

Sai Comes To My Life

To write a book on Shri Shirdi Sai had nowhere been in my thoughts, four years ago. Today, I can think of writing on nothing else, but His glory. I always question myself as to why this situation should have arisen in my life. Whatever I think, whatever I do in the mundane or on a purely mental plane, His thoughts appear quietly in the background of my mind. He appears sitting on a stone, His right leg over the left, looking upwards with all His glory in that tattered *kafni* that He perennially donned. His white headgear would be shining bright in His splendour. This image would remain for long, disturbing my worldly routine. Howsoever I would like to separate my consciousness from it, His thoughts would not leave me, all-pervasive and all-blissful. I would feel restless like a fish in the fisherman's net, not being able to cope with the conflicting demands of family, job, relatives and social life. Willy-nilly, pushing His thoughts to the background I would take out my car, go to the market with the family to purchase household requirements, to give them an occasional cold drink and purse permitting, even a pastry. In the market, or while sitting in the car, I would often be the victim of a familiar trick played on me. I would suddenly notice a photograph of Shri Sainath in a shop, or a locket with His photo on some lady's neck, or even a ring on somebody's finger. My first reaction would be to avoid looking at it by concentrating on the display items of the shop, or on the people walking around. I would even try

to get away mentally to distant places like London and Tokyo, which I had once seen, with the earnest hope that at least in these places, there would be nothing akin to India, thereby reducing the probability of thoughts of Shri Sainath entering my mind. I would think about the palace of the King of Japan. I would concentrate on the beautiful lake garden at Tokyo, where in the eerie silence of a departing day, I had seen an old man sitting on a bench, feeding the ducks. The moment this old man's picture with a white cap and beard would cross my mind, trouble would start afresh. His picture would transform in my mind to that of Shri Sainath. I would get a jerk. He would seem to laugh. How far I had flown in His thought, almost like a lover's dream.

Such unsolicited mental union became a part of my existence, day and night, not leaving me alone even during sleep. Normally, one devotes a major part of one's waking hours to mundane pursuits of life, except, perhaps, when one is in 'love'. My plight is that normally I think about Shri Sai and only occasionally, about other activities. For one who is afflicted with such love, the worldly activities gradually shrink to a minimum, leaving more and more time for Him. The moment I would get into my bed, His thoughts would play hide-and-seek with me. In those tranquil moments, He would appear in my mind in almost a three-dimensional image and then suddenly disappear. I would try to catch Him again. This 'transformation' in my life has surprised me, no less than my family members and close friends. All the familiar terms like birth, death, world, nature, religion, cosmos, etc. have suddenly acquired a new meaning. My attempts to consciously swim against this 'time-flow of a mighty force beyond comprehension,' have failed. The more I resisted, the less I understood its meaning. I knew the force when I surrendered. It is Shri Sainath and His Grace. It always hovers there,

inseparable and inalienable. I bask in His Glory; I delight in His splendour, yet am never content.

How did it happen? Did I try for it? Did I pray for Him? Did I practise *Hatha Yoga* or *Raja Yoga* to attract His attention? None of those normal methods of propitiation of deities was performed by me. Till 1989, I did not know anything about Shri Shirdi Sai except that I had heard His name in the context of Shri Satya Sai Baba. Yet His Grace had so suddenly devolved on me, in a most unexpected way!

It had happened suddenly. There is a video shop in Palika Bazaar near my house, from where I used to occasionally collect video cassettes. I do not remember the exact date, but it was sometime in November 1989. I went to the shop to collect a certain film cassette. It was not available. I scanned most of the cassettes, but none was appealing. Suddenly I saw a cassette on Shirdi Sai Baba produced by Manoj Kumar. I enquired about the cassette from the owner, who told me that children love it for the many miracles of Shirdi Sai Baba that have been shown therein. The word 'miracle' also stimulated some interest in me. I had always been fond of seeing films about the supernatural and had read books on the subject.

