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# 1. 2013

## 1.1 August

### **Prof. Haraldsson's book, "Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet", Released (2013-08-19 13:27)**

*Last updated on 6th November 2013*

Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson's ( [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur\\_Haraldsson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur_Haraldsson) , <https://notendur.hi.is/erlendur/english/> ) significantly updated and revised book with a new title, "Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet", has been released. The publication date is July 16th 2013 and it is available on amazon.com here, <http://www.amazon.com/dp/190873325X> . I don't think an Indian edition is available as of now - hopefully that situation will change in the near future.

I think this book is sure to become an important book on Sri Sathya Sai Baba for interested academics, scientists and intellectuals worldwide due to the methodical investigation and documentation by its author, a Professor emeritus of Psychology in a European university. Further, the author is a European and is not a devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

#### **[Later updates:**

The post, "Review of Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet by Erlendur Haraldsson Ph. D.", <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2013/09/review-of-modern-miracles-story-of.html>, has my review of this book.

The post, "

Notes on Prof. Haraldsson's, Modern Miracles, July 2013, book on Sathya Sai Baba",

<http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2013/08/notes-on-prof-haraldssons-modern.html> , has notes from my reading of this book. end-**Later-updates]**

I viewed the front page, back page, preface and foreword from the Amazon preview, [http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/190873325X/ref=sib\\_dp\\_ptu#reader-link](http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/190873325X/ref=sib_dp_ptu#reader-link) .

The back cover page has the following: *[Please note that Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson has given me permission, over email, to share the following extracts from his book preview, on this blog. These extracts are also available for free reading at the above amazon preview link.]*

Sathya Sai Baba, one of India's most famous Swami's, was one of the most enigmatic and remarkable religious figures in recent times. Millions followed him and accepted his claim of being a modern day Avatar - a God Man.

Modern Miracles is the result of four decades of investigation into the apparently miraculous phenomena associated with Sai Baba. It expands upon earlier editions which were published in the 1980s under the titles Miracles Are my Visiting Cards and Modern Miracles. There followed translations in 11 languages that resulted in 17 editions. The earlier editions were based on observations and investigations up to the early 1980s.

Now, after 30 years and almost two years after the death of Sai Baba, it is time to sum up what has been learnt about this religious and spiritual figure who has had great influence on millions of people, and for whom no match can be found in modern times. The Indian government honoured him with a state funeral that was attended by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and Sonia Gandhi, the Congress party President.

The author, Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson, on whose painstaking investigations this book is based, has been a professor of psychology at the University of Iceland and is the author of numerous scientific publications.

Unlike many academics he has never hesitated to study interesting phenomena first-hand, and his investigation into the psychic phenomena attributed to Sai Baba is no exception. Haraldsson made many first-hand observations of materializations and had nine face-to-face interviews with Sai Baba during nineteen trips to India.

— end back cover text —

The preface has Dr Joop M. Houtkooper concluding, "Although Sai Baba has passed away, the miraculous phenomena described here might be important if similar phenomena would occur in the future. This book provides a unique richness of experiences, the result of researches spanning 40 years."

In the foreword, which seems to be the same as in previous editions of the book and so perhaps dated in the 1980s, the late Dr. Karlis Osis, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karlis\\_Osis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karlis_Osis) , <http://www.aspr.com/osis.html> , starts by saying, "Modern Miracles has merits of unique proportions. Although miraculous phenomena occurring in connection with religious leaders have been reported throughout history, Haraldsson's presentation is a first of its kind. The study is based upon the firsthand observation of a scientist and is supported by his careful interrogation of witnesses. It describes paranormal phenomena of extraordinary variety and strength attributed to one of the most remarkable men of the century.

India, the land of guru worship, abounds with holy men who are often called 'babas'. Sathya Sai Baba is a unique individual - a kind of genius towering over the whole landscape."

Later in the foreword Dr. Osis says, "Readers will see with what vigour he cuts through the jungle of storytelling and candidly reports the outcome of his quest.

Neither Haraldsson nor I were able to persuade Baba to participate in experiments. Nothing would have clinched the matter so well as, say, a week or two spent in the best parapsychological laboratories in the world, and that we offered. Nevertheless I could understand the reluctance of a religious leader of millions to submit to experimental protocol designed by people of different beliefs and cultures. After all no one asked the Pope to go to the laboratory, before his holiness could be trusted.

In the absence of laboratory evidence Haraldsson states his reservations. In the Western tradition of experimental sciences, nothing that has not withstood the controlled experiment is considered certain. Many social scientists, however, including myself, have later put more trust in observations of real-life events, which often reveal what the lab distorts. Haraldsson wisely presents all sides and asks intelligent readers to judge for themselves.

Millions of Baba's followers - East and West - call him an avatar, that is, an incarnation of a deity. This is by no means universally accepted in India, just as Jesus, who is also said to be an incarnation of God, is not universally accepted in the West. These matters of belief and theological reasoning are clearly not within the domain of parapsychology, and Haraldsson wisely avoids evaluation of the religious side of the issues. The paranormal is what Haraldsson is trying to document and understand; and even that - as the reader will see - is not easy. Although some of the phenomena go hand in hand with the Western concepts of telepathy, clairvoyance, foresight of future and mind over matter (psychokinesis), there are other phenomena for which we are not prepared."

— end Foreword extracts —

To my mind, this book may become the early 21st century rough equivalent of the middle of the 20th century book, The Incredible Sai Baba by Arthur Osborne,

[http://books.google.co.in/books/about/The\\_Incredible\\_Sai\\_Bab\\_a.html?id=6C5F8VwYfcgC&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.co.in/books/about/The_Incredible_Sai_Bab_a.html?id=6C5F8VwYfcgC&redir_esc=y)

. The second page of the book, as seen from above link, notes that the book was first published in 1957. And then reprinted in 1970, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1980, 1985,

1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994. Reset and printed in 2000, 2002, 2005!

That shows how future generations have appreciated the Arthur Osborne book on (Shirdi) Sai Baba far more than the generation at the time the book was first published! I think that is quite the norm for books on miraculous prophets. Their miracles are just too much for the contemporaneous (or near contemporaneous) generation in general, who

prefer to side with the Doubting Thomas majority. But future generations adore these truthful accounts of such wonderful and joy-and-succour-giving prophets/saints/avatars!

Arthur Osborne's book, if I recall correctly, had a Westerner's seemingly factual and balanced account. That impressed the reader (at least it impressed me) as having the ring of truth in it. BTW I don't know whether Osborne ever saw Shirdi Sai Baba. He probably got attracted to him after Shirdi Sai Baba's name spread well after his Mahasamadhi (in 1918). In Prof. Haraldsson's case, he has seen Swami, met him many times and is a veteran & eminent parapsychologist!

I am so happy that Prof. Haraldsson's book has been published/released (though I have not read this revised edition yet and am basing my comments mainly on a previous edition of his book - I have also had some small interactions with Prof. Haraldsson on a concluding section of his revised book prior to publication). IMHO, Prof. Haraldsson has made a great contribution to methodical and truthful capture of evidence related to paranormal capabilities/events related to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and put them all together from a four decade perspective, two years after his passing away. I thank Prof. Haraldsson for his wonderful service to truth-seekers worldwide - truth-seekers who do not limit themselves to the limited vision of current mainstream science but are willing to go beyond current mainstream science limits in their pursuit or quest of universal truth/reality.

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### **Prof. Haraldsson Politely Asserts Genuineness of Sai Baba miracles in UK Radio Talk Show in 2012 (2013-08-19 13:41)**

*Last updated on November 1st 2013*

I came across, "Past Lives, Apparitions and Sai Baba with Erlendur Haraldsson", [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8P\\_FnfUJoog](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8P_FnfUJoog) , which is an audio only youtube video (almost frozen picture) where Prof. Haraldsson, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur\\_Haraldsson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur_Haraldsson) , <https://notendur.hi.is/erlendur/english/> , is politely dismissive of UK Radio Talk Show hosts' (in mid 2012) jocular reference to Swami's miracles, and asserts that the miracles are genuine. The weight of Prof. Haraldsson's stature as an eminent and veteran parapsychologist changes the tone of the UK Radio Talk Show hosts in this regard! They become far more respectful in their references to Sai Baba later on in the interview with him!

Note: The part transcripts below may have some minor inaccuracies/typos but I believe they have captured the sense of the matter properly. I am not able to spare the time to review the part transcripts for errors.

The Erlendur Haraldsson part of the video (audio) starts at slightly after 33 min. This part starts with the talk show hosts mentioning that Prof. Haraldsson has been featured on BBC, Discovery channel and Channel 4.

On being questioned about how he got into study of the paranormal, Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson (EH) mentions interactions with Prof. Hans Bender (in Germany), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans\\_Bender](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Bender) , Prof. Rhine in USA, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Banks\\_Rhine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Banks_Rhine) , and Prof. Ian Stevenson of University of Virginia, USA, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian\\_Stevenson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_Stevenson) . [ Ravi: *These seem to be very big names of the past in the parapsychology field. Prof. Jim Tucker of University of Virginia, USA, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim\\_B.\\_Tucker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_B._Tucker), is continuing with Prof. Ian Stevenson's research into past life memories of some children. ]*

The interview then covers EH's investigations into interactions with the departed (contact with the dead) that some people (in Europe) have had.

Then it moves onto EH's investigations into past lives remembered by some children in places like Sri Lanka and Lebanon.

Around 01:04:55 one of the (two) talk show hosts moves the topic to Sai Baba - the host says that his parents were devotees of Sai Baba for some time in London and that he too had attended numerous prayer meetings. The hosts then jocularly mention that they were not aware that EH was an investigator of the "miracles, shall we say" of Sai Baba.

The host says that Sai Baba has passed on (the interview seems to have been conducted sometime in the middle of 2012). [ Ravi: *The way the hosts jocularly mention miracles shows how much they doubted it. The media, especially the Western media, as well as the scientific/rationalist establishment has ensured that such a wrong view of Sai Baba's miracles has been spread among its readers/viewers. ]*

Around 01:07:20

EH says, "So I spent a lot of time studying Sai Baba and I wrote, in the end, a book about him, *Miracles are my visiting cards*. In America it was published as *Modern Miracles*. So I became quite involved with the study of the phenomena of Sai Baba. And he was really very remarkable. There were claims of paranormal phenomena, or miracles, if you like, that are very unique. And some of them even look like the miracles described in the New Testament." [ Ravi: *Wow! I salute Prof. Haraldsson for courageously stating his view based on his observations. Such statements can invite horrific attack from some rationalist and atheist-scientists who try to tear apart the reputation of scientists making such statements. Very few scientists and academics have the courage that Prof. Haraldsson has shown to publicly make positive statements about Swami's miracles as they perhaps are afraid of the attack they will come under from their peers, especially from the West. ]*

...

EH says, "One thing was very striking that he would do this so often (materialization miracles - rings, pendants, fruits, sweets etc.). I think my estimate was that he might produce like twenty everyday and that was just day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. And he gave all this material away. But then, of course, magicians can let appear in their hands various things. But they don't give it away (laughter). They do not give away gold rings, jewellery."

...

Talk show host talks about magic tricks' charges. Around 01:09:57 EH says, "Unfortunately the critics - and I have studied them very carefully and interviewed some of them - his most severe critics as far as the normal explanation is concerned have never really come close to him. They have never observed him. They have never bothered to look up the whole evidence - not just individual, single instances. Maybe it was trickery, but then it was trickery of a greater kind than we have ever seen by any magician before."

...

"He would produce things, like on the spur of the moment. And so it was a response to something that came up in the conversation. Like I remember once when we were trying to get him involved in experiments. And he always wanted to talk about religion and religious life and so on. But we were, of course, interested in experiments and scientific view. He said, one day, that daily life and spiritual life should be like a double rudraksha. Well, I had never heard what a rudraksha is. My colleague, Karlis Osis, didn't know what a rudraksha is. So I asked him what is a rudraksha, what is a double rudraksha? And he tried to explain but couldn't do it. Our interpreter couldn't understand it - couldn't explain it either. But I was very insistent on this and asked him some 3-4 times. So in the end he seems to lose patience and then just waved his hand and then opened the palm and showed me - this is it. And then there was a rudraksha in his palm. So sometimes these things seem to appear spontaneously."

Talk show host, "What is a rudraksha?" EH says, "Well, you asked like I did. (Laughter). A rudraksha is a kernel of a fruit like a (stone) plum. And a rudraksha is a very famous kernel of fruit in India ..."

Around 01:13:30 EH says, "Vibhuti serves a similar role in Hinduism as bread or wine in Christianity. And he often produces this - more often than anything else. And gives it to people very freely. Sometimes this vibhuti appears on like photos of him or other \*\*\* deities and for (in) an inexplicable way - and I have visited many, many such places in India, in Sri Lanka, even in England, in London, and in United States. ...

Well, I can tell you one story. I was (once) going to Sri Lanka. But I had to stop in Lebanon and they hadn't had the time to get my visa for Sri Lanka, here in Iceland. ... So I decided to get my visa for Sri Lanka in the embassy in Beirut. So I went there, filled out the form. They told me, if I had patience I could wait for it. Then after a while one of the

secretaries came and told me, the consul would like to see me. So I went to see the consul. Then he was with my passport in his hand. And said, your name sounds familiar to me. Did you not write a book about Sai Baba? Yes, I had written a book. Then he told me then I must tell about something that happened to me. He told me that he had a daughter - he was an elderly man, about 60 or little older - and she had, at that time, been very sick. And he feared about her life. So he decided - he had been told that sometimes it might help to pray for (to) Sai Baba for help - and he did that. And his daughter recovered for whatever reason. Then he was so happy with this that then he got a photograph of Sai Baba in a large frame and hung it up in his apartment.

Then he told me, soon after that, there started to come some dust on the cover of the photo. And he told me - I live upstairs in this building. Would you like to see it? So he invited me up to his apartment. And there in his bedroom opposite to his bed was a large framed photograph of Sai Baba ... Then I saw that on the glass were streaks of vibhuti on it. Also between the glass and the photo. And he had never opened the frame. So it was a mystery to him how this had happened. But this man, this consul, he told me that he had never seen Sai Baba. He had no particular connection with him. But apart from his praying for help at one time, and being impressed with Sai Baba since. So, how did this happen? (At a) long distance. And there are many distance phenomena like that.

Those who say that this is all easily explainable, I think they do not consider, they do not look at the full picture. They just take one or two little instances which may be explained easily.”

[ Ravi: I think Prof. Haraldsson has made a vital point. Those who try to explain away Swami's miracles take a few instances and focus only on them. They do not look at the full picture! Once one brings in the full picture - many materializations of great variety day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year - explaining them away as normal magic tricks simply does not sound sensible. It is the observation and interrogation of devotees that Prof. Haraldsson has done over a span of four decades that makes him state that Swami's miracles, when taken as a full picture, cannot be explained away (as normal magic tricks). He has not made this statement or arrived at this conclusion casually and hurriedly. He has been thorough about his investigation and interrogation over a large span of time and then arrived at this conclusion. ]

Around 1:22:30

Talk show host - "You were there and you saw him. What was your feeling about the whole thing, about him? How do you feel yourself about him? The man. Do you think he actually had paranormal powers?"

EH says, "Well, when I look at the cases I studied and also some of the things I observed it is hard not to think that he had some paranormal abilities.... And there really hasn't been anyone like him."

Talk show host, "No. And I have known of nuclear scientists and all kinds of people who were devotees of Sai Baba. ... Most impressive type of people."

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I later had some exchanges with some correspondents - Sai devotees and non-Sai devotee friends of mine. I felt it appropriate to share one exchange, which the correspondent okayed, and my part of the exchange with others. Please note that I have deliberately not used divine titles for Bhagawan in these exchanges as that currently is not the norm for scientific and media (especially Western media) circles as well as non Sai devotees.

A friend (non Sai devotee) raised a possibility that Prof. Haraldsson may have been fooled.

I wrote him (slightly edited):

Thank you for your response.

You are certainly entitled to your view. My view, however, is that Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson (EH) is not one of the scientists who are "the easiest to get fooled".

Please note that his concluding statement is a guarded one. I repeat it below for clarity:

EH says, "Well, when I look at the cases I studied and also some of the things I observed it is hard not to think that he had some paranormal abilities.... And there really hasn't been anyone like him."

From a science point of view certainly the above views of Prof. Haraldsson have to be treated as his individual views and not something that has withstood scientific scrutiny. [As that requires objective verification

in Lab. conditions and some mainstream scientists may even demand repeatability of the 'miracles' by scientists in a Lab. before it is considered a scientific fact!] But from the point of view of non-scientific knowledge it is up to the reader to decide the "weight" of Prof. Haraldsson's opinion.

I would like to share a sensitive part of the interview which I hesitated to mention in my initial mail.

Around 1:20

EH says, "There were also claims from some of the students around him that he would be keeping things in chair and so on in his later years. But I think that came rather late in his life."

So it seems to me that Prof. Haraldsson would be willing to consider that some of Sai Baba's materializations later on in his life could be "magic tricks".

[I personally am not in a position to make an **authoritative** statement here. I have seen many materializations (Vibhuti, necklace etc.) in the hall where he gave Darshan (Sai Kulwanth Hall) but never saw any evidence of trickery associated with those materializations. They usually were in response to some good acts or good dramatic/musical performances and gave most of the assembled people a lot of shared joy. But then I am not an expert in these matters and so I cannot judge whether these materializations were paranormal materializations or magic tricks. My paranormal experiences with Sai Baba have been in the area of him showing me that he knew about my thoughts while I was in front of him and my thoughts and actions while I was physically away from him as well. But they are individual and subjective experiences unlike materialization which was viewed and experienced by many people at the same time. I must also say that I feel my experiences of paranormal capabilities of Sai Baba were very appropriate for the relationship I had with him which was that of a spiritual seeker and a Guru. He taught that his materializations are a small part of him (his reality/divinity) and that spiritual seekers should not focus too much on it - so I tried to follow that. Perhaps worldly materializations were more appropriate for devotees who had material expectations in their relationship with Sai Baba or perhaps had a need for such materializations in their spiritual and material journey.]

My understanding of Prof. Haraldsson's statement/view is that Sai Baba's materializations and other paranormal capabilities, when taken as a full picture (over decades of Sai Baba's life), is genuine.

The critics have focused on showing a few instances as "magic tricks". Perhaps their contention may be that if one instance of trickery is proved then all of Sai Baba's materializations are magic tricks. That would be like saying that if one is proved to have lied once, even if it is a white lie, then all statements of that person are lies. [Of course, the credibility of a person takes a major hit if he/she has been proved to be a liar in non-trivial situations (non-white lies) but it does not mean that the person always lies.]

My view is that even if some instances seem to be tricks (nothing proved, mind you, but a view that is heavily spread by the media and on the Internet), you cannot dismiss all materialization instances as tricks. If you want to form a proper view of a person's paranormal capabilities you have to look at the full picture/full evidence and then come to a conclusion. Prof. Haraldsson, being a balanced, veteran and eminent scientist, has chosen the full picture/full evidence view to form his opinion, even if the opinion does not suit the needs and motives of powerful Western media outlets and some other powerful Western groups. I again salute Prof. Haraldsson for his courage to state his view publicly in a Western radio talk show (media) and in his book (previous edition and hopefully the current edition/new version has the same view). Prof. Haraldsson, in my humble opinion, has been a truth-seeker and has spoken the truth about Sri Sathya Sai Baba, even if many powerful people in the media and scientific circles do not want to hear and know such science-shaking truth (to be more precise, current mainstream science shaking truth).

— end response to friend (slightly edited) —

I followed up with another mail whose contents are given below (slightly edited):



I am not pressing the issue here. Just sharing something to give you a feel of the atmosphere in which Sai Baba would materialize objects during the days that I was able to see some of his materializations in Puttaparthi.

I was browsing for genuine Sai Baba miracles and came across this youtube video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkcHQoG-EdQ> . At 0:26 in it a young student comes up to Swami - I have taught this student! He finished his M.Tech. (CS) and is now doing a Ph.D. in CS - in IIT Madras if I recall correctly. The student was noted for his script writing for dramas. I think he was being felicitated for a drama which had just concluded. Swami hands him the rose that Swami was holding in his hand (may have been given to him by somebody else a little while earlier) and then does his familiar circular waving motion of the hand and produces a necklace, which he puts on the boy with some difficulty but with a lot of happiness. The student is overjoyed, Swami pats his cheek and then shows him a Abhaya Hastam as a blessing to him.

Around the time this materialization was done, Swami was quite severely physically impaired. The chair shown in the video during this sequence is his detachable car chair - he would not walk in public - I think he needed great assistance for walking at this time. I believe his hand was not very steady and so he needed fair bit of assistance. Note how he struggles a bit when the necklace gets stuck in the hair of the student.

I think if he were to use trickery to produce necklaces and rings when he was so severely challenged physically, at least some times he would have fumbled which would have exposed any hidden recess from which he procured the item. But I have not seen any such slip-up in quite a few materializations that I saw, though from some distance, during the last years of Swami's life when he was very severely physically challenged.

BTW the video goes on to show some other materializations - I have no comment on those.

— end response to friend (slightly edited) —

The last follow up mail (so far) was this one (slightly edited):

This youtube video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JOCFOdq09Q> , is clear video evidence, in my layman, non-parapsychologist/non-

scientist view, of a genuine (Sathya) Sai Baba materialization miracle. It has the clear frontal view as against the behind Sai Baba view of the video referred in the previous mail(s) of mine.

At 05:38 one can see clearly that the palm could not have been holding a necklace. The waving motion starts - the sleeve of the robe is visible - the palm does not go anywhere near the chair arm.

At 05:42 the necklace is hanging down his palm (perhaps being held by his fingers though that is not so clear)!

Please note that this was during the last period of his life when he was very physically challenged - he is seated in the portable car-chair and would not (maybe could not) walk in public.

— end response to friend (slightly edited) —

Finally and rather fittingly for this mail I would like to share an exchange (slightly edited) I had with a long-time Puttaparthi resident (and Sai devotee, of course), which brings in the Divine and holy perspective.

Correspondent: Swamy once said at Kodai, " What i create and give you may be available in market outside but what you cannot buy is the power behind, which i give with the article"

Ravi: Very appropriate Swami message in this context. Thank you so much.

Correspondent: "Miracles are my visiting cards" is the most simplest reason Swamy gives for the creations he does and he himself asks people not to attach importance to them once you get into his fold as a devotee. Once you get into his fold you are given a spiritual caning ! He would exhort us to seek the creator and not his creations, the kingmaker and not the king.

Seeing Swamy wave his hand to create anything, is a very very holy experience.

Ravi: I entirely agree. It was awesome for me when I saw the first materializations as an eyewitness. Later, even after the novelty faded, I enjoyed it both as a demonstration of spiritual power and as something which gave so much spiritual joy to the people who could witness it.

Correspondent: Those who enjoy it is because they are enveloped in his loving grace. You never feel He is tricking you. It is for those who are out of his fold.

Swamy once said about criticism on Him thus, " Let that 'daridram'/misfortune not befall you to be out of my fold and hearing all that. There will come a time when all those who criticize me will not even be on the horizon anymore but SAI will continue to remain, choose between the two"

Ravi: A vital choice indeed! The spiritual aspect of life, as the material aspect of life, is strewn with choices - it is upto the person to make the choices and thereby decide a major part of his/her future.

— end exchange with longtime Puttaparthi resident (slightly edited) —

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### Swami's love for Bharath (2013-08-19 17:26)

A correspondent wrote in response to an Independence Day mail I had sent out:

I wonder if any other country has this concept of revering the country as a mother the way India does. What an unique people we are, who see God in everything. Long live our culture and tradition. Vande Mataram.

Every Independence day reminds me of Swami's patriotism and love for Bharath. Whats it with this land that draws God it. Forget the establishment of righteousness, I guess God just loves this place so much. He just cant get over it. He gets "Bharath-sick" from to time and finds some reason to take an earthly form and experience the joys of this land. Why this partiality to this holy land.

I remember His poem, His voice rings in my head.

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*KhanDa khanDaantara khyaati naarchinchina mahaniyulanu ganna maatRu bhoomi  
Paaschaactya veerula paaradrolinchiyu swaantantramunu ganna samarabhoomi  
Sangeeta saahitya Saastriya vidyalandu dhi Sakti choopina divya bhoomi  
Chitra kaLala chooDa chitramai vunnaTTi Bharata bhoomiyandu jananamondi  
Bharata maata dharma bhaagyambu kaapaaDa baadhyatantayu meedae bhaktulaara*  
From her soil have risen noble souls; her matchless glory sung in every land

\_ She sent scurrying her captors from the west, and shattered her shackles

*Nonpareil*

is her brilliance shining through her music, literature and  
science

*Having been born in this picturesque land of Bharath embellished by fine arts  
Its the duty of every devotee to safeguard the spiritual riches of this mother*

-

He would also then deplore the current state of affairs through another beautiful poem

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Parama Pavana maina Bharata vani Yandu

Sahana man n

ade manaku chakka danamu

vratamu lanniti yandu vane ganchina Yatti Ghana Sathya sheelame kathina tapamu

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madhura bhavambedi mana desa mandanna matru bhavamu kannu manya medi

pranambu kantenu manambe ghanamanu mana desa neethini manta galipi

-

neti kichiri Paradesha Neetula Rasi vese vichitra swetcha anu vichu kathe

enugu etla tana balamu eruga ledoru attu lainaru mana bharatheeyulu nedu

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*Forbearance is the charm that Bharateeyas effuse in this holy land*

*Adherence to truth is the penance of the highest order they adhere to*

*The sweetest of experiences in this land is gained by devotion to parents*

*In a land where self respect rivals life itself, values today are incinerated*

*in the garb of new found freedom chaperoned by foreign ideologies*

*Bharateeyas today are subdued like the elephant that knows not its own strength.*

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### **Scientific Paper that Debunks Deccan Chronicle 1992 Claim of Materialization Miracle Exposure (2013-08-24 15:20)**

In my humble opinion, the Sai fraternity came under tremendous assault from many sections of the media, national and international, at the time of and after Bhagawan's Mahasamadhi. The Sai fraternity had to largely keep quiet, try

to ignore the negative reports and let its work do the talking. Perhaps it was an inevitable and inescapable phase in Bhagawan's ongoing mission. Of course, the media co-ordinator(s) of the Sai mission did a very good job in putting out the factual picture but perhaps some sections of the media chose to ignore it, at least initially.

Now that the media knows that the Sai mission is continuing with vigour perhaps it may be a good time to examine an infamous incident in the past where the role of some sections of the media was exposed to be wrong by a scientific paper. That paper is titled, "Reactions to and an assessment of a videotape on Sathya Sai Baba", by Erlendur Haraldsson and Richard Wiseman, in the Journal for the Society of Psychical Research, <http://www.spr.ac.uk/main/page/spr-publications-parapsychology>, April 1995, [https://notendur.hi.is/~erlendur/english/Sai %20Baba %20Indians/SBvideotape.pdf](https://notendur.hi.is/~erlendur/english/Sai%20Baba%20Indians/SBvideotape.pdf).

[BTW I loved the quote of Carl Gustav Jung, the famous Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Jung](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung), put up on the above JSPR web page, "I shall not commit the fashionable stupidity of regarding everything I cannot explain as a fraud."]

In the above scientific paper, Prof. Haraldsson scientifically debunks Deccan Chronicle's article dated 23rd November 1992 (wrongly) claiming that a Doordarshan videotape exposed Swami's miraculous creation of a chain at an event in Hyderabad on 29th August 1992 where the then Prime Minister of India, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, was present.

Prof. Haraldsson along with Mr. Richard Wiseman (authors of the paper) visited India in July 1993 and met the executive editor of Deccan Chronicle who arranged to give them a copy of the videotape. The authors then thoroughly analysed the tape which included taking assistance from a (UK?) company which investigates corporate fraud to enhance the video (using noise filters). The authors concluded that the tape does not prove fraud.

But the Deccan Chronicle seems to have gone to town on the matter, perhaps made a lot of sales of its newspapers, and spread the impression that it had exposed trickery! Not only that, this claim of 'exposure' was echoed in other newspapers, Indian as well as international! Deccan Chronicle and some other media outlets had given judgement!

The above scientific paper debunks the Deccan Chronicle 'exposure'. I am quite sure most or all of the media would not have publicised such exposure by a scientist of its own flawed conclusions! The paper states in its conclusion, "This is a clear example of how a videotape containing a scene where sleight-of-hand may have occurred can become an allegation that trickery has in fact taken place (besides getting other facts wrong). This is then interpreted as an exposure, and is echoed unverified by the media."

In this context we know that Swami's teachings are far more important than Swami's miracles. But then it is also a fact that Swami has demonstrated his phenomenal miraculous power to so many people over so many years. Some of us have experienced his paranormal powers and know for a fact that they were genuine. Scientists like Prof. Haraldsson and Dr. Karlis Osis have done a great service to the field of scientific knowledge by carefully documenting their direct experiences of paranormal powers of Sathya Sai Baba, though not under controlled conditions. Today we also have tons of video evidence of Swami's materialization miracles which can be examined by parapsychology researchers/investigators.

The About Us page of White Crow Books, the publisher of Prof. Haraldsson's latest book on Swami, <http://whitecrowbooks.com/us/about>, has a wonderful explanation of its title. "The name 'White Crow' says much about us. It pays homage to the great 19th century spiritual adventurer, William James: 'To upset the conclusion that all crows are black,' he said, 'there is no need to seek demonstration that no crow is black; it is sufficient to produce one white crow; a single one is sufficient.'"

There is enough video available today, some of it even on youtube, to demonstrate clearly genuine instances of Swami's materialization miracles. That would make it at least hundreds, I guess, of video "White Crows" which is sufficient for a rational and logical person to accept that Swami did perform materialization miracles.

Even if some video evidence seems to be suspicious of trickery (nothing proven, mind you), it does not negate the hundreds of "White Crow" videos that clearly demonstrate Swami's awesome and phenomenal power to materialize objects at will. The scientific community should take note of these "White Crow" videos and ponder about them.

## Notes on Prof. Haraldsson's, Modern Miracles, July 2013, book on Sathya Sai Baba (2013-08-26 16:27)

Last updated on 6th November 2013

As I am reading Prof. Haraldsson's new/updated book on Swami I am making Notes of it. I have received permission, over email, from Prof. Haraldsson and the publisher, White Crow Books, to put up these Notes/Summary on this blog.

### [Additional Info:

The post, "Review of Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet by Erlendur Haraldsson Ph. D.", <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2013/09/review-of-modern-miracles-story-of.html>, has my review of this book.

The post, 'Prof. Haraldsson's book, "Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet", Released', <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2013/08/prof-haraldssons-book-modern-miracles.html>, covers the back page, preface and foreword of the book (available in Amazon preview of the book). I have also compared the book to Arthur Osborne's book on Shirdi Sai Baba. end-**Additional-Info]**

Before I get into the notes, I would like to say that Chapters 2 and 3 of the book are vital from a scientific view of Swami's materialization miracles. As I understand it, the field of parapsychology (psi phenomena), <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parapsychology>, is the scientific field that investigates paranormal phenomena like materialization and other miracles. As far as I know, in the career of the Sathya Sai Avatar, the best known parapsychology researchers of the world who have investigated him are Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson and Dr. Karlis Osis. Chapters 2 and 3 cover the interactions including materialization miracles that Haraldsson and Osis had with Swami in the 70's.

As Swami felt it inappropriate to demonstrate his paranormal powers in controlled experiments, Haraldsson and Osis may not have been able to publish ground-breaking papers on Swami's paranormal powers in top parapsychology journals. Even if some papers were published, the lack of scientific evidence from controlled experiments would have led some parapsychology scientists and most mainstream scientists to not treat such papers as ground-breaking.

But these chapters of the book capture their experience very well. Since it relates to direct paranormal experiences by them these accounts will carry far more value with parapsychology scientists/researchers and perhaps other scientists too than accounts of non-parapsychology-scientists.

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The following are notes I made from my on-going reading of "Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet", published July 2013, [http://whitecrowbooks.com/books/page/modern\\_miraclesthe\\_story\\_of\\_sathya\\_sai\\_baba\\_a\\_modern\\_day\\_prophet/](http://whitecrowbooks.com/books/page/modern_miraclesthe_story_of_sathya_sai_baba_a_modern_day_prophet/), <http://www.amazon.com/dp/190873325X>, by Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur\\_Haraldsson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur_Haraldsson), <https://notendur.hi.is/erlendur/english/>). I have also included comments of mine in italics and prefixed by Ravi.

In the preface it is stated that Sathya Sai Baba had great influence on millions of people and for whom no match can be found in modern times. [*Ravi: I think that captures the impact of Sathya Sai Baba on the world at large, at the current time, very well.*]

Prof. Haraldsson has studied Sathya Sai Baba first-hand on many occasions and conducted extensive investigations regarding him including detailing interviews with many devotees, ex-devotees and critics.

The distinguished parapsychologist, Dr. Karlis Osis, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karlis\\_Osis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karlis_Osis), <http://www.llewellyn.com/journal/article/62>, writes in the foreword about Haraldsson's study of miracles of a religious leader to be a first of its kind and that the book "describes paranormal phenomena of extraordinary variety and strength attributed to one of the most remarkable men of the (20th) century".

Prof. Haraldsson was accompanied by other parapsychologist researchers during some of his visits to investigate Sathya Sai Baba in India including Dr. Osis and Dr. Houtkooper.

### Chapter 1 - WE ARE INTRIGUED - Notes

Haraldsson, while on a trip to India in 1972, met powerful and rich people like ex-Governor of Goa, Mr. Nakul Sen, who had personal encounters with Baba and were convinced that Baba performed genuine miracles and further, was a "godly person" who could know anything about anyone at any time!

Haraldsson first met Sai Baba in November 1973 - around forty years ago! His and his companion's visiting cards and a letter were passed on to a senior ashram functionary who may have shown it to Swami. It resulted in Swami arranging to meet Haraldsson.

## Chapter 2 - FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE MIRACLE WORKER - Notes

Swami called Haraldsson and his companion (Dr. Karlis Osis) for an interview the next day morning. Swami immediately created vibhuti for them and, a little later, a ring for Dr. Osis. Haraldsson and Osis explained to Swami about their interest in having such materialization miracles as well as Swami's out-of-body capabilities done under controlled conditions (as controlled conditions can eliminate trained magic tricks). Swami's response was that the methods of science could not explain such miraculous phenomena and that they were outside the realm of science. Haraldsson and Osis tried to put across to Swami that science had neglected studying such phenomena and that by Swami demonstrating his powers under controlled conditions, new knowledge about these mysterious phenomena could be added to science. Swami responded that he was not a showman and that "he could use his paranormal powers only for the good of his devotees".

