb” – that is what this man says. I happen to know a thing or two about Dr. Bhagavantam, not only about his scientific contributions, but also about his professional career and also his stay here with Swami. As far as his professional career is concerned, Bhagavantham did his early work on the Raman Effect, under the supervision of his scientific mentor, Sir C. V. Raman. Later Bhagavantham wrote books on the Raman Effect, one of the very first ones in fact. Subsequently he branched off into the application of group theory to the analysis of spectroscopic data and the book he wrote with Venkatarayudu, became quite famous until other books appeared. Later, Bhagavantham did a lot of very good work on magnetic space groups, and how to use them for the analysis of macroscopic magnetic data on solids. As a professional, Bhagavantham was a Professor of Physics in Andhra University and later he became the Director of the famous Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. In that period, Swami has on occasions visited Bhagavantham in his house in I.I.Sc. Bhagavantham also served as the

Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister. I can say with full knowledge that Bhagavantham had absolutely no connection with the genesis of the Indian nuclear program. I ought to know having served for three and a half decade in the Department of Atomic Energy. In fact, the names of the people who developed the first nuclear device nuclear are well-known to the Indian public, most of whom I know personally. They include my former boss [late] Dr. Raja Ramanna and my former colleague Dr. P. K. Iyengar.

Is there any connection at all between Bhagavantham and the atom bomb? Well, in a very indirect way as follows. [By the way, we have Bhagavantham himself narrating this story before a video camera. That was shot by an American many years ago. We have that clip and may be we will put it on Saicast.] Soon after Bhagavantham came to Swami, Baba asked him whether he knew anything about the *Bhagavad Gita*. Bhagavantham replied that he did not. Swami then remarked that this was a matter of shame since the father of the atom bomb, Robert Oppenheimer recalled a famous verse from the *Gita* when he witnessed the very first test in 1945 in the desert sands of New Mexico. This is a very well documented incident, in which Oppenheimer recalls the verse about Krishna appearing brighter than a thousand suns. This verse occurs in the eleventh chapter. The brilliance of the exploding bomb and its enormous power reminded Oppenheimer of this particular verse. By the way, Oppie as he was known, learnt Sanskrit just to study the *Gita* in the original. After reminding Bhagavantham of this incident Swami said it was unfortunate that while an American scientist knew the *Gita*, the Indian scientist did not; so saying Swami materialised for Bhagavantham a copy of the *Gita* from the sands do the Chitravathi river, where both were at that time. That is the only connection between Bhagavantham and the Indian atom bomb! You see how ignorance can distort facts. And these are the people one is supposed to believe when they make allegations.

But such is the state of today's society that it has lowered its standards to deplorable levels so that the moment the word child abuse is uttered, the allegation is given credence, while TV conducts a Kangaroo court and pronounces verdict, based on a Jury that communicates via SMS! I was told that just around the time the *Hindustan Times* [which, ironically once used to be edited by Mahatma Gandhi's son!] came out with its anti-Swami piece, the *Guardian* in the UK had some similar allegations to make. This is most unfortunate because the *Guardian* is a highly respected paper. But these days, standards of journalism are no longer what they once used to be. I never thought I would live to see the days when leading newspapers in India would carry a photo of an execution on their first page. In fact, just about twenty years ago when public hanging was a common occurrence in a neighbouring country, it used to be said that such display was the height of uncivilised behaviour. But those norms were thrown to the winds last week, even by what are thought to be respectable papers in India. Yes, we live in times when decency seems irrelevant.

Finally, I would like to make an appeal to our readers, the young ones especially. You have before you a great opportunity, to discover your true nature and use that discovery to improve your neighbourhood and the world

at large. Do not underestimate your potential. Today you might be in a small position but who knows what tomorrow would bring? When he was a sixteen-year old kid, Clinton shook hands with Kennedy in the White House. Years later, he came to occupy it and when he left it, he was in a position to do a lot of good to the poor in Africa which he is in fact doing. Therefore have faith and get ready for the future in the belief that if you do, God Almighty would not overlook you when He is looking for people to play big roles.

In this context, please do some time reading spiritual literature. Read and then reflect because that alone would broaden your mind. Having broadened your view, try to see what you can do to help. There are many ways you can. You could, if you have writing skills for example, write for us stories about the triumph of Love and *Dharma* in this day and age; many think that these are nice topics for giving talks but do not work in practice. Good always triumphs in the end – this is not a Hollywood formula, but the reality of *Dharma*. Of course, evil may appear to succeed spectacularly in the short run but there is hardly any historical evidence that evil triumphs for ever. It cannot for the simple reason that *Dharma* is the basis of creation and not evil.