Miracles I had seen during my childhood. I hail from a place called Baripada, a district town in Orissa. It is situated in a tribal belt, replete with hills and thick luxuriant rain forests inhabited by elephants, deer, bears and other wild animals. The tribals with whom our family has been intimately connected for generations, and who continue to cultivate our hereditary lands, are known to practise black magic. It is some what similar to Voodoo practice in Africa. They can put a snake to sleep, set a place on fire, stop a cow from giving milk or even kill it, dry up a tree, etc. I have seen persons affected by tribal occultism. In my early childhood my father was

posted in a place called Berhampur, adjacent to the tribal belt in South Orissa. It must have been sometime in 1956, when I was a child, that I saw two miracles. I saw a person giving a show in a public place near the railway station. He placed a thick coiled rope on the ground. He uttered something and threw some dust on the rope. Suddenly one end of the rope started moving up towards the sky slowly. After a few minutes, the whole rope stood erect at a height of about twelve to fifteen feet. Later I came to know that it had been the famous Indian 'rope trick.'

Whether it was black magic or a mere trick, I cannot vouchsafe, as I was too young then. However, all the people who saw it praised him and donated a lot of money. The other miracle I saw was a bout between two persons practising black magic. This again, I saw at Berhampur around the same time. Both the persons sat apart on the ground at a distance, facing each other. They wore only a dhoti in a peculiar manner. The upper part of the body was naked. They indulged in attacks and counter-attacks using magical powers as their weapons. Towards the end, one of them took a bamboo pole and fixed its lower portion into the ground. The bamboo stood about four to five feet above the ground. He smeared it with some liquid. Then he chanted some mantras and lashed the bamboo pole with a whip. His adversary sitting at a distance, suddenly jumped up in excruciating pain and fell panting on the ground. The other person whipped the bamboo pole three or four times more. Each time he did so, the victim cried out in pain. At last he surrendered himself to his adversary. While he lay prostrate in agony, I could clearly see his back. It had three or four clear lacerated wounds, as if he had been actually whipped. Blood oozed out of these wounds profusely. I was scared and ran back home. When I narrated this to my mother, she forbade me to visit such places again.

I had read a number of books about saints and miracle-men in my early childhood. I knew that Swami Vivekananda saw a different Universe than is ordinarily visible, when Ramakrishna Paramahansa touched him. I read that Moses had made the sea part to allow safe passage to the fleeing children of Israel. I knew that some saints could even know the time of their own death. They entered *samadhi* at a pre-ordained time. But this understanding had been purely on an intellectual plane. Therefore, when I heard about the miracles of Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi, I decided to see the film. Little did I know at that point of time, that yet another miracle was about to take place. My life would stand transformed in a matter of a few hours.

At home I played the cassette after lunch. The first few episodes were full of miracles like curing people and turning water into oil, defying all reason. The early miracles of Shri Sai Baba were soon over. Then the later episodes were shown. When Shri Sai Baba was shown in a *samadhi* state for 72 hours, I had a strange feeling. Initially I could not believe my eyes. The image of Shri Sai Baba in His old age would suddenly vanish and my father's image would appear in its place. My father, the only person in whom all my love had been concentrated, had departed for his heavenly abode as far back as 1982. No one had been able to take his place. At first, I thought it was a projection of my own thoughts. I turned my gaze away from the television screen towards the sky and the trees that I could see through the window. Then, I focused my sight on the screen again. Shri Sainath was still in *samadhi* and the devotees were praying to Him to regain His consciousness. Again the image changed to that of my father. I switched off the television when this happened once more. Nonetheless, I tried to reason it out. I put my lifetime experience and knowledge to the test. Could it be that I had

been longing for my father? Could it be that the appearances of my father and that of Shri Sainath were alike? However, they did not match at all. Shri Sainath was a tall person, about 6 feet in height. My father had been of medium height, about 5'-6". The face of Shri Sainath was long, He had a beard and the looks of a Muslim fakir. My father's face had been round and I had never seen him with a beard.

I looked at the picture again; the images merged once more. I had no logic, nor any answer to account for the this strange phenomenon. I was perplexed. Never-the-less a strange feeling of love started growing within me. The film was over, but I continued in a state of stupor. The entire night and the day following I ruminated over the matter. The more I thought, the more I felt myself being mystically drawn towards Him. Nothing else mattered. I felt as if He had penetrated deep into my soul.