Swami lectured them on how daily life and spiritual life should grow together and mentioned a double rudraksha in this context. Haraldsson did not understand the term rudraksha, let alone double rudraksha, and asked Swami for clarifications. Swami and the interpreter failed to explain it to him satisfactorily. Haraldsson continued to insist knowing about this term. That led to some irritation perhaps but then Swami materialized a double rudraksha so that Haraldsson could understand what it is! Later he added to this materialization miracle by having the rudraksha encased in golden shields and with a golden chain. *[Ravi: This seems to be an awesome demonstration of materialization power personally to a scientist. The book also has a photograph of the materialized double rudraksha (later on in the book).]*

Haraldsson asked Swami why Swami could do these materialization miracles but not they? Swami said that all (i.e. Swami, Haraldsson, Osis and everybody else) were like matches but that Swami's match(es) had fire! *[Ravi: This fits in with what I have heard Swami speak or read in his writings. Each of us is God (and so has immense power including materialization power through Sankalpa Shakti). Swami knew and experienced his Godhood but we, or rather most of us, have not realized our Godhood (and Godly power).]*

Haraldsson felt quite convinced that the double rudraksha materialization and its golden encasing materialization further on were spontaneous miracles i.e. not pre-planned.

However, for scientific investigation, controlled experiments were needed which Swami was not willing to participate in. As Haraldsson puts it Swami was a man of religion and not of science.

Haraldsson noted Swami's charisma and ruler-like presence and personality. *[Ravi: I think that description is very apt for Swami.]* He also noted that Swami spoke as one who knows as against one who has learned things from someone else. *[Ravi: I think that is a very wise observation about Swami by Haraldsson. I agree, in general.]* At the personal level he found Swami likeable and even jovial at times.

Haraldsson writes that Sai Baba's words to them on religion or philosophy did not have scholarly refinement but adds that this impression may have been caused by Sai Baba speaking to them in "somewhat broken" English. *[Ravi: I would say that Sai Baba's Telugu discourses were quite literary, flowing like a powerful stream, and interspersed with many poems that he would sing. These Telugu discourses came across to me as quite scholarly besides having the vital force of getting directly to the point and being expressed in a way that was rather easily understood typically. However, I have learned some Telugu mainly after 2003, and am not a Telugu expert to comment on it authoritatively. Certainly his English, as I have heard in videos and a little in public, lacked sophistication - so I think Haraldsson's opinion that Sai Baba's words to them on religion or philosophy lacked scholarly refinement has been formed due to the fact that Swami spoke to them in a language quite foreign to him, i.e. English as against his native Telugu.]*

Haraldsson and his companion met devotees at the ashram and recorded their miracle accounts. They also met Shri N. Kasturi, biographer of Sai Baba, who related some miracles to them. These miracles included materialization and other miracles like miraculous cure of cancer and an out-of-body visit by Sai Baba.

They had two other interviews with Sai Baba where they pressed for experiments again. Sai Baba promised a day for experiments in Bangalore in the presence of Dr. S. Bhagavantam, a distinguished Indian scientist, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suri\\_Bhagavantam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suri_Bhagavantam), who was then abroad but expected to be back in India shortly. Unfortunately the experimental session got cancelled with the reason being given that Dr. Bhagavantam would not be back in time for Haraldsson and Osis (i.e. before they had to leave Bangalore). Haraldsson and Osis were really disappointed.

### Chapter 3 - LOOK AT YOUR RING - Notes

Colleagues in the West found accounts of Sai Baba miracles of Haraldsson and Osis too extraordinary even for parapsychology researchers!

Haraldsson and Osis came back to India to do further research on Sai Baba. In an interview Swami created white rock candy for them. When asked how he did it Swami said, 'Mental creation. I think, imagine and then it is there.', but then Swami moved into spiritual philosophy, 'Spiritual love is central, miracles are small items. Love is giving and forgiving.' *[Ravi: I think these three sentences attributed to Swami fit in very well with what I heard from him (discourses) and read from his writings. Simple statements but which, in my humble opinion, convey deep existential and universal truth(s).]*

Haraldsson and Osis observed Swami creating vibhuti during Darshan at Brindavan from very close quarters and do not find any evidence of trickery. The incident is explained in quite some detail.

Haraldsson and Osis met devotees and heard their miraculous experiences. The devotees would emphasize that more important than the miracles was the beneficial impact of Sai Baba on their lives. *[Ravi: Swami and Swami's teachings, I presume, would have been what caused the beneficial impact on the devotees.]*

Haraldsson meets Prof V.K. Gokak, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V.\\_K.\\_Gokak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._K._Gokak), (later first vice-chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning) who described in great detail the materialization of a gold Krishna statue by Bhagawan in Dwaraka. Haraldsson verified the account by speaking to two other persons who had also seen that miracle. *[Ravi: To see the statue you may visit: [http://www.saibaba.ws/miracles/statue\\_of\\_krishna.htm](http://www.saibaba.ws/miracles/statue_of_krishna.htm)] Interestingly Prof. Gokak mentioned that Swami said 'let that image of Krishna which is traditionally present in the minds of all these people appear in the form of a golden statue.' and that if Swami had created a statue depicting Krishna as he really looked people would not recognize him! [Ravi: I get awed by such statements from Swami. He simply knew all details about Krishna and Rama, the very widely worshiped figures in Hinduism today. He makes them historical reality for people like me instead of mythical figures that many academic scholars including many Indian academic scholars consider them to be.] Haraldsson also covers the matter of the police trying to claim the materialized statue as government property since it was taken out from the soil!*

Haraldsson and Osis were invited to Dr. Bhagavantam's son's house in Bangalore where Swami gave them a discourse on the differences between scientific and spiritual approaches which is translated by Dr. Bhagavantam. *[Ravi: So while Haraldsson and Osis missed meeting Bhagavantam and Swami together in their first visit, it happened in the second visit.] Swami said that science deals with physical realities whereas spirituality deals with controlling the mind and that "mind can potentially create anything".*

However Swami refused to participate in experiments. He would allow them to observe him. On Haraldsson and Osis trying to impress upon Swami the need to advance scientific knowledge on such miracles, Swami responded that humanity can be helped by true knowledge which comes only from "purification and sublimation of the mind".

Swami told them that a spiritually purified mind can create anything. Swami said that he did not have to think about chemical composition of what he wants to produce - he simply gets it! *[Ravi: Awesome explanation of the directness of Sankalpa Shakti of the spiritually purified mind without need to know physical/chemical/scientific details of item(s) to be materialized. Simply will it and it is there!]*

Swami took Haraldsson aside and told him some matters about his personal life. The matters mentioned were true/correct but Haraldsson felt that they could have applied to many people and so the revelations were not "compellingly impressive".

Dr. Bhagavantam advised Haraldsson and Osis not to "pester Baba further with requests for experiments, since that might spoil our relationship with him".

Haraldsson and Osis go to Puttaparthi when Swami goes there. In an interview with them and others Swami performed more materialization miracles and also gave a spirited talk "attacking scientists" as not being able to understand the spiritual. Haraldsson and Osis again told Swami about "need for experimentation and empirical research on paranormal phenomena, of which he was allegedly a master". They showed Swami a few things they had brought to test his paranormal powers experimentally but Swami politely declined and said that exhibiting his powers that way would be black magic! *[Ravi: I can easily imagine Swami feeling it way, way below his dignity to show his powers using paranormal experiment instruments/things!]*

But Swami showed them his powers by making the stone and picture in the ring he had previously materialized for Dr. Osis, disappear and told them that was his experiment!

Later Dr. Osis while sitting for bhajans in the bhajan hall experienced "an altered state of consciousness" which was serene and pleasant. Baba had mentioned earlier that he would give them an "experience"! Dr. Osis had conducted experiments with/on meditative experiences in the past. *[Ravi: Very interesting that Swami gave a 'spiritual' experience to Dr. Osis who perhaps was in a position to receive that experience due to his prior exposure/experience with meditation.]*

#### **Chapter 4 - HOW REAL? - Notes**

Haraldsson makes a first attempt at critical evaluation of Sai Baba's miracles. He states that if the materialization miracles are genuine "then the theoretical implications are enormous, for physics and psychology alike".

The author explains the terms 'teleportation' and 'apport'. He gives some information on past investigations of such claimed phenomena by others (not Sai Baba) in the West.

Sai Baba allowed Haraldsson (and others then) to film him outdoors. Haraldsson filmed Sai Baba extensively (outdoors) but did not get close range and proper angle film of his materialization to be considered "to have some evidential value".

*[Ravi: Today I think the ashram authorities may have at least a hundred videos capturing genuine materialization of Sathya Sai Baba with the proper angle as well as close range. A thought that struck me was that the ashram authorities, if they have such videos, could put them up on youtube or their own websites and invite forensic examination of these videos.*

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*Even if ten of such materialization videos show no possibility of trickery and are certified by well established forensic experts from the world as such and that the videos have not been tampered, scientists then would have something to look at seriously. It may not become a universally accepted "violation of the laws of physics" as that would need real-life experiments I think, but, at least, it would show people including scientists and accomplished magicians that hey, such genuine materialization \*may\* not be impossible.]*

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Haraldsson then advances some hypotheses like hypnosis, help from accomplice, objects hidden in devices, sleight-of-hand etc. and on examining them finds them to be unlikely. However, he also states that the grounds were insufficient to conclude that the phenomena (materialization) were genuine. *[Ravi: As there was no controlled experiment.]*

He then advances five points which argue in favour of viewing the materialization miracles as genuine like lengthy history of materialization by Sai Baba "apparently without being detected in fraud", variety of circumstances where materialization happened (not limited to a magician's stage), materialization in response to need/demand, prominent



Indian scientists being convinced of genuineness of the materialization miracles and a dental surgeon-cum-magician who was convinced of the materialization being genuine. Haraldsson also mentions about the view of at least one magician that reputed scientists can be deceived by magic tricks just like the general public.

#### **Chapter 5 - NO ONE CAN COMPREHEND MY GLORY - Notes**

This chapter covers the early years of Sathya Sai Baba including some description of Shirdi Sai Baba. It also has "a brief digression into Hinduism". The author gets tempted to "say that Hinduism is an elastic, free enterprise religion in spite of its strong, ancient historical roots". *[Ravi: I find the elastic and free enterprise descriptions as very apt, especially for Hinduism as practiced now in the early 21st century.]*

#### **Chapter 6 - NO EXPERIMENTS ? WHAT NEXT? - Notes**

Haraldsson gives an overview of how he interviewed various Sathya Sai devotees about their experiences with Swami, in various places in India and over multiple trips to India.

#### **Chapter 7 - OBSERVATIONS BY INDIAN SCIENTISTS - Notes**

Haraldsson interviewed Dr. D.K. Banerjee faculty in the Organic Chemistry department of the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc) at Bangalore (and his friend Mr. G.D. Hazra, a pharmaceutical manufacturer), who, though a skeptic at the beginning, through close observation of many materializations by Baba and a personal experience involving his son where Baba demonstrated knowledge about matters happening at a distance, got convinced of Baba's paranormal powers. *[Ravi: Dr. D.K. Banerjee is listed as the director of IISc from 1971-72 in its wiki page, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_Institute\\_of\\_Science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Institute_of_Science). Perhaps he was playing that role as a stop-gap arrangement as the same page lists another name, S. Dhawan, as Director from 1962-81. Dr. D.K. Banerjee is also listed as past faculty in the IISc., Organic Chemistry department web page here: <http://orgchem.iisc.ernet.in/faculty.html>.]*

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#### **Chapter 8 - THE MANGOES DID IT & Chapter 9 - THE RAJA OF VENKATAGIRI - Notes**

These have the interviews of Gopal Krishna Yachendra and V.V. Rajagopal Yachendra. The father of the above two gentleman, the Raja (king) of Venkatagiri who died in 1971, was an earnest devotee of Swami. The family had many interactions with Swami in the 50's and 60's which are described in detail. It also describes some visits of Swami to Venkatagiri in those days.

*[Ravi: Here's some info. about Venkatagiri: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venkatagiri>. Here's a conversation that Prof. G. Venkatraman of Radio Sai had with Gopal Krishna Yachendra: [http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol\\_03/11NOV01/venkatagiri.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_03/11NOV01/venkatagiri.htm). Swami's words on the Raja of Venkatagiri, Gopal Krishna's father (above page has his photographs and this quotation) on 18th Feb. 1964, "Venkatagiri has been, for centuries, the seat of a Royal family dedicated to the support, protection, and the promotion of Dharma. Consider how many temples have been built or renovated and maintained by its munificence! Take count of the Vedic Pandits [scholars] the family has patronised so far, and the number of religious books its donations have helped to reach the masses. See the interest the family takes even now, for the uplift of temples and mutts [religious establishments], although their State and status have been overwhelmed by the storm of political change."*

*The above article also states, "The Rajah it was who used to organise festivals in Puttaparthi in those days (50's and early 60's perhaps?), and provide all the necessary arrangements. Swami often speaks nostalgically of the Rajah, describing him as a loyal devotee next only to Hanuman – that is extra-ordinarily high praise, coming from Bhagavan."*

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#### **Chapter 10 - ASK FOR WHATEVER YOU WANT, Chapter 11 - HE VANISHED BEFORE HIS DEVOTEES' VERY EYES, Chapter 12 - YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN IT & Chapter 13 - FIGS FROM ANY TREE - Notes**

These have the interviews of the Kuppam Radhakrishna family. They have delightful accounts of the utterly mind-boggling miracles Swami, as a boy/young man, performed in the 40's and 50's. Chapter 12 has Baba answering in

response to a request for a miracle, 'I show you something, and you still do not believe in the miracle. What am I then to do? You should learn how to do this for yourself. It is possible. But even then you will not be able to explain it to others. You can only enjoy it.'

[Ravi: Here's a Radio Sai interview of Smt. Gayatri Gupta, the niece of Smt. Vijaya Hemchand, the person interviewed in Chapter 11 of the book, [http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol\\_10/01AUG12/04\\_gayatri\\_01.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol_10/01AUG12/04_gayatri_01.htm)]

#### **Chapter 14 - ENJOY THESE DAYS NOW & Chapter 15 - THE SINGERS - Notes**

These have the interviews of Mrs. Kamala Sarathy and the famous Carnatic music singers B.V.Raman & B.V.Lakshmanan ([http://tyagaraja-aradhana-calicut.org/p\\_ogramme/inaugurations-to-date/b-v-raman-and-b-v-lakshmanan/](http://tyagaraja-aradhana-calicut.org/p_ogramme/inaugurations-to-date/b-v-raman-and-b-v-lakshmanan/), <http://www.hindu.com/fr/2006/12/01/stories/2006120102450600.htm>). They mainly cover the period of late 40s, 50s and early 60s.

[Ravi: Here's a Radio Sai interview of Mrs. Prema Bose, daughter of Mrs. Kamala Sarathy, [http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol\\_09/01NOV11/05\\_prema\\_bose.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol_09/01NOV11/05_prema_bose.htm).]

#### **Chapter 16 - AN EX-DEVOTEE & Chapter 17 - THE ABANDONED BROTHER - Notes**

These chapters try to bring a balance to the book by having interviews of those who were close to Swami at one point of time but later moved away and had become somewhat critical of Swami. They have the interviews of Mr. Varadu and Mr. Krishna. They mainly cover the period of late 40s to early 50s. An important point to note is that both the critics, Varadu and Krishna, who had acted as Swami's personal attendants and so knew intimate details about Swami at physical level, considered his miraculous materialization of objects as genuine.

#### **Chapter 18 - BABA'S SPIRITUAL DISCIPLE - Notes**

This has the interview of Mr. Raja Reddy who was a personal attendant and close associate of Swami. He lived in Puttaparthi from 1956 to 1973 (after finishing his studies in Economics). Raja Reddy says that a (any) person's mind is an open book to Swami (i.e. Swami would know what is going on within the (any) person's mind). Raja Reddy then quotes Swami as saying, 'I am just a reflection, reaction and resound'. If one thinks he (Swami) is big then he is big, if one thinks he is a child then he is a child, and if one thinks he is a naughty fellow then he is a naughty fellow!

Haraldsson asks Raja Reddy about cases when Swami said that a person will get cured but that did not happen. Reddy acknowledges such cases. He says that Swami would not like an anxious person to leave him in an unhappy state of mind. Reddy implied that Swami would want to make such a man happy even if (later) the "man misunderstands him, calls him something, does not believe in him and so on".

Mr. Reddy also suggests that "firmly rooted" faith may result in Swami's words about cure/healing come true whereas "a shaken faith" may result in the cure/healing not happening.

[Ravi: Here's a Radio Sai interview of Raja Reddy: Part-1: [http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol\\_05/01OCT07/14-h2h\\_special.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_05/01OCT07/14-h2h_special.htm), Part-2: [http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol\\_05/01NOV07/14-h2h\\_special.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_05/01NOV07/14-h2h_special.htm). It is very noteworthy that Mr. Raja Reddy had such a strong spiritual inclination that after finishing his Economics studies from the prestigious Loyola college in Madras, <http://www.loyolacollege.edu/> (a Jesuit institution), instead of taking up a regular well-paid job, he chose to stay with Swami for the next 17 to 18 years! I am quite sure, during those days, he would not have been receiving salary commensurate with his educational qualifications. I think Haraldsson has chosen a very appropriate title for the chapter by referring to Raja Reddy as Swami's spiritual disciple though I don't know whether Swami referred to him as such. Swami's standards in these matters seemed to be very, very, very high!

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*It must also be noted that later Mr. Raja Reddy got married, had a son and lived in Bombay/Mumbai. Haraldsson writes that Mr. Raja Reddy passed away in 2010.]*

#### **Chapter 19 - A WESTERNER IN INDIA: DR ROERICH - Notes**

This chapter has the interview with Dr. Svetaslov Roerich, a famous Russian painter settled in India, who was awarded the Padma Bhushan, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svetoslav\\_Roerich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svetoslav_Roerich). It includes details of Sai

experiences of his wife, Devika Rani, movie star (1930s), who was awarded the Padma Shri as well as the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devika\\_Rani](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devika_Rani). Devika Rani was a co-founder of Bombay Talkies film studio, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombay\\_Talkies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombay_Talkies), along with her then husband Himanshu Rai, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himanshu\\_Rai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himanshu_Rai).

This chapter is followed by 6 pages of photographs of Swami, Haraldsson and many of the persons interviewed or mentioned in the earlier chapters.

## Chapter 20 - THE INDIAN CRITICS - Notes

This chapter describes in quite some detail the challenge to Swami issued by Dr. Narasimhaiah, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hosur\\_Narasimhaiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hosur_Narasimhaiah), Nuclear Physicist, Fulbright scholar and vice-chancellor of Bangalore university when the challenge was issued in 1976 (and 1977). Swami seems to have ignored the challenge and mentioned to the Times of India that, "Narasimhaiah's approach was improper, that is why I reject it. The formula that nothing can be created out of nothing is appropriate to the limited field and dimensions of science. It does not at all apply to the transcendental field and dimensions of spirituality".

This challenge seems to have resulted in "widely publicized controversy that raged in the newspapers for several months".

Haraldsson had two interviews with Narasimhaiah. Haraldsson states that Narasimhaiah had never observed Swami do any materialization but was still convinced that the materialization of Swami was not genuine!

This chapter also mentions the transformation of Blitz publisher (& editor), Mr. R.K. Karanjia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russi\\_Karanjia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russi_Karanjia), from critic to believer after having an interview with Swami, about which he wrote in the Blitz in 1976. Interestingly, Haraldsson had an interview with Mr. Karanjia.

It also mentions two famous rationalist critics of Swami:

- Abraham T. Koor, botanist,  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham\\_Koor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Koor),
- Basava Premanand,  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basava\\_Premanand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basava_Premanand),  
owner-publisher-editor of The Indian Skeptic magazine (whose publication now seems to have been discontinued), and the  
founder of Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation\\_of\\_Indian\\_Rationalist\\_Associations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_of_Indian_Rationalist_Associations)

Neither of the above, Haraldsson writes, had actually met Swami (they may have tried to meet Swami but like in Narasimhaiah's case Swami may have declined to meet them due to improper approach) but were still strongly critical of his materializations!

Haraldsson concludes in this chapter that neither the Indian rationalist-challengers nor himself and Dr. Osis succeed in their wish to formally investigate Swami's miracles and so no formal experiments were conducted on Swami's miracles. Haraldsson writes further that, however, a "wealth of anecdotal evidence and observations" regarding Swami's miracles exists. [<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/anecdotal> gives the meaning of 'anecdotal' as "Based on casual observations or indications rather than rigorous or scientific analysis".]

*[Ravi: What I find striking in this chapter is the "science fundamentalism/science fanaticism" or "rationalist fundamentalism/rationalist fanaticism" of these three famous Indian "rationalist" critics of Swami - Narasimhaiah, Koor & Premanand (btw all three have passed away). They seem to have pronounced that the miracles were not genuine without having proved that they (taken as a whole) were not genuine! Their challenge not being accepted does not*

*mean that the miracles were not genuine. I think it is the intellectual arrogance of these kind of scientists and rationalists that makes them jump to such wrong conclusions. In my humble opinion, what Narasimhaiah, Kovoov & Premanand could have truthfully stated is that they have no scientific evidence of Swami's miracles and hence they are not able to accept it as genuine, and that they are not in a position to state that these miracles (taken as a whole) are not genuine as they have not examined them, let alone proved them (taken as a whole) to be not genuine.]*

#### **Chapter 21 - SOME NOTEWORTHY NUMBERS - Notes**

Haraldsson collected data systematically from most of the interviewees (including ex-devotees) of earlier chapters by having them answer a multiple-choice questionnaire of over 100 items. Most of the questions were about their specific experiences (number of times they have had experience) of Swami's miracles. The chapter has a kind of overview of various type of materialization and some other miracles of Swami.

Haraldsson reports that some respondents had told him that Baba's usual answer about where his materializations came from was, 'It comes from Sai Stores.' But to one person Baba said, 'Sometimes it is created, sometimes it is brought (apported from somewhere).' The term apport is explained by Haraldsson (and one respondent) as objects existing somewhere "and that through some paranormal power Baba was able to make them disappear at that place and suddenly appear in his hand or wherever he willed them to appear".

#### **Chapter 22 - A FEW PARALLELS - Notes**

Haraldsson draws some parallels between miracles of Jesus Christ and Baba. He then mentions psychic capabilities of mediums like D.D. Home, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel\\_Dunglas\\_Home](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Dunglas_Home) and Indridi Indridason, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indridi\\_Indridason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indridi_Indridason), and comments that Baba's "physical phenomena" were different (had only a slight resemblance). Some other notable mediums of the West are also mentioned, some of whom could apport objects. He then mentions a report published in a Chinese scientific journal which claimed 'apport' of objects had been achieved but which also stated that its results were "preliminary".

Haraldsson concludes this chapter saying that a century of psychic research has not been able to provide solid evidence that objects can be created from nowhere and remain existing (for some significant amount of time). Many claims of apport and materialization have been found to be not genuine. But some, like those mentioned in this chapter, Haraldsson writes, "may be considered genuine".

#### **Chapter 23 - MANIFESTATIONS OF RELIGIOUS MYTHS AND SYMBOLS - Notes**

The manifestations of Hindu symbols like vibhuti on Swami's body as well as photographs of Swami is discussed. A comparison of some sort is made with Christian stigmatics. [Ravi: From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stigmata>: "Stigmata (singular stigma) is a term used by members of the Christian faith to describe body marks, sores, or sensations of pain in locations corresponding to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ, such as the hands, wrists, and feet."].

Sudden manifestation of fragrance associated with Baba is mentioned along with similar 'odour of sanctity' reportedly associated with Christian saints & mystics.

#### **Chapter 24 - RAISING THE DEAD? - Notes**

Claimed healing miracles of Baba, including raising of the dead, are mentioned but not really examined as Haraldsson was not medically trained and so felt it inappropriate to attempt a proper examination of these reported miracles.

Page 250 of the chapter mentions that Howard Murphet in his "Man of Miracles" book writes that Baba told Kasturi 'to put the word "dead" in inverted commas', when writing about Radhakrishna being brought back to life from death. Haraldsson writes that this indicates that Baba did not confirm the death of Radhakrishna.

[Ravi: I think a common Indian English practice, which seems to be erroneous, is to use quotation marks and inverted commas for emphasis. And it is not limited to India. The wiki on Quotation mark, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quotation\\_mark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quotation_mark), states, "Quotation marks are sometimes used to provide emphasis, although this is usually considered incorrect."

*I think Baba would have wanted dead to be in quotes (inverted commas) for emphasis rather than casting doubt on the event. Baba would look upon doubt as anathema/poisonous and has, in many discourses, talked about the great danger of doubt in the spiritual/religious path. So, I for one, simply cannot accept that Baba would have asked Kasturi to bring an element of doubt in an account of a famous miracle of his. If he did not want people to believe in the raising from the dead miracle he would have simply asked Kasturi to omit the account.*

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*I think most Indians who read Kasturi's account will view the quoted word, dead, as the emphasised word, dead, rather than doubt being cast on the person having been dead.*

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A relevant link: [http://alt-usage-english.org/quotes\\_for\\_emphasis.html](http://alt-usage-english.org/quotes_for_emphasis.html)

-

A correspondent wrote in response to the above:

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*Your position is well taken. Another explanation could also be - "When is a person really dead? There is also a view in some ancient culture that real death happens only when the soul finds an alternate residence or merges with the infinite consciousness". Krishna talks about it extensively in the Bhagavat Gita when he says that "it is only the body that dies and not the soul".*

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— end correspondent response —

*From around 09:40 till around 15:05 in the youtube video, "Man of Miracles? Rod Serling and Sai Baba - The Lost Investigation", <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJYgXXvRSec>, 49 min. 30 sec, Walter Cowan speaks about his death and then re-entering his body. Seeing Walter Cowan himself relate it makes the revival-from-clinical-death/NDE (Near Death Experience) + Swami miracle far more believable, IMHO. Here's the account from John Hislop's book, My Baba and I, [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/devotees\\_experiences/Resurrection\\_WalterCowan.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/devotees_experiences/Resurrection_WalterCowan.htm). ]*

## **Chapter 25 - THE DAZZLING LIGHT - Notes**

This chapter deals with the dazzling light miracle of Swami in the 40s. It also mentions that Christian religious literature has many accounts of light shining from religious figures including Jesus Christ himself. Interestingly Haraldsson mentions a Russian (Orthodox church) saint who is credited with a similar light shining account, Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seraphim\\_of\\_Sarov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seraphim_of_Sarov). Some Catholic saints too are credited with such "luminous phenomena".

*[Ravi: I found this sentence from the above wiki page of Seraphim of Sarov very interesting: 'Perhaps Seraphim's most popular quotation amongst Orthodox believers is "Acquire a peaceful spirit, and thousands around you will be saved."' end-wiki-extract. Not only the one who acquires a peaceful spirit but thousands around that person! I think these peaceful spirit persons are sorely lacking in the 21st century rush-rush world of today.]*

## **Chapter 26 - TELEPORTATION, SWIFT MOVEMENTS OR WHAT? - Notes**

This chapter discusses the "sudden or instantaneous movements from one place to another" of Baba mostly in the late 40s. It mentions that journals of psychical research have reported such teleportation by some mediums like Indridi Indridason. There are also reports of levitation (rising in the air) of some mediums as well as the Catholic saint, St. Joseph of Copertino (1603-1663).

[Ravi: I found St. Joseph of Cupertino, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_of\\_Cupertino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_of_Cupertino), to be a very unusual saint. Here are some extracts from the wiki page:

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*"He was said to have been remarkably unclever, but prone to miraculous levitation and intense ecstatic visions that left him gaping."*

...

*"Joseph began to experience ecstatic visions as a child, which were to continue throughout his life, and made him the object of scorn. His life was not helped by his frequent outbursts of anger."*

...

*"Feeling drawn to religious life, in 1620 he applied to the Conventual Franciscan friars, but was rejected by them due to his lack of education. He then applied to the Capuchin friars in Martino, near Taranto, by whom he was accepted in 1620 as a laybrother, but was soon dismissed as his continued ecstasies made him unfit for the duties required of him."*

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*After Joseph returned to the scorn of his family, he pleaded with the Conventual friars near Cupertino to be allowed to serve in their stables. After several years of working there, he had so impressed the friars with the devotion and simplicity of his life that he was admitted as to their Order, destined to become a Catholic priest, in 1625. He was ordained a priest on March 28, 1628.*

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*After this point, the occasions of ecstasy in Joseph's life began to multiply. It was claimed that he began to levitate while participating at the Mass or joining the community for the Liturgy of the Hours, thereby gaining a widespread reputation of holiness among the people of the region and beyond. He was deemed disruptive by his religious superiors and Church authorities, however, and eventually was confined to a small cell, forbidden from joining in any public gathering of the community. He passed the last 35 years of his life following this regimen."*

...

*"Joseph was beatified in 1753 and canonized in 1763. He has been declared the patron saint of air travelers, aviators, astronauts, people with a mental handicap, test takers, and poor students."*

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— end wiki extracts —

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*I think most spiritual geniuses/saints/mystics get widely misunderstood by society in general, and as they typically do not perform normal roles in society well, they earn the scorn of normal people. Many times they are not so intellectually smart which makes it easier for normal people to persecute them. St. Joseph was confined to a small cell for the last 35 years of his life! Why? Because his ecstasies and levitation miracles caused 'disruption'! Or was it jealousy among the church authorities who would have been far smarter than him with far better educational qualifications but lacked his piety, the vital spiritual/religious quality, and so did not experience ecstasies or perform levitation miracles? I wouldn't be surprised if jealousy was at least part of the reason.*

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*Another interesting aspect for me is that his lack of education (as he was not so intellectually smart) prevented him from being accepted as a priest initially. He had to plead to be given some humble work (serving in their stables), and then impress the authorities with his work & devotion to be made a priest eventually.*

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I think, over time, spiritual organizations tend to fall in the trap of favouring worldly education over spiritual piety/calibre. The bigger the organization the more easily, perhaps, they get trapped into revering worldly/secular education instead of spiritual piety/calibre as the latter is not easy to appreciate let alone measure. The net result being that eventually such spiritual organizations may become very much like secular/worldly organizations and move far away from the spiritual organization founder's vision!]

### **Chapter 27 - BILOCATION? - Notes**

The phenomenon of Baba appearing/being in two places at the same time is covered in this chapter. Mainly two cases in Kerala are discussed. Haraldsson also mentions that the Italian monk, Padre Pio, is reported to have shown bilocation capability.

### **Chapter 28 - EXTRASENSORY PERCEPTION - Notes**

This chapter mainly deals with the "mind-reading" and future prediction aspects of Baba.

This chapter is followed by 4 pages of photographs.

### **Chapter 29 - BABA'S REACTION - Notes**

This chapter has the reaction of Baba and others to the first edition of this book published in 1987. Haraldsson visited Puttappathi in end September 1988 and was able to hand Baba a copy of the book at Darshan time, saying that it was "A gift for Swami". Haraldsson, very frankly, writes that Baba indicated that he did not like the emphasis on miracles and said loudly so that others could also hear, "some books, not right information".

Haraldsson writes that in an interview Baba gave him (along with some others not associated with Haraldsson) a few days later (October 3rd 1988), Baba remarked that scientists did not believe in the importance of purity, or in mind, or divinity or atman. They only believed in bodies. Haraldsson acknowledges that Baba has a valid point as most scientists consider matter to be supreme and "consider mind an off spring of the brain's activity which is hence extinguished at the moment of death". In other words, most scientists believe in bodies. [Ravi: *This small exchange captures the essence of the spirituality vs. science debate very well, IMHO. Swami's teachings are focused on purifying the mind and improving the human values in the mind, with the body being just an instrument/vessel which would be discarded on death by the 'soul' (subtle body, rather) and this subtle body would usually take on a new gross body (unless the person gets liberated in which case there is no rebirth). (Current mainstream) science closes the chapter at death and is clueless about what happens to the individual's personality afterwards! Some scientists, including at least one very distinguished rationalist-type scientist, rather than accepting that they are clueless about it, foolishly and arrogantly **declare** that the personality also gets finished at death (and decay) of the body.*]

In the same interview, Baba then commented on Haraldsson's book. He told Haraldsson that he (Haraldsson) "was a good and educated man, but

had not spoken to the right people" and that he had been misinformed in some cases. Baba was critical of Varadu and Krishna, referring to them as rowdies. Very interestingly, Baba said that most people, especially Indians, come to him for some selfish purposes - which was OK; Baba did not complain about it - but if their selfish purposes do not get fulfilled they leave (the implication being that some of such people then become critical and provide misinformation about Baba). Baba "emphasised that he never asks anyone for anything". Baba also said that Westerners come to him usually for a spiritual purpose (as compared to most Indians coming to him).

Baba praised Kamala Sarathy and Kasturi, and asked Haraldsson to meet Narasimhan (then editor of Sanathana Sarathi).

Baba then told Haraldsson, "I am also human" but also added that we are all God. Baba mentioned his hip accident and told Haraldsson that it had been an accident - he had not taken on illness of a devotee. Baba then said, in spite of the pain, I still continue. [Ravi: *So, right from the late 80s, Swami seems to have suffered physical-level pain but*

not talked about it openly. He suppressed and ignored his pain for the sake of his then and future devotees, one of them being me (I got drawn into the Sathya Sai orbit in the 90s)! How grateful we must be to Bhagavan for ceaselessly working for our social and spiritual uplift even when he was in physical pain which would have incapacitated ordinary persons! If ever one wanted a shining example of "Paropakartham Idam Sareeram (This body is meant to serve others)", <http://www.saidarshan.org/baba/docs/d010414.html>, I think an outstanding example is particularly the last few decades of Baba's life when he valiantly fought his physical body challenges and ailments, simply to serve others. Of course, his whole life is a saga of service but I think his urge to serve humanity in the face of bodily challenges really comes to the fore in the last decades of his life.]

Haraldsson also writes about a blissful experience at Darshan time, a couple of days later. Baba gives him a warm friendly smile and moves on. Then Haraldsson felt something "like a wave of inner warmth that came over me with such sweetness, that I had to control myself not to shed tears".

Interestingly the chapter states that several Western scholarly journals published good reviews of the 1987 edition of this book. Two distinguished scientists of the field of psychology who published good reviews of this 1987 edition are:

1) Prof. Hans J. Eysenck, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans\\_Eysenck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Eysenck), "Professor of Psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London (a constituent college of the federal University of London), from 1955 to 1983". The wiki page also states that "At the time of his death, Eysenck was the living psychologist most frequently cited in science journals" (he died in 1997). Prof. Eysenck wrote about the book, "Well worth reading for the interest of the topic, the man, and the puzzle it presents".

2) Prof. Ian Stevenson, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian\\_Stevenson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_Stevenson), "Ian Pretyman Stevenson (October 31, 1918 – February 8, 2007) was a Canadian psychiatrist. He worked for the University of Virginia School of Medicine for 50 years, as chair of the department of psychiatry from 1957 to 1967, Carlson Professor of Psychiatry from 1967 to 2001, and Research Professor of Psychiatry from 2002 until his death." Prof. Stevenson refers to the book as "the first book about Sai Baba that we can fairly characterize as scientific, because he has assembled evidence from eyewitnesses of the phenomena" and as a "grounding monograph".

The chapter concludes with the information that the book had, till February 2013, "been published in eleven languages and seventeen editions". [Ravi: I am quite certain that this new/updated book will also eventually get published in several languages and be widely distributed and read.]