At a practical level, I would request our readers, the young ones in particular, to spend some time becoming actively familiar with not only Swami's teachings but also the details of what He has done. I regret to say that there is abysmal ignorance about what exactly H2H is, with many [including old Sai students] mistaking the ***Sai Inspires*** service to be H2H. Also, not many still seem to be aware that there is actually a 24/7 radio service. Likewise, it is unfortunate that though a deluxe and indeed priceless set of five picture volumes have been brought out on the occasion of the 80th Birthday with 800 pages of photos about Bhagavan Baba's life and Missions, [including about the Hospital and the Water Projects], not many seem to be aware them, and what is worse, even if they are, not much interested. If we take so little interest in the teachings as well as the Missions, then how can we hope for anything better from the outside world that knows so much less?

Just today, we received a mail from an anguished parent who is deeply troubled that his kids could not care less about the world except their "super-world icons". But then if people take interest in helping us, we can reach out to so many who would like to care, about less-fortunate individuals, and about humankind and Nature in general.

12. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This has been a rather long article and I think before I end I should really pull together the substantive points I have sought to make.

- My purpose has been two-fold; first is to inform and second is to enable devotees to arm themselves with sufficient data so that in future, they could, should it become necessary [which God forbid!] they can on their own rebut strongly as suits the occasion.

- Other than that, I have tried to set forth many points in some detail so that people who have come to Swami lately, including youth, have a better perspective of what God and the Avatar are all about.
- As Swami has pointed out, human birth is a gift granted so that humans can redeem themselves and return to God. As Baba says: From God we have come, and to God we must return.
- In practical terms, it means we must spiritualise life. In turn that means we must go through life making an earnest effort to be continually aware of our Cosmic origin and nature and the need to be in total harmony with the Cosmos itself.
- If we live our life like that, then at least some around us would be influenced and come under that spell and also transform.
- We should not underestimate the potentially for this spread of goodness. Huge forest fires often are the result of small bush fires linking up. There are many other examples in Nature of self-organized criticality. If goodness spreads, then a stage could definitely come when a critical threshold is crossed and things turn out to be for the better. Such turns have occurred in the lives of individuals but we need to steer humanity towards such a positive turn, so that the planet and humanity can both be saved.

The road ahead is not easy; it is pretty rough and we have to encounter many bumps in the shape of people talking irresponsibly and in a negative manner. We have to weather all this as we go along.

I hope that what I have set forth above would help at least to some extent in that.

Finally, I do hope all of us realize that God comes down as man only ever so rarely. When He so does, we should not waste that precious opportunity in diluting Divinity with seeking to advance personal agendas, however good they might be. In a Discourse some years ago, Swami said forcefully: "What is all this about seeking personal Moksha? Go out and serve the people out there. God will then come looking for you and grant you liberation even if you do not want it!"

We have been asked to see God everywhere and resonate to that experience with love and service. That can happen only when we look beyond the Head to realm of the Heart.

Let us pray that those who are trapped in the illusory realm of the Head and damn Swami, experience true Love and transform. As they say, today's saint was yesterday's evil man and today's evil man will be tomorrow's saint. Before it becomes a ripe and sweet fruit, many stages have to be crossed. So, while responding to critics we should not get carried away and lose the larger perspective.

In practical terms it means we must set apart time to continually drink from the fountain of ancient wisdom. It is not enough merely to check e-mails, blog,

keep track of the stock market and all that. *Vedanta* says do all that as a part of the role you have to play in life, but not at the cost of the larger perspective.

Borrowing from Adi Shankara, let me say that when the end comes, Blackberry would not save us but only the name of the Lord!

God bless, Jai Sai Ram.

00—00—00

Love is your greatest asset. Develop love and always speak the Truth. Truth sounds bitter whereas people are easily pleased by falsehood. People do not relish milk, which is brought to their doorstep, whereas they are prepared to traverse miles together to consume a bottle of liquor. Falsehood has become the order of the day. Falsehood may please others but not your Conscience. Strive to satisfy your Conscience before satisfying others. Under all circumstances, follow the path of Truth. In case the utterance of truth is likely to lead to some danger, remain silent.

- BABA

Please look up the following from earlier issues of Heart2Heart, for more information concerning some of the points raised above.

1. GOD, THE AVATHAR AND THE INTELLECTUAL [From January 2006 H2H Issue]
2. THE INEVITABLE COLLAPSE OF CALUMNY [From July 2006 H2H Issue]
3. LETTER TO THE BUREAU OF PUBLIC INFORMATION, UNESCO IN 2004 [From July 2006 H2H Issue]
4. AN UNPRECEDENTED MIRACLE OF LIFE...AND DIVINE LOVE [From July 2006 H2H Issue]
5. FAITH, FORTITUDE AND THE DIVINE TOUCH [From September 2006 H2H Issue]
6. TRUTH WILL ALWAYS TRIUMPH [From Vol. 2, Issue 05, March 1st 2004 H2H Issue]

Thank you, Sairam.