His personality of a Faqir in tattered clothes and no pretensions to Godliness, with His love and care for the poor made an instant appeal to me. Had he not displayed the power to control the elements of Nature to help the needy and the distressed? Was he not known as the Saint of the 'downtrodden'? He had lived, along with His followers a life of rustic simplicity and had departed as He had come-empty handed. Yet, what he had left behind is sufficient to sustain not one but several Worlds like ours.

The next morning I got up late, His Memory still haunting me. I felt a compulsive urge within me to visit the temple of Shirdi Sai Baba, for the first time, in my life. I had passed this temple complex on the Lodhi Road, on several occasions, in the past. Yet, this was my first visit. I bought the book entitled "Shirdi Sai Baba-The Unique Saint of India" written by Mr. Kamath and Kher. I spent the next two to three days going through the Book over and over again. I also saw the film of Manoj Kumar 2-3 times. The acute desire to see Him in the

film and to read about Him never seemed to exhaust itself. I further procured a music audio cassette on Shri Sai, one of the songs of which was worded: "*Milgaya hein jinhen bhi sahara, woh na chhodenge daman tumhara*". This, when translated into English means like: "Those who have got Your Grace can never leave you." These thoughts kept repeating in my mind. Yet I never shared them with any one. I have been practicing Pranayam and Meditation regularly for some years. I have been in the habit of visiting the Bhairav Temple on every Sunday. I now started visiting the Sai Temple regularly on my way back from the Bhairav Temple located below the ramparts of the Old Fort.

Three to four months passed this way, immersed in His thoughts. Shri Kamath's Book and 'Shri Sai Charita', a publication of Shri Shirdi Sansthan written both in gave a graphic account of Shri Sai's personality – His miracles, followers, places of stay, the people He loved, His teachings, philosophy of life, etc. An intense desire was born within me to know more about Shri Sai which grew almost to a point of pain. When in meditation, I would often imagine the posture in which Shri Sainath had been laid to rest. I would think about the last cloth He wore. Would He still be like that even today? Would it be possible by some how to see His body under the Samadhi? Would He resurrect Himself like Jesus Christ and appear before the world in flesh and blood? A sadness would descend over me. Only if I had been born when He was in his flesh and blood.

The search of Him was growing within my mind. I bought a photograph and started worshipping him daily. Earlier, I used to listen to a recital of Vishnu Sahasranam after leaving my bed as a morning ritual. It was now replaced by Sai Aarti. Gradually, Sai took over my existence. For months I remained in an ecstatic mental plane. No one knew of the storm raging within me, not even my family members. At times, I thought

it to be a passing infatuation, which would wane with time. My health deteriorated as my appetite started reducing. One who is drunk with His joy knows no food or drink. My mind, however, became more stable and the material stakes in life gradually started receding. It was then that I was overcome by an intense desire to visit Shirdi; but neither the situation in the office nor at home would permit me to undertake this journey.

It was the day of Bhaiya Buj in the month of October or November in the year 1989. I had an opportunity to visit Bombay with my friend Shri Vijai Mehra. We stayed in Hotel Taj. We finished our activities during the day and returned to hotel by the evening. After dinner in the room, we were about to lock the door when somebody rang the bell. Vijay opened the door and came back with another person whose name, incidentally was Vijai as well. He informed that the same morning he had been to my house at Delhi where he came to know that I was at Bombay. He took the midday flight and came to Bombay to meet me. He further informed that he belonged to Nasik where his mother was very sick. He had come to me for the cure of his mother through my knowledge of Astrology and Pyramid science, which I used to practice in my Netaji Nagar home on every Saturday. He further requested to me to visit Nasik and have a look at his sick mother. Having a police officer's mind full of suspicions, I straightaway rejected his rather unexpected request to visit Nasik. However the new visitor was relentless and continued to request me to visit Nasik for about two hours. During this discussion, he also proposed to take me to Shirdi for the darshan of Baba's Samadhi. The mention of Shirdi, generated some interest in me to visit Nasik, but I was not sure as yet. Since I was to return to Delhi the next day by flight, I was getting doubtful if the trip to Shirdi would be possible within

such a short period of time. I asked about the time it would take to visit Shirdi and return to Delhi. The visitor informed it would take about twelve hours to complete the journey. Though his offer was welcome, I could not accept for the fear of missing my flight the next day. The new comer assured me that it would take only about 5-6 hours to drive down to Shirdi. We could start at 5.00 A.M. the following day to reach Shirdi at about noon with an hour's break at Nasik. We could then join the noon Aarti and leave for Bombay immediately thereafter. The time was too short; I thought to venture out on such a mission. I had, hence, to decline this offer though not without anguish to myself. Vijay still stuck to his grounds. He persisted with his request to the extent of touching my feet. I had no option but to give in to an offer so touchingly made.