### **Chapter 30 - WHAT DOES HE TEACH? - Notes**

Swami himself as well as some readers of the 1987 edition of this book complained about lack of enough coverage of Swami's spiritual teachings in the book. Swami specifically told Haraldsson that "it was his message that mattered, not his miracles". Haraldsson's stand was that his focus was on Swami's miracles and that other books like the many volumes of Sathya Sai Speaks and the Vahini series cover Swami's message. However, this chapter seems to be a good effort to address the above complaint.

The chapter has quotations/aphorisms (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/aphorism>: "A tersely phrased statement of a truth or opinion") of Swami on Love, Faith, God, Prayer, Discipline etc. Haraldsson also mentions the eclectic (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/eclectic>: "Selecting or employing individual elements from a variety of sources, systems, or styles") nature of Swami's teachings, "emphasizing the unity of the essence of religious faith, basically stating that it does not matter to which faith you belong as long as you are a good member of your religion".

One quotation of Swami that I found striking in this chapter, especially in the context of this book which is mainly about Swami's paranormal powers/miracles, is:

"Really, the power that man holds in himself is unsurpassed; no other created being has it. For, he is the living image of God, the precious casket enshrining the Divine itself. If you are weak, grief stricken and ignorant, the fault is yours; do not blame others; you have not tapped the spring of God within you. This is the sin, the turning of the blind eye to this patent fact. Diagnose the faults in the eye, and have the blind spots or the cataract cured. You can do it, by prayer or by resorting to a Guru.



The inner nature of man is nearest to the nature of God.”

[Ravi: I am quite sure the "he" above is a generic term not limiting the quotation to males. I have heard/read many discourses of Swami where he has clearly said that women can also progress spiritually as much as men, and given instances of such spiritually evolved women from Hindu scriptural history.

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BTW this is the discourse from which the first paragraph above seems to have been taken, 11th May 1971, [http://askbaba.helloyou.ch/discourses/d1\\_971/d19710511-1.html](http://askbaba.helloyou.ch/discourses/d1_971/d19710511-1.html). I think it is very appropriate to mention the sentences prior to what has been quoted above. So here is the whole paragraph from the discourse:

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Have you connected your act of service with the reservoir of love in the heart? Are you doing it with God-consciousness? Or is it merely a superficial ceremonial routine act, done for publicity or personal pride? Really, the power that man holds in himself is unsurpassed; no other created being has it. For he is the living image of God, the precious casket enshrining the divine Itself. If you are weak, grief-stricken and ignorant, the fault is yours; do not blame others: you have not tapped the spring of God within you. This is the sin - the turning of the blind eye to this patent fact. Diagnose the faults in the eye, and have the blind spots or cataract cured. You can do it, by prayer or by resorting to a Guru.

— end discourse extract —

-

I am not surprised to note that Swami connected the act of service done with love/god-consciousness with power of God! Service with love was **\*the\*** path that he exemplified and wanted his devotees to follow.]

Another aphorism of Swami mentioned in the book, of particular interest to me:

”Truth is not mere factual accuracy regarding any event or object. This is truth in the worldly sense. But Truth in the spiritual sense transcends the categories of time and space and remains unchanged always. This transcendental Truth has to be inscribed in the heart. It is in the light of this truth that man should pursue the journey of life in the world.”

[Ravi: This is pure Vedanta (Upanishadic) philosophy from Swami, of which, IMHO, he demonstrated absolute mastery via his discourses and writings.

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To the blessed few/some who observed and realised it, Swami demonstrated pure Vedanta/Advaita via the most important aspect of actual experience that Swami would have of feelings and thoughts of others. Advaita (I am in you and you are in me; I am in all and all are in me) was not only a philosophy to him but a matter of direct, every day experience! For the blessed few/some who experienced this aspect of Swami, he (Swami) was not just a teacher of Advaita, but the accomplished spiritual master of Advaita (like accomplished masters of the performing arts who demonstrate their expertise via live performances and not (only) published articles & books).

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It needs a student (formal/informal) of Vedanta philosophy to get some understanding of Swami’s mastery of Vedanta.

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My understanding of Vedanta: The ultimate existential truth is the changeless is-ness (beingness/awareness) in each one of us. It is that same single changeless is-ness that projects this whole world (universe actually) of bewildering multiplicity (Maya/Mahamaya). Look outward and you get trapped into Maya. Calm the passions, still the thoughts and look inward to experience one’s changeless existential truth (which is the same existential truth in all).

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I think most intellectuals find such philosophy to be too ridiculously simple for them to accept that it could be the ultimate truth of existence! They perhaps are too much in love with their great minds to accept that the experience of

*ultimate existential reality comes from switching off their great mind, becoming thoughtless and plunging deep into their beingness (which is very, very difficult to do for most people, especially the intellectuals who are habituated to intense thinking, and may take years/decades/births of spiritual effort to achieve). They instead may be of the view that only a complex mental philosophy/science which only can be understood by great minds (like quantum physics or genetics) can lead them to the ultimate truth(s) of life. The mind, for them, it seems, holds the key to the truth, and they perhaps simply cannot come to terms with Vedanta philosophy which says that the outwardly attracted/directed mind is the problem, the thief, that has ensnared them and entangled them in the illusory and ever-changing cycle of worldly life and death (samsara). For the intellectual, it is the mind that gives him/her status, position and wealth in life. Giving up the mind would mean giving up status, position and wealth! That would be too terrifying and too absurd a proposition for most intellectuals, and so such intellectuals simply cannot accept, let alone experience, Advaita.]*

### **Chapter 31 - THE HYDERABAD TELEVISION INCIDENT - Notes**

This chapter covers the incident that Deccan Chronicle reported as "magic" i.e. not genuine materialization by Swami at a function in Hyderabad in August 1992. Haraldsson and a companion did a proper investigation of the matter and concluded that Deccan Chronicle's report is **not** "corroborated by the tape, or the picture they print".

Haraldsson and his companion published a scientific paper on the matter whose link is available in this post of this blog, "Scientific Paper that Debunks Deccan Chronicle 1992 Claim of Materialization Miracle Exposure", <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/2013/08/scientific-paper-that-debunks-deccan.htm> l.

### **Chapter 32 - THE WESTERN CRITICS - Notes**

This chapter has Haraldsson's views of the Western critics of Swami and Haraldsson's views of their criticism. Haraldsson mentions that his book (earlier editions) on Swami had attracted pro and anti Swami comments and this "controversy about Baba was far removed from a scientific discussion". Some critics of Baba gave a "one-sided and propagandistic" and "a distorted view of my book and my investigation of Baba".

Regarding one anti-Baba blogger Haraldsson writes that the blogger distorted Haraldsson's views "to suit his negative stance" and placed it "prominently on the internet".

Haraldsson writes that Sai Baba displayed the "the ability to awaken spiritual aspirations in other people" and "altruistic behavior" which are qualities that Western terminology uses for (expects in) saints. He writes that Sai Baba was a great fundraiser who "used the funds heaped upon him for the good of the general public". He also notes that Swami lived in a "small apartment" till the 1993 incident (i.e. had a very frugal lifestyle), was "highly dedicated to his work" and "was seeing devotees practically every day all his adult life".

About the crowd around Swami, Haraldsson writes, "Looking at it retrospectively, Sai Baba received his devotees as well as the curious dutifully, regularly and patiently." "Seen from outside he was almost like drowning in the ever-growing sea of devotees who all wanted something from him, many of them desperately."

Haraldsson mentions that Sai Baba had greatness and charisma "that made him rise from life in a remote primitive village in the middle of nowhere to an international celebrity". He had an enormous global following from the highest (Indian Presidents & Prime Ministers) to lowest strata (poor villagers) of society.

The chapter also covers some unproven allegations of a personal nature by some Western critics about Swami. Unfortunately Prof. Haraldsson and some others seem to have come under the sway of some Western media channels which sensationally publicised these unproven allegations. I strongly condemn some parts of this chapter.

Sathya Sai devotees will find these unproven allegations to be very objectionable and hence will not want to read this chapter or perhaps even read the book. They will also not want to recommend this book to others.

Haraldsson writes that Swami's charisma and ability to awaken spiritual aspirations in people as well as his reported undiminished miraculous phenomena over seven decades made him an outstanding "world-known celebrity". He then mentions the grand scale of welfare and service activities involving awakening of large scale generosity.

### **Chapter 33 - ATTEMPT ON SAI BABA'S LIFE? - Notes**

This chapter describes the unfortunate 1993 incident. Haraldsson writes that a newspaper account mentioned that the assailants were "aggrieved" that they or related persons were not given jobs or influential positions.

Haraldsson writes that a newspaper mentioned that the DGP of Andhra Pradesh gave the view, based on investigations, "that it was not an attempt on the life of Sai Baba." Haraldsson states that it is important to note that it was **not** an attempt on Sai Baba's life.

Haraldsson writes that Swami, in a discourse, nearly a month later, alluded "that it was all caused by jealousy".

#### **Chapter 34 - THE SEARCH FOR NORMAL EXPLANATIONS - Notes**

Haraldsson examines various normal explanations for Swami's miracles like hypnosis, accomplices, sleight of hand etc. and either rules them out or mentions that no solid evidence was found to support the "normal explanations".

#### **Chapter 35 - THE PELLET THEORY - Notes**

Haraldsson examines the view of some ex-student critic(s) of Swami who think that Swami would have used pellets of vibhuti. Haraldsson mentions instances where Swami materialized lots of vibhuti or other things like sweets which "refute the pellet theory". Haraldsson then mentions Baba's answer to a question on how he does his materialization: "I think and it is there."

Haraldsson mentions an experiment involving yeast growth where "intent of the mind (prayer or whatever)" increased the growth. He also talks about data available for the placebo effect. He then concludes, "Mind matters. How we think is indeed important."

#### **Chapter 36 - PERPLEXING OBSERVATIONS - Notes**

Haraldsson writes that he, along with a companion(s), has investigated two other Swamis (and one lady psychic) in India and "found clear evidence of sleight of hand and deception" in the two Swami cases, which was reported in scientific research papers they authored (in Journal of Scientific Exploration and Journal of the Society for Psychical Research).

Haraldsson followed up a claim by Rogo [Rogo, D.S. (1982). *Miracles: A Parascientific Inquiry into Wondrous Phenomena*. Dial Press, New York] that Sai Baba's materializations were not genuine "(When films taken of some of his exhibitions are slowed down, it is clear that he is quite an expert at sleight of hand.)", and found that Rogo's claim was not based on fact. Rogo himself had not seen any such film but based his views on comments from a Dr. May who told Haraldsson that he has not seen any film of/on Sai Baba!!! But Dr. May had filmed a woman in Bombay who he had shown to be clearly engaged in fraud. Haraldsson writes that Rogo "might have been referring" to the film of the woman in Bombay done by Dr. May. [Ravi: *It is quite amazing how supposedly serious para-scientific literature has outlandish critical statements made about Sai Baba's materialization miracles without any factual basis!*]

Mr. Doug Henning, famous Canadian magician, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doug\\_Henning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doug_Henning), and Dr. Karlis Osis, examined the films of Sai Baba (materializations) and concluded that "the films were too unclear to provide any evidence either for or against the sleight of hand hypothesis".

Haraldsson writes that Mr. Doug Henning stated that no magician can produce objects on demand. Haraldsson then gives cases where Sai Baba has produced objects on demand, and sometimes hot or sticky food items.

The chapter concludes that for bulk of the phenomena of Swami, natural explanations cannot be found and so, "Apparently, physical laws can be transcended by the human/spiritual mind."

#### **Chapter 37 - DISTANT PHENOMENA - Notes**

This chapter covers distant phenomena like vibhuti appearing (on photographs typically) at places far away from where Swami was physically, and devotees hearing Swami's voice when Swami physically was far away from them. It also mentions the vibhuti and amrith appearance currently (Feb. 2013) on some photographs in the shed used by Seva Dal for preparing and storing food to be distributed to poor villagers, which was seen by Haraldsson and his colleague when they visited Puttaparthi in Feb. 2013.

## Chapter 38 - PASSING ON - Notes

This chapter describes the last period of Swami's life and the "passing on" (Mahasamadhi) of Swami.

Towards the bottom of Page 355 of the book Haraldsson writes that one observer told him that on 23rd Nov. 2010 (Swami's birthday), 'he wept (*wept*) like a child'. Haraldsson then tries to analyze why Swami did that. In this context, page 356 of the book has the following passage where a somewhat edited mail response of mine to Prof. Haraldsson is printed (anonymously):

When asked about this, one Indian who had spent much time with Baba, responded:

Swami was not a distant, dry, unemotional Upanishadic or Platonic God. He was an intensely emotional and hypersensitive God who would respond to the pull of a deeply emotional plea or prayer from a devotee. I think I can say that he gave far more importance to emotions than dry analytical thought. And sometimes he too become emotional, especially during the last years of his life, say the last decade.

— end passage from Page 356 of the book —

The email exchange from which the above edited response of mine is taken happened in March 2013. Here are the relevant email extracts:

Prof. Haraldsson wrote: Any thoughts about why Swami "cried like a (child)" at his last darshan? [*Ravi: I have substituted the word 'child' instead of the actual word Prof. Haraldsson used in his question.*]

I (Ravi) responded: I missed the last Sai Kulwant Hall Darshan (incidentally today is the 2nd anniversary of his last darshan, 25th March). So I don't know about his "crying" then. Neither have I heard about it.

But I have observed him being moved to tears quite often during the last years of his life. He had become very emotional, people told me, as compared to his earlier years.

If he did get moved to tears during his last darshan, I think it could be because he knew that it was the last darshan but felt it not proper to tell his assembled devotees about it. He had very deep love for his devotees, especially the long standing committed ones. He must have known how they were going to suffer emotionally in the coming days. He himself may have felt the pangs of physical separation from his devotees at physical level which he knew had to happen. These may have moved him to tears, if he did "cry" at the last Darshan.

He was very much a loving & doting mother to his assembled devotees during the last days. Any loving mother, if she knew that she would be parting ways with her beloved children, would have cried. Maybe that is why Swami was moved to tears (if he did "cry"). [IMHO, Swami was not a distant, dry, unemotional Upanishadic/Platonic God. He was an intensely emotional and hypersensitive God who would respond to the pull of a deeply emotional plea/prayer from a devotee.]

[A day or two later I sent an update mail on this matter, relevant extract of which is given below]

Small update:

I checked with a couple of people today whether Swami "cried like a (child)" during his last darshan at Kulwant Hall. Both said that he did not cry that day. One said that his face seemed sad and tired (or something like that).

Another matter. I had written earlier:

"[IMHO, Swami was not a distant, dry, unemotional Upanishadic/Platonic God. He was an intensely emotional and hypersensitive God who would respond to the pull of a deeply emotional plea/prayer from a devotee.]"

I would like to restate the intensely emotional part. He gave far more importance to feelings than thought. So I think I can say that he gave far more importance to emotions than dry analytical thought. And sometimes he too become emotional, especially during the last years of his life (say last decade).

But he could also be a very calm judge like person when the occasion demanded it, and not get moved by desperate pleas made by a person whom he felt did not deserve his mercy/Grace. I was told today by a student-turned-staff who,

I believe, has spent over two and a half decades in Puttaparhi and had numerous interactions with Swami, that in his earlier years (prior to last decade) he was less outwardly emotional than in the last decade. As I thought about what the student-turned-staff said I felt it blended well into what I have heard from others about earlier years of Swami.

— end extract of mail exchange between Prof. Haraldsson and me in March 2013 —

After examining the edited response of mine in Prof. Haraldsson's book I feel the following would be a better presentation of my view of the matter:

Swami was not a distant, dry, unemotional Upanishadic or Platonic God. He was a hypersensitive God who would respond to the pull of a deeply emotional plea or prayer from a devotee. I think I can say that he gave far more importance to emotions (feelings) than dry analytical thought. But he could also be a very calm judge like person when the occasion demanded it, and not get moved by desperate pleas made by a person whom he felt did not deserve his mercy/Grace. It should also be said that sometimes he too became very emotional, especially during the last years of his life, say the last decade.

— end better  
presentation  
of my view —

Haraldsson covers the full state honours accorded to Swami, and the dignitaries who paid their respects. He also mentions that Swami's passing away was covered by most of the top world media channels (print & TV).

Prof. Anantharaman's (SSSIHL faculty and now Media Co-ordinator, SSSCT) Padanamaskar account in March 2011 is given when Swami, while giving him permission to take Padanamaskar, told him, 'yes, this will be your last chance'. Prof. Anantharaman thought that Swami was hinting that something might happen to him (Prof. Anantharaman). But now we know that the hint was about Swami himself passing on!

Towards the end of the chapter, Prof. Haraldsson writes that he and a colleague (Dr. Joop Houtkooper) visited Prashanti Nilayam ashram in February 2013 and noted that the ashram "is still very much alive".

### **Chapter 39 - THE QUESTION OF PROOF - Notes**

This chapter gives an overview of various observations by Haraldsson himself of Sai Baba's miracles and some miracles reported by a photographer of Baba from 1984 to 1991.

Then it moves to the interesting point about proof regarding such psychic phenomena. Science traditionally uses experiments to confirm that phenomena are genuine. As Sai Baba did not permit experiments that path was closed. However judicial systems "have evolved interrogation and corroboration of witnesses, investigating relevant contemporary documents and so on, as ways of accruing evidence". But human testimony does have weaknesses due to which courts "rely primarily on the quantity of testimony and on consensus of witnesses". That has been the approach taken, Haraldsson writes, by him and his colleagues (in this book).

Haraldsson states that numerous followers including ex-devotees who have extensively observed Sai Baba give a general consensus about the genuineness of materializations of Baba.

### **Chapter 40 - HOW TO EXPLAIN: A FINAL LOOK - Notes**

Haraldsson attempts to give some explanations about Swami and Swami's miraculous phenomena. He quotes Kasturi on Swami, "divine he is but also very human". Haraldsson states that Swami had the spiritual uplift side and the miraculous phenomena side.

Haraldsson gives some details about the service rendered by Swami's two super speciality hospitals, the two general hospitals, educational institutions, Sri Sathya Sai central trust, drinking water project, huge Seva Dal organization and Easwamma women's welfare trust. He also writes about huge donations made by many wealthy people to Sai Baba's organization and says that such donors would have been deeply impressed by their meetings with Sai Baba. Some donors experienced miraculous phenomena of Sai Baba.

Haraldsson writes that Swami had a "strong ruler/disciplinarian nature" and that Haraldsson was reminded of what he thought Napoleon would have been, when he saw Swami. He notes that there was "something herculean about him" due to which he (Swami) was considered as an Avatar by many followers.

Haraldsson puts forward a "a few speculative hypotheses regarding the causes and nature of the mysterious phenomena around Sai Baba" and examines their validity. **Haraldsson writes that some of the phenomena could have a "normal explanation" but not the bulk of them. Haraldsson states that the hypothesis that Baba had psychic powers which allowed him to "produce various phenomena when he wants to" is supported by an "endless number of observations and experiences" and so has to be accepted for bulk of the phenomena.**

One of the hypotheses is that psychic powers may be induced in devotees of Sai Baba by their faith in him and his (Sai Baba's) power to produce vibhuti which may result in vibhuti being produced on photographs of Sai Baba (in the devotees' houses/places).

Haraldsson concludes the chapter and book (regular text part) by stating that Sai Baba gave millions of people new ideals or restored their faith in old ideals. He then states that Sai Baba "left behind, particularly in India, a great legacy and large institutions which will serve its people for generations to come".

This chapter is followed by 3 pages of photographs. Then follows References and Index.

### **Chapters Most Sai Devotees May Not Want to Read**

As part of the concluding notes, I must mention that Haraldsson's book has some interviews of critics of Swami, some Western unproven allegations etc. Swami did not like the critical content in the 1987 edition of the book but perhaps felt that the book overall was okay as he spoke to Haraldsson (after the book was published) and gave him interviews.

I think even with this new/updated book Swami would not be happy with the critical part. However, I think the academic & intellectual community will treat work like this as serious academic work only if criticism is also covered.

In my view, most Sathya Sai devotees will be uncomfortable reading the Swami critics part and some other critical parts of the book, and so may want to skip reading the chapters covering such material (some may even not want to read the book). I have tried to put down from my memory & notes the chapters which most Sai devotees would want to skip:

Chapter 16 - AN EX-DEVOTEE

Chapter 17 - THE ABANDONED BROTHER

Chapter 20 - THE INDIAN CRITICS

Chapter 24 - RAISING THE DEAD?

Chapter 32 - THE WESTERN CRITICS [Most Sathya Sai devotees will surely want to skip this chapter.]

Chapter 35 - THE PELLET THEORY

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### **Can the Skeptical Scientist Experience Spiritual Miracles/Divine Grace? (2013-08-31 18:25)**

I think, as a "skeptical scientist" is expected to be skeptical about everything, the answer is, typically, No.

As I understand it, spiritual miracles like materialization, healing and visions need intense faith in a person/deity/formless Divinity (God) for the miracles to happen, usually. But the "skeptical scientist" is expected to be skeptical about everything! That, IMHO, would not allow him/her, usually, to develop intense faith in God. So the "skeptical scientist" will, usually, not experience spiritual miracles/Divine Grace.

The wiki page on scientific skepticism, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific\\_skepticism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_skepticism), states, 'Scientific skepticism (also spelled scepticism) is the practice of questioning whether claims are supported by empirical research and

have reproducibility, as part of a methodological norm pursuing "the extension of certified knowledge". It credits Carl Sagan, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Sagan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Sagan), famous US astronomer, astrophysicist and cosmologist, with the term, 'scientific skepticism'.

The wiki page further states "Scientific skeptics do not assert that unusual claims should be automatically rejected out of hand on a priori grounds - rather they argue that claims of paranormal or anomalous phenomena should be critically examined and that extraordinary claims would require extraordinary evidence in their favor before they could be accepted as having validity."

If a scientist has faith in miraculous power of Divinity without having objective and extraordinary evidence of miraculous/supernatural/paranormal powers of Divinity, then, according to the above view of scientific skepticism, that person is not a skeptical scientist. You can't be both - a skeptical scientist and a person of faith in God (as there is no validated scientific evidence of Divine power)! Either you be a skeptical scientist OR you have faith in Divinity!

I beg to disagree with the above either-or choice arising out of the scientific skepticism wiki page views, though I am not a scientist, let alone a skeptical scientist (I am a software technologist who has a Physics graduate degree (1983)). IMHO, a person can wear multiple hats in his/her life. So while one is wearing the scientist hat one can be skeptical about the scientific area that one is investigating and demand reproducible and objective evidence for any scientific claims. But the same person, after he/she has finished the scientific area investigation, can remove the skeptical scientist hat and wear the hat of faith in God whose power encompasses the whole of human and non-human existence, as against the limited realm of science, and enjoy the wonderful benefits of such faith.

[Please note that I am not saying that such a scientist needs to be a disbeliever in God while doing scientific investigation. He/she may continue to actively have that faith in God while doing scientific investigation in the area of their work without that faith in God reducing their rigour for objectivity and reproducibility for any scientific work they are involved with.]

I think many scientists who came into the orbit of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (or highly evolved spiritual masters/mystics across the world from various religions/no-religion) were extremely fortunate that they had individual/subjective experience of his Divine/Godly paranormal powers, even when they were skeptical, sometimes deeply skeptical, of Bhagawan's Divine powers. I view these acts of Swami as acts of phenomenal Grace showered on these skeptical scientists. These acts would have 'cured' many such scientists of their skepticism about God and allowed them to wear both hats of a scientist as well as a devotee of/believer in God.

I have been told that Swami was a mirror in which people could see their own reflections. In other words, as I understand it, a person with faith gets back a reflection of faith from Swami which would include Divine/paranormal experiences. But a person with doubt would (usually) get back doubts of his/her faith from Swami! I have heard Swami put this faith matter in a very simple but yet profoundly truthful way, in a discourse in Kulwanth Hall (some-time after Oct. 2002). He said if you say Yes (meaning you believe in him), Sai will respond Yes (shower Divine Grace on you). Here's a relevant quote from a 1968 Swami discourse, 'If you will accept me and say "Yes," I too will respond and say, "Yes, yes, yes." If you deny and say "No," I also echo "No." Come, examine, experience, have faith. This is the method of utilizing me.', <http://www.sathyasai.org/discour/1968/d681123.htm>. [Perhaps it is similar with other spiritual masters/mystics the world over.]

It is as simple as that! It doesn't need sophisticated science and technology; it just needs a "heart", in other words, emotional & intuitive part of mind, that believes in Him (or other forms of Divinity of various religions in the world or even formless aspect of Divinity) to experience Divine Grace/spiritual miracles.

## 1.2 September

### Science Fanaticism and Anti-Godmen/Anti-Religion Fanaticism of Some Indian Scientists (2013-09-16 18:35)

I thought a little reading of how some top scientists in India, let alone other parts of the world, viewed (and still view, I am quite sure) our dear Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Garu, and Bhagawan's holy miracles/paranormal acts, will show how vital Prof. Haraldsson's new book on Swami is, in setting the record straight about Bhagawan's miraculous powers. [To know more about Prof. Haraldsson's new book you may visit this post, "

Notes on Prof. Haraldsson's, Modern Miracles, July 2013, book on Sathya Sai Baba",

<http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2013/08/notes-on-prof-haraldssons-modern.html> .]

Here is the article published in The Hindu over two years ago after Bhagawan's Mahasamadhi, by Pushpa M. Bhargava, former Vice-Chairman, National Knowledge Commission, former member, National Security Advisory Board and former founder and Director, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, "The phenomenon of Satya Sai Baba", <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/the-phenomenon-of-satya-sai-baba/article2019362.ece>.

This top Indian scientist makes outrageous statements that display his ignorance:

a) "There is not a shred of evidence of rebirth; the very idea of rebirth goes against all of science. Every claimed case of rebirth that has been investigated has been shown to be fake."

[Ravi: My God! He is dismissing all the reincarnation evidence gathered by research done by parapsychologists (which, I presume, have been published in parapsychology journal articles) as "shown to be fake" without providing any supporting statements! Some big names in reincarnation research are Prof. Ian Stevenson, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian\\_Stevenson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_Stevenson), <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/reincarnation01.html>, Prof. Jim Tucker, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim\\_B.\\_Tucker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_B._Tucker), <http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/clinical/departments/psychiatry/sections/cspp/dops/staff/jimbio-page>, and the author of the Sathya Sai Baba book, Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur\\_Haraldsson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur_Haraldsson), <https://notendur.hi.is/erlendur/english/>. These are not names to scoff at! If somebody says that all their reincarnation cases have been shown to be fake then they better present some supporting statements.]

b) "In fact, no miracle has ever been performed by any one. All miracles attributed to religious leaders are inventions of the clergy."

[Ravi: What a shameful statement for a top scientist to make! What scientific or other evidence (like reliable witness accounts) does he have for his "fact" that no miracle has ever been performed by any one? How can such scientific or other evidence be given which will cover all humanity and all millenniums of the past? IMHO, what he can safely state is that well established evidence of paranormal events performed under controlled conditions has not been published in mainstream scientific journals. He could state that according to mainstream science there is no validated evidence of paranormal acts/events. And limit himself to that. What a tragedy that our ancient Bharat has such a distinguished scientist making utterly outrageous statements by logical/scientific standards!]

c) "The late Dr. Y. Nayudamma, the former Director-General of CSIR, who died in an Air India crash near Canada years ago, told me of his visit to Sai Baba with a once ardent follower, Dr. S. Bhagavantam, a former Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister. Nayudamma stood in front of Sai Baba with folded hands and most respectfully, requested him to produce a blade of grass between his palms. That would have been a miracle. But, instead, Nayudamma had to leave."

[Ravi: The scientist who folded his hands and spoke respectfully was not given a demonstration of Swami's miraculous powers. So what! Did the distinguished scientist, by dint of his scientific research, have a right to expect a miracle to be performed for him by Swami? What utter arrogance of some distinguished Indian scientists! They expect to be treated like great people by everybody. How wonderfully different was the approach of foreign scientists, Dr. Haraldsson and Dr. Osiris? No wonder, Swami treated them with dignity and demonstrated his powers to them (but not under controlled conditions as that perhaps would have been way, way below Swami's dignity).]

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To my mind, some Indian scientists like the distinguished scientist, Pushpa Bhargava, are not worthy to be considered as seekers of the truth. They are science fanatics and anti-religion/anti-Godmen fanatics who cannot see truth



beyond their mainstream science journal articles.

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Ravi S. Iyer (2013-09-17 22:52:19)

Here is an article on what the late, distinguished Indian scientist and former Director of Indian Institute of Science, Dr. Bhagavantam, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suri\\_Bhagavantam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suri_Bhagavantam), said about Swami and the laws of science: <http://theprasanthereporter.org/2013/09/7792/>.

"I do not try to find out what law He is breaking and how. When a scientist finds that something happens which cannot be explained or grasped by the laws known already, he just accepts that something that is a not yet known phenomenon. This is how science has grown. So, since what I have seen (and what I am seeing and what shall see hereafter) do not come under any of the known laws of science, I simply enunciate the law that Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba transcends the laws of science and that becomes a law of science."

The two year old The Hindu article of Pushpa Bhargava referenced in the post above, mentions the name of Bhagavantam but conveniently does not mention what Bhagavantam thought about Swami's miracles. As far as I know, Dr. Bhagavantam did not withdraw such views of his as given above, even when Dr. Bhagavantam's association with Swami's organization lessened.

Ravi S. Iyer (2013-09-18 10:16:57)

A correspondent passed on a skeptic site link on Prof. Ian Stevenson which states, 'Some of his UVa colleagues found Stevenson to be an embarrassment, but this was the university that Jefferson had founded with the promise that it would be "based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it.'" So, not only was Stevenson allowed to continue his spirit studies, he was able to bring in several prominent parapsychologists to work at UVa, ...', <http://www.skepdic.com/stevenson.html>.

My response: I think most mainstream scientists do not easily accept Parapsychology research results/conclusions.

Here's some info. about Parapsychology from Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parapsychology>:

Privately funded units in psychology departments at universities in the United Kingdom are among the most active today. In the United States, interest in research peaked in the 1970s and university-based research has declined since then, although private institutions still receive funding from donations.

...

Critics state that methodological flaws can explain any apparent experimental successes and the status of parapsychology as a science has been vigorously disputed. Many scientists regard the discipline as pseudoscience, saying that parapsychologists continue investigation despite not having demonstrated conclusive evidence of psychic abilities in more than a century of research.

...

Some of the more specific criticisms state that parapsychology does not have a clearly defined subject matter, an easily repeatable experiment that can demonstrate a psi effect on demand, nor an underlying theory to explain the paranormal transfer of information.

— end extracts from wiki —

I think I can understand this attitude of some mainstream scientists to parapsychology research work. They would want repeatability in a lab. by any qualified/competent scientist with adequate lab. facilities, like in Physics or Chemistry before they will accept something as validated evidence/scientific evidence/scientific fact. Parapsychology deals with matters which are very elusive and so perhaps very, very difficult, if not impossible, to repeat in a lab.

So some mainstream scientists will say that they don't "trust" it or that it is not a science. But I don't think a man with proper scientific temper will say that all of Ian Stevenson and others' parapsychology research presenting evidence of reincarnation has been "shown to be fake" - as that seems to be plainly a false statement. Sure, they probably can state some cases where some parapsychology research papers which claim evidence of reincarnation, have been shown as presenting fake/invalid evidence. But I am quite sure that will not extend to all of (or perhaps any of) Ian Stevenson, Jim Tucker, Haraldsson etc. research work giving evidence of reincarnation.

I don't think even Prof. Richard Dawkins would say that (all reincarnation evidence has been shown to be fake). Whatever I have read about him shows him to be pretty factual and logical. Where he does seem to have gone overboard like 'The God Delusion' title of his book, he does have some logic, even if it is somewhat unethical, for such a book title.

I am afraid I have noted that such outlandish statements (printed in Indian newspapers) usually come from some over-the-top Indian 'distinguished scientists' or young Indian scientists with PhDs in mainstream science (like Physics) from elite world institutions like MIT, USA who come back to India to work in prestigious Indian scientific research/academic institutions. Perhaps all the religion they see around them in India makes them lose their balance and go over the top.

Ravi S. Iyer (2013-09-18 22:50:01)

Here's the response to Bhargava's article in The Hindu from Prof. G. Venkataraman of Radio Sai and ex-Vice-Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning in end May 2011 with the full response as well as the edited response printed in The Hindu. The Hindu printed response can also be viewed here.

Here is brother Nitin Acharya's response in end May 2011 which adds to Prof. G. Venkataraman's response.

Ravi S. Iyer (2013-09-19 18:45:25)

Prof. Ian Stevenson did not prove reincarnation but provided some evidence (not compelling) for reincarnation.

From a skeptic site itself, <http://www.skeptdic.com/stevenson.html> :

However, he resented being described by journalists as trying to prove reincarnation. He believed that he had produced a body of evidence for reincarnation that must be taken seriously. But he admitted that "the evidence is not flawless and it certainly does not compel such a belief. Even the best of it is open to alternative interpretations, and one can only censure those who say there is no evidence whatever."

...

Most people are not likely to be too impressed when they realize that all Stevenson had to show for over forty years of research is that it is now false to claim that there is no evidence for reincarnation. It is still quite reasonable, however, to claim that there is no compelling evidence for reincarnation.

— end skeptic site extracts —

Some extracts related to a very interesting 1988 published interview of Stevenson from <http://reluctant-messenger.com/reincarnation-proof.htm> :

Essentially I say that the idea of reincarnation permits but doesn't compel belief. All the cases I've investigated so far have shortcomings. Even taken together, they do not offer anything like proof. But as the body of evidence accumulates, it's more likely that more and more people will see its relevance. ...

My idea of God is that He is evolving. I don't believe in the watchmaker God, the original creator who built the watch and then lets it tick. I believe in a "Self-maker God" who is evolving and experimenting; so are we as parts of Him. Bodies wear out; souls may need periods for rest and reflection. Afterward one may start again with a new body.

...

I wouldn't claim to be free of the fear of death, but it is probably less in me than other people. These children sometimes provide reassurances to adults. We've had two or three incidents of children going to, let's say, a woman who has lost her husband and is inconsolable and saying, "You shouldn't be crying. Death isn't the end. Look at me. I died and I'm here again."

## **Review of Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet by Erlendur Haraldsson Ph. D. (2013-09-21 23:20)**

*Last updated on October 9th, 2013*

Publisher: White Crow Books (July 16, 2013), [http://whitecrowbooks.com/books/page/modern\\_miraclesthe\\_story\\_of\\_sathya\\_sai\\_baba\\_a\\_modern\\_day\\_prophet/](http://whitecrowbooks.com/books/page/modern_miraclesthe_story_of_sathya_sai_baba_a_modern_day_prophet/) Amazon.com link: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/190873325X>

*Disclosure: I am deeply grateful to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for the love he showered on me which includes vital direct as well as indirect spiritual guidance.*

This review mainly focuses on the painstaking and thorough investigations by Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson into the paranormal phenomena associated with Sri Sathya Sai Baba and conclusions drawn from these investigations, as documented in this book. The review does not touch upon some other matters covered by the book and completely excludes Chapter 32, The Western Critics, of the book.