The next morning we left for Shirdi, promptly at 5.30 a.m. We had breakfast at Nasik. We also found some time to make a visit to the Muktidham, a huge temple complex with accommodation for about 200 pilgrims. On my way to Nasik from Bombay, I had been lost in my own thoughts. I was contemplating the manner in which I was being literally dragged to appear before Him at Shirdi. I had read about the call of the spiritual Masters to their devotees. I knew the Great Masters keep watch over their disciples, life after life, through the eternal cycle of life and death. They guard their devotees from the stage of 'infants within the mother's womb' to death and thereafter. The disciples are fished out of this material world for the fulfilment of their true mission at a propitious moment, for which they are made ready through a series of pains and pleasures. Had there been such a call from Shri Sai or is it coincidental, I thought. How was I to know? Had there been a Sign? The only Sign had been that I was undertaking this journey unexpectedly and in an unplanned

manner, and stood in imminent danger of missing my flight back to Delhi in the event of even a minor mishap. This did not appear as a pleasant prospect to me, not then.

I prayed for a clear Sign. I challenged Him, mentally of course. If He was my Guru and was calling me, I should be able to garland His statue at Shirdi. I enquired from my host if it would be possible. I was informed that since the queue at Shirdi was likely to be long, it would not be possible to do so. For the first time in my life I prayed for a small favour to Him — to accept my garland.

At Muktidham we worshipped the various deities including Shri Ram-Sita, Radha-Krishna, Shivji, etc. Suddenly Shri Sainath in white marble sitting with right leg over the left engaged my attention. I had never expected to find Him so suddenly in this temple. *Aarti* was in progress. We procured garlands and stood behind the crowd, waiting for an opportunity to creep closer for a better view. I was holding a big garland in my hand. The *aarti* was concluded within a short time and the crowd surged forward in expectation of *prasad*. Suddenly the priest looked at me and asked for my garland. He beckoned me to come nearer and to put the garland I had been carrying on the statue of Shri Sai. I did so, rather elated. I noticed to my great surprise, that while garlands offered by others had been put around the neck of the statue, only to be taken off, my garland remained. I was thrilled with joy. Yet the doubt remained whether it was sheer coincidence or a divine indicator.

From His side Shri Sai had spoken. The message beat into my head loud and clear that my search had ended. This was the Call that I had waited for, from the first breath of my life. I had always felt an unknown pain of wanting something in life which I was not able to identify. The pain of a meaningless existence had been gnawing at my heart. It had been my constant companion ever since my birth. I had known

all along without anyone telling me, that this had been the pain of 'separation'. This separation was the central theme of Sufism, about which I had read. Even the Bhakti cult was based upon the longing of the *bhakt* for his God, whom he saw with the eyes of a lover. Poetry spouts from the lover's heart for his Beloved, creating a universe within. It is a universe of 'intense love'. It is a different thing to understand this in an intellectual sense. But now suddenly the doors of this universe had been thrown open to me. I plunged into a state of pure ecstasy, savouring its delight within me, till I was at one with it. All perceptions of space and time vanished. It was joy and 'pure joy' all the way to Shirdi.

My inner self said it was His indication, but the intellect continued to play its tricks, doubting and questioning. In any case, upto Shirdi I was in a mood of ecstatic expectation.

We reached Shirdi around mid-noon. We purchased *naivedya* and flowers for offering and took our place at the end of the serpentine line which snaked its way through the temple right upto Him. My host informed me that we were lucky to be here on a Thursday, an auspicious day for the worship of the Baba, the *Param Sadguru*. I had been lucky, I thought to myself, to have reached Him on His day. Was it pre-ordained or it was just coincidental? Did He want me to come on a Thursday? The queue had not moved even an inch forward, I noticed, within half an hour. My thoughts turned back to my flight, which I was now bound to miss. At this rate we may not be able to reach Baba even by four in the afternoon. There was nothing else to do except to pray. I prayed to Him fervently, standing in the queue. Minutes later I heard a person call me by my name. I could not recognise him. He knew me as we had met in Delhi earlier. I, of course, could not remember this. Seeing our plight, he offered to make arrangements for an early *darshan*. He left, to return in a few minutes with the good news.

We were led through an adjoining room to the *samadhi*. Baba's statue was there as if in flesh and blood, splendid in the ochre robes. Before I could concentrate on His face or on the *samadhi*, the queue moved forward. The crowd continued to jostle from behind. But then, even a moment had been enough. One look at His face filled me with a strange joy I had never known before. His face was so sublime and so familiar, as if an old memory of a childhood friend had suddenly come back to life. I hurtled back some seventy-two years in time. I was back to the Shirdi Baba's days. He was the same and very much there. Divine glory poured forth from His face, from every pore of His body. He appeared to gaze at me. There was a hint of a smile at the corner of His lips. What is happening to you, I asked myself? The inner voice echoed - this is the moment for which you have been waiting since your birth. A strange sense of separation and also reunion swept over me like giant tidal waves in succession. Everything felt so divine. Those few moments were more intoxicating than all the liquor in the world.

I hardly possessed the sense to notice that the priest had taken the flowers from us and made offerings to the *samadhi*. Again, my garland adorned the Sai. This time the sign was clearer. The queue moved again and we found ourselves outside the temple near the Gurusthan under the neem tree. We moved from the Gurusthan to the Dwarkamayee and then to the Chawdi and the Khandoba temple. By the time we finished, it was past two in the afternoon. All of us were hungry. I thought in my mind that I would be happy to get a little *kbeer* in a container, as I had been told that it would be available in *prasad* on Thursday. My host and his namesake Vijay went to the *langar* for arranging a meal, where thousands were lined up before us. They came back to report that the food counter had closed. No food from the Shirdi temple, it was fine, I thought. Food could be taken from the hotels. But

denial of a little *kbeer* as *prasad* really hurt me. Did not Baba know that I just wanted a little *prasad* out of love? I sat down under a tree and continued to pray. My host and Vijay went out again to return a few minutes later, with the news that lunch would be served to us in the VIP room. Even though I was doubtful, they assured me that they had made all arrangements for lunch. I followed them to the kitchen block and then to the VIP dining room. We sat waiting anxiously for lunch to be served. Utensils were placed on the table in front of us.

It was then that a strange thing happened. One of the organisers, who had promised that lunch was on its way, suddenly started apologising as food items had been exhausted. However, there was some *kbeer* left which he could manage for us. It was brought some ten minutes later. I could recognise the container immediately, as I had imagined and prayed for it. This could be no coincidence I thought. It was His Grace. I was moved intensely. He had millions of people and the whole universe to look after. Yet He was so concerned with the small desire of a humble creation like me. Was I so important to Him? Or was He so merciful to me? I knew it was His mercy. My tears flowed for a long time. Once they had ceased, everything had changed. I felt I had met my Spiritual Master, my long-lost Guru. It was not He who had been lost. It was I, who like a vagrant child had wandered here and there, after material pursuits. He had found me out and had called me back home. My friends were surprised to find me in this state, for they did not know what I was thinking. I was in my own world.

The journey back to Delhi was the beginning of my journey on the path of Sai. I started meditating on His form for hours during the night and even during the day. I read most of the books written on Him in English and in Hindi. I had searched through books on spiritualism, the occult and

religion. I had read to find out if there was anything written on Him. I read Swami Muktanand's *Chitsakti Vilas* and found that in his state of *samadhi*, he had seen Shri Sainath in *Sidhaloka* (the abode of the Adepts). I read the books of Avtar Meher Baba. He had clearly said, "If you know Him as I know Him, you would call Him the master of creation." I went through the lives of Kabir, Sarmad, Tukaram, Sant Gyaneshwar, Namdev, Tulsi, Hathras, Bulleh Shah, Nanak and other saints, published by the Radha Swami organisation. I tried to learn about the path of the *Sidhas*, the mystics and the Sufi saints. All my intellectual wanderings ended in one clear conclusion. Shri Sainath personifies the quintessence of all scriptures and paths. I had imperceptibly crossed the barriers of the limited mind and moved from doubt and confusion to conviction and faith. I realised that even if He has cast off His mortal body, He remains as He had always been. He had played one role in the human garb. He plays another without it.