*[Cautionary Note: Chapter 32, The Western Critics, has unproven and malicious allegations regarding Sri Sathya Sai Baba. A Western TV media documentary/programme is referenced by Haraldsson in this chapter for these unproven and malicious allegations. But Haraldsson has omitted to mention that a major figure of this documentary had his lawsuit on the matter in a US court of law, self-dismissed and with prejudice (which means that he cannot file a lawsuit on the same matter in any other court in the USA)!*

*\_ In my humble opinion, most powerful Western media outlets have a strong bias against Sri Sathya Sai Baba and perhaps had (and may continue to have) profit, and possibly other, motives in widely publicising sensationalist negative allegations about him. In the coverage they have given of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in my humble opinion, the Western media outlets certainly do not come across as unbiased and balanced reporters of facts.*

*\_ Some Sathya Sai devotees who saw and read these widely publicised Western media unproven and malicious allegations seem to have come to believe them to be true. In Chapter 32, Prof. Haraldsson mentions a few such Western Sathya Sai devotees. Prof. Haraldsson himself seems to have come under the sway of such negative propaganda and has given his opinion on the matter seemingly based on a Western media channel's documentary and taking shelter in the word "may", which I find to be very objectionable and highly irresponsible for an academic researcher of Prof. Haraldsson's stature. I strongly condemn this statement of Prof. Haraldsson in this chapter.*

*\_ In my opinion, Chapter 32, The Western Critics, of this book does not contribute in any way to the investigation of the paranormal phenomena associated with Sai Baba. So I have completely ignored it for this review. I suggest to readers that they treat Chapter 32, The Western Critics, as the effect of powerful Western media negative publicity about Sai Baba on Prof. Haraldsson as well as some Western Sathya Sai "devotees" he mentions in it. I further suggest to readers to either skip reading Chapter 32 or read it without coming under the sway of such negativity like Prof. Haraldsson seems to have come under.]*

As I understand it, the field of parapsychology (psi phenomena), <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parapsychology>, is the scientific field that investigates paranormal phenomena like materialization and other miracles. As far as I know, in the career of the world famous god-man of India, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the best known parapsychology researchers of the world who have investigated him are the author of this book, Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur\\_Haraldsson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur_Haraldsson), <https://notendur.hi.is/erlendur/english/>) and, to a limited extent, Dr. Karlis Osis ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karlis\\_Osis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karlis_Osis), <http://www.llewellyn.com/journal/article/62>).

Dr. Karlis Osis writes in the foreword of the book about Haraldsson's study of miracles of a religious leader to be a first of its kind and that the book "describes paranormal phenomena of extraordinary variety and strength attributed to one of the most remarkable men of the (20th) century". (I presume that this foreword was written for an earlier edition of the book in the 20th century.)

My view is that through this book, Prof. Haraldsson has made a great contribution to methodical and truthful, to the best of his knowledge, capture of evidence based on observation and experience of fairly reliable witnesses including himself, of paranormal acts/events (phenomena) related to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and put them all together from a four decade perspective, slightly over two years after Sai Baba's passing away.

Prof. Haraldsson has taken a balanced/unbiased view of these paranormal phenomena associated with Sai Baba. He does not seem to be a devotee of Sai Baba and has demonstrated the skepticism demanded from a scientific investigator into such matters by very carefully examining various "normal explanations" for the reported paranormal phenomena. To my mind, an appropriate way to look at this book would be to view it as arguments made by a lawyer giving the testimonies of many fairly reliable first-hand witnesses (including some testimony of the author himself), providing and examining both pro (genuine miracles) and contra (not genuine miracles) views, and then putting forward the lawyer's conclusion on the matter. The reader of the book can play the role of a juror/judge and decide whether to accept the lawyer's (author's) conclusion or reject it entirely or come up with a different conclusion of his/her own.

Haraldsson writes about how he and Dr. Osis came to hear about Sathya Sai Baba during their visit to India in 1972, which eventually led to their first meeting with Sai Baba in November 1973. Immediately, Sai Baba showed them his materialization miracles by creating vibhuti for them and a ring for Dr. Osis. They tried to explain to Sai Baba

their need to scientifically investigate such phenomena under controlled conditions. Sai Baba responded that the methods of science could not explain such miraculous phenomena and that they were outside the realm of science. Haraldsson and Osis tried to put across to Sai Baba that science had neglected studying such phenomena and that by him demonstrating his powers under controlled conditions, new knowledge about these mysterious phenomena could be added to science. Sai Baba responded that he was not a showman and that "he could use his paranormal powers only for the good of his devotees". Haraldsson writes insightfully that Sai Baba was a man of religion and not of science.

Haraldsson records the paranormal phenomena that Sai Baba demonstrated to them directly (though not under controlled conditions) in two separate visits to India by them (Haraldsson and Osis). He writes about Sai Baba paranormal power experiences related by distinguished Indians like Prof. V.K.Gokak, a distinguished academic, and other Indians.

As experiments had been ruled out by Sai Baba, Haraldsson directed his main efforts to finding and interviewing old devotees and ex-devotees who had observed Sai Baba extensively, some of them at very close quarters. Haraldsson visited many cities in India for this purpose like Madras/Chennai, Salem, Kuppam, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Calcutta. He states that he tape-recorded most interviews and ensured that the interviewees read "the relevant passages" (their documented testimony) and approved it. He has gone mainly for first-hand testimony and generally excluded second-hand testimony as second-hand testimony is considered to have weaknesses (even by courts of law). For these detailed testimonies, an entire chapter is typically devoted to testimony of one or two persons.

The witnesses whose testimonies about Sai Baba's paranormal phenomena have been captured in great detail are a scientist of a premier Indian science research institute, a pharmaceutical manufacturer, Indian royalty, long-time devotees who spent a lot of time with Sai Baba and were physically very close to him, South Indian (Carnatic) classical music singers, then college students from Madras who stayed with Sai Baba for some periods, an Economics graduate who chose to stay with Baba, and was very close to him, for 16 to 17 years after finishing his studies, and a famous Russian painter who lived in India and his famous former Indian movie-star wife. A couple of these witnesses moved away from Sai Baba after some years of association and are referred to as ex-devotees by Haraldsson.

Haraldsson also writes about the Indian rationalist critics of Sai Baba. He interviewed a famous Indian senior academic and rationalist critic. He also interviewed a senior journalist critic who got changed into a devotee after an interview that Sai Baba gave him. A South Indian newspaper's claimed exposure of materialization by Sai Baba in 1992 as not genuine, is shown to be a false exposure (debunked) by Haraldsson.

Haraldsson presents systematically collected data from most of the interviewees including ex-devotees which he got by having them answer a multiple-choice questionnaire of over 100 items. Most of the questions were about their specific paranormal experiences with Sai Baba and the number of times they had such experiences.

Parallels are drawn between Sai Baba's paranormal phenomena and that of some historical religious figures from Christianity as well as mediums. Many of these parallels are given in the context of particular phenomena like dazzling light, teleportation and bilocation. One chapter titled "Extrasensory Perception" deals with mind-reading capability of Sai Baba.

After having provided all the witness testimonies and some other material, Haraldsson searches for "normal explanations" for the reported paranormal phenomena.

In the penultimate chapter of the book, Haraldsson examines "THE QUESTION OF PROOF". He writes that science traditionally uses experiments to confirm that phenomena are genuine. As Sai Baba did not permit experiments that path was closed. However judicial systems "have evolved interrogation and corroboration of witnesses, investigating relevant contemporary documents and so on, as ways of accruing evidence". But human testimony does have weaknesses due to which courts "rely primarily on the quantity of testimony and on consensus of witnesses". That has been "our" approach, Haraldsson writes.

Haraldsson states that numerous followers including ex-devotees who have extensively observed Sai Baba give a general consensus about the genuineness "of the frequent appearance of objects in his presence, or on his body on certain occasions".

In the concluding chapter of the book, Haraldsson puts forward "a few speculative hypotheses regarding the causes and nature of the mysterious phenomena around Sai Baba" and examines their validity. Haraldsson writes that some of the phenomena could have a "normal explanation" but not the bulk of them. Haraldsson states that the

hypothesis that Baba had psychic powers which allowed him to "produce various phenomena when he wants to" is supported by an "endless number of observations and experiences" and so has to be accepted for bulk of the phenomena.

Prof. Haraldsson, in my humble opinion, has been a truth-seeker and has spoken the truth about paranormal phenomena associated with Sri Sathya Sai Baba, despite many powerful people in the media and scientific circles not wanting to hear and know such science shaking truth (to be more precise, current mainstream science shaking truth).

P.S. Notes of my reading of the book are available on my blog post here: <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2013/08/notes-on-prof-haraldssons-modern.html>.

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\_ I shared the above review (excluding the cautionary note on Chapter 32 which was added later) with Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson, author of the book, after which he wrote me, "This is a fine and fair review."

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Ravi S. Iyer (2013-10-31 16:39:34)

An almost-same review is available on amazon.com book review page and goodreads.com book review page.

## **Science Fanaticism and Anti-Religion Fanaticism displayed in Post Theistic Society Article (2013-09-25 18:44)**

*Last updated on October 13th, 2013*

At the outset, I beg the reader's pardon for using strong words like science fanaticism and anti-religion fanaticism but I think they accurately describe the tone and words used in an article in The Hindu, "Let's aim for a post-theistic society", [http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/lets-aim-for-a-posttheistic-society /article5154603.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/lets-aim-for-a-posttheistic-society/article5154603.ece). [I am a software technologist who has very high degree of respect for mainstream science & technology. I am also a lover of various religions of the world that do not approve of hatred and aggression, except in self-defense. I believe, I have a good balance in my strong and enthusiastic interests in both software technology and religion.] I managed to get a couple of comments of mine shown on the above web page. The first comment referenced an earlier comment by a Nikhil which said that the article was a science vs. religion one and gave some pro-religion points of view. It is the second comment from the bottom of all comments shown in the article above (you need to click "Show all comments" to get to it).

Now for my comment (7th comment from bottom of all comments):

@Nikhil: Very well said.

Natarjan writes, "What supernatural powers? Let us first realise that there is no supernatural MIRACLE that has withstood the scrutiny of science." But that does not mean that science has shown that supernatural MIRACLES were, are and will be impossible! Science has to either prove well known MIRACLES to be false or simply say that it is not known whether these cases are genuine miracles or not. The strident words which Natarajan uses tries to convey an impression that supernatural MIRACLES like those reported in Christian and Hindu scripture are impossible [I do not know Islamic scripture well enough to mention it in this context].

People with genuine supernatural powers may not have been examined in a controlled scientific laboratory environment. But large number of reliable witness accounts of these very, very rare paranormal phenomena are certainly available across religions, countries and centuries of time.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Sep 23, 2013 at 14:35 IST

— end my comment (on The Hindu article web page) —

Later a Raamganesh commented to me (10th comment from bottom of all comments) that there is "paucity of evidence" for miracles and that when scientists have tested miracle-claims they have always come up short on

evidence.

My response comment to him (15th comment from bottom of all comments):

@Raamganesh - Parapsychology scientists have investigated and found some reliable witness accounts evidence for paranormal phenomena. But most mainstream scientists do not accept such parapsychology work and demand extraordinary evidence for the extraordinary paranormal claims.

The late Dr. Karlis Osis said it very well in the context of one such person with extraordinary paranormal powers, "Nothing would have clinched the matter so well as, say, a week or two spent in the best parapsychological laboratories in the world, and that we offered." Unfortunately for science, the concerned person declined the offer.

I think scientists like Natarajan need to take a balanced view of the matter and not go overboard by trying to convince people at large that paranormal phenomena (miracles) reported in the holy scripture of various religions are fake. Science does not know for sure, one way or the other, and scientists like Natarajan must adhere to the truth by stating that clearly.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Sep 24, 2013 at 16:21 IST

— end my comment (on The Hindu article web page) —

I feel quite satisfied with this comment appearing on The Hindu web page for this article. I think it settles the rationalist scientist going overboard with his science fanaticism & anti-religion fanaticism bit, for the discerning reader. BTW the above comment refers to the offer Dr. Karlis Osis had made to Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the 1970s as mentioned in Prof. Haraldsson's book on Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

I had tried some other comments which got rejected by the moderator. I would like to put down below some points from the comments rejected by The Hindu moderator.

Till we have a miraculous Jesus Christ or a Krishna like person/god-man who is willing to co-operate with scientists for such investigation under controlled conditions, science will not accept the existence of such supernatural/paranormal phenomena. That is the way of science and I have no issues with that. Many mainstream scientists do not accept results from parapsychology investigations and even question its status as a science.

Human knowledge is not limited to mainstream science. IMHO, we should be open to both scientific and non-scientific knowledge.

...

For more on this matter (reliable witness accounts of paranormal phenomena) please read Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson's new/updated book, "Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet". A review of it is available at: <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/2013/09/review-of-modern-miracles-story-of.html> .

...

The article (Natarjan's article in The Hindu) lacks scientific temper and smacks of science fanaticism and anti-religion fanaticism. — end points from comments that got rejected by the moderator —

A line that I would like to add which I did not mention in any of my attempted comments, and which was also sent to me by a correspondent (in a slightly different form), is:

Science is not the be-all and end-all of life.

An important point that struck me later:

The article in The Hindu referenced at the beginning of this post states, "But modern science has been able to explain almost all natural phenomena so that the purview of the unknown has shrunk considerably and the fear of nature is largely irrelevant."

Has modern science been able to explain death? IMHO, mainstream science is quite clueless about what happens to a person's mind-personality/mental-being on death, and whether reincarnation is possible.

Has fear of death become largely irrelevant? IMHO, mainstream science is quite ineffective in giving man strength of mind to face death and bodily & mental suffering. Spirituality and religion have over millenniums given billions

of people the world over, mental strength to face suffering and death. By trying to destroy the faith of billions of people the world over in religion and spirituality, scientists like Natarajan are essentially trying to destroy the source of mental strength these billions of people have to combat suffering and death.

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I thoroughly enjoyed reading the defense of religion articles that appeared in The Hindu on October 13th 2013 as responses to the post-theistic society article by Vasant Natarajan mentioned at the top of this post. Given below are the article links and comments I submitted on the associated web pages (don't know if they will pass the moderator and get shown).

- 1) Einstein misquoted, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/einstein-misquoted/article5229386.ece>  
It is wonderful to see the correct and full quotation of Einstein being provided thereby correcting Vasant Natarajan. Misquoting famous scientists views on God to suit some writer's personal agenda is deplorable. 2) Blame it on politics, not religion, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/blame-it-on-politics-not-religion/article5229388.ece>  
"But we should not forget that so much humanitarian service is carried out by religious organisations. So it is not religion that has to be discarded but religious politics." "He is outside your jurisdiction. If you want to meet Him, you have to undertake a spiritual odyssey or do some out-of-the world investigative journalism." So very well said, sir. I thank you for this superb response article to Vasant Natarajan's emotional and unbalanced attack on religion.
- 3) Science tells us what is, and not what ought to be, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/science-tells-us-what-is-and-not-what-ought-to-be/article5229392.ece>  
"Blaming religion for all the violence in the world is not knowing history. The two World Wars had nothing to do with religion, yet together they have brought more suffering than all the history of mankind. You cannot blame religion because of a few misguided individuals and do away with it." "It is wishful thinking to say that the post-theistic society will be a bliss." Very well said, sir. The thirst for religion and spirituality in former communist countries like Russia shows how vital religion and spirituality are for the well being of society.
- 4) Both science and religion have a place under the sun, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/both-science-and-religion-have-a-place-under-the-sun/article5229402.ece>  
"Therefore, Prof. Natarajan's claim that "modern science has been able to explain almost all natural phenomena so that the purview of the unknown has shrunk considerably" is preposterous." Thank you so much for crisply bringing out this point. In my humble opinion, some intellectually bright scientists tend to get carried away by their knowledge and intellect and end up making preposterous statements. Sometimes they start lecturing these preposterous statements to the world at large!

...

"We may not need a sun-god as the professor argues but we cannot deny people's right to be wonderstruck by the apparently inexhaustible solar energy that sustains life though we have not fully comprehended the origin of the sun and various stars and planets." It is my belief that prayer has immense power. If a person is able to tap into the power of worship & prayer by imagining a sun-god the effect of the worship and prayer are real even if the sun-god is imaginary. A scientifically knowledgeable person may pray and worship a formless God and achieve the same effect. Why deny the less scientifically knowledgeable/inclined person the power of worship of a nature-God?

— end Hindu article links and submitted comments —

Later I felt that I should have used stronger words instead of the last sentence above. A better version would have been: Who has given the brilliant atheist scientist the right to deny the less scientifically knowledgeable/inclined person the power of worship of a nature-God? I consider freedom of worship of even a so-called imaginary God like a nature-God a fundamental human right.

Some more words on nature-God worship: Feelings of awe and joy are vital for worship. Nature is a tremendous and free source of awe and joy. The sun is such a vital natural force/phenomenon that without it one cannot imagine life as we live now. Using the sun to get into a mode of awe and joy, and worship it as an embodiment of the Divine is such a natural and easy thing to do. It does not need any sophisticated education for the sun to create the feeling of awe and joy in people.

Vedanta tells us *Isa vasyam idam sarvam* - God lives in all this. So the sun is also an embodiment of divinity/God. Viewing the sun as a nature-God therefore does not go against core Hindu Advaita philosophy. The acid test of sun-God worship (or any God worship) is whether such worship gives the worshiper happiness and joy, and even help him/her when in distress. If the worshiper is getting what he/she wants from such worship who is the atheist scientist to stop him/her doing sun-God worship? What does the atheist scientist know about the power of faith (in any God including a nature-God) to give happiness and joy, and even work miracles? The atheist scientist is free to practise his/her atheism but he/she has no business whatsoever to enforce his/her atheism on other people and prevent them from worshipping nature-Gods and other Gods.

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### 1.3 October

#### **Religion is Like a Secret/Hidden Topic among Scientists in US elite universities! Are Indian universities too headed in same direction? (2013-10-15 16:52)**

*Last updated on October 18th 2013*

I did a Google search on religion in elite US universities and came up with this interesting March 2011 article by E.H. Ecklund, Associate Professor of Sociology, Rice university: *Religious Scientists: Faith in the American University*, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elaine-howard-ecklund-phd/what-is-keeping-universities-religious/\\_b\\_839161.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elaine-howard-ecklund-phd/what-is-keeping-universities-religious/_b_839161.html). She (perhaps with some other colleagues) did a survey of "nearly 1,700 scientists at elite American universities". Interesting points from it that tell the sorry state of affairs (from my religion-lover perspective):

1. Many academic scientists told the author of the article that "religion has no place in the modern academy." [Based on response from "scientifically selected sample of 275" scientists at elite American universities.]
2. The author writes that social scientists are more likely to favour religion being part of their discipline.
3. Even though many academic scientists are religious and have an interest in spirituality they do not talk about it openly as they are scared that they will be discriminated against!
4. " ... because of their unwillingness to talk about their own views on religion and spirituality, scientists with faith could be partly to blame for uninformed conversations about religion and science on university campuses."

— end points from article — Ravi: So the science (and technology & management) student does not typically get to hear any religion in university from his/her teachers during one of the most important formative periods of the student's near-adult/adult life! I would not be surprised if many science, technology and management graduates and higher academic degree holders produced by these institutions are agnostics even if their parents are of strong faith. [That is what happened to me - my parents certainly had faith in God. But lack of any mention of religion during five years of college (in Ruia college, Mumbai, ending with Physics graduation in 1983) put me on the firm track of agnosticism. Well, I was into Vedanta/Upanishadic philosophy & Gita philosophy but I did not have faith in a God who responds to prayer and so I was an agnostic. And all the Vedanta & Gita study was on my own initiative - not part of my college science curriculum. I needed life to hammer me down with severe challenges to see the light and turn decisively to the Hindu faith of my family of a God who responds to prayer and intervenes in human/worldly affairs! I tasted the succour and joy that comes from faith in such an interventionist God and that changed me from an agnostic to a happy and enthusiastic theist.]

Very unfortunately most Indian science, technology and management universities or associated departments of universities seem to be aping the US universities and falling into the same trap. The craze for world university rankings and country university rankings like NAAC perhaps makes them fall deeper into the religion-agnostic and God-agnostic



trap of Western (and Chinese) higher education [If I recall correctly one of the two well known world university rankings is a Chinese based one - Shanghai based.] So Indian higher education systems may end up mostly producing agnostic or atheist scientists, technologists and management specialists, who are the elite who will be playing important roles in the vital material institutions of the country!

Going a little further, a very disturbing sort-of conclusion: The more educated a person is (in science, technology & management), the less is the possibility that he/she will believe in a God who responds to prayer and intervenes in human affairs. For belief in such an interventionist God you have to turn to the company of the less educated who may usually be following preachers/priests (or turn to the few humanities educated Professors/teachers/writers who speak up on religion)! [I am excluding centres of intense religious study, practice & experience like monasteries and ashrams as they are not easily accessible as compared to higher education universities] Hmm. Is that (having to turn to the company of less educated theists for faith due to a general lack of academics who speak up on religion) the reality of religion in higher education today? Very unfortunately, I think that is the reality of religion in higher education today. [Some large universities have a department of religion but I don't think the courses offered by the department may be taken by most science, technology and management students. Many medium and small universities may not even have a department of religion.]

P.S. Hope I am not coming too strong on the religion bit here :). But I seriously think that religion and God being absent from curricula of most science, technology & management universities or associated departments of universities all over the world is a bad thing for society in general. [Yes, a few aspects of religions are controversial - they can be left out. Most of the teachings of the world religions are excellent teachings to build communities on time-tested values like love, service of the needy, joy, peace, truth, forgiveness, gratitude to parents etc.] I think that situation (religion being absent from higher education curricula of ...) must be changed for the well being of society. How that can be achieved - I haven't got the faintest idea! I mean, the opposition to religion being taught & discussed openly in science, technology and management higher education is so deeply entrenched and dominant, in the West, China (I presume) and, unfortunately, even in India, that people seem afraid to speak up and argue for it.

The hope comes from the politicians as they control the public taxpayer money provided to educational institutions and also have an overview say in approving higher educational institutions. The politicians represent the people at large, many of whom, in India and I think even in the USA, thank God, are theists, and so the politicians (in India and USA) typically represent the theist interests.

To ensure no misunderstanding I would like to clarify that I am not talking about religion being enforced on anybody in universities using the help of politicians. I strongly support freedom of worship associated with any religion as well as freedom to not be associated with any religion. I am talking about getting help from politicians to ensure that education on religion (including the bad parts of it) and its co-existence with science is a part of science, technology and management higher education in some way, formal or informal. An atmosphere where science academics who are religious are scared to talk openly about their views on religion and science especially to students, as they fear discrimination, is not a good thing, in my humble opinion.

If nothing is done about these matters than we will continue to have, as Associate Prof. of Rice University, E.H. Ecklund puts it, "

uninformed conversations about religion and science on university campuses". In my view, such uninformed conversations seem to be leading to some products of science departments of elite Western universities (which includes some Indians who come back to become academics in leading Indian science educational institutions), to continue to hold and even profess their uninformed views on religion and science to the world at large through mainstream newspaper articles! Such uninformed public articles will create confusion in the minds of the public who look up to academics as trusted sources of knowledge and may mislead some of the public! We need to instead have informed discussions on the co-existence of religion and science as they stand today, which are made available to the public through various channels like the media and the Internet.

## 1.4 November

### Sathya Sai Baba's Advaita Teachings By John Hislop Ph.D. - Edited Transcript of Video (2013-11-13 23:20)

*Last updated on 20th November 2013*

Video courtesy: saicast.org

This post is an edited version of the talk, a significant part of which covers Advaita as taught by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Swami), given by Dr. John Hislop

, in simple and friendly English, at a US Retreat (Eureka, Missouri) on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1989. The video's original source is saicast.org and is available at the following saicast links:

<http://www.saicast.org/1989/19890527Hislop.html>

and

<http://vimeo.com/47243347>

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I have uploaded the video (temporarily) to youtube and provided a proper transcript for the same, here, "Sathya Sai Baba's Advaita Teachings By John Hislop Ph.D.",

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DI9izOvsUJg>

, 1 hr, 26 min, 02 sec. Instructions about how to use the transcript and related caption features of youtube are provided in the About tab of the youtube video page above (you will have to click on 'Show More' button to see the whole About tab content).

About Dr. John Hislop

The late Dr John (Jack) S. Hislop had a Ph.D. (in education) from the University of California, Los Angeles campus (UCLA). [Source: "A PERFECT DISCIPLE, The story of Dr John S Hislop",

[http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol\\_02/13July01/02\\_Cover\\_Story/cover\\_story.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_02/13July01/02_Cover_Story/cover_story.htm)

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Dr. Hislop first saw Sathya Sai Baba in 1968. He was a major force in the International Sai Organization in the 1980s and 1990s. He has written books about his experiences and conversations with Sai Baba, "My Baba and I" and "Conversations with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba". [Source:

<http://vimeo.com/47243347>

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#### **Edited Talk Transcript**

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0:01:18 - Introduction by Dr. William (Bill) Harvey

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0:10:09 - Swami's Atma Vidya Teachings & Experiences of Hislop

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0:33:10 - Advaita; Swami explaining His (paranormal) Knowing of Hislop's Lectures

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1:23:39 - Do We Need God's Grace for Liberation?

0:00:00 - Prayer-Song

Easwaramba's resplendent son,

it's the start of a bright new day.

Time to rise, time to shine, Lord Divine.

Time to lead us along life's way.

Awake, Lord of Puttaparthi.

Awake O Lord over all mankind.

Awake O Lord of compassion,

that the world, good fortune may find.

0:01:18 - Introduction by Dr. William (Bill) Harvey

It's very wonderful to introduce either of the two speakers that we've got for this conference this morning. One of the speakers will speak and then tomorrow in each afternoon session we will have the other speaker. But all of us know, of course, Doctor Hislop. We have read his books. He's been described accurately as the Westerner that is the overseas person - non Indian - who has had more interviews and more time, more opportunity to consult with, ask questions of Swami than anyone else.

He has just had, for whatever reason, a spectacular opportunity to get in a position where he could ask the kind of questions we'd all like to have answers of. And he has this ability, this unique quality - Swami has Graced him with this ability where, when Swami gives what is not yet for us the answer we want - a complete answer ... Jack is able to persist and not get Swami angry but get Swami to elucidate more. And so we can read conversations. We can read My Baba and I, over and over and over again because what he does is he goes in and without a tape recorder without, I guess, a lot of ego, he's able to listen very carefully.

He records these things. He makes notes of them right after he comes out of those sessions and then he's willing to share. In My Baba and I, you see that he has shared not only these reports but letters that Swami has written to him. And another thing about Jack is that he is not at all shy about sharing the times when Swami admonishes him. He tells us just as it is and through the years, people have on occasions, wondered if (some quote) is a particular accurate quote. I can assure you that he is extremely dedicated. He doesn't pull punches. He just tells us, he shares with us and it is a great opportunity. Swami just can't, in the physical sense that we're in, make these things available to each and every one of us. So he chooses instruments at various times and he's chosen Jack Hislop to do this.

It's our duty to go forward and take advantage of that and he gets better and better every year. Jack does. He seems to have more energy now than he had 8, 10, 12 years ago. He ... [applause] I remember, I guess with Indiana, (at) one of our 3rd/4th annual conferences I was trying to introduce him and I said that he is reminiscent of Arjun when he is the one chosen by Swami to receive the Gita. And the question was asked, why not the older brother Dharmaraja who was the epitome of Dharma and so forth. And Swami at that time said that it was because Dharmaraja was the embodiment of Dharma but he had hindsight. He would ask questions and reflect on things after they happen. Arjun would ask before they would happen and therefore, have an opportunity not to make some of the mistakes.

And I think that's one of the things that Jack does for us. He asks these questions of Swami. He goes into great, great detail. He listens to us when he comes among us and when he doesn't have the answer, he makes a note. And the very next time he goes to Prashanti Nilayam, he makes it a point to ask Swami that particular question. So while he is here, you have the opportunity ... Alan mentioned that he's gonna be available for some special ... private so-called times. But he's always available the whole three days that he's here. And you can catch him walking back. Normally in these public sessions you ask questions that are of general interest. Those private sessions are when you have personal questions. Sort-of like Swami does. But he's available. He doesn't mind your asking questions on top of questions. Matter of fact, he's a little bit upset if you don't take advantage of the time he is here. You go ahead and ask him as many questions as you want to. And I'm going to now step aside and give you the opportunity of hearing a presentation from our beloved Dr. John Hislop. [Applause.]

0:06:20 - John (Jack) Hislop begins his talk

Pranams to the Lotus Feet. Pranams to Sai devotees.

I am very happy that you invited me to come here once again. I thoroughly enjoy being at the Saint Louis conference. I've been here a number of times and have been fortunate enough to make many very good friends amongst you. And it's always a happy occasion for me when I have the chance to see you again and the chance to have conversations with you again. Before I start talking about Swami I would like to make just a couple remarks to follow up on what Bill just finished saying about large cities perhaps having several centers. That was Swami's original idea when he first formed the American Sathya Sai Baba organization. He said it would be good to have a number of medium sized or small centers scattered geographically in an area. And then once a month or once every two months those centers could meet together and have a speaker and invite interested members of the public to that meeting.

So what Bill is suggesting is exactly what Swami himself has said many years ago. The personal question sessions that they mentioned started several years ago in Vancouver British Columbia at their request when I attended their conference there. And I want to tell you that those of you who would like to ask questions privately that I don't give any personal advice. What I do is: you ask a question and if I know Swami's answer to that question, and I have heard Swami speak so often during the past 20 years that almost invariably I can remember something that Swami said that will apply to that question. So you get what Swami said. And I don't add personal remarks. If I don't know I just say, Sorry, I don't know the answer to that question.

I should and I want to tell you something that happened last weekend at the council meeting in San Diego. There was unanimous endorsement and unanimous approval of your own Bill, Doctor Bill, as the acting chairman of the Executive Committee and therefore the acting chairman of the entire American Sathya Sai Baba organization. Give a hand [clapping]. I can tell from your response that you also endorse that appointment.

Have you noticed the beautiful work they've done in front of the altar - that lovely vase with the little flowers? And the designs and the altar itself?

0:10:09 - Swami's Atma Vidya Teachings & Experiences of Hislop

You know Swami said that there is the Atma and there is the spiritual teaching and there is the longing for enlightenment. But even so, a teacher must come and impart that sacred information to you. And when it comes to Atma Vidya, the science of the self - sacred science of the self then the one who comes to teach you is the world teacher. It is God himself who comes so the one who has come to teach us the science of the self, the sacred information about the self is the world teacher, is God himself, Sathya Sai Baba.

Well, there is in India a periodical called the Indian skeptic and they engage themselves in practicing skepticism in relation to everybody in the spiritual field. That is they believe that everyone is a fake, including Swami. And they especially criticize Swami when He says that I am the divine, I am God. The editor sent me three copies. So I replied to him and told him that over the last twenty years my conclusions were quite contrary to his, having seen Swami hundreds of times. And I said that those who criticize Swami for saying that he is God, at least should be fair and should complete the sentence because Swami never stops there. He invariably completes the sentence and says, yes, I am God but so are you and the only difference between us is that I know my truth and you, as yet, do not know your truth. But otherwise we are exactly one and the same.

The last time I was there Swami passed me several times - each time he would hit me on the shoulder and say, Hislop, no difference between you and me. [Laughter] So that is what He says, always has said and continues to say it - that you are God. And He says the greatest sin that can be committed by a person is to think that he is other than God and then fill his mind with thoughts of cravings and of hatred. Man churns his mind with cravings, desires, hatreds and dislikes. And from that all the problems that assail the world, arise. Now, as Bill said, it is true that I have had many, many (conversations) with Swami.

In the old days, beginning days, there was hardly anybody on the campus there at Prasanthi Nilayam. The first time I came, my wife and I, in January of 1968, there were only six or eight foreign people in the entire campus. There were no new buildings. Just the Mandir - and before the present additions to the Mandir - and two or three old ramshackle buildings in which a few people lived. And, Swami, when we came, put the men in one room - old dusty, dirty room, and the ladies in another and then He would come every morning and spend an hour and a half or two hours talking to us and come back in the afternoon and spend an hour and a half or two hours talking to us day after day for all the ten days that we were there.

Ask Him any question that we wanted do and He would answer. He would send food to us and the curious thing we noticed was that the food came in these Indian canisters - various segments with different kinds of food. When we started there were perhaps some eight foreigners and perhaps six or seven Indians in the group. Gradually their schedules took them away and they left. We (were) down to about four of us. (We noticed the) peculiar thing and that was that the level of food in the canisters stayed precisely the same no matter how many people have been taking food from the canister. When there were twelve or fourteen people the canister went down - the food level went down a certain amount; when there were only four or five of us - (it went down) exactly the same amount. So the food just multiplied naturally.

During the early days also Swami himself would walk through the crowd and individually give every person sweets and sometimes Amruth out of a container and although there might be two or three thousand people there, yet the little container that Swami carried never was empty - always was full.

So I had (all those) talks with Swami. In the early days - well, in the first couple of years we were staying in a room which faced Swami's room - above the Mandir - and He didn't have anyone to talk to. So He would come to the window and wave me like that. Come up, Hislop. Come up and talk. So I would (pop) into the room and we would have a long chat. One time I said to Him, - I never addressed Him in the second person - I said, Swami has to look after the entire universe, stars and the distant galaxies. He has to look after all the people in the world - the people who worship God that don't even know about Swami. He takes care of them too. Now with the colleges the school and the devotees in all parts of the world, with that tremendous burden of work, how does Swami have time to sit here and talk to the likes of me? And He said that Hislop, it is not like that at all. He said it's like when you start a car - you turn the key in the car and the engine starts and then the engine just runs. No attention is needed to do it. So He said the universe is like that. Swami turns the key the universe - all parts of the universe work and no attention is needed. So I have plenty of time Hislop to sit here [laughter] and talk to you.

Then for many years - I would say five or six years at least - wherever Swami went He would take me with Him in the car. No matter where He is going. Whether (to lunch) or to some other city or what not. I would sit in the front seat with the driver and in the back seat would be Swami sitting in the middle and then there would be a couple of persons close to Swami. Raja Reddy used to be on one side and Vitthal Rao. I don't know how many of you knew Vitthal Rao

before he died. Very nice man - Vitthal Rao. Swami liked him very much. He was a very witty man and could always make Swami laugh but knew exactly where to stop - you know. Never step one inch over the proper boundary. So Swami always had Vitthal Rao with Him whenever he went in the car. But then Vitthal Rao died and the people at the back of the car started to change - Dr. Bhagavantam would be there, Joga Rao would be there, and so on. In these car trips, I would be turning back all the time straining my neck looking back because the back seat was where the action was [laughter].

Swami would sometimes be talking to the two fellows there in Telugu. Sometimes he would sing Bhajans and sometimes he would answer questions. And I had the (eternal) reputation of always asking questions. So I would ask questions and Swami would answer the questions. Then, as soon as the car trip finished, I would go to a quiet place and write down everything that was said. If we had an half an hour or an hour's conversation it might take me four hours to reconstruct the conversation. Then I would take that conversation to the other people who were in the car or in the group (interviewing) Swami, wherever Swami and I happen to be and would ask them to read and point out any omissions or any errors of commission in what was written. So even though it came from my memory all the talks in the conversation were verified by other people. So they aren't wild (reaches) of imagination.

Sometimes people have come to me and said, well why didn't you tape them (instead)? It would be much more believable if we can listen to a tape. Well, that's true. It's a very good idea and I tried that. I carried a tape when I first (went) there and Swami let me use it a couple of times. At one time I said to Him - this was when the old cottage was there at Brindavan - before this new lotus like building which is now there which is a new home (and that cottage had a big verandah).

I said (to) Swami, what Swami says should be recorded for posterity. All these wonderful things you're saying and nobody puts them down or does anything about them. So I said that's (why I) should. So I said, all right Swami when shall I come tomorrow morning? Well, you come at 10 o'clock - right. So I would come at 10 o'clock - have a tape recorder there. (Then I would) ask a question and put the machine on. And Swami would say Umm ... I don't think that (one) should be recorded. So off went the machine. Until finally He told me, Hislop, don't use that tape recorder anymore. He said the tape recorder's up here - in your mind.

0:22:53 - How to Love Swami?; Hislop Experiencing Swami Within

Very often people ask, I want to love Swami but I don't find any feeling of love in my heart so how can I learn how to love Swami? So I asked Swami that same question and Swami said, well Hislop, it's like this, when you were walking by the shop window and saw that tape recorder in the window you didn't have any affection for it. It was just a piece of merchandise in the window. But when you went in and bought it, it became yours. Now you love it. Every place you go you carry it. So what is yours - you love. The mother, even though she may be sympathetic to and very tender to and be loving to the other children on the block, she loves her own child. It belongs to her. So it's the same way with Swami. If we want to have a strong happy joyful feeling and love for Swami, we should consider that Swami belongs to us. He is ours. He's part of us, just beneath the surface of our consciousness. (There is) Swami. I used to say to Swami, Swami when I start to be quiet and look within myself - trying to dive in myself, after I get a certain distance inside then it seems to me that it's no longer Hislop there, Swami - it's Swami who's there. Swami said yes, yes, that is exactly true. It is Swami who is there.

Now, (as) an example of that, this last year, in February I was in Prasanthi Nilayam. I wasn't there very long, just two weeks because my wife doesn't - can't - travel any longer in that long trip. They had a series of talks. There's what's called the central office - the Sathya Sai Baba Seva organization now. Their office is in Prasanthi Nilayam. Those of you who have been there, you know where your lecture hall is there. Down the corner where it joins the bank of apartments, there is a (coir rope) and that's their office. They are supposed to run the Ashram. Mr. Kutumb Rao is dead. He died from cancer. This group of three or four people is now supposed to take care of the ashram.

They, immediately when I arrived, arranged a series of lectures to the foreign community. You know - the custom of Prasanthi Nilayam for some years has been that the foreigners come and since there's nothing to do and they are not accustomed to sitting quietly, they tend to go out of their apartments and then wander out into the village and talk to the merchants, make friends with the merchants. Then they start to eat the village food. And for all I know, five

minutes before they ate, a lizard fell from the ceiling into the food and they get sick. Especially the girls from Italy - they have a lot of trouble. They make friends. Go out in the village to make friends with these Kashmiri people and then trouble follows - a lot of trouble follows. So Swami is constantly advising the people who go there - don't leave the (campus). They have shops - everything that you want to buy can be bought on the campus. The food is there - it's clean even though it may not be much competition to the highest priced restaurant in your own town. Nevertheless the food is good and it's clean. Swami wants people to stay (in). So as part of that program at eleven o'clock every day there is a talk to the foreigners with the hope that they were going to (attend) the talk instead of wandering out on the streets.

So they made a series of three lectures for me on those days and then the fourth one was to be a question and answer session. I gave the three lectures and then came the fourth one - the question and answer session. Swami incidentally was calling me in every morning. I was in six or seven times during the couple of weeks that I was there. He would say, come in and then I go sit in the room with him and with the editor of the Sanathana Sarathi - Narasimhan. So Swami called me in this morning after I have given the question and answer session and He said Hislop, all you did was confuse the people [laughter].

Now, you know, the lecture hall is a long ways away from Swami's little room. You know where the Mandir is (where) Swami has a room. There is only one little tiny window way up on the wall and the door is always closed. And during the time that He is not upstairs privately He's having continual conferences with people about schools, about construction and so on in that little room. So that little room with its one little window, full of people, is a long ways away from the lecture hall. How did Swami know I (had) confused people? So I said Swami, how do you mean? He said, well, when people ask questions, you responded from a viewpoint with which they were not familiar. (And as) you had a certain understanding of something and from that you made their response but they didn't understand what you said. Then they would ask another question based on what they didn't understand and that created more and more confusion. He said that's not the medicine people need. Why don't you just tell them Swami's teachings? So um.. I figured that there He was in His room and yet He heard every word that I said in that lecture hall and He could see into the minds of the people - see - that they weren't understanding (some of) the answers I gave. There was confusion. So believe me, Swami is everywhere at all times.

Now the following day I had agreed to have a question and answer session with the Italians from Rome. (The) Italians - there are so many of them there and they don't seem to have much to do with each other (from) the various cities. Now the Rome group wanted me and I had forgotten the name of the leader. So I asked some other Italians. I said there was this meeting we were having and who should I speak to, to find out the exact time.

When they finally pointed out the person, they didn't have the slightest interest in coming to the meeting of the Roman group. So (they are) divided. I had this question and answer session with the Roman group and then Swami called me (in) again the next morning. And so I said, Swami did I do any better yesterday? And Swami said, yes, yes, Hislop you did better. You said Swami's teachings but there was that trouble of the language. Well, yes, Swami, none of the Italians spoke English. So [laughter] - so there was a translator. He said, yes, yes. He said then you didn't explain very well to that man who was confused about Jesus. So I said Swami I think his confusion arose from the previous day where he didn't understand what was said. But I thought he was finally satisfied. Now the Rome shed number thirteen where the Italians were, was three times as far away from Swami as the lecture hall. Moreover there is the big foreign cafeteria and the big multi-story residential place between Swami's room and the shed thirteen. Even by visual you can't see it. And yet there, He knew everything (that) went on - translator, fellow (who asked) about Jesus and so on.

So you can be sure that Swami is here in this very room at this very moment. He knows everything that you're thinking about - because, you are He. If you feel, He feels. If you think, He records the thought. He's you - inside of each one of us. And Swami says that our greatest sin is to deny that - not to realize that. And to instead let the mind get filled with thoughts of hatred and cravings, giving rise to all the trouble in the world.

0:33:10 - Advaita; Swami explaining His (paranormal) Knowing of Hislop's Lectures

Now our first speaker brought up the topic of Advaita. He gave some comments and cited some instances of the Advaita philosophy. I think that we should have a fairly reasonable concept of what Advaita is all about because

Swami, more and more, is making remarks based on the Advaita philosophy. In fact, he said in a couple of discourses that we should now study and learn something about Advaita. Now what is Advaita? Advaita is part of Vedanta. It's the Vedanta analysis of the human person just as a scientist in the laboratory dissects an insect or a plant or a tree or whatever he is studying in minute detail. If he is operating on an animal or a cadaver, for example, he tries to get inside into all the thousands of little nerves in the body and how they affect one another. It's a minute analysis of the subject under investigation. So in the Advaita philosophy then there is made such a minute analysis of the human person. Now you all heard about Maya and all sorts of things said about Maya. The whole thing as regards our life here in the world starts with - although they say starts with and then they say it's eternal - so therefore there is no beginning or no end - in the indivisible (divine - can't be divided) universal consciousness.

By the way, when I was talking to Swami - this will tell you the story - I finally said to Him, Swami, how is it that you know everything that I say and everything that was in the minds of the people in these meetings we had? How are you there? Are you there as Easwara? How are you there, Swami? How do you know that? This room has walls and only a window. You can't see through those walls. Who can see through those walls? How are you in that meeting, Swami? So He said Hislop, I was there as universal consciousness. He is universal consciousness - that consciousness which informs every thing of creation.

Even sticks and stones have that consciousness. You remember this story of - if you happen to read in the book - the story of the Saris in Bombay where the Saris started to weep and cry and the box was all wet from their tears because Swami rejected them and sent them back to the merchant. He wouldn't take them to use as gifts for the ladies He wanted to make gifts to. So even the granite, the stone has consciousness although it can't speak.

In fact, Swami says that this process of evolution which has the present result on all we human beings sitting together in this room starts with the granite and then for that consciousness - that consciousness is locked up in the granite - then that consciousness makes a quantum leap - not a(n) incremental advance, but a quantum leap from the granite to the vegetable - vegetation. After all the stone crumbles and makes soil and the minerals and the vegetation uses that for its growth. So the consciousness makes a quantum leap and becomes the consciousness of the vegetable. Then the vegetation is eaten by animals. They survive on the vegetation and consciousness then makes another quantum leap from the vegetable to be animal. And then we humans eat animals. Animals become part of our flesh and blood - part of the mind even.

In fact, Swami says that this tremendous expansion of population in the world which is giving headaches and heartaches to so many countries trying to figure out how to deal with it - comes largely because of the worldwide custom of eating animals. All over the world we eat animals, eat animals (and) eat animals. And these animals then come into the human birth - more and more and more and more human beings. So from the animal then there is again a quantum leap into mankind. And in mankind then awareness - very acute awareness arises. We are aware of ourselves. We are aware that we are alive and therefore can start to think about our lives and try to distinguish the false from the true.

The animal, Swami says, is alive but it doesn't know that it's alive. It lives but doesn't know it's alive and therefore can't make inquiry. Whereas we know we are alive and then can start the process of inquiry. Then the next step in evolution is from human to superhuman and from superhuman to the spiritual and from the spiritual to the divine. So I asked Swami, well Swami ... stone, vegetation, animal, man - we can all see, we all know but how about this next step - the superhuman? Who is superhuman? We don't see a superhuman. Are (those the) people, Swami, up in the Himalayas mountains who can walk on water and walk through a mountain and levitate themselves and fly away to other planetary systems and so on. Swami says, no, no. Those are just people trying to get liberated. They're not superhumans. They are just human beings trying to get liberated.

0:40:59 - Swami on Liberated People in Today's Age - Now

Well, Swami who is superhuman? He said, superhuman people are like - then he named several of the ancient saints - Vasishtha and so on. He said those people have completely finished with human life. They don't have any desires or any cravings or any fears - don't have any of those aspects of human life which causes us to engage in actions which then creates our human world. They are quite separate (from) all those aspects of craving, fear, hatred and so on.



They've totally finished with human concerns and any action that they engage in is for the benefit of humanity Those are the superhumans - that's the superhuman stage.

So I said (well) Swami, all the ones you mentioned lived thousands of years ago. How about now? (So He says), Oh yes, yes, there are many now. Swami, where are they? I don't see them. He said, Oh! They are very careful to keep a low profile. They just live quietly - nobody knows. I had asked Him before if there were liberated people today. He said, Oh Yes. And again, where are they, Swami? Well, mostly they are in the foothills of the Himalayas and if you happen to come upon one he will just turn and walk away - won't even talk to you. Then I said, well, how about the West, Swami, in the West? Oh yes! There are liberated people in the West. And again, He said they keep a very, very low profile and you don't know that they are there. So maybe amongst us here, we have some superhumans and some liberated people. Possible? We wouldn't know. Only they know.

0:43:05 - Swami's Advaita Teachings

So, (then) how does all this business of evolution coming up to the human and beyond the human - this is all part of Advaita - how does that start? In the indivisible divine, the universal consciousness, Maya arises without motivation, without incentive. Swami says, just like a bubble of air rising from the mud at the bottom of the lake, then coming to the surface and bursting on the surface. Just like any fire - sparks fly out of the fire. Now the sparks are not different from the fire - they are part of the fire and yet they spring away from the fire and have a separate existence.

In that same way, in the universal consciousness, in the indivisible absolute, Maya arises and Maya then manifests itself as mind. Maya manifests as mind and as soon as mind is manifest then all the tendencies which lie at the root of the mind start to flower and grow and then manifest as the external universe. So the mind creates the external universe. Now as Adi Shankara - you all are (familiar with the name) Adi Shankara? - the great Indian philosopher of the early Middle Ages who was fully liberated at the age of about five or six and then walked throughout India teaching. And he's the one who from the Vedas codified the Advaita philosophy. We can all see that what he says is true and Swami has repeated the same.

You know, Swami says, I do not teach other than what has been taught for ages past. So he points out that in our lives right now or anytime, the only thing that we experience directly, you know - direct experience, not second-hand not implied. See, directly I touch this and move the (cup) - that's direct - nothing in between. The only thing in all of our existence that we experience in that way directly, without something else being in between, is our thoughts. Our thoughts - we experience directly. That's the only thing we experience directly. Therefore everything else that we experience is the result of thought. Thought then manifests as all the objects of the world. Now they point out (so) that we can quite easily understand that even though when it is said, as I have said, it seems strange, odd and unbelievable. Yet, if we will think of our dream - we go to sleep and this material world, this solid material world which we have to be so careful (in), otherwise we injure ourselves and injure others and so on - this solid material world doesn't exist for us in the dream. It's completely disappeared. (It's) gone in the dream world and yet in that dream world there manifests a universe just as solid and as real to us as this one is now. Isn't that true?

And yet every aspect of that dream world comes from our mind. We are dreaming and that dream world is formed out of mind stuff - just ourselves dreaming. And out of the mind dreaming is formed that entire world - the buildings, the animals, the people. If we meet with our grandfather - (even) somebody who was born before us - we look at the building which was built (a) thousand years ago in a fantasy - whole world made just out of the mind stuff which we accept as being real. So much so that if we have a dream hunger, what will satisfy the dream hunger? Only a dream meal. If we have a dream illness how can we get cured? Only through a dream doctor. And what can we do to help the dreamer? Nothing.

Just imagine a small little child in bed with mother and father. And the little child is having a terrible dream. It's being beaten or suffering terribly. Now, no matter how much the child is suffering, who can help it? Can mother and father help it? They don't even know. But if the little child would just wake up then all this suffering would immediately disappear. So therefore just as in the dream world, something may occur to wake us up from the dream - perhaps there was a little child, the mother turns it over or something or maybe (we're in) someplace and a lion gives a roar and that wakens us - wakens us out of the dream and we are free from all the suffering and misery in that dream. Why? Because we've been wakened from the dream. We're no longer caught up in the dream.

Now in the same way, Swami tells us, directly, as do the ancient saints and sages that, when we have experienced self-realization or enlightenment, from that stage of enlightenment or self-realization, from that stage this world, this waking world is just as much a dream as is the dream world to us from a standpoint of (the) waking world. Just as much a dream! So I said to Swami, Swami this, you say, this waking world that (we're in) right now - I'm sitting here talking to you Swami, and you tell me that this waking world has no reality - is just a myth, a dream. But then Swami I see you in this myth, in this dream working day and night. That sounds sort-of odd Swami. How can that be? If it's useless, just a dream, what are you doing here working so hard in this dream? You understand the question? Swami said (that) I come into the dream just with the hope that I can awaken you. So the Lord Easwara, the universal consciousness takes the form of Swami in this waking dream. And what is His purpose? His purpose is to awaken us from the dream of misery and despair and trouble that we experience in this world.

You see, why do we have this longing for eternal life? Why do we come here? Because life is intolerable and because it is not our natural state. Were it our natural state then we wouldn't have the desire to change - to be something else. So we become interested in spiritual life because to us we've reached the point where life is intolerable. Otherwise why do you drive 16, 18, 20 hours to come to this meeting? If you're so happy and satisfied, why wouldn't you stay home and look at the TV and go to a baseball game or something? Or just go and have a good meal? Why? Because it's intolerable to you, that's why. You know that you're suffering and you want to wake up. (And) here comes Swami, the Lord of creation, the Lord of all - here only to wake us up. Now we should understand from the Advaita - Am I boring you with Advaita? Sure? Okay. Alright.

See how is it that if we are now liberated - (and we are) Swami and all the great sages say that you can't - liberation for us is not something that is new, that can be achieved. Because liberation is the eternal state and being eternal, it must already be here. You follow me? Since universal life, universal consciousness is eternal - never beginning, never ending then it must already be here. Liberation must already be here at this very moment; doesn't have to be achieved. Swami specifically tells us, that the difference between bondage and liberation - as being bound (and) not being bound, being liberated, free - that there is no difference between those two. There is no essential difference between the state of bondage and the state of liberation - no essential difference. Because the state of bondage is simply a mental idea in our mind.

We consider ourselves as these miserable small human beings (heir) to all the (ills) of the world and refuse to consider ourselves as being the eternal absolute. We choose to do that. And, how do we make that terrible mistake? How do we make the terrible mistake? (Us) being free, being liberated this very moment and yet thinking that we are bound and coming all these miles to try and find out how to get liberated. How do we make that mistake? Well, the science of Advaita then looks very carefully into such things and makes the analysis, tries to see the truth of the matter.

Now we make the mistake because we take appearance for reality. We take that which is not true as being real. Now for example, (it) doesn't happen so much here in America because the snakes come out only in a certain season. But in India a person walking at dusk - this is one of the favorite illustrations used by the sages - so we use the same one. At dusk a person is walking on a path and he sees before him a coiled snake and hesitates and reacts. Maybe engages in some action like running away. Who knows what actually (he) may engage in? And then it's found that that is just a coiled rope. Not a snake at all. So what is the situation there? The situation there is that there was ignorance of the rope. (You see.) We were ignorant. We didn't know it was a rope and our imagination, our mind conceived the thought that it was a snake and therefore superimposed the form of snake on that inert piece a rope.

So how is that illusion done away with? It's done away with by inquiry. (You see.) That once you inquire into the matter then you can't help but find out that (it) is either a snake or a rope. You can't help (but) find out it is a rope, once you inquire. So therefore Swami says that meditation is not enough. There must also be inquiry. All the sages say the same. Now the illustration of the snake then is carried to every aspect of the world and every aspect of our lives. We are acting in ignorance of our true nature and we're only going to find out what is the truth beneath that ignorance, by inquiry. And by inquiry we must challenge what we now think to be true, to find out if in fact it is true.

Now where we, according to Advaita, where we get confused and carried away is in our failure to understand the role of the senses and the sense organs. The mind which is Maya manifest gets bound by the sensory organs. So Advaita

tells us, and Swami has said on numerous occasions, the ceiling on desires is a very easy, primary way of saying it to people just to introduce them to the idea. But he says that the way to get free of that (ignorance) is to explore the fact of sensory experience. That is to see (the) defects of that which we acquire in the world in order to satisfy our sensory craving. Almost any object that we acquire will in time change and will become not a source of pleasure but a source of pain. (Now the) bottle which goes pleasure in drinking if continued, results in drunkenness. The young lady sees her hero and they are married. In a few years time he becomes a jerk, not a hero and divorce sets in. The beautiful car, the first time the clutch goes, it loses all its beauty. So if we will examine the objects of the world and see that the pleasure that they provide us really is very temporary and in fact will lead to various (kinds of) unhappiness and sufferings in our lives then as we see that we can become detached from that process. And detachment is essential because only if we are detached can we observe correctly.

1:01:43 - Advaita Summarized; Practical Application of Advaita

Bill what time is it? Twenty five minutes left. Alright I think we'll stop the lecture on Advaita now and we should now have some questions. So let me just summarize Advaita then. In terms of the practical application of Advaita you have to ask yourself, is my conviction that I am a separate individual person living in this world under adverse circumstances - is that true? You have to challenge that concept.

Swami - remember what Swami says - that that is not true, that you are in fact God, that you are all beauty, all glory, all magnificence. He says that when you realize and see your own beauty then you are free and realized because nothing else can compare to the beauty and the glory of you the divine, the divine person. And the way to achieve that divinity is to just deny, flatly deny the validity of other ideas which have been propagated and put in your mind by other people - starting when you were born - by your parents, by the newspapers, by the magazines, by schooling. It's been pounded into us from the earliest days that we are limited individuals. Swami says, absolutely not true. We are the unlimited universal consciousness and therefore if we realize that, (then) even though the events of the physical world continue as it did before due to karma, (yet) they do not affect us because we are detached. We take the position of the witness, the divine witness, seeing all the play of the world before us.

Swami says that we should think of ourselves and see ourselves as actors in a play playing a part but on our way home to God. That is how we should see - should see ourselves and that will occur only if we take such statements seriously and start to examine to see whether or not all the things we spend our life desiring and acquiring, if they really give the satisfaction that we think they do at first. They don't. Therefore become detached, start to make inquiry, take the position that you are God. You are divine. You are magnificent. You are the glory of the whole universe. Swami says that the person of Himself, the person of Swami is just an infinitesimal part of the glory of God and that we are that full glory. So deny that we can be described as persons. Deny that our life is circumscribed by the things that happen to us. Deny that the thoughts that we think are genuine. The only thing genuine in the whole process is this I - this feeling of I - which continues unchanged in the waking state, in the dream state and in the deep sleep state. That's which continues. That I which continues - that is what we should look at. They tell us to say I am Brahma. Thatam Asi. That am I.

But the I is there. So why should we say I am that. I am Brahma. But I is already Brahma. So look to that in one's life which is permanent, which is always there, daytime, sleeping time or whatever and give attention to that I.

Follow that I to its source where it arises and this whole myth explodes. And then we can, according to Swami, we can then use all the objects of the world to their best advantage. We don't have to give up the objects - the cars, the houses and so forth and so on. What we have to give up - if we wish to realize what we really are - what we have to give up is our attachment to those, our attachment to them - not the things themselves. Detachment really means giving the best (use) to every object in the world - making the best use of every object in the world, not to give it up and go away from it. But to free ourselves from the attachment to it and then use it, enjoy it, make proper use of it. It won't harm us at all. So that is an overall view of Advaita and now we should have questions. Questions are much more important than anything that I can say because what I say often goes in one ear and out the other and I don't explain well enough or (delightfully) enough. But you have questions. Those are the important things.

1:07:13 - Question and Answer Session; How do you know when you are doing it right?

*Audience Member:* How do you know when you are doing it right?

*Hislop:* You know when you consult your conscience. .. Swami says that the conscience is God in every person. Now normally we don't consult our conscience. We consult what other people say is right. What society says is right. Or our parents say is right. Or our wife or husband says is right. We don't turn inward and consult our conscience. If we put all other things aside and ask our conscience it will tell us, if we are right or wrong. Next question.

1:07:51 - Isn't the Process of Inquiry Itself an Illusion?

*Audience Member:* I don't know if you will answer this here but since inquiry is a process coming out of the activity of the mind isn't inquiry itself an illusion?

*Hislop:* Yes of course it is. You see, just as the illusion of sickness in a dream has to be cured by a dream doctor likewise the illusion of being bound in this waking dream world has to be cured by the illusion of the master's teaching. Next one - yes sir?

1:08:33 - How to differentiate between conscience and mental chat?

*Audience Member:* What is the best way to understand when we are inquiring on something and it is actually coming from the conscience as opposed to mental chat? Question is, how can we distinguish between the conscience and what the mind tells us.

*Hislop:* Practice. You see. So far we don't consult our conscience. What we should do, is to sit quietly - now Swami gives an example - He says that if you have a question that you don't really know the answer to and you read Swami and still don't know the answer then you can ask Him directly in this way. Sit quietly for about 20 minutes and think only of Swami as being in the heart - as being your reality. Think of Him. See His form. See His face. Remember His sayings. Every time the mind starts to wander away bring it back immediately to thinking about Swami in one way or another. Then after 20 minutes of that concentrated fully on Swami, ask the question. And within a short time your mind will be clear and you will know what the answer to the question is. How about the ladies side? Alright.

1:09:59 - Following the I to the Source Becomes a Burden. How to rid oneself from this burden?

*Audience Member:* (We have to) follow the I to the source and (when) we do this for some distance (we are aware), still under duality, (from) I moving to the source, after some time (this) becomes a very heavy burden. And we realize that we still can't make it all the way (or we have not made it all the way). (How) do you (rid) yourself of this burden? It seems to me that there is some other kind of quantum leap (that we would need to have).

*Hislop:* The lady says that trying to find the source of the I becomes a task, a burden. You see it isn't that you try to find in words or in concepts the source for the I. It is just that you give your attention to your feeling of beingness. Now you see, nobody, nobody has to tell you that you're alive. You won't even have to look in the mirror to know that you're alive, that you exist. Okay. You know you exist, (see.) So to trace down the I simply means to stay with that feeling that primeval feeling of beingness - deep, just follow deep into yourself. You will find, if you do that, that you come to an area of quietness where you as the questioner don't even exist - just a vast endless area of quietness and peace. (It is) just like, if you want to know that you are God then you must concentrate on that idea and you will transform yourself into God because you are already God. In following the I to find its source you are that source. You're simply finding, giving room for that which you are, to come forth and make itself known. Try that. Next question, ladies side.

1:12:32 - If We Think Ourselves as God, Won't We Have a Big Ego?

*Audience Member:* If we all work with that idea that we are all God - We have the idea (we are God) - yes. If we think ourselves as God (then) won't shall we (walk) with a big ego.

*Hislop:* Yes, she says that if we have a feeling now that we are God and now we declare that we are God - isn't that going to be a big ego? A tremendous ego, in fact. [Laughter.] Yes, I would think there would be that danger [laughter]. But you see, to get to a new land you must pass through dangers, dangerous travel. Swami will protect you. He says that I will be with you all the way. I will protect you. Turn to me, give your life to me and I will save you. Nothing will happen to you. So any of these exercises or inquires that you make, dedicate the inquiry to the Lord and hold His hand while you are making them. Keep Him by your side. Then no problem will arise. (Another) question?

1:13:51 - Why does Baba Materialize Objects and Vibhuti before the Public?

*Audience Member:* I have never heard Rama and Krishna (or for that matter) Jesus or Mohammad materializing objects. How is it (that) Baba chose (to do) a lot of materializing of objects and vibhuti before the public?

*Hislop:* He doesn't know that Krishna materialized objects or that Jesus did. So how come Swami materializes objects? Is there a significance of doing that? Ya. It is very significant in that state. See, all we know about Swami producing objects is that He says it's part of His nature. Now yogis - I have been in Burma and India (so long) - I know yogis both in Burma and India who can produce objects just like Swami does. But now for example, ex-governor of Goa, Nakul Sen, told me that there was a fellow who belonged to the court circle there and he would always have him in when there were guests. This fellow could stand in a circle of maybe 25 people and he could create 25 different objects - each object being exactly what the person wanted. See. But said Nakul Sen, he could do that only after praying to the Goddess Durga - only after paying to Durga. Now other yogis engage in yogic exercises to develop those psychic powers but Swami says that with Him, it's natural. There's no necessity to practice. He says that He walks along and the idea occurs to Him that He would like to give this lady a japamala. As soon as the idea occurs, there's the japamala. (He) attaches no importance to it. That is no sign of divinity. It is duplicated in many parts of the world. No sign of divinity. It's just to please to devotee and make the devotee happy. So the devotee will perhaps listen to Swami and do what Swami really wants a devotee to do [laughter]. Next question.

1:16:14 - Where do human values fit into the context of I-ness being the only genuine thing?

*Audience Member:* Where does the human values fit into the context that the only thing that's genuine is the sense of I-ness that's there?

*Hislop:* Yes, the question is, where does human values fit in to (the) sense of I-ness. You see, Swami says that in regards to our Sai organization, there are two things to keep in mind. One is not to get involved in money, don't get involved with government, don't get involved with power. That's one thing. The second thing is to do only that which is within your capacity to do. (You have a) limited capacity as a human person. Only do that which is within your capacity to do. And He said, rely on your self - the Atma doesn't need any help. Alright Then He said that the purpose of the Sai organization is so that its members may live an ideal joyful, happy life. And therefore we should give careful attention to the ideals of the Sai organization so that we can live ideal lives which will serve as an example to others and therefore help them to also live ideal human lives.

Now in regards to Seva - the primary Seva is: do not harm another. That's the basis of Seva. You may think that's a silly, small statement that has no power at all - just think, at this moment and every moment of the day, are there not screams of agony rising to the sky all over the world for what ill one person is doing to another? Screams of agony (from) all over the world. Suppose that today that one small silly little statement - don't harm another - were adopted. Would it not be a new world tomorrow? What a change, worldwide change with just that one small thing? So first, work no harm upon others then if you conceive of the fact that Swami is not only in your heart, He is a reality of every person that you see then if you see someone in distress and it is within your capacity to help, why not help? How can you not help? You are serving Swami. Swami says I don't need your help with the world. God made the world. He is perfectly competent to look after the world. He says that when you do Seva, do it to God - to God within that person - every person - the only reality (is) that person is God.

Therefore do Seva to God. You can't go up in His room at the Mandir and massage His feet and prepare His meals. You can't serve God that way. But you can serve God in another person. Now I think it is time for lunch.

*Bill Harvey:* You've got about five more minutes. I was just going to make sure that you defined Seva. So that people realize. Some people know that's a Sanskrit term for service - community service. He's got into the habit of saying Seva. But its service that he's talking about. Go ahead (Bob).

1:20:27 - Swami saving Hislop and Others from Head-On Collision in Bangalore

*Audience Member:* When Swami saved your life in the car He said that Hislop it took me longer to come to you because you weren't calling for me. And how is it in terms of this illusion and free will and all the (unknown future .. type-of-thing)?

*Hislop:* You see, what He said was that you were so shocked - I don't you know whether you know the story of the car or not. Very briefly - we're coming back from Brindavan to the hotel in the city and there were six people (in the) car: myself, my wife, New Yorker and his wife and the daughter - they had come from New York to rescue the daughter from hippie community in India and take her back home. So they asked (the) ride in our taxi back to the town So six (were) in the car. Now the taxi driver's in a hurry always and so he came up behind a bus and looked, peeked you know, to pass on the right hand side - peeked around. (He saw a light and) figured (it) was a stationary light and so he pulled around and stepped on the throttle. You know what happens when you step on the throttle of an Indian car. Nothing much happened. [Laughter] [You have] a lot of experience - I see. Right. So we start to pull around besides the bus. Then it was evident that he had made a terrible mistake; that that was not a stationary light. It was a light of a vehicle moving at a fast rate of speed.

Now when you are faced with a head-on collision, one car will (at least) take to the ditch because it'll be less dangerous than this head-on collision. But that couldn't happen. On our left side was a bus. On our right side was the high row of (road) repairing material. No way to get off the road to the left or the right - inevitable collision. So we, you know, shut our eyes like that. You're dead, we're dead. But then nothing happened. So we opened our eyes [laughter] - we opened our eyes and there we were going around the front of the bus. We looked quickly behind us to the windshield and there were the lights of the other car receding behind us. So when we saw Swami (on) the next morning I threw myself at His feet (and) said Lord, you saved (our) life last night. He said yes, yes, yes. That was, that was very funny wasn't it? [Laughter] Then He said you were so shocked, you even forgot to call on Swami. But Swami saved you anyway. Then He turned to a group of Telugu people sitting along the wall (of the verandah) and in Telugu, told them the whole story.

*Audience Member:* Was the driver conscious of that experience afterwards?

*Hislop:* Oh yes, he couldn't figure it out - we asked him. Taxi driver - a taxi driver usually can answer any question. But he couldn't figure it out (though). He couldn't explain it. One more (question)? Okay.

1:23:39 - Do We Need God's Grace for Liberation?

*Audience Member:* (Last time you made the) statement (that) we cannot receive liberation without God's Grace. Does that mean that God's Grace from within us is going to (extend) and give us liberation? Or are we looking to Swami, to say one day in words, you are liberated?

*Hislop:* Yes, the statement is that Swami has said that now you are entangled in all this (mess) you created for yourself. You know like (Hardy) and his old pal what a mess. And He says but Swami will save you. Only Swami's Grace will save you. Now what He means there is the same thing He said that there is the Atma; there is the spiritual teaching; there is the longing for enlightenment. But yet a teacher must come to convey that sacred information to you, (teach it) to you (see.) That, that's the sense of Grace. That is, otherwise it wouldn't occur to us. The perfect illustration I think is a child (at) the seashore when the waves break. There are bubbles and these bubbles reflect the Sun and are beautiful, very colored bubbles - the child runs down and picks up a handful of bubbles and comes to father and says, Daddy, I want to take this home with me and the father says yes son, I know but I have to tell you that's just water and in a moment it'll be gone. Now that would never have occurred to the child (you see), by himself. The guru had to come and convey the teaching to him. So in that case the father was the guru. In the same way, Swami's Grace is bringing us this teaching that we read every day in His discourses. In that way (it is) His Grace, otherwise it wouldn't occur to us. We would, like the people in the Mid-East (Middle East?) - what thoughts do they have of liberation? All they can worry about is how to dodge the next bomb - (you see.) Okay. I think (that will be it). Okay. Sairam! Thank you very much.

--- End of Talk ---

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**Universal Consciousness - Advaita - Teachings Backed by Practical Experiences (2013-11-15 16:36)**

*Last updated on November 20th 2013*

The post, Sathya Sai Baba's Advaita Teachings By John Hislop Ph.D. - Edited Transcript of Video, is about teachings of Advaita as taught by Sri Sathya Sai Baba from one of the foremost, now deceased, Western followers/disciples of his, a Dr. Hislop (given in a talk in 1989 in the USA). Very interestingly, the theory of Advaita is backed by practical experiences of Dr. Hislop of the "universal consciousness" level of Sri Sathya Sai Baba which allowed the latter to have paranormal knowledge about Dr. Hislop. Sri Sathya Sai Baba exhorted his followers to believe that the ultimate reality and the only reality of all of them (indeed of all existence) is the "universal consciousness" which is at the depth of their very being. In other words, that all are God.

But, as most of us (including me, certainly), have some difficulty in constantly (or even for some time) living with such a belief, given the various very human limitations that we have at our current spiritual evolution levels, we may prefer to draw inspiration from an external icon (name and/or form) for our spiritual efforts. In the post mentioned above Sri Sathya Sai Baba is that external icon which is viewed as Divine but in my humble opinion most (if not all) of the lecture would apply to other divine figures too of Hinduism as well as other religions. The nomenclature used may be different, "world as the body of Christ", "one Ummah", <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ummah>, instead of "universal consciousness" (the equivalence is not exact but the essence of the terms is the unity in creation and so they have equivalence). Instead of Sathya Sai Baba, the figure could be Christ or Krishna, or the formless Allah.

It must also be mentioned that the initial part of the talk relates to matters specific to the Sri Sathya Sai Baba following. Some readers may want to skip that part and start reading the edited transcript document (or viewing the video) from "0:22:53 - How to Love Swami?; Hislop Experiencing Swami Within". [I repeat, you can substitute your name & form of God instead of Swami].