I continuously chanted His Mantra "Om Shri Sai Nathaya Namah." I started visiting His temple at Lodhi Complex, Delhi regularly thereafter. Since 1986 I had been meeting hundreds of people every Saturday, who used to come to me for astrological predictions and other consultations. By the year 1990 this number had multiplied to more than a thousand a month. There was so much of suffering around. The want was frightening. It was not always need-based. It was greed that compelled some of the people to undertake various material pursuits, often with dubious intent and methods. No science, no medicine, no intellectual advice can solve the problem of the *homo-sapiens*. Then what could I do when people came to meet me with expectations? Where is the universal healer for all the ills of the world? The name of Sai was the only medicine that I could prescribe. I had even made experiments on ailing persons suffering with diseases like

hypertension, epilepsy, etc. I had built a pyramid at my residence and had studied its effect on various functions of the body earlier. But *Sainaam* was the best method, as I visualised.

Continuous meditation on Shri Sainath introduced me to a strange world rather imperceptibly. The devotees of Shri Shirdi Sai gradually began to gather around me. Some of them had not even known that I was also one of His devotees. One day a person named Raju met me to say that he had been directed in a dream to see me. The same thing happened to one Gulati. Soon more people from Delhi and other parts of India came, obeying some mysterious command, because of which they came to meet me. I always discouraged them, as I continue to do today, saying that such experiences are often aberrations of the mind and are coincidental by nature. They have little to do with mystical experiences. The more I denied, the more people started approaching me with such mystical commands. At times they even thought that I had some mystical powers. I refused to meet such people, and deliberately ignored them with the earnest hope that some sanity would prevail in them and in me. I even tried to convince them that I was an ordinary person having a family and doing a job to eke out my livelihood. I suffer from all the sordid problems of the mundane world like disease, want, anger and problems with the boss in the office. Having gone through so many books on the subject, I had an intellectual understanding about such phenomena. But to understand something academically is different from actually undergoing the experience. Although I rejected these incidents as mere coincidence, their number started increasing further. One day a Mrs. Joshi rang up from London, saying that she had been suffering from a physical problem and the doctors have not been able to help her. I told her that I could only try to help if she came to Delhi. She replied that her condition was such

that she could only be carried to India on a stretcher. I heard a voice command within me, "Then let her come on a stretcher." She came to India on a Saturday and waited for me in a queue in front of my house for about eight hours without any problems. I gave her *bibhuti* (sacred ash) of Baba and taught her how to worship Him. Her relief from pain was instantaneous. She visited India again in July - August, 1993. She made her obeisance to Shri Sai at Shirdi. She is one of His devotees now. Sai has given a new life to her.

The case of a property dealer in Delhi was still more strange. One day his three minor sons disappeared, leaving behind a note that they were tired of the matrimonial discord between their parents. The couple searched for them frantically. Even police help was taken, but to no avail. The children seemed to have disappeared without a trace. Broken in spirit and desperate, the father approached me on a Saturday. Having listened to his problem, I prayed to Shri Sainath for help. Suddenly it flashed in my mind that his children were safe and would return soon. I had a vision that one of them had developed a limp. I could also see that the couple was destined for some more suffering. One must reap the consequences of one's acts, not only in the lives to follow, but also in this very lifetime. This is what Shri Sai had said. Sai is all compassion. I knew that particularly for the penitent, expression of remorse is a step towards Sai. Whenever someone takes one small step towards Sai, He takes ten steps towards him/her. I was moved by the tears flowing down the cheeks of the lady. I directed the couple to immediately visit the Sai Temple at Lodhi Complex and worship Baba, after having presented him a yellow *chadar* and a coconut. It is not that Baba has any need of these articles. It only symbolises a feeling which the devotee has for Sai. We prayed to Baba for his children.

The couple did exactly as had been required of them. Lo and behold, within two days there was a telephone call from Patna informing them that the boys had reached there and also that one boy had injured his leg. Ever since then, the family has been worshipping Baba.

Hundreds of incidents of this type started happening around me. The crowd, seeking my intervention in their personal matters, started multiplying. I started receiving letters from all over the country and abroad, from people I had never known and who belonged to different strata and communities. I had only one panacea to prescribe for all their maladies. Sai was the 'Giver'. One needs only to pray to Him. We dispatched photographs of Sai and a little bit of the *udi* (*bibhuti*). Even my family members were not untouched. They began to have a series of experiences, miraculous in nature. Responses to the photographs of Sai, which we had sent earlier, began to pour in. People started writing about their experiences with Shri Sainath once they had started worshipping His photo and using His *bibhuti*. It was astounding. It was amazing. Sai's name was a miracle in itself - a cure for all ailments of the body and life.

How could so many coincidences take place together? Had I a spiritual preceptor, I would have surely asked him to explain. Unfortunately my Guru, my Guide, my Sainath had entered his *Mahasamadhi* in the year 1918, decades before I was born. I can only ask Him to give me the answers in His own way.

I went through the books of Mehar Baba and Upasani Maharaj, as they had been close disciples of Shri Sai and had received spiritual sustenance from him. I started meditating on Him for an answer. In the meantime, the people had started meeting me in large numbers. The press also became interested in me and started collecting material, mainly through interviews of persons who had been beneficiaries. Some of them wrote long articles. The crowd at my residence swelled

further. Many important personalities, including businessmen, politicians and administrative officers began to approach me with the hope that I had a panacea for all their material problems. Even people practising Yoga, *Pranayam*, Meditation and other spiritual methods began to approach me with the hope of learning my secrets. Some of them were ascetics without the burden of family life, who had practised meditation for years in seclusion. I was baffled. Why should such persons approach me? Why should this role be thrust upon me? I am a government officer and was content to be so. I did not have the training, knowledge, capacity or inclination to be a spiritual path-finder for others. Yet, here I was in a role I had least expected to play. Mystical are the ways of the Divine.

I wanted to find out if similar things had been happening to others. Many people came to me with experiences which had been both wondrous and touching. Some of them had definitely been miraculous. Sai Baba's life had been full of miracles. One almost every day, every hour and every moment. These miracles continue to take place even today. There could be no better example than that of Anil, a young businessman of Delhi. He had been an ardent devotee of Shri Sainath for the last 15 years. In 1984, his one-year-old son was found to have a serious medical problem and had to be taken to London for treatment. The child suffered from Down's Syndrome with chromosomal deficiency, a combination usually very fatal. The doctors advised surgery, though they were not fully hopeful of a cure. Anil had unimpeachable faith in Sainath, who had said "Why worry when I am there?" The child unfortunately expired on the operation table. Anil had been sure all along that the child would recover from the operation, so much so that he had even organised a birthday party for him on the fourth day from the day of operation.

The death of the child was doubly shocking to Anil. His only child had passed away. Worse still, his God had failed him. Before consigning the mortal remains of the child to flames, Anil took the pendant of Shri Sai from his neck and put it around the child's neck, praying that he should be given back to him. Clearly, despite the severe loss and despite a sense of having been cheated, faith had not deserted him as yet.

Miraculously, Anil's wife conceived the same month. Wiser with the death of the child, the couple underwent an embryonic Down's Syndrome test. The first test was positive. The couple prayed continuously to Baba for His divine intervention. Once again everything seemed lost. They prayed to Baba fervently. The second test two days later indicated that the child was free from all chromosomal deficiencies. A healthy son was born to Anil in the ninth month. To everyone's utter surprise, the newborn bore a mark of the size and same colour (blue) on his hip-line like the earlier child had. Anil had, in his faith, already announced that Baba would definitely give back his son. His faith in Sai is truly a matter of emulation.

There have been several instances like this, too innumerable to mention, during the existence of Baba in gross form and thereafter. There have been cases of several Anils which have not come to light, or which cannot be recounted for want of space. The fact remains that Sai is there for all who care to seek Him. Those who seek with humility and with a pure heart, Sai never fails them. Those who have sought once, have found Sai for ever. I continue to receive letters in scores every day, narrating more and more of such instances. I wonder within myself, from where does He get the time to attend to the millions of problems of seekers?