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### **A lovely and insightful account of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Setup from The Hindu (2013-11-22 10:03)**

I was 'persuaded' to buy a copy of "Srivari Brahmotsavam- A celestial spectacle on earth" from The Hindu by my Hindu newspaper vendor/supplier for Rs. 150/- a few days (perhaps weeks) ago. I thank the vendor for making me buy it :). I have yet to read it in full but have found it to have fascinating insights of Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam setup with wonderful photographs as well. I thought I should let readers know that it can be bought from the net here: <http://hindu.com/books/srivari/srivari13.htm>. Some points about the issue.

- It starts with lovely photographs of the annual Brahmotsavam (mainly deity photographs).
- Average number of pilgrims having darshan every day - 63,000! On 25 to 30 days in a year the number of people having darshan crosses 1 lakh.

### **The financial picture**

I think TTD has heavily benefited materially by South India's economic boom. Some figures of revenue: 2012-13 Rs. 2125 crores  
2003-04 Rs. 496 crores  
1993-94 Rs. 121 crores  
1983-84 Rs. 33 crores  
1972-73 Rs. 9 crores  
1962-63 Rs. 0.98 crore  
1954-55 Rs. 0.20 crore

Now for us to get a proper value of the above figures they should be adjusted for inflation which I am quite sure may change the old decade figures significantly. But even the inflation adjusted figures would show a significant growth in revenue over decades, I think.

- TTD has a workforce of around 20,000, half of whom are permanent employees.
- If TTD were a listed company, it will rank around 300 in the list of over 5,000 companies in Bombay Stock Exchange. It will overshadow the likes of Indian Hotels company, which owns the Taj Group of hotels, Tata Global Beverages (formerly Tata Tea), Sundaram Finance and multinationals such as Novartis and Pfizer.

### Other topics

The issue has articles on the laddu, geology of Tirupati, Nithya Annadanam (serves meals to 60,000 pilgrims daily for free! - Awesome), tonsuring the head, Security, Biosphere reserve, Volunteer service groups, Social Service activities of TTD, Cow donations (and cow care), interviews with a spiritual head and administrators, fascinating images from the past etc.

For those who are devoted in some way to Lord Venkateswara of Tirupati, I think this book/supplement is a must-have.

### My Tirumala Experience & Thoughts

I also thought I should add some key things that I remember from my only trip to Tirumala-Tirupathi in the late eighties (IIRC).

At that time I was an agnostic who was into whatever I had understood then of Vedanta philosophy & contemplation but did not really believe in a supernatural power which could/would intervene in human/worldly affairs and so I was not into devotion (Bhakti). I had come under the impression that Tirupathi Balaji was a money God and I tended to prefer lower-profile temples and spiritual centres as more suitable for my path to God. I went to Tirupathi on this trip along with friends & a relative as a kind-of curious visitor.

The first key memory I have of Tirumala is hearing Venkatesa-Suprabhatam, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suprabhatam>, (sung by M.S. Subbulakshmi if I recognized it and remember it correctly) as we were going towards the temple proper. It seemed to be so holy and seemed to settle the mind into a higher/purer state. Of course, I had heard it earlier in other environments like a residential flat. But hearing it on the Tirumala hill during early morning right in front of the temple was different - it was an uplifting experience.

The other very striking memory is of a wealthy family in the queue just before the sanctum sanctorum with a fiftyish perhaps male who was quite heavily built and had a few large gold rings on his fingers. The lady of the family had lots of gold jewelry and there were some children too along with them. As the queue advanced and turned to the sanctum sanctorum (or a point very close to it), the fiftyish heavily built man broke into a run, shouting Govinda Govinda! His face reflected anticipation and desire of a 'mad' but pure 'mad' kind.

I had not seen anything like that before in my life in temples that I had visited mostly in and around Bombay. Yes, of course, one could see devotion writ large on the face of many people in temples, and also at homes of devout people (my mother was quite devout). But this was different. The running was like how a cricket-fan may run to see a cricket star or a film fan may run to see a film star (though that hero-worship is different from God-worship).

And this man was fiftyish and obviously well off! But he seemed to have forgotten his status and everything and just wanted to rush to have his beloved God's darshan!

That made a lot of impact on me. I now had seen 'crazy' but pure-type of Bhakti from rather close quarters. I felt that that person had experienced something which I not only had not experienced but could also not really understand/appreciate/imagine.

Around a quarter century later, now I certainly can understand that Bhakti and sometimes, I myself, get into that very happy, blessed, 'mad' kind of love (devotion/Bhakti) for God, usually in the God-man forms of Sathya Sai Baba, Shirdi Sai Baba, Krishna, Rama, Jesus etc. In those moments it is just that love, admiration and/or worship of/for God that matters - all else simply disappears from the consciousness or becomes very unimportant. Such moments are the cherished moments of my life - the rest of my life just pales into insignificance when compared to these blessed moments. I think these uplifting moments are the common experiences of devotees of God from various religions, regions of the world as well as periods of time. And that perhaps is, and has been over millenniums, the vital magnetic pull of various religions, religious centres, saints and god-persons across the world.

I think I also understand, to some extent, the money part of Tirumala. God is all powerful and has the power to satisfy various kinds of desires of His devotees. Those who pray devotedly for wealth, like many, many businessmen devotees of Lord Venkateswara of Tirupathi, are showered with wealth by the Lord. And then they come to His image



at Tirumala to offer gratitude for showering that wealth, and perhaps offer a part of that wealth to Him.

To put it in a different language and context, the mind matters. If the mind intensely focuses on desiring wealth through prayer (and, usually, backed with some business or other activity) I think the way existence works is that such intense prayer has the capability to make the desire come true.

But then wealth is transitory. Some amount is needed for survival but desiring too much of it can bring a lot of worries too. So the wise people teach us to pray instead for things that are more lasting like love, joy and peace which would usually include necessary amount of wealth for decent if not luxurious living.

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### **Commemorative Postage Stamp on Sathya Sai Baba released by Minister of State for C&IT, Dr. Kruparani (2013-11-25 16:13)**

It was very satisfying for me to see the recognition provided by the Govt. of India of Swami's outstanding contribution to India of motivating people to pursue spirituality through loving service to the poor and the needy on a very large scale suitable to modern times, by releasing a postage stamp in his honour.

Here's a Telugu news video clip of it, 0 min: 55 secs.

Here's a pic of the stamp, and here's a pic of the "First day cover".

<http://postalinspectors.blogspot.in/2013/11/commemorative-postage-stamp-on-sathya.html> gives a pic of the release itself. I have copy-pasted the accompanying text below:

Sri Sathya Sai Baba (born as Sathyanarayana Raju; 23 November 1926 – death 24 April 2011) was a highly revered spiritual leader and world teacher, whose life and message are inspiring millions of people throughout the world. He claimed to be the reincarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi. The Sathya Sai Organisation, founded by Sathya Sai Baba "to enable its members to undertake service activities as a means to spiritual advancement" has over 1,200 Sathya Sai Centers in more than 100 countries. Through this organisation, Sathya Sai Baba established a network of free hospitals, clinics, drinking water projects and schools. Sathya Sai's devotees are spread across the world.

Union Minister of State for Communication & Information Technology (IT) Killi Krupa Rani released a commemorative stamp on Sathya Sai Baba on the occasion of his 88th birth anniversary celebrations held at Puttaparthi (Anantapur district) on 23rd November 2013.

— end extract —

I think the crux is the platform created worldwide for persons who want to "undertake service activities as a means to spiritual advancement" and are comfortable with teachings of Sathya Sai Baba whose essence perhaps can be captured as the eternal (Sanathana) values of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema. The platform is stable and has leading lights like retired supreme court judges as trustees ([http://supremecourtindia.nic.in/judges/bio/97\\_apmisra.htm](http://supremecourtindia.nic.in/judges/bio/97_apmisra.htm) - Justice Misra is seen with Dr. Kruparani, MoS, in the pic mentioned above, of the stamp release) or holding top positions like Chancellor of the Sai university (Justice Venkatachaliah: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manepalli\\_Narayana\\_Rao\\_Venkatachaliah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manepalli_Narayana_Rao_Venkatachaliah)). [After Swami's Mahasamadhi former Supreme Court Judge P.N. Bhagwati, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P.\\_N.\\_Bhagwati](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P._N._Bhagwati), was appointed the Sai university Chancellor but he perhaps faced some health issues and so was not seen at important events like the convocation.]

Over the past couple of years as I have been doing rather intensive reading of major events in India (and abroad) I have come to understand the value that a retired supreme court judge can bring to institutional governance at the very top levels. The honourable supreme court judges must be having tremendous experience of dealing with disputes of various kinds some of which involve the high and mighty of the land (both at supreme court level and lower courts). I guess almost any dispute under the sun could come up to the Supreme court (and lower courts) - corruption, murder, constitutional impropriety, divorce, sexual molestation, tax matters etc.! I think such experience would be making them very wise about human beings and institutions. Further, accountability is something they would be very well versed with. So, if anything is amiss in an institution where they serve at the top, and that is big enough to come to their notice, they have the clout and the wisdom to haul up people and set things right. The government, I think, gives a lot of value to the opinions and views of retired supreme court judges.

It is very satisfying and reassuring for me to see that the key Sathya Sai institutions have such eminent and wise people

like retired supreme court judges in top positions.

BTW Sam Pitroda, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam\\_Pitroda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Pitroda), was the chief guest for the convocation of the Sai university this year (held one day prior to Swami's birthday i.e. on 22nd Nov.). The wiki states that Pitroda is adviser to the Prime Minister of India on public information infrastructure and innovations and the chairman of National Innovation Council. He does not seem to be a Sai devotee - perhaps he was attracted by the educational model of the Sai university. Here's a report of the convocation which has Sam Pitroda's picture at the convocation towards the bottom of the report, <http://www.theprasanthereporter.org/2013/11/32nd-annual-convocation-of-sssihl/>. And here's The Hindu report on the convocation.

The Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust also released its annual report, [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pdf/Annual%20Report%20\\_SSSCT%202012-13.pdf](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pdf/Annual%20Report%20_SSSCT%202012-13.pdf) (Note the pdf file is around 12 MB and so the download may take some time).

So around two and a half years after Swami's Mahasamadhi, I think the transition to a stable post-Mahasamadhi phase has been achieved. Govt. recognition, retired supreme court judges taking up key positions (after Swami's Mahasamadhi), annual financial reports being made available for free download, decent media reports on Sai institution events ... The chaotic months with attendant scary media coverage and government oversight/inquiry that followed the Mahasamadhi are a distant memory now! Not that the institutions may not face challenges now and then - that perhaps would happen to any institution. But now the institutions have shown the ability to run in the absence of Swami's physical form. (Of course, Swami's Grace is beyond His physical form and that is the vital factor for the running of the institutions).

IMHO, now the Puttaparthi setup is a shining beacon of loving service to fellow human beings in a modern setup involving sophisticated medical care, education, some village service as well as loving adoration of God through means like bhajan, chanting, satsang and reading scripture and Sai literature.

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### **Sama - Muslim Mystic Music of India Documentary (2013-11-25 16:47)**

I thoroughly enjoyed, felt inspired and improved my knowledge about Muslim mystic music of India as well as Islam, by watching a documentary Sama. Some info. about it from its webpage, [http://www.psbt.org/screening/movie\\_review/481](http://www.psbt.org/screening/movie_review/481). It is financed by the Government of India. SAMA - MUSLIM MYSTIC MUSIC OF INDIA | SHAZIA KHAN | 52 min | Kashmiri, Malayalam, Assamese, Bengali, Rajasthani, Tamil, Hindi, English | 2113

The Film explores the Islamic music traditions in India and portrays how they have borrowed and taken inspiration from the culture of the India, in both form and content, to become a truly magnificent sound. The Film discovers that connection which allows the artiste to become one with the creator and experience peace, calm, serenity and joy.

— end webpage extract —

I saw it on youtube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyg4qpqDXqE>, 52 min, 01 sec.

It starts with a Tamil Muslim song which I loved and a simple yet very powerful quote from the Quran:

Quran Surah 2 (Al-Baqarah) Ayat 152 - Remember Me and I will remember you.

The Tamil Muslim song is Eganee Ya Allah (by Nagore Saints, it seems).

Around 03:00: Then it moves to Kerala and mentions that Arab traders had contacts with Kerala prior to Islam and that paved the way for Islamic preachers to come to Kerala. It then has a still with the following message:

The Indian Ocean's commercial connections, circa 7th century AD, brought Islam here. But there have been other ways: soldiers, ruling dynasties and Sufis. Over 1,400 years of shared history with Hinduism in the region, Islam here continues to evolve. Creating a new culture, which is broadly Islamic, but whose principal characteristics are heterodox and indigenous.

—end message—

Then we have a mappila paattu (traditional Islamic songs of Muslim Malabar Kerala) from a couple of young girls singing clearly and melodiously but without any music support.

The cultural blending of Indian and Arabian music styles is talked about, and how the mappila paattu moved from pre-Islamic themes to Islamic themes.

Then there was an interesting still with the message:

Mid-13th century AD, the Delhi Sultanate under Shams ud-Din Iltutmish became a refuge for people fleeing the Mongol onslaught on Baghdad and the Caliphate. Sufis were part of this exodus, too. They arrived, settled and began to discover traditions similar to theirs. Wandering across the land, they assimilated local customs. In time, they became the biggest exponent of the spread of Islam in India.

— end message —

Hmm. What I had read earlier about famous Sufis coming to India from Muslim lands like Iraq gave the impression that they were sent here to spread the Islamic faith. I don't recall those articles mentioning the push-factor of the horrific Mongol sack of Baghdad (and caliphate in general). [The 8th para in this link describes the horrific sack of Baghdad, the epicentre of Islamic civilization then, by the Mongols in 1258, lasting for a week, <http://historyofislam.com/contents/the-post-mongol-period/the-fall-of-baghdad/> - Baghdad was utterly destroyed]. As is the case in most such moves/migrations I think both the push-factor of the Mongol destruction as well as the pull-factor of an Islamic sultanate in Delhi would have led some of the Caliphate religious leaders including Sufis to move to India. I think this piece of vital info. from this film improves my understanding of Indian Islamic history quite a bit.

Around 07:50: Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti's shrine in Ajmer is covered with some historical background and a qawwali song sung in the shrine.

Around 11:05: Jodhpur, Rajasthan is next featuring Muslim singers who sing (and for generations have sung) Hindu bhajans to Rajput kings as well as Muslim songs (for others). Their way of life is an interesting blend of Hinduism and Islam.

I loved the mystical view presented by one song (I think the video mentioned Bulleh Shah in this context), translation given below:

God is within, around, up and above  
this, my friend, is a profound lesson.

Recite the name of the Almighty,  
and the veil of separation will melt away,  
the Prophet's guiding light will meet you then.

The holy Kaaba is a place within me,  
I wonder who blessed me with it.

Within is a temple, a mosque and the God too.

Around 17:30: Assam comes next. A monastery head priest talks about a founder, named Sankardev, of a (Hindu) sect who gave importance to congregational chanting & singing (Naam Kirtan) and worship of one God. Here's his wiki page.

Then we have a message:

The Islamic tradition of meditative invocation or chanting God's ninety-nine names is called ZIKR. Hazrat Shah Miran who came from Baghdad in the 17th century introduced this devotional concept of remembrance in Assam. He gave the first Azaan (Muslim call of prayer) here and came to be known as Ajan Pir (Spiritual leader).

— end message —

Here's the wiki page for Ajan Pir.

An Islamic leader says that Ajan Pir created the ZIKR which is Islamic but borrowed the music from the Vaishnavite sect. The (Hindu) monastery priest says that Ajan Pir was influenced by Sankardev's philosophy and the similarity between Islam and that philosophy. God is one.

Then we have a Hindu song and later, a Muslim song from the Ajan Pir group.

Then the Islamic leader says (translated), "The purpose of practicing Zikr in short is to have a union with God. When one's whole being calls out to the Almighty (Allah) it is only then one achieves communion. In that moment, the person transcends the physical world. Nothing remains but Allah Allah Allah."

Around 24:30: The scene shifts to snow and Jammu and Kashmir.

We have an Islamic song.

About Sufism, a veteran Islamic folk music man says (translated), "A Sufi would be someone who is pure hearted - there is nothing malicious about him. He should have found his connection to God - recognition of Divinity is the core of this process. A Sufi would be conscious of the present, living in the now... alive. He is fearless. The life of a Sufi and

a common man is very different. How exactly? The Sufi is no longer scared of dying - he does not have materialistic concerns. If he is on this path, he trusts the power that fed him in his mother's womb where even his mother's hands could not reach. He keeps the faith that Allah will provide for him because God has ordained that he is responsible for food, death and destiny. The rest is man's free will."

He goes on later to say (translated), "Certain sects of the Islamic society consider the Sufis deranged - giving them several irreverent names - but a true Sufi will be above these debates ... if he is not, then he has strayed from the path, irrespective he has to keep moving on."

We have a song and lovely santoor music (if I got it right) on a beautiful lake (Dal lake?).

Then one of the musicians says (translated), "The practice of Sama (audition gatherings) and music in Sufism is like a rosary. Man carries within his being the music of creation, the beating of his heart is Sufi music, it is the real mystic music. A sort of music that gives you peace, placates your soul; not a temporary respite. When one hears the call of Azaan, one is enthused with divine energy. Leaving all material engagements, we offer our obeisance to the Almighty. This is the call of Sama. That which draws you to virtue and takes you away from the immoral. (That is called real music. That is called real Sama.)"

Around 37:00: The scene shifts to a Baul music festival in Kolkata, East India and then a village in Bengal, East India. Baul folk musician-fakirs say (translated), "Saint Lalon's songs are about humanity. People across religions can follow this path. Music is the medium through which we seek enlightenment, our music is very introspective. (Interviewer) Is your path to Allah same as the Quran teaches? (Musician-fakirs answer) The same! This asceticism is the essence of Quran. Read the Quran, you will know the path to God. Each page is an ode to humanity. The Quran mentions two Meccas. One in the Arab lands and the other is within you. God resides here (speaker places his hand on his heart/chest), not in Arab lands. Music for us is a high, as well as our livelihood. If we are not performing, we will be singing away at home. Through music we pay our respects to our masters."

...

"Amongst us Hindus are called Bauls and Muslims are called Fakirs. We follow the same philosophy, we are one." ...  
"To hell with divides. We are all humans. One is not born a priest or a cobbler. Death finds us all whether you live under a tree or in a five star hotel - whether you are a Hindu or a Muslim."

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## **Some Key Figures from Sathya Sai Trust Annual Report for 2012-13 (2013-11-27 13:22)**

*Last updated on 28th November 2013*

I tried to pick up some key figures from the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust Annual Report for 2012-13, [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pdf/Annual %20Report %20 \\_SSSCT %202012-13.pdf](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pdf/Annual%20Report%20_SSSCT%202012-13.pdf) (12 MB document having 132 pages). Here they are: [Note: A crore is 10 million; figures are in Rupees; 1 US \$ is currently around 62 Rupees.]

### **Key financial figures for 2012-13**

From Page 10:

Income: 165.95 crores

[includes

Interest (on Investments, I presume) of 117.18 crores and

Donations of 41.46 crores] Expenditure: 101.21 crores

[Barring 8.22 crores spent on Admin & Maintenance, remaining expenditure of 92.99 crores was on Education, Medical Relief & Welfare projects.]

Additional 10.88 crores spent by university from funds and grants received by them.

Page 11:

Balance Sheet - Total Funds: 1523.25 crores [includes Investments of 1257.28 crores]

### **Key service figures for 2012-13**

Free Medical care:

6,75,363 patients attended to and 23,911 surgical procedures performed [across 2 super hospitals, 1 general hospital, 1 mobile hospital]

Free Education:

1259 university students [across 4 campuses - Puttaparthi and Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, Bangalore and Mudde-nahalli in Karnataka.]

22 Music college students

[School students figures across all classes did not seem to be available; Xth std. passed out students - 89, XIIth std. passed out students - 118]

(Free) Welfare projects are difficult to reduce to numbers like above - please read the document for info. But there are some numbers in the report which I felt appropriate to put down below:

- Grama Seva (Village Service) - once a year for around a week. Mainly done by Sai education system students under supervision of faculty & staff, as exposure to village service [45,000 sets of clothes (a Sari and a Dhoti making up one set, I presume) distributed over 153 villages; 2,92,000 people were served (a food packet and a laddu (sweet), I presume).]
- Nithya Annadana Padhakam (Daily Free Food Service): 38 villages served, 2,70,741 meals served.

### **Other**

The report covers organization of (devotional and other like university convocation) festivities in Puttaparthi ashram, details of Sri Sathya Sai Media Foundation (Radio Sai etc.) work as well as that of Sri Sathya Sai Easwaramma Women's Welfare trust.

An online school education project, Vidya Vahini, is covered in some detail.

### **Sathya Sai Organizations**

The report also covers Indian and international Sai organizations giving details of various devotional and service activities conducted during the reporting year. These organizations handle the various Sathya Sai centres across the country & world and so are distinct, in some sense, from the Puttaparthi Sai setup. Some info./figures are given below:

#### **Indian Sathya Sai Organization:**

2,647 samithis (centres), 5,92,106 organization members (mostly part-time I guess - 4,563 full time members), 3,30,691 Bal Vikas (like Sunday school) students and 1,39,700 trained Seva Dals (volunteers).

3,809 disaster relief cases, 2,644 villages adopted, 1,200 village improvement programme beneficiary villages, 8,95,714 (free) medical camp beneficiaries.

#### **Sathya Sai International Organization:**

120 countries active, 1,969 Sai centres.

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Given the fact that the revenue of one of the largest temple setups in India for 2012-13 was 2125 Crores, the income of the Sathya Sai Central Trust is quite less - less than 10 % of that figure. Of course, the large temple setup has a different focus and serves a different and very important need of its far larger number of visiting devotees. So comparing the Sai central trust setup with the large temple town setup would be like comparing apples and oranges! But I think that the service to man/society achieved by the Sai central trust with its far lesser income is very noteworthy. A postal inspectors blog post had mentioned in the context of the release of the recent stamp on Sathya Sai Baba, about him creating an organization "to enable its members to undertake service activities as a means to spiritual advancement". I think these figures clearly show that the Sai central trust and associated institutions are maintaining that focus on service activities even after the Mahasamadhi of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

## 1.5 December

### Tibetan Book of the Dead - Description of Death, Between Death & Re-birth, and Re-birth (2013-12-14 17:43)

I saw an interesting though perhaps over-dramatized video on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, "Secret Tibetan Book of the Dead | History Channel Documentary", <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ermcc6iDqQA>, 44 min 01 sec, with the transcript available [Transcript allows you to browse through the text of the video and choose to view only the parts you are interested in.] The video has input from some Western experts on the book including some professor(s). The experts comments are quite interesting and thought-provoking.

There is a wikipedia page associated with it, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bardo\\_Thodol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bardo_Thodol). A few extracts:

The Liberation Through Hearing During the Intermediate State differentiates the intermediate state between lives into three bardos:

- The chikhai bardo or "bardo of the moment of death", which features the experience of the "clear light of reality", or at least the nearest approximation of which one is spiritually capable.
- The chonyid bardo or "bardo of the experiencing of reality", which features the experience of visions of various Buddha forms (or, again, the nearest approximations of which one is capable).
- The sidpa bardo or "bardo of rebirth", which features karmically impelled hallucinations which eventually result in rebirth. (Typically imagery of men and women passionately entwined.)

...

*[Ravi: Carl Jung's comments on it:]*

In an introduction to Evans-Wentz' version, Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung summarizes his psychological commentary: The Bardo Thödol [Tibetan Book of the Dead] began by being a closed book, and so it has remained, no matter what kind of commentaries may be written upon it. For it is a book that will only open itself to spiritual understanding, and this is a capacity which no man is born with, but which he can only acquire through special training and special experience. It is good that such to all intents and purposes useless books exist. They are meant for those queer folk who no longer set much store by the uses, aims, and meaning of present-day civilisation.

— Carl Jung

*[Ravi: I have been very impressed with whatever little I have read of Carl Jung. From the little I have read of both Jung and Freud I think Jung seems to have got the psychological understanding of humans more right. But then that is just my opinion based on very little reading - I could be way off.]*

— end wiki extracts ( & comments) —

The book pdf is available here: <http://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Tibetan-Book-of-the-Dead.pdf>. I have downloaded it but not yet read/browse-read it.

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### Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation - The Joy of the Gospel (2013-12-14 18:52)

I read the initial parts of Pope Francis' newly released document, The Joy of the Gospel. Here's a news article on it, "Francis: This is how the joy of the Gospel can reform the Church", <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/the-vatican/detail/articolo/francesco-francis-francisco-30114/>

Though Pope Francis' words are directed to Catholics/Christians, I think many of his views apply to other faiths too with a replacement of the deity Christ, when mentioned, with that of another faith (or a formless God). I have put

down some references to the document and some small extracts which I think may be of interest to non-Catholic/non-Christian readers too. The long document is available here: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html) #

I must also say that many of us may not agree with some approaches of the Roman Catholic Church - I am not so comfortable with the idea of evangelization (and conversion) itself. I mean, if a person of his/her own accord chooses to convert to another religion - that's fine. But the idea of enticing people to convert from one religion to another "true" religion is something I am not comfortable with. I admire the great religions of the world and I think what we need is better followers of the core messages that each of the great religions' founders/prophets have given to humanity. That will make for a harmonious, holy and happy multi-faith world, IMHO. The different religions can be like different flowers that nature showers us with in her fascinating variety.

But I do admire the dedication of some Christian missionaries in serving the needy viewing them as the body of Christ. Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba taught devotees to view the needy as "Daridra Narayan"/God and serve them with love. I think this mindset of service of the needy viewing them as divine is common to both Sai Baba teachings and Roman Catholic Church teachings. Further I think there are many religious groups in India who would have a similar approach.

### **Index.I - A joy ever new, a joy which is shared**

- Section 2 talks about the dangers of consumerism in today's world leading to desolation
- Section 3 invites Christians to a "renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them".
- Section 7 talks of technological society providing pleasure but finding it difficult to provide joy. Pope Francis mentions that he has found "most beautiful and natural expressions of joy" among the poor. He quotes Pope Benedict XVI, "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction".
- Section 8 says that encounter with God's love liberates people from "narrowness and self-absorption". It says, "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being." And "For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?"

*[Ravi: I think the last sentence above, "For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?" applies fully to those of us who received the love of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba directly (physical form level) or indirectly.]*

### **Index.II - The delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing**

- Section 9 talks about goodness always spreading and "authentic experience of truth and goodness" growing within us.

### **Chapter 1. I. A Church which goes forth**

- Section 24 talks about the need for getting involved (with those who have to be helped). "Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet. He tells his disciples: 'You will be blessed if you do this'". Pope Francis says that an evangelizing community should get deeply involved with the community - they should take on the smell of the sheep so that the sheep become willing to listen to them! "An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the

way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time.” And ”The disciple is ready to put his or her whole life on the line, even to accepting martyrdom, in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, yet the goal is not to make enemies but to see God’s word accepted and its capacity for liberation and renewal revealed. Finally an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always.”

### **Chapter 1. III. From the heart of the Gospel**

- Section 39 has these wonderful words of Pope Francis (and his team perhaps): ’Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others. Under no circumstance can this invitation be obscured! All of the virtues are at the service of this response of love. If this invitation does not radiate forcefully and attractively, the edifice of the Church’s moral teaching risks becoming a house of cards, and this is our greatest risk. It would mean that it is not the Gospel which is being preached, but certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options. The message will run the risk of losing its freshness and will cease to have “the fragrance of the Gospel”.’

*[Ravi: Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings for practice by his followers revolve primarily around one word - Love. Pure and unconditional love which would express itself usually as some form of service to the one(s) loved. Fascinatingly he would usually refer to listeners of his discourses as PremaSwarupulaara - forms/embodiments of love. So he taught that we are all forms of love and have love at the core of our being. Perhaps we can experience that reality of ours by trying to follow, whenever we can, the teaching of expressing our pure and unconditional love to others as forms of God and also to love God within us (formless aspect) or as expressed in well known symbols/icons/idols/images of God.]*

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## 2. 2014

### 2.1 January

#### Lovely video about Islam in America from a (true) Christian perspective (2014-01-15 14:03)

Recently I saw, what seems to me to be, a very balanced video about Islam in America from a Christian perspective (published on youtube in 2012). I consider this to be a true Christian perspective which is based on the teachings given in the Gospel. It covers the impact on Muslims in USA of the horrific and despicable 9/11 attack. I was very happy to see the efforts made by Christian and Jewish leaders and others to provide solidarity to good peace-loving Muslims in America, as well as efforts made by Muslims of America to reach out to Christians (and Jews) of the USA. Towards the end of the video a Christian leader talks about how he played a role in convincing Pastor Terry Jones to give up his plan of burning the Holy Koran in 2010. [Unfortunately Pastor Terry Jones continued with such efforts in future.]

Here's the youtube link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-50TZf10do>, 53 min 18 secs. I have copy-pasted an extract of the youtube page description below:

Published on Sep 14, 2012

Is Islam incompatible with democracy? Is Islam a violent religion? "Islam in America: The Christian Truth" tells the truth about American Muslims. Through intimate portraits of both immigrants and lifelong US citizens, viewers will come to know Muslims as they truly are: peace loving, responsible members of society who bring culture and beauty to the places where they live as well as jobs and economic empowerment. You will hear the struggles and triumphs of those who came to America seeking a better life for their families. You will be surprised by persons who encountered Muslims with suspicion, but found instead life-long friends.

— end youtube page extract —

As a lover of religions I am very impressed by the freedom of worship laws of USA, and the willingness of people to support such peace-loving worship. I liked the confidence of a young and articulate US Muslim lady in this video who covers herself (with a hijab that covers her body & head and not the full burqa). [For more on hijab please see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hijab>.]

The video has been produced by an Evangelical church of Tennessee, USA, <http://www.newevangelicalpartnership.org/>.

I pray to Almighty God to shower His Grace on such efforts to bring harmony, love, joy and peace among people of different religious faiths.

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#### An Avatar has both Divine Consciousness and Individual Consciousness - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (2014-01-15 14:34)

In Amruta Vahini, August 2013 issue, Sri B.N. Narasimha Murthy writes that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Varu said (sang in Telugu) the following which explains what an Avatar is, "What do you mean by 'God Incarnates'? Out of love and affinity for humanity, God comes down to their level on earth with 'Divine Consciousness' (*Daivaprajna*) juxtaposed with 'Individual Consciousness' (*Jeevaprajna*)".

Bhagavan further made a clarification to Sri Narasimha Murthy about God having *Jeevaprajna* ('Individual Consciousness') like other human beings, "When I feel 'I am Sathya Sai Baba', it is *Jeevaprajna*; when I am 'I' that is *Daivaprajna*! I can move from one to the other at My Will!"

Bhagavan also said, "Either *Daivaprajna* or *Jeevaprajna* are put on by me at My will. In fact, both of them are in Me,

but I am not in them; I am beyond both!"

Sri Narasimha Murthy writes that Bhagavan also said, "In My physical body (*sthoola shareera*), I am confined to this room; in My subtle form (*sookshma shareera*) I can go anywhere in the universe; in My higher subtle form (*ati sookshma shareera*) I can appear in the dream or meditation of any person; and in My super subtle form (*para sookshma shareera*), I pervade the whole universe!"

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Additional sources on Swami's Avatarhood:

1) The Avatar on Himself, <http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Porta I/On-Himself.htm>

2) Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba - Introduction, <http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/sri-sathyasaibaba/introduction.htm>

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Here's an account of a devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba where she gives her view of the double consciousness of Shirdi Sai Baba - Sri Sai Baba Ego and Universal Soul or Ego.

"One noticeable difference between Sri Sai Baba and other saints struck me. I have moved with other notable saints also. I have seen them in high Samadhi or trance condition entirely forgetting their body and course) (*sic*) effacing the narrow notion of the self confined to the body; and I have seen them later getting conscious of their surroundings, knowing what is in our hearts and replying to us. But with Sri Sai Baba, there was this peculiar feature. He had not to go into trance to achieve anything or to reach any higher position or knowledge. He was every moment exercising a double consciousness, one actively utilizing the Ego called Sri Sai Baba and dealing with other Egos in temporal or spiritual affairs, and the other-entirely superceeding all Egos and resting in the position of the Universal Soul or Ego; he was exercising and manifesting all the powers and features incidental to both the states of consciousness. Other saints would forget their body and surroundings (*sic*) and then return to it. But Sri Sai Baba always was in and outside the material world. Others seemed to take pains and by effort to trace the contents of others' minds and read their past history. But with Sri Sai Baba this was not a matter of effort. He was in the all knowing state always."

Source: [http://saileelas.org/sai/numo/modules/listing\\_service/uploads/u8.1361878630.exppart2.htm](http://saileelas.org/sai/numo/modules/listing_service/uploads/u8.1361878630.exppart2.htm) #mrsmanager [DEVOTEES' EXPERIENCES OF SRI SAI BABA BY H.H.NARASIMHASWAMIJI]

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## Many Statements of Shirdi Sai Devotee in 1936 Appropriate for Sathya Sai Devotees Today (2014-01-16 21:39)

*Last updated on 19th January 2014*

I found some of the statements of a lawyer (pleader) devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba said in the year 1936 to be very appropriate for many devotees of Sathya Sai Baba today!

From Devotees' Experiences of Sri (Shirdi) Sai Baba by Narasimha Swami pdf file here - pages 28 and 29:

**16th October, 1936, Nasik**

**& 28th October, 1936, Shirdi**

RAO BAHADUR S.B.DHUMAL, B.A., LL.B, Pleader, Brahmin, aged 63, Nasik, says:

I have one great difficulty in answering the question "What are your experiences of Sai Baba?" All hours of day and night, I am having experiences of Baba. There is no incident or event in my life which I do not connect with him - however trivial it may appear to be. I firmly believe that everything in my life is swayed by Baba. What then is to be mentioned as my experience? Of course, the outside world will not be ready to accept my belief as correct or well-founded. But that matters nothing to me. In fact, that very disbelief of people seems to be a reason for refusing to disclose one's experience. Every devotee feels that his experiences are his own, and are given to him for his own spiritual and temporal benefit and not for ventilation or publication to the general public which, of course, includes masses of ignorant, irrelevant carping critics and scoffers. Yet ardent biographers are anxious to ferret out one's innermost secret and sacred experiences to embellish their work. But the devotee whom they delve into feels that in the very act of dragging the secret experience into light, its reality and life are destroyed. The anatomist anxious

to examine the living organism inch by inch cuts out what he wants and places it under his microscope, but in that very act, life is destroyed and what he examines with his instrument is dead tissue and not the living organism. The best way of understanding Baba is to experience him oneself. Where is Baba gone? He is still alive and active - more active, if that were possible, than he was before his Mahasamadhi. In downright earnest can get into touch with him, today and at once. But if one will not do that, but wants experiences, second hand, third hand or even fifth hand, he will get but poor stuff. I feel also very strongly the regrettable facts that experiences which get their significance and full force when expressed in our vernacular are to be now expressed to you and by you in English and that the loss in transition will be serious.

— end extract —

After the above words, Shri Dhumal does share his Shirdi Sai Baba experiences which, I am quite sure, give Ananda (joy) to as well as strengthen Bhakti (devotion) of most of its readers. It certainly had that effect on me. I must also mention that the articulate and exquisite English used to describe his experiences show that Shri Dhumal (I presume he authored that part) was a very knowledgeable and well educated man of those times (pre-Independence India) and so lends more credibility to his account. In those days, it seems to me that, many of the educated Indian elite became lawyers. Many of the well educated devotees of Shirdi Sai Baba who went on to write about their experiences with Him were from the legal profession. I would like to share some more details about Shri Dhumal from page 29 of the same book link given above.

Dhumal writes, "I was first (in 1903) devoted to Gajanan Maharaj whom I took to Srimant Gopal Rao Buti. About 1907 I went to Sai Baba. From my very first visit, I was greatly impressed with his extraordinary personality. At his unspoken command, I took Buti to him and at once Buti also became his devoted follower. Among the services of the latter to Baba, perhaps the most momentous and memorable is his allowing his huge stone-pile (Dagdiwada) to be used as the temple for the reception of the mortal remains and the worship of Baba." [Ravi: *So the Nagpur millionaire Buti, who constructed today's Shirdi Sai Mandir building, [https://www.shrisaibabasansthan.org/new\\_eng%20template\\_shirdi/shirdi/samadhi\\_mandir.html](https://www.shrisaibabasansthan.org/new_eng%20template_shirdi/shirdi/samadhi_mandir.html), was brought to Baba by Dhumal (at worldly level, of course; at spiritual level Dhumal would have just been the instrument - the wire-puller would have been Shirdi Sai Baba in a subtle form).*]

Dhumal lost his wife when he was 36 years old and without any issue. His father-in-law and others were after him to get re-married. But Dhumal surrendered to Shirdi Sai Baba on this matter. So his father-in-law approached Baba on the matter. Dhumal writes (page 32), "When I told him that I could never act without a direction from Baba, he took me to Shirdi and then went to Baba without me. He came back in five minutes and intimated to me that he could read Baba's negative reply from his eyes and told me not to marry without Baba's express consent or order. Of course, I never acted without Baba's consent. Up-to-date, Baba has not made me marry and I have continued my life of "single blessedness". Alike from the temporal and spiritual view point Baba has settled this course for me and after a fairly happy and successful temporal life, Baba is developing in me a slow but sure detachment from the temporal comforts and I am surrendering my self to his guidance without the faintest fear for my future here or hereafter in spite of the fact that his ways are mysterious, highly puzzling and really inscrutable in many matters. As for temporal success, it is not vain glory but a desire to set down the actual truth that makes me inform you that almost invariably my professional efforts were crowned with success and from their financial or personal aspect also, I had nothing to complain of, as my income tax would clearly indicate. It was all due to Baba's help and grace. Yet despite all this temporal success, he keeps me free - more and more free, from worldly shackles and ready for retirement when he gives the signal."

[Ravi: *Dhumal was 63 when he wrote this account in 1936. How much parallel do we find in our direct & indirect experiences of Sathya Sai Baba and Dhumal's experience of Shirdi Sai Baba! Uncanny, isn't it?*]

How Baba dissuaded Dhumal from going to England for further studies (pages 36 and 37): "Amidst the innumerable instances of Baba's help to me at every turn or crisis of my life I may select a few. In 1910, my intimate friend, Srimant Gopal Rao Buti, was anxious to help me. He agreed to lend me the necessary sums to maintain me in England for my study at the Bar and my family in India during my absence. We had settled in full detail all parts of this scheme and went to Baba for his approval. When Madhav Rao Deshpande put him the question "Should not Bhav (i.e. myself) be sent to Vilayat (i.e., England)?"

Baba asked "What for?"

M.Deshpande: To study for the Bar.

Baba : No. His Illayat (natural aptitude) and Vilayat (will of heaven) are not in *Bilayat*, but in this country. Why should he go to England?

I realised then that,

'The best laid schemes of mice and men

Do often go astray'."

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[Ravi: *Bilayat and Vilayat in Hindi means foreign land. But Vilayat may also have the archaic other meaning given above - will of heaven. ]*

[Ravi: *Once again we see the parallel between the two Sai Babas\_ in their general reluctance (with certain exceptions) to approve of devotees under their physical-level care going abroad (Western countries typically) for long periods of time!]*

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### **A Cultured Lady Devotee's Experiences of Shirdi Sai and Its Similarity to Sathya Sai Devotee Experiences (2014-01-19 19:51)**

Shri B.V. Narasimha Swami has provided the experiences of a lady devotee under a penname. In the preface to his book, *Devotees' Experiences of Sri (Shirdi) Sai Baba*, available (in part) as a pdf here, he writes, "The only other pseudonym in this volume (Part I) is "Mrs. Manager." Indian readers would naturally expect and respect this feeling of delicacy in a lady at appearing before the public with her statement. The pseudonym given correctly indicates her status and that of her husband. These are regarded by all who know them as eminent devotees worthy of credit." Later on her identity got revealed. <http://bonjanrao.blogspot.in/2012/12/mrs-tarabai-sadasiv-tarkhad.html> states "Mrs. Tarabai Sadasiv Tarkhad was the wife of Sadasiva Tarkhad, brother of Ramachandra Atmaram Tarkhad (R.A.Tarkhad). R.A.Tarkhad was the Secretary of the famous Khatau Mills, Bombay." And later, "When she was interviewed by B.V.Narasimhaswamiji in 1936, she was also called as 'Mrs.Manager'." So we now know that Mrs. Manager in the above mentioned book is Mrs. Tarabai S. Tarkhad.

Mrs T.S. Tarkhad's account in the above book is dated 21st May 1936 ( related section pdf is available here )

. She writes on page 64

, "One's first impression of Sai Baba was derived from his eyes. There was such power and penetration in his glance that none could continue to look at his eyes. One felt that Sai Baba was reading him, or her, through and through. Soon one lowered one's eyes and bowed down. One felt that He was not only in one's heart, but in every atom of one's body. A few words, a gesture would reveal to one that Sai Baba knew all about the past, present and even future and about everything else. There was nothing else to do for one, except to submit trustfully and to surrender oneself to Him. And there He was to look after every minute detail, and guide one safe through every turn and every vicissitude of life. He was the Antaryami, call Him God or Satpurusha in Sahaja Sthithi or what you like. But the overpowering personality was there, and in his presence no doubts, no fears, no questioning had any place and one resigned oneself and found that was (the) only course, the safest and best course. From one's first entry into His presence, one went on getting experience of His power. His all-knowing and all-pervasive personality, His protecting care that shielded one, wherever one went and at any time whatsoever. I shall give some instances of his Antanjmitva that I personally got or learnt of in the early days of my stay at Shirdi."

[Ravi: *I think a lot, if not all, of the above applies to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as well. Many devotees who have experienced Him at physical level (Darshan, interaction, interview etc.) felt Him to be Antaryami. From <http://hinduism.iskcon.org/concepts/107.htm>, "Antaryami means "the controller within" and refers to God residing within the hearts of all beings." I certainly felt, based on some experiences, that Sri Sathya Sai Baba knew everything*

about me and that I could hide nothing from him. My mind and its current thoughts as well as its memories of past deeds were an open book to Him.

\_ And, in my experience of Sathya Sai Baba at physical level, it was His eyes that were the vital interaction medium. A few months ago (in 2013) a lady devotee of Puttaparthi, in a chat with me, talked about how during Darshan she felt as if Sathya Sai Baba was scanning each person with His eyes in second(s)/fraction of a second while His wheelchair would be moved around (this is during the last years of His Darshan). I think she expressed it quite well - it was like a split-second/second(s) scan with His eyes. And then His eyes along with a facial expression to match would show joyous approval, quiet approval, no expression, disapproval, disgust etc. All over in second(s). But it needed spiritual/emotional sensitivity to appreciate many of His subtle eye-and-facial-expression messages (though some of such messages were not-so-subtle and so easy to understand for anybody).

\_ I had read somewhere that the eyes are the window of the soul. To be a little more precise, I would say that the eyes are the window of the subtle mind-body form/sookshma shareera. To go a little further in this vein, I have heard on TV, the current Indian Lok Sabha (crucial lower house of Parliament) speaker, a lady, Meira Kumar, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meira\\_Kumar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meira_Kumar), announce the positive outcome of voice votes by saying, "The eyes have it". I think in spirituality one could say, "The eyes have it"!

\_ I must also say that in my experience, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was willing, at times, to maintain long eye contact with devotees who wanted to have that experience. But perhaps most of His devotees preferred not to maintain long eye contact with Him.]

In page 66 we have Mrs T.S. Tarkhad saying, "When we had difficulties to get over, we never had to speak. We had merely to go and sit or stand in his presence. He at once knew what the matter was and gave a direction exactly meeting our requirements." She goes on to give details of a few such experiences.

[Ravi: Once again, this has been the experience of some Sathya Sai devotees. I personally have had one clear-cut experience of such mind-reading/clairvoyance followed by directions being given by Sathya Sai Baba, and a couple of other such experiences where I am quite convinced that He was specifically answering queries in my mind in His discourse given after finishing Darshan during which (or shortly before) I was thinking/having these queries. But then there have been many who went up to Sathya Sai Baba and explicitly stated their problems and asked for directions.]

In page 67 Mrs T.S. Tarkhad says, "As was frequently said, he was not confined within the three cubits length of flesh, bone and blood that people called Sri Sai Baba. He was in every dog, cat, pig, man and woman. While we cannot shake off the idea that we are this physical sheath or the attachment we feel to things connected with it, he was ever free from such narrow ideas or attachments. He seemed to be in or to be the Oversoul, the Super-consciousness, Sahaj Samadhi, or Jnanamaya Sharir by whatever name we choose to refer to that higher state of his."

[Ravi: These subtle spiritual matters have been so well articulated by the lady. I think the above would completely apply to Sri Sathya Sai Baba as well. The lady then talks about double consciousness (individual and divine) of Shirdi Sai Baba which I have already captured in a previous blog post here: [An Avatar has both Divine Consciousness and Individual Consciousness - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba](#). It gives me great joy to see how knowledgeable about these subtle spiritual aspects, the Indian lady, Mrs. T.S. Tarkhad, was in the early part of the 20th century. I think this clearly shows that spiritual understanding is gender-neutral. It just may so happen that human society, or maybe I should say human life, being what it is, ladies, especially Indian ladies, usually have a tougher path to get close to enlightened male spiritual masters and then achieve spiritual understanding of the kind Mrs. T.S. Tarkhad achieved. It must also be said that India today has many female spiritual masters/mystics as well, some of whom are quite famous. I do not know enough about them to comment on their accessibility to female spiritual aspirants/devotees.]

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## **Differing Views on Indian Culture and Modernity (2014-01-25 16:08)**

Last updated on Jan. 30th 2014

A correspondent passed on this article on Indian culture and modernity by a Prof. Jain,  
<http://www.speakingtree.in/public/spiritual-blogs/masters/philosophy/indian-modernity?track=cntshgp>

culture-and-

I have given below a slightly edited version of my responses to him.

Interesting article.

My take is somewhat different on some of the topics touched. However, my views have been formed by experience and my general reading, and not systematic and intensive research. Specifically I do not have data to back up my views whereas Prof. Jain has given some data to support his views. [I must also say that the data provided by Prof. Jain does not mean that he has to be right. Ideally these views must be critically examined by researchers in the field who can state whether the data references are accurate, appropriate and substantial enough to make the case and whether there are other important pieces of data not considered by Prof. Jain which argue otherwise.]

Social Equality: "One of the popular assumptions is that modernity provided equal status to downtrodden sections of the masses." and then Prof. Jain mentions the Swadhyaya initiatives concluding, "Just a small example to show how social equality can be achieved by Hindu cultural values." My view is that even a few centuries ago Hinduism was quite unequal as compared to Hindu society in 21st century India today. It seems to me that Kshatriya (warrior) and Brahmin (priestly) castes together physically and mentally ruled over the majority of the population during the Hindu rule days prior to Muslim/British rule. The remnants of that mindset are visible even today in many parts of rural India notwithstanding the supposed equality before the law.

Hinduism seems to have undergone tremendous reform over the past few centuries, some of which was initiated by Hindu saints, some perhaps by the challenge of other religions like Christianity and Islam, and some by democratic and science-minded reformers. I am very comfortable with most of what I see of and read about 21st century Hinduism in South India (I don't know enough about it in other parts of India).

*[To ensure that I do not get misunderstood I must mention my view that all humanity (and other lifeforms too) from a deep spiritual view point are one/equal. Further, I think spiritual evolution, especially in today's easily available knowledge world, is not the prerogative of any caste or creed/religion.]*

*\_ Regarding material differences between Hindu castes/groups in the 21st century, I think the future clearly is a society where castes may only play roles related to traditions and not have any superiority/inferiority stuff. Further, Indian society already provides opportunities for people from any caste or creed to rise up in society, at least till middle-class and upper-middle-class levels. That, it seems to me, will surely continue in the future.]*

About the Swadhyaya innovative experiment - Amrutalayam and its achievements: I think this is wonderful to know. I think other spiritual groups in India do something similar in their village oriented projects. But I don't know about the scale issue - it is great to have a few successful/demonstration experiment villages but it is quite another matter to replicate it in many villages. That needs dedicated teams of such workers and leaders - I think that is where NGOs and spiritual organizations are coming up short.

One must also mention the power of such working-experiments/demonstrations being lighthouses to inspire others to better ways of living even if they are not able to reach the level of the lighthouse itself. I think this lighthouse of harmonious village life aspect is vital. It shows that it can be done and is not just a pipe-dream of an armchair idealist. About democracy in ancient India: Well, there may have been some examples of republics here and there but even those may have been on the lines of Greek and Roman republics where only the privileged classes were entitled to vote and the lower working classes and slaves were not entitled to do so, if I recall some of my readings correctly. In under developed rural villages of India one can see remnants of India's millenniums old history with washermen washing clothes at the river, bullock carts etc. The life of these working classes - washermen, marginal farmers or agricultural workers, etc. - is very, very tough. Back-breaking work, man, back-breaking!

Fortunately India today has very subsidized ration and free govt. medical services, even free plots of land to build houses for such poor people of villages. I believe that labour in the USA in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were leading a very tough life like the villagers in some parts of India. I think it was similar in the UK during some parts of the nineteenth century till the industrial revolution and UK being the leading colonial power in the world gave it enormous wealth which was distributed partly to the working classes.

With that background I think democracy as we see in India today, where rural votes can bring state and central

governments to power or remove them from power (due to which governments are forced to provide them livelihood support in the form of heavy subsidies and even freebies), was just not there earlier (before Independence or perhaps before rural India woke up to the real power of voting collectively which may have been a few decades after independence). I think India then was a feudal setup like Europe had a feudal setup prior to the French revolution. That does not mean that the working classes - tradesman, farmers etc. - did not have any voice. They must have had their guild-equivalents (some of which probably continue to this day in fields like temple sculpting which may be the domain of a caste-based group) and the rulers would listen to the guild-leaders. Similarly the rulers would have been dependent on farm produce and so the farmer-leaders would have a say. But that would have been nothing like the power the working classes have in modern democratic systems both in the Western world and in India.

About Feminism: I think in cultured upper classes (Brahmin and Kshatriya), Indian Hindu women were given some prominence but they were typically not treated as equal to men. In the working classes, women's position seems to have been horrifying and that very, very unfortunately and very, very shamefully, can be seen in some economically and socially backward villages of India even today. Yes, in Indian history, we do have examples of women leaders in various fields including spirituality but they seem to be exceptions. Male dominance seems to have been the norm. Even today males tend to block women from rising up, especially to very powerful positions, in India. Those women that reach top positions do so, from their innate capability, rather than absence of male prejudice against them. [I am not talking about corporate India which is a small fraction of India, population wise - I am talking about rural and semi-urban India and poor parts of urban India] I think the Western world is way, way ahead of India, in general, in terms of the laws and culture they have, as of today, to allow women to rise up in society and protect the rights of women.

I think the point about women being over-loaded to earn money (by working at a job) as well as run a home is a valid point too. I think a home-maker wife who may work part-time and is educated leads to a more wholesome and happy family than a full-time working wife (and working husband) family. But I think this should be a matter of choice. I also have to state that dependence of a wife on a husband for money seems to be a primary source of husband ill-treating the wife. So many women may not want to have such dependence on their husband.

About Science/Technology and Rationality: "It is true that modern science has added tremendous inventions for human society but to claim that tradition or culture was non-scientific will again be misleading." Well, here perhaps one needs to be very careful about jargon. I am not a scientist but my readings have led to my view that hard sciences like Physics or Chemistry have very clear principles and norms like measurability, objectivity, repeatability and the need for a theoretical explanation for phenomena. When compared to ancient history of mankind, such principles and norms have been astonishingly/mind-blowingly successful in showing some traditionally held beliefs and explanations of phenomena to be false, and given the correct or more correct explanations in their place. They have also led to unbelievable innovation and technology that have made life far, far more pleasant than it was for millennia prior to such hard sciences. I think a lot of Hindu traditional knowledge like astrology and spirituality are non-scientific but that does not mean they are false and do not have validity. It is just that they do not conform to the principles and norms of hard science. Other Hindu traditional knowledge like metallurgy may have been very accomplished for their time but I don't think they followed the principles and norms of hard science and so they being termed as non-scientific may not be wrong, IMHO.

Environment protection: I agree with the author's statements about it being sad that viewing rivers and trees as divine are ridiculed. But I am not sure whether an attitude of worship towards rivers and trees necessarily implies effort to protect rivers and trees. I think most people may do the worship once in a while and leave the task of protecting the rivers and trees to somebody else. And, unfortunately, such somebody-else protectors are very, very rare in Indian society today. I think India seems to be facing ecological challenges of immense proportions. Just reading about pollution in the holy Ganges itself gives one the hard-truth-picture about current Indian ecological damage. From the wiki on Ganges, "The Ganges was ranked as the fifth most polluted river of the world in 2007, Pollution threatens not only humans, but also more than 140 fish species, 90 amphibian species and the endangered Ganges river dolphin. The Ganga Action Plan, an environmental initiative to clean up the river, has been a major failure thus far, due to corruption and lack of technical expertise, lack of good environmental planning, and lack of support from religious authorities."

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## 2.2 February

### **Book having Baseless Criticism of Hindu Divine Figures Blocked from being Distributed in India (2014-02-12 17:19)**

*Last updated on March 13th 2014*

Penguin India has decided to withdraw a book on Hinduism by an academic, Wendy Doniger, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wendy\\_Doniger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wendy_Doniger). From <http://www.legallyindia.com/201402114335/Bar-Bench-Litigation/penguin-pulps-hindu-book>, "In settlement of a civil and two criminal suits brought by a religious group against Penguin Books India, the publisher has agreed to withdraw and destroy all copies of a history book on Hinduism." ...

"The petition also claimed that Penguin has "hurt the religious feelings of millions of Hindus by declaring that Ramayana is a fiction", breaching section 295A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), citing the book's line that "placing the Ramayan in its historical contexts demonstrates that it is a work of fiction, created by human authors, who lived at various times"."

The book also depicts Lord Krishna in a poor light.

I congratulate and thank the Shiksha Bachao Andolan Committee for taking the matter to court and winning.

My considered view is that some academics have taken upon themselves the right to "declare the truth" about matters that occurred millenniums ago. I would be fine with an academic saying that irrefutable historical evidence is not available to prove that Rama of the Ramayana and that Krishna of the Bhagavata Purana were real figures. Similarly I would be fine if academics said that irrefutable historical evidence is not available to prove that the miracles attributed to Jesus Christ in the New Testament were real occurrences.

But some of these academics go way beyond and "declare" that scriptural accounts of these divine figures (Ramayana, Bhagavata Purana, New Testament etc.) are mostly, if not entirely, fictional accounts, that have been created and then propagated by evangelists associated with those religions/religious figures! Such "declarations", to my mind, are baseless! Lack of irrefutable evidence does not prove non-existence. After all, we are talking of events that happened/supposedly happened some millenniums ago.

Please note that such books do not go through even an academic peer review though editorial staff of the publisher may discuss the matter with the author. The only way to challenge such authors & publishers is by going to court.

The big problem, in my view, is that academics are considered by secular educated society to be discoverers and tellers of the truth. So some of such accounts get viewed as truth by "educated" sections of society. Wikipedia, for example, uses books by some such academics, as references for content of their web pages on religious figures.

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[Update on March 2nd 2014. Prof. Doniger seems to base her statement of Ramayana being fictional on lack of archaeological and inscriptional record of Rama. (She writes in *The Hindus - An Alternative History*, "Rama left no archaeological or inscriptional record."). So, as a rebuttal of her arguments, I would like to rephrase some statements from the above comment to "Lack of archaeological or inscriptional evidence does not prove non-existence of Rama. Lack of detailed consistency among various versions of the Ramayana does not prove that Ramayana is fictional. After all, we are talking of events that happened/supposedly happened some millenniums ago. In a largely oral record preservation tradition that was prevalent millenniums ago in India it is natural for some variations to creep in various versions of Ramayana across various languages, sub-cultures and geographically distant regions where the Ramayana was adored and preserved. I presume that there is a large amount of commonality about the story of Rama in most of these versions of the Ramayana and that commonality seems to me to be strong scriptural (oral and written) evidence of Rama having been a real figure of history. Further, I would view the lack of archaeological or inscriptional record as an argument for dating Rama to far earlier than most Hinduism academics/Indologists seem to date the Ramayana. One famed mystical master who was a 'seer' dated Rama to 20,000 years ago. In which case,



is there any wonder that we have not found any archaeological or inscriptional record of Rama?"]

Here are two excellent links which give the Hindu believer view of Wendy Doniger's works/withdrawal issue.

1) "Why the Wendy Doniger episode is not a free speech issue" by Sandeep Balakrishna, <http://www.firstpost.com/india/why-the-wendy-doniger-episode-is-not-a-free-sp-eech-issue-1388751.html>

I added the following comment to the above article:

Ravi S. Iyer ...

Very well said. I am so happy to see this article which puts the Wendy Doniger book withdrawal issue in the right context. It is not an issue of "free speech". It is an issue of outlandish and selective interpretation of Hindu scripture that is cheap and sensationalist. What a pity that we have some such scholar-academics of Hinduism in the world today!

2) [Warning: Very unfortunately, Wendy Doniger's writings on Hinduism focus on sensationalist stuff like eroticism. So please be warned that the link given next quotes some such writings of hers.] RISA Lila - 1: Wendy's Child Syndrome by Rajiv Malhotra, [http://creative.sulekha.com/risa-lila-1-wendy-s-child-syndrome\\_103338\\_blog](http://creative.sulekha.com/risa-lila-1-wendy-s-child-syndrome_103338_blog), article dated 12 years ago. [From his wiki, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajiv\\_Malhotra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajiv_Malhotra), "Rajiv Malhotra (born September 15, 1950), is an Indian-American multimillionaire, author, philanthropist, public speaker and writer on current affairs, world religions and cross-cultural encounters between east and west. After retiring at age 44, he founded the Infinity Foundation in 1995, dedicating himself to philanthropic and educational activities and "making grants in the area of Hinduism studies"."]

One small extract (from Wendy's Child Syndrome) and comments of mine:

"The most important leverage she (Wendy Doniger) has is that she has given more students their Ph.Ds in Hinduism than any other person in the world and has successfully placed these former students in high-leverage academic jobs throughout the Western world, to carry the torch of her theories and principles of researching Hinduism. There is no place one can go to in this academic discipline without running into the effect of her influence, through her large cult of students, who glorify her in exchange for her mentorship."

[Ravi: My God! If even part of the above is true today (the blog post is dated 12 years back) then there is a serious need to address such misrepresentation of Hinduism by the Wendy Doniger group of twisted-interpretation-Hinduism academics by works from genuine Hinduism academics. But does India have any such genuine Hinduism academics? Have some rules of the Indian secular constitution prevented the field of Hinduism academics in India to get established and grow?]

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The following comment of mine now appears on the web page of an "opinion" article related to free speech in the context of Wendy Doniger's book withdrawal, that was printed in yesterday's The Hindu, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/changing-landscape-of-free-speech/article5677713.ece> :

I congratulate and thank the Shiksha Bachao Andolan Committee for protecting the emotional sensitivities of the vast majority of Hindus in India who revere Rama, Krishna and other Hindu Gods, using the law of the land, from twisted interpretations of Hindu sacred texts by Wendy Doniger being distributed in India.

Some academics have taken upon themselves the right to "declare the truth" about matters that occurred millenniums ago. It is OK for an academic to say that irrefutable historical evidence is not available to prove that Rama of the Ramayana and that Krishna of the Bhagavata Purana were real figures. Similarly it would be OK if academics said that irrefutable historical evidence is not available to prove that the miracles attributed to Jesus Christ in the New Testament were real occurrences.

But some of these academics go way beyond and "declare" that scriptural accounts of these divine figures (Ramayana, Bhagavata Purana, New Testament etc.) are fictional! Come On!

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Feb 13, 2014 at 10:24 IST

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I sent the following to Letters column(s) of The Hindu today (Feb. 15th 2014) [made a couple of corrections later on]. I don't know whether they will consider it for printing in their columns for the newspaper issue of day-after-tomorrow (Monday). BTW I submitted a similar comment on the web page of the article (given below) but the moderator blocked it (as other comments posted later have appeared on the web page).

This is in response to the article, No country for free speech, says Penguin, [http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/no-country-for-free-speech-says-penguin /article5688586.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/no-country-for-free-speech-says-penguin/article5688586.ece) in today's The Hindu.

India is a democracy and its laws are made by representatives of the people to reflect the needs and views of the entire country. The vast majority of Indians are deeply religious and have intense love for the divine/holy figures of its religions like Rama, Krishna, Mohammed, Jesus Christ, Sikh founder-Gurus, Buddha, Mahavir, Zoroaster and Moses. Provocative book covers and outrageous statements about these figures may make a book writer famous and sell book copies but they hurt the sentiments of vast numbers of Indians.

Western countries may have a standard for free speech which allows burning of holy books and showing of despicable videos about such figures which create horrific tension not only in the countries where they occur but worldwide. Should India follow such Western standards of malicious criticism of religion in the name of free speech? In my view, of course not.

Ultimately such matters have to be decided democratically by the will of the people of the country as a whole and not a Westernized elite group of Indians.

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Update at 5:49 PM, 15th Feb. 2014: Now the comment appears on the web page article mentioned above! I had written about it not appearing to the Readers' Editor of The Hindu. Don't know whether that played a role in my comment going past the moderator. Anyway, thanks to The Hindu for showing my comments on the web page.

I do appreciate The Hindu as an awesome newspaper which facilitates intellectual debate and discourse in a suitably moderated way on a wide range of topics, including sensitive ones, which I think is great for 21st century India which includes 21st century holy scripture interpretation, belief and practice of various religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity ...

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The Hindu carried an article today (16th Feb. 2014), <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/shoe-pinches-when-it-is-on-the-other-foot-says-swamy/article5694511.ece>, which quotes a statement of Dr. Subramanian Swamy about the outcry of some people about the Wendy Doniger book withdrawal and free speech in India issue, "The academics' cry of academic freedom carries no credibility, and there is, I am convinced, no court or future Parliament in India, which will respond sympathetically to their demand. Rather most Indians will think that they have got their just dessert."

[About Dr. Swamy from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subramanian\\_Swamy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subramanian_Swamy), "Dr. Subramanian Swamy (sometimes spelt Subramaniam Swamy; born 15 September 1939) is an Indian academician, politician, activist and economist."]

The web link above also carries the following comment of mine:

I think Dr. Swamy has said the plain and simple truth. The Wendy Doniger book withdrawal issue is related to Indian Penal Code provisions to protect Indian religious followers from malicious criticism of their revered holy figures even if it comes from a professor of a religion. This professor of religion seems to have no faith in the religion she is a professor of and seems to enjoy trashing it. The people of India at large and as of the present time, simply cannot digest such criticism of their religion, whatever may be the religion they are following. I think the Westernized intellectuals of India who are up in arms against Penguin India for the withdrawal of the book, simply don't get this reality of India.

Unfortunately The Hindu seems to be carrying very few viewpoints from intellectuals and political leaders like Dr. Swamy on this matter. I thank Dr. Swamy for speaking up on this matter and The Hindu for printing it.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Feb 16, 2014 at 10:16 IST

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TIME interviews Dinanath Batra, president of Shiksha Bachao Andolan Samithi (Committee), <http://world.time.com/2014/02/12/sex-lies-and-hinduism-why-a-hindu-activist-targeted-wendy-donigers-book/>. It has only six questions and answers but I think Shri Batra has explained his organization's stand very well. I felt it appropriate to put down some extracts of Shri Batra's answers below:

"The entire book is objectionable, but yes, that (juxtaposition of sex and Hinduism) is one of our main objections. She is insulting our gods and goddesses and religious leaders and texts and even our freedom fighters. I don't have any objection to sex and neither does our religion, as long as it's within the parameters of religion."

...

"We are against anything that hurts people's religious sentiments. Our movement is aimed at cleansing distortions from education in India. We have also taken on the Indian educational boards for wrong facts in their textbooks. We will protest against any book that portrays a negative image of our society."

Ravi: "Wrong facts" is a key issue from my perspective. Views of the distinguished Professor of Hinduism, Wendy Doniger, are presented as established facts in her book including the view that Ramayana is a work of fiction! I am deeply disturbed to see these kind of, in my opinion, baseless "facts" being created by distinguished professors of Hinduism. In my view, a tragedy of Indian academia is that, barring Dr. Subramanian Swamy, an economist, the mainstream media seems to have no other famous/distinguished Indian academic publicly countering Prof. Wendy Doniger's views.

In contrast, it is the Hindus in the USA who are publicly countering Doniger from an academic perspective. Here are a couple of interesting links:

1) HAF (Hindu American Foundation) Reacts As Penguin Waddles Away From Doniger, [http://www.hafsite.org/HAF\\_Reacts\\_Penguin\\_Waddles\\_Away\\_Doniger](http://www.hafsite.org/HAF_Reacts_Penguin_Waddles_Away_Doniger)

A small extract: "Even a controversial scholar like Doniger has the right to be heard, but, just as the rest of us in medicine, law, business, or the sciences face both short-term and long-term repercussions of varying severity for misstatements of facts or liberty taken in editorializing or interpreting facts, academics like her need to introspect as to their commitment to balancing academic freedom with academic integrity and mutual respect."

2) Indian Censorship and the Curious Case of Wendy Doniger by Murali Balaji, Director of Education and Curriculum Reform, Hindu American Foundation, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/murali-balaji/indian-censorship-and-the\\_b\\_4777117.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/murali-balaji/indian-censorship-and-the_b_4777117.html)

A small extract: "But the book and many of her articles over a 40-year academic career misinterpret facts or pick and choose incidents that conveniently fit a narrative of an erotic, exotic, mythologically rife Hinduism whose portrayal is actually alien, and often insulting, to adherents of that tradition."

Ravi: I thank the Hindu American Foundation for challenging distinguished professor of Hinduism, Wendy Doniger's attempts to present some of her controversial views on Hinduism as "facts".

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I wrote the following in response to an article by The Hindu's Readers' Editor in support of "free speech", Process as punishment, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/Readers-Editor/process-as-punishment/article5696398.ece> in today's (17th Feb. 2014) The Hindu.

Interesting views.

My take is that there should be some mechanism to prevent falsehoods and/or negative allegations not backed by strong evidence from being spread about religious figures as these figures are the beloved of many. If the figure is

a contemporary or near-contemporary one I understand that the laws dealing with slander of any citizen provide a means for such matters to be challenged in Indian courts.

However, when the figures are from scripture which are over millenniums old, I don't think the slander laws would come into play. Perhaps that is why, in India, we have the IPC section 295A.

From a point of view of promoting scholarship that reveals the truth I think one can consider modification of section 295A to exclude established facts (backed by strong evidence) about religious figures even if they are very negative. But to do away with section 295A entirely may lead writers, including distinguished professors of religion, to spread all kinds of juicy gossip about religious figures that they personally may be convinced about, even if they lack strong evidence for the same.

— end response —

A slightly shortened version of the above appears as a comment in the above mentioned web page of the article.

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A small extract (slightly modified) of my mail response to a correspondent yesterday (19th Feb. 2014) related to this topic:

Free speech is fantastic and I love it. But freedom comes with responsibility. Irresponsible and malicious speech aimed at religious figures who are the beloved of many, in the name of free speech does not seem right to me. Even if it were right the reality is that vast numbers of people in the globalized world of Internet communication today simply cannot digest such kind of free speech. The globalized world has to deal with this reality of today.

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Update on 22nd Feb. 2014:

I came across this very interesting judgement of Bombay High Court in 2010 when Maharashtra government's ban of a book about a religion was appealed by the author of the book, <http://legalperspectives.blogspot.in/2010/01/freedom-of-speech-yes-unwarrented.html>.

Some parts of the judgement putting forward the need to balance free speech with religious tolerance are given below (taken from the above link as I could not easily get the actual judgement document on the net):

48. Freedom of speech and expression is a cherished right of every citizen. Every person has a right to express what he/she feels about any issue which according to him/her needs to be debated upon or brought before the public eye. Freedom of expression would also include freedom to criticize. Indian democracy has survived because of the protection its Constitution has granted to its people to express freely their views on affairs of the State and on other issues concerning religion, culture, civilization, literature and personalities, which are beyond the mundane affairs of the State. This list is merely illustrative and not exhaustive. Fearlessness is the hallmark of a vibrant, democratic and secular society like ours. We are an amazing mix of people coming from different social and cultural background, people professing different religions and people who speak different languages. While we have a right to criticize each other, the criticism has to be healthy and not malicious. It must not lead to creating ill-will and hatred between different communities. Freedom of expression must be well utilized, it must lead to sensible dialogue but not senseless destruction of lives and property and breach of public order.

54. In our constitutional set up, everything is open to criticism and religion is no exception to it. Every religion, whether it is Islam, Hinduism, Christianity or any other religion, can be criticized. Freedom of speech and expression covers criticism of a religion and no person can be sensitive about it. Healthy criticism provokes thought, encourages debate and helps us to evolve. Counsel submitted that the author has through the book placed his perception of Islam before people. He submitted that the book brings the lesser known aspects of Islam before the public eye. He submitted that the book gives correct insight into Islam, but assuming the author is wrong, he has a right to be wrong.

55. We do not want to join issue with Counsel on this aspect. The author has undoubtedly a right to be wrong. The author can say what he feels is right and if it is wrong, he cannot be punished for it. But what needs to be seen is

whether the author has done this exercise bona fide with a real desire to explore the tenets of Islam and give his exposition thereof.

56. An author has a right to put forth a perspective that a particular religion is not secular. This is a view point which one has a right to assert. However, if a book reeks of hatred for a particular community, if it contains rabid material and there appears to be no sincere handling of the subject but a malafide exercise to stir communal passions one must pause and consider whether it is in the interest of general public to allow its circulation. In such a situation restriction imposed on the freedom of speech and expression by the Constitution must spring into action. It is necessary once again to remind ourselves that in Baragur, the Supreme Court has made it clear that no one has a right to impinge on the feelings of others on the premise that his right to freedom of speech remains unrestricted and unfettered and that it cannot be ignored that India is a country with vast disparities in language, culture and religion and unwarranted and malicious criticism or interference in the faith of others cannot be accepted.

81. It is not possible for us to agree with Counsel. We have no doubt that the author must be allowed to criticize Islam. Pure and simple criticism without any intention to hurt religious feelings of a particular community must be allowed. But, here the criticism is not academic. The author has gone on to pass insulting comments on Muslims with particular reference to Indian Muslims. That is most objectionable.

— end extracts of judgement —

The court upheld the ban. The author appealed to Supreme Court which, in April 2010, declined to interfere with the Bombay High Court judgement, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/court-declines-to-interfere-with-book-ban-order/article751618.ece>.

My humble opinion is that the above judgement sections are very wise given the vast majority of religious believers in India. As it is a High Court judgement which was not interfered with by the Supreme Court in 2010, I think we have a good sense of how top judges of India view this matter of balance between free speech including criticism and religious tolerance today.

Today's The Hindu carries the article, "Why we write books", <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/why-we-write-books/article5714214.ece>. Its lead paragraph states: Who becomes a scholar in order to insult and injure others? It is the bigots, propagandists, trolls and fundamentalists of the world who trade in insult and injury

The following comment of mine appears on the above web page of the article:

While society does, in general, respect scholars for their intellectual contributions, I think the author has gone too far by presuming that scholars cannot have malicious intent. Scholars are also human, and academic conspiracies, unfortunately, are not unknown. So scholars should also be under the purview of the law of the land including the laws that protect the vast majority of religious followers of the country from deliberate and malicious attack on their beliefs.

In 2010, the Bombay High court had contended in a case involving a book authored by R.V.Bhasin that criticism of (a religion) is permissible like criticism of any other religion. But it held that the book had criticism with a malicious and deliberate intention to outrage the religious feelings of (followers of a religion), and so upheld the ban on the book.

The tragedy in this case is that we did not get the honourable court's judgement on whether Prof. Doniger's work was maliciously critical of a religion or not.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Feb 22, 2014 at 15:46 IST

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An additional comment of mine was shown on the web page of the above article:

I agree with Anil Suri that contrary to public perception, academics are as prone to self-promotion and suppressing differing or opposing schools of thought as people in any other profession.

In the rarefied world of creation of new academic knowledge i.e. academic research, we have specialized areas intellectually dominated by a usually small number of top academic scholars. The battle between competing theories/views among these top scholars can become an intense one which may even become rather unethical at times. Prof. Doniger's book seems to be a part of such a battle. The concern for society at large in this case is that it is views from such books by distinguished academic scholars on religion that makes its way into school and college curriculums on religion as well as encyclopedias. [Prof. Doniger is on the editorial board of advisors of a leading encyclopedia.] And that then becomes the accepted representation of a religion among the majority of people over time.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Feb 24, 2014 at 09:23 IST

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Here is a fascinating article by an Associate Prof. of Law on the history of Indian Penal Code section 295A (which is the key section that tripped up Penguin India on Prof. Doniger's book) in The Hindu of 25th Feb. 2014, "Scribblers, scholars in the same boat", <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/scribblers-scholars-in-the-same-boat/article-5723012.ece>.

My comments on it appear on the above link. Have reproduced them below (Please note that " and " characters enclosing "deliberate and malicious intent" have been shown as some junk characters):

Very interesting history behind IPC section 295A added in 1927 - especially the view of law makers then that the requirement of "deliberate and malicious intent" would exclude "bona fide criticism, historical research and all that leads to the interpretation of religious texts in such a way as to lead to progressive reform in social matters".

Today, the fear of criminal prosecution in our legal system and attendant harassment and waste of time leading to possibility of self-censorship and/or publisher censorship about any critical views on religion is a point well taken.

But the suggestion "that historical and scholarly works be given a blanket immunity from the operation of Section 295A" seems to be going too far. Unethical practices, unfortunately, are not uncommon in academia today like in other walks of life. The scurrilous scribbler may easily don the role of an academic scholar, say by becoming a PhD student, and use the blanket immunity to spread religious-hate writings.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Feb 25, 2014 at 10:05 IST

--- end comments ---

So people going on and on about 1860 British penal code in the context of the Doniger book-pulping storm are wrong. This section was introduced in 1927 and some of the key lawmakers involved, as mentioned in the article, were famous Indians (Pakistanis were also Indians then) like Lajpat Rai and Jinnah.

A later additional comment on the same page:

I tend to agree with this statement of CS Venkat on the basis of my quick browsing of some parts of Prof. Doniger's The Hindus book, "In short, her attitude towards the Hindu religion is negative, needlessly confrontational, giving rise to well founded suspicions in the community about her true intentions and the intentions of those who financially support her scholarship."

I also tend to agree with Anil Suri's statement when applied to religion, "Freedom of expression does not cover demonstrably unsubstantiated statements that others may find offensive."

A strong desire to propagate a deeply held view even if the view lacks hard evidence and is highly controversial is not uncommon among some motivated people which includes some distinguished professors. So writings on religion, no matter what the credentials of the author, must come under the purview of anti-religious-hate laws to avoid unnecessary communal tension in a deeply religious and religiously diverse country like India.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Feb 27, 2014 at 11:22 IST — end comment —

An article on the infamous video made in the US in 2012 which caused so much outrage across the world - YouTube ordered to take down anti-Muslim film, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/youtube-ordered-to-take-down-antimuslim-film/article5731924.ece>.

The following comment of mine appears on the above article web page:

If the USA had anti-religious-hate laws like India does then the over 50 deaths and hundreds of injuries worldwide, as reported by Wikipedia, due to this horrific video could have been avoided. An innocent actor like Ms. Garcia would not have endured being despicably duped by the filmmaker(s) and unintentionally becoming the target of the fury of some outraged members of the concerned religion.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Feb 27, 2014 at 15:05 IST — end comment —

Just in case the reader would like to see the wikipedia page mentioned in my comment above, here's the link: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innocence\\_of\\_Muslims](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innocence_of_Muslims)

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2nd March 2014:

I submitted the following comment on The Hindu article dated 1st March 2014, The Indian Inquisition, <http://www.thehindu.com/books/the-indian-inquisition/article5740159.ece> :

Given the fact that The Hindu, in the recent past, has been frequently publishing articles against IPC Section 295A and NONE raising concerns about how Prof. Doniger's book could be used by some dangerous elements to create communal tension in India, I think The Hindu should come out clearly and state whether they want free religious-hate speech in the country like in some countries of the Western world. That would at least let its readers know where The Hindu stands on this sensitive matter of religious-hate speech/writing which seems to be the main focus of section 295A.

— end comment —

Later I submitted another comment:

The author refers to "Paul Courtright's exploration of Hindu mythology's fraught sexuality". I think the author and The Hindu are failing in their duty to readers by not presenting the true extent of Paul Courtright's weird 'interpretation' of part of the anatomy of Lord Ganesha. The majority of Hindus across India will find this weird 'interpretation' to be highly offensive. The phrase "Hindu mythology's fraught sexuality" simply does not correctly convey Courtright's outlandish and shocking 'interpretation'.

— end comment —  
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March 3rd 2014

The above comments did not appear on the web page of the article (the moderator would have blocked them). A watered down version of the second comment above was accepted and is now shown on the web page. I have copy-pasted that comment below (please note that the ' character is shown as a junk character):

The author refers to "Paul Courtright's exploration of Hindu mythology's fraught sexuality". The author has suppressed the true

extent of Paul Courtright's weird 'interpretation' of part of the anatomy of Lord Ganesha. The majority of Hindus across India will find this weird 'interpretation' to be highly offensive. The phrase "Hindu mythology's fraught sexuality" simply does not correctly convey Courtright's outlandish and shocking 'interpretation'. I think The Hindu has a duty to correctly inform/provide the full truth (in a sensitive way, of course) to its readers of such matters.

from: Ravi S. Iyer

Posted on: Mar 3, 2014 at 13:44 IST — end comment —

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An update: I had written about the two blocked comments to the editor and the readers' editor of The Hindu, copy to the Press Council of India.

[From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Press\\_Council\\_of\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Press_Council_of_India): "The Press Council of India is a statutory body in India that governs the conduct of the print media. It is one of the most important bodies that sustain democracy, as it has supreme power in regards to the media to ensure that freedom of speech is maintained. However, it is also empowered to hold hearings on receipt of complaints and take suitable action where appropriate. It may either warn or censure the errant journalists on finding them guilty." ... "The Council's actions may not be questioned unless it is proved to be in violation of the constitution, which makes it an exceedingly powerful a body."

From [http://presscouncil.nic.in/Content/273\\_1\\_Chairman.aspx](http://presscouncil.nic.in/Content/273_1_Chairman.aspx): "Justice Markandey Katju has been nominated as Chairman, Press Council of India on 5th October, 2011 for a three year term." Justice Katju is a former Supreme Court judge.]

The mail seems to have had some effect. The second blocked comment is now shown on the web page. But the first comment still did not make it.

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8th March 2014.

Today's The Hindu had this article, Safeguarding the many histories of India, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/safeguarding-the-many-histories-of-india/article5761399.ece>.

A comment of mine appears in the above web page. I have copy-pasted that comment below (slightly modified to fix two typos):

The article starts with some words about truth implying that Prof. Doniger's withdrawn book is truthful and that, that truth has been suppressed in India. By doing that I think the author is stretching the truth quite a bit. Prof. Doniger has expressed views of hers as the established truth like Lord Rama being a fictional figure but her conclusion is far from established and quite flawed, IMHO.

From a larger perspective, the issue is Penguin not continuing with the legal process to decide whether the charges made by SBAS are valid or not. In this particular case, why doesn't The Hindu (which is continuously publishing such articles) and interested people like the authors of such articles get together and file a Public Interest Litigation in the honourable Supreme Court and get its views on Prof. Doniger's book? Is that not possible?

If that is possible and the SC judges that the book does not violate section 295A (and other laws) then Prof. Doniger's book can be sold in India.

— end comment —

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March 13th 2014.

This article in today's The Hindu, Book leaders indulging in hate speeches: SC, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/book-leaders-indulging-in-hate-speeches-sc/article5778911.ece>, states that a Bench of the Supreme Court of India headed by Justice B.S. Chauhan on Wednesday 12th March 2014 (yesterday) stated that:

a) Hate speeches of social, political and religious leaders based on religion, caste, region or ethnicity are a "menace" to society.

b) "Effective regulation of hate speeches at all levels is required as the authors of such speeches can be booked under



the existing penal law and all the law enforcing agencies must ensure that the existing law is not rendered a dead letter,”

c) “We request the Law Commission to also thoroughly examine the issues raised and to consider, if it deems proper, defining the expression hate speech and make recommendations to Parliament to strengthen the Election Commission to curb the menace of hate speeches irrespective of whenever made,”

d) “The court cannot re-write, re-cast or reframe legislation for the very good reason that it has no power to legislate. The very power to legislate has not been conferred on the courts. However, of late, judicial activism of the superior courts in India has raised a public eyebrow time and again,”

*[Disclaimer: I am not a lawyer and so my views below could be somewhat off-base. However, I don't think my views below would be far from a legal expert's view.]*

So clearly freedom of speech in India, IMHO, as per the current Supreme Court view of the current Indian Penal Code, excludes religious hate speech.

Extrapolating this Supreme Court view to books I think it is clear that as per current Indian Penal Code (IPC), the author(s) and publisher(s) of any book whose content is deemed as religious hate content can get booked under the IPC. Therefore, as things stand now, authors and publishers of books in India that criticize religion need to take extra care to ensure that a plausible case cannot be made that their criticism of religion is deliberate and malicious, or that it can be used to incite religious hatred/violence in India.

If this situation has to be changed to allow for a wider scope of criticism of religion than is currently permitted by IPC, then the law makers (legislature and law ministry) have to change the law.

I am not saying anything about whether the current state of affairs is good or bad. Honestly, I just don't know enough about religious hate speech in India and its consequences to take a considered view. But whatever little I have seen and heard of it has been quite scary (a "menace" like the SC said) in its capacity to create communal tension leading to violence.

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Ravi S. Iyer (2014-03-09 22:39:51)

I found a very interesting passage in Bill Aitken's book, Sri Sathya Sai Baba - a life, about the academic field of comparative religion.

Page 11 (of Indian paperback copy) has the following:

"My quest was to find the meaning of true religion and to this end I studied comparative religion at Leeds University. According to my guru at Mirtola, people who study comparative religion are only comparatively religious and this was proved by the fact that almost all the views expressed on the oriental religions were from a missionary perspective. Yet, this was better than nothing. In Britain, almost all chairs of theology were confined to Christian incumbents and Leeds was unique in having been founded, in large part, with Jewish money earned from the wool trade. Not unnaturally, the donors endowed a professorship not hostile to any particular faith. In spite of their bias, my lecturers were not able to entirely downplay the beauties of Hinduism which my eclectic soul detected to be crucial for the completeness of its education."

[Bill Aitkens "is Scottish by birth, a naturalized Indian by choice". His study at Leeds university mentioned above seems to have been in the 1950s. Mirtola seems to be a place in North India.]

I thoroughly enjoyed and had a good laugh at the statement/phrase, "people who study comparative religion are only comparatively religious".

Maybe people should try to change the topic of the study from "comparative religion" to "unity of religions". That might result in them becoming truly religious.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-04-04 16:18:55)

Interesting interview of Free Speech proponent and Columbia university president, Lee C. Bollinger for Indian newspaper, The Hindu. In response to a question about Indian environment where hate speech related to religion triggers responses, Bollinger said, "In a society that is fragile, where there is a major risk of eruption of violence, if it is well established that this is its history, I think there should be greater latitude for policies prohibiting such speech." I think that is well said, and Indian history clearly shows that hate speech related to religion can lead to violence and even loss of lives, and so there is a need for restrictions on such kind of hate speech.

Bollinger added, "In the global world, it is hard to see the need... Is it really a threat of religious violence as a result of certain speech or is it a pretext to allow things that the government should not be allowed to get into? That's one of the great issues of our times." I agree that it is one of the great issues of our times.

## **Rajiv Malhotra on Gross Misrepresentation of Hindu Religion by Some US Academic Scholars of Hinduism (2014-02-18 14:37)**

Here's a very interesting interview of Rajiv Malhotra on rediff detailing how some US academic scholars of Hinduism including distinguished Prof. Wendy Doniger have grossly misrepresented Hinduism, <http://m.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show-1-when-westerners-make-fun-of-our-gods-theyre-instigating-trouble/20140217.htm> Here are some salient points of the interview from my perspective.

- Rajiv Malhotra got involved with this topic in 2000 when one of the teachers of his kids' school in the USA informed him that some American scholar had advised a teacher not to teach Ramakrishna and Vivekananda due to some negative stuff associated them!
- Some US academic Hinduism scholars use Freudian psychoanalysis to analyze Hinduism. [*Ravi: and come to some weird conclusions which they spread as the truth*]
- Most of the other religions in the USA have seminaries whose products become scholars of that religion in US universities. Hinduism in the USA does not have an equivalent seminary.
- Most Hinduism professors in the USA are not Hindu (in belief & practice).
- Rajiv Malhotra has been banned from all academic forums. [*Ravi: Rajiv Malhotra has written books on Hinduism but perhaps is not considered to be an academic on Hinduism.*]

Rajiv Malhotra sent an email to a mailing list (of which I am a recent addition) today about the rediff interview mentioned above. In the mail he provided the following links:

- RISA Lila - 1: Wendy's Child Syndrome by Rajiv Malhotra, [http://creative.sulekha.com/risa-lila-1-wendy-s-child-syndrome\\_103338\\_blog](http://creative.sulekha.com/risa-lila-1-wendy-s-child-syndrome_103338_blog)
- RISA Lila - 2 - Limp Scholarship And Demonology by Rajiv Malhotra, [http://creative.sulekha.com/risa-lila-2-limp-scholarship-and-demonology\\_103560\\_blog](http://creative.sulekha.com/risa-lila-2-limp-scholarship-and-demonology_103560_blog)
- University of Chicago magazine, The interpretation of gods, <http://magazine.uchicago.edu/0412/features/>
- Hitchhiker's Guide to 'Invading The Sacred', <http://beingdifferentforum.blogspot.in/2014/02/hitchhikers-guide-to-invading-sacred.html?m=1> [Rajiv Malhotra has made his book 'Invading The Sacred', "that rebuts such distorted works by non-practitioners of Hinduism freely downloadable to counter the continuing misrepresentations of Doniger & co."]

Given below are relevant extracts of a mail response I sent him today:

I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to you for having taken up the cause of highlighting, and making efforts to correct in a completely non-violent and peaceful manner, mis-portrayal of Hindu religion and Hindu culture in US academic scholarship on these topics. I was shocked to the core to read about the horrifying mis-portrayal of Hinduism by a US senior and distinguished professor of Hindu religion, Prof. Wendy Doniger and other US academics who may be inspired by her. As US scholarship plays an important, if not dominant, role in world academic scholarship the implications for Hindu academic scholarship worldwide is horrifying to a staunch believer in Hinduism like me. As you have indicated in your recent rediff interview perhaps the crux of the problem is that most of the professors of Hinduism in the USA are not practitioners or believers of Hinduism.

I will be forwarding your mail to many of my contacts —snip—.

I pray to Almighty God to shower His Grace on your efforts as well as efforts of others to correct, in a completely non-violent and peaceful way, the mis-portrayal of Hinduism in US (and world) academic scholarship. I further pray to Him that academic scholarship in Hinduism becomes more truthful in letter and spirit, and is infused by faith in the Sanathana Dharma approach to God.

I would also like to state that I have great respect and reverence for other faiths like Christianity and Islam. Vedanta teaches us, "Isa vasyam Idam Sarvam" (God dwells in all this). And so I view various faiths of the world as different pathways to the one and the same Divine power that permeates all of creation, which is referred to as God.

— end mail extracts —

Shri Rajiv Malhotra responded with "Thanks".

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### **Seemingly Balanced Article on Academic Scholarship in Hinduism by Univ. of San Francisco Prof. of Media Studies (2014-02-19 17:57)**

Here is a seemingly balanced article on Hinduism scholarship, especially in the USA, Hinduism and its Culture Wars, by Prof. Vamsee Juluri, professor of media studies at the University of San Francisco, <http://www.theindiasite.com/hinduism-and-its-culture-wars/> However, Prof. Vamsee Juluri too seems to view Rama and Krishna through the lens of history (as against scripture) and seems to be of the view that they are mythological/literary figures rather than real ones. BTW he was raised in Hyderabad and so is a Telugu Bidda.

Some notes on the article (it is a long article and so there are quite a few notes):

) The Hindu-American community has, in recent years, raised concerns about errors/prejudices in works of Western scholars of Hinduism.

) Scholars like Wendy Doniger and Romila Thapar have argued against the Hindutva view that India has been a Hindu land since ancient times which was somewhat recently (from a historical perspective) invaded by Muslims and others. [*Ravi: Romila Thapar seems to be a leading Indian historian and her views, I guess, must be quite influential in Indian academic scholarship about Hinduism. Maybe sometime I should read one or two of her books related to Hindu history of India to get some idea of current Indian academic scholarship views about Hinduism. BTW her wiki, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romila\\_Thapar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romila_Thapar), states "Romila Thapar (born 30 November 1931) is an Indian historian whose principal area of study is ancient India." - so she must be heavily influential in Indian academic scholarship about ancient Hindu history.*]

) Diana Eck in her new book, *India: A Sacred Geography*, states that even there was no religion of the name Hinduism in the past, "there was a shared mythological imagination and practice that was deeply entwined with the physical landscape of the subcontinent for at least two thousand years". [From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana\\_L.\\_Eck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_L._Eck), "Diana L. Eck (born 1945 in Bozeman, Montana) is a religious scholar who is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University, as well as a Master of Lowell House and the Director of The Pluralism Project at Harvard. Among other works, she is the author of *Banaras, City of Light*, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*, and *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country Became the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*. At Harvard, she is in the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, the Committee on the Study of Religion, and is also a member of the Faculty of Divinity. She has been

reappointed the chair for the Committee on the Study of Religion, a position which she held from 1990 to 1998. Eck is a Methodist and is married to the Reverend Dorothy Austin." Ravi: Utterly fascinating! I must read some of her works somewhere down the line. BTW I think I must mention that her spouse name (and some other info.) indicates a same-sex married couple.

Her book (*India: A Sacred Geography*), which seems to be quite a recent one (perhaps first published in 2012) has glowing editorial review comments on amazon, <http://www.amazon.com/India-Sacred-Geography-Diana-Eck/dp/0385531923>

\_ One of these comments is from Karen Armstrong, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen\\_Armstrong](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Armstrong), "In this lucid, learned and luminous book, Diana Eck introduces the Western reader to the sacred landscape of India. She leads us into an unfamiliar world, with myths and symbols that seem initially strange, but by the end of this rich journey we find that we have encountered unexpected regions within ourselves." Words like lucid, learned and luminous from Karen Armstrong is high praise indeed! [After reading Karen Armstrong's comments I was compelled to place an order for a copy here: <http://www.amazon.in/India-Geography-Diana-L-Eck/dp/0385347081>, price Rs. 490/- for paperback book.]

) Two views of what today's Hinduism is are provided. [Ravi: My view is that it is devotion, devotional groups, shrines, festivals, rites and scripture of various kinds from Puranas having the stories of divinity to Vedanta philosophy.]

) A.K. Ramunajan's three hundred Ramayanas essay being removed from Delhi university undergraduate reading list is mentioned. One of the Hindutva viewpoints which the author felt is "worth considering" was why teach the version(s) that "depict our beloved gods as villains".

[Ravi: Hmm. What a hugely sensitive matter religion becomes when it is part of under-graduate or school curriculum! Some info. related to US school curriculum and religion controversy: From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Californian\\_Hindu\\_textbook\\_controversy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Californian_Hindu_textbook_controversy), "A controversy in the US state of California concerning the portrayal of Hinduism in history textbooks began in 2005. Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu groups complained that their religions were in part incorrectly or negatively portrayed.

The Texas-based Vedic Foundation (VF) and the American Hindu Education Foundation (HEF) complained to California's Curriculum Commission, saying the coverage in sixth grade history textbooks of Indian history and Hinduism was biased against Hinduism, and demanding that the portrayal be revised according to the views of Hinduism and Indian history shared by most Hindus and Indians."

Ravi: I think most people become activists for proper representation of their religion in school curriculum when they see children, especially their own, taught a biased or mis-represented view of their religion. That's how Rajiv Malhotra got into his activism in this area. ] \*) The various versions of "stories" of Hindu gods are accepted and tolerated by Hindus in India without any well known attempts to impose a monolithic version on all Hindus of India. "High academic writing" has a different "elite postmodern" view.

) "Most devout Hindus have formed a picture of the gods in their inner lives long before they learn the facts of sexuality, and in this picture, the affection and reverence they feel for the gods is usually parental, and therefore non-sexual. We think of Shiva and Parvathi, for example, as parental figures; -snip—, in our minds they are known only as our Adi-Dampatulu (Telugu for Primal Couple), and she, our Ammavaru (Revered Mother)." [Ravi: Very, very well said, Prof. Juluri. I entirely agree.]

\*) Prof. Diana Eck writes, "the linga (in at least one interpretation) is an epiphany of such transcendence that it can hardly be considered a part, much less an anatomical part, of Shiva as he appears in embodied form." [Ravi: I am so very happy to see the noted Prof. Diana Eck state this so clearly. That is the way the vast majority of current-day Shiva lingam worshipers see it. Scholars of religion who write and talk about Shiva lingam must emphasize such views, at least in the context of modern day Shiva lingam worship, instead of trying to promote 'anatomical' views for cheap publicity purposes.] \*) South Asian writing of the past few decades has achieved world acclaim but such writing does not seem to include Hindu spiritual quests or pilgrimages. [Ravi: That is certainly some food for thought. Perhaps Hindu devotional writings in English are not considered literature-quality wise good enough to make it to top literary

*lists and/or there is some bias that comes into play here.]*

) Current generation Hindu parents have to deal with effects of globalization and other factors in the "story of religion" being passed on next generation youngsters.

) The article talks about the Ramayan television serial, rise of Hindutva and more younger middle-class Hindus in India and abroad viewing epics like Ramayana as scripture as against myth.

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## 2.3 March

**India: A sacred geography - by Harvard Prof. of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies, Diana L. Eck (2014-03-02 10:16)**

A couple or so days ago I received the copy I had ordered of India: A sacred geography by Prof. Diana L. Eck. I flipped through the pages of the 559 page book published in 2012 and was awestruck by its sweeping coverage of Hinduism in India.

Some quick points:

- Banaras, Pandharpur, Badrinath, Girnar, Kanyakumari, Tirupati, Ujjain, Haridwar, Somnath, Ramesvaram, Tiruvannamalai, Madurai, Srirangam, Simhachalam, Vrindavan, Mathura, Dwaraka, Udipi, Guruvayur, Puri, Ayodhya and Nasik are some of the holy cities covered. Char Dham and Jyotirlingas are covered.
- Sacred rivers covered include Ganga, Yamuna, (and Triveni), Kaveri, Narmada, Krishna and Godavari
- Gods mentioned include Shiva, Shakti (Kali, Mahadevi, Lakshmi, Parvati/Gauri), Rama, Krishna, Vishnu (Narayana) and Narasimha.
- References and quotes are given from various holy Hindu scripture including Mahabharata, Ramayana, Atharva Veda, Puranas (Shiva Purana, Linga Purana, Skanda Purana, Devi Bhagvata Purana, Bhagvata Purana), Shatapatha Brahmana, Rig Veda, Upanishads, Shilappadikaram (Tamil epic), Tiruppavai and Ramcharitmanas
- The photographs in the book reflect the sanctity of the holy land of India.

It will take me awhile to read this book. But, based on this flipping through the pages of the book effort itself, I have no hesitation in recommending this contemporary (2012) book on sacred India by Prof. Diana Eck whose knowledge about sacred Hindu India has just blown me away. It is a matter of great pleasure for me to know about such foreign (USA) professors of religion who are so knowledgeable about Hinduism in India. If you are into Hinduism or interested in it, even if you don't get time to read the book right away I suggest you consider keeping a copy around so that you (and others at your home/friends) can read it in parts whenever you get the time. Further, it may be a great book for visitors to your home to leaf through.

For India folks, here's the amazon India link: <http://www.amazon.in/dp/0385347081>

For USA folks, here's the link: <http://www.amazon.com/India-Sacred-Geography-Diana-Eck/dp/0385531923>

For those who do not know of Prof. Diana Eck, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana\\_L.\\_Eck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_L._Eck), "Diana L. Eck (born 1945 in Bozeman, Montana) is a religious scholar who is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University, as well as a Master of Lowell House and the Director of The Pluralism Project at Harvard. Among other works, she is the author of Banaras, City of Light, Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India, Encountering God:

A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras, and A New Religious America: How a Christian Country Became the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation. At Harvard, she is in the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, the Committee on the Study of Religion, and is also a member of the Faculty of Divinity. She has been reappointed the chair for the Committee on the Study of Religion, a position which she held from 1990 to 1998."

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## The "Historical Jesus" and the Gospel of Mark (2014-03-02 10:48)

Some days ago I finished reading Reza Aslan's "Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zealot: \\_The \\_Life \\_and \\_Times \\_of \\_Jesus \\_of \\_Nazareth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zealot:_The_Life_and_Times_of_Jesus_of_Nazareth). I think it is the first book that I have read about the "Historical Jesus" though I had somewhat casually read some articles and viewed some videos on the Internet on the topic earlier.

This was my first serious look at how some academics of history of religion examine and view Jesus of Nazareth. The first thing that struck me was that while the author is quite sensitive in his writing about Jesus, perhaps this academic field is such that he and other academics are forced to be skeptical about scriptural accounts, which in this case is the New Testament. They dig deep into inconsistencies between the gospel accounts. Very importantly they look for other records like Roman records to corroborate events related in the New Testament. If there is no corroboration from other records they bring in the possibility of the the scriptural account being fictional.

This is so different from the believer reading the gospel (New Testament) with an attitude of faith. I read the Gospel of Mark here, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/mark.htm> (I read only the gospel part and skipped the meditation typically), which is the shortest gospel of the four (the others being Matthew, Luke and John). [I had read the New Testament a few decades earlier but then I was an agnostic.] Having experienced some of the miraculous/supernatural powers of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and having belief in the experiences of other devotees who come across as truthful people, I was able to read the Gospel of Mark with faith and, by and large, it seemed to me to be a very believable account. Yes, I can imagine that some details may be a little inaccurate but overall I find it to be a very believable account of a Divine figure endowed with supernatural powers.

But do the academics who study the New Testament have the benefit of such experiences of divine power and so belief that the Gospel accounts, by and large, are truthful accounts of experiences of people who lived with Jesus during the period of his ministry? Well, I am not so sure. Some seem to have belief but it seems some, or maybe most, don't.

Why do I say that? Here's the wiki page for the Historical Jesus, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical\\_Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Jesus). Some short extracts and comments:

"The term Historical Jesus refers to scholarly reconstructions of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, based on historical methods including critical analysis of gospel texts as the primary source for his biography, along with consideration of the historical and cultural context in which he lived. These reconstructions accept that Jesus existed, although scholars differ about the beliefs and teachings of Jesus as well as the accuracy of the accounts of his life, and the only two events subject to "almost universal assent" are that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and was crucified by the order of the Roman Prefect Pontius Pilate."

*[Ravi: Only the baptism and the crucifixion are almost universally accepted (as facts)!]*

"The Christ myth theory (also known as the "Jesus myth theory" or "Jesus mythicism") is the proposition that Jesus never existed in any form but was invented by the Christian community around 100 CE."

*[Ravi: An invention by the (early) Christian community! My God! This, in some ways, is in line with Prof. Doniger's views about Rama!]*

*[Ravi But, thankfully, the above view is not an academic scholar mainstream view. The academic scholar mainstream views are (I say academic scholar as most, if not all, of the current day scholars mentioned as holding these views are academics):]*

- "Apocalyptic prophet: The apocalyptic prophet view primarily emphasizes Jesus preparing his fellow Jews for the End times."
- "Charismatic healer: The charismatic healer portrait positions Jesus as a pious and holy man in the view of Geza Vermes" and Jesus as a healer. [*Ravi: That's the kind of view that I am somewhat comfortable with.*]
- "Cynic philosopher: In the Cynic philosopher profile, Jesus is presented as a traveling sage and philosopher preaching a cynical and radical message of change to abolish the existing hierarchical structure of the society of his time." [*Ravi: I think this view is a sceptical view of scripture which misses out on the mystical power, grandeur of the miracles, and compassion of the Divine Jesus Christ.*]
- "Jewish Messiah: The Jewish Messiah profile of N. T. Wright places Jesus within the Jewish context of "exile and return", a notion he uses to build on his view of the 1st-century concept of hope."
- "Prophet of social change: The prophet of social change portrait positions Jesus not as an eschatological prophet, but primarily as someone who challenged traditional social structures of his time."

— end short extracts and comments —

My view is that unless Jesus Christ had divine powers which, as is written in the Gospel accounts, he demonstrated to his followers, they would not have been inspired to continue his mission after his crucifixion in the face of horrendous persecution.

In future additions to this post (or new posts) I plan to share some historical background details about Jesus Christ and the early Christian church which I learned from my reading of Reza Aslan's book and other sources.

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### **Sathya Sai Baba said atheists can also get self-realization; Sai Baba's words about Sai-Baba-speaking-through-somebody-else claims (2014-03-31 17:09)**

*Last updated on 1st April 2014*

A couple or so days ago I saw a couple of videos of a Sai devotee's recent talks in the USA, on saicast, [http://www.saicast.org/2014/2014FebSatya\\_jit.html](http://www.saicast.org/2014/2014FebSatya_jit.html). IMHO, both of them are very good and will help in Bhagawan's mission. Thanks to the Sai devotee speaker for the talks and thanks to saicast for making the videos available.

Some particular points:

In the Boston talk (Part 1), (at around 36 min. 36 secs), the speaker-devotee, who served Sathya Sai Baba at a close personal level for many years, mentions about Sai Baba (paraphrased) correcting the view that atheists who are great social workers, have strong ethics and morality (but who don't believe in God) will not get self-realization in this birth but will be blessed by a next birth in a good devotional family with a smooth path to self-realization. (At around 38:42)The speaker said that Sai Baba categorically stated that atheists too most certainly can achieve self-realization (in this birth itself) and that anyone (including atheists and agnostics, I guess) who gives up body consciousness - for them, self-realization is inevitable.

I think this is a very important aspect of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings about self-realization that does not seem to be well known. Perhaps such teachings would get appreciated by leading atheists of the world today like Sam Harris, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam\\_Harris\\_\(author\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Harris_(author)), who seems to be quite a popular writer and speaker in the USA (and elsewhere) especially among scientists, technologists and intellectuals.

A relevant extract from a blog post, <http://iami1.wordpress.com/2014/02/06/sam-harris-vs-reza-aslan-2007-debate-on-religion-and-reason-part-transcript/> :

I think Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris are perhaps the most prominent anti-religion scientist-atheists in the world today.

However Harris does acknowledge the reality of spiritual experiences. An interesting extract of Harris from the part-transcript is given below:

“The reality is, it is possible for a person to close their eyes and use their attention in a certain way such that they no longer feel separate from the universe, say. You know, they felt it was just me a moment ago and then all of a sudden there’s just the world. Okay. That is an experience that is replicable, that we can all have, that many of us I’m sure have had. Most people, most of the time have had these experiences in the context of a religious tradition and they have interpreted them by the light of their religious tradition. The problem with this process is that it is not in the scientific spirit encouraging of rigorous honesty. It is encouraging of dogmatism and metaphysical speculation and ... Yes, there are diamonds in the (—abusive word snipped—) of religion. You know, Rumi and Meister Eckhart are attesting to a kind of experience that I think we should all be desperate to have. The problem is we need to talk about it honestly ...”

So Sam Harris may well agree with the philosophy of Advaita. But he may not believe that intense prayer can result in miracles that break laws of material sciences like physics & chemistry (materialization miracles) or knowledge of medical science (healing miracles).

— end extract —

I (Ravi) also wanted to share Sai Baba’s words to a long-term devotee and servitor, which the latter kindly shared with me - *Dehaabhimaanamu undinanthavaraku sakala saadhanamu avasaram*. i.e. So long as the body consciousness continues (in other words, identification of oneself as (only) one’s body-mind complex) all the saadhana(s) (spiritual/religious practice(s)) are necessary. Which implies that once one gives up/loses body consciousness (in other words, directly experiences that one, at the core of one’s being, is a separate entity/reality from one’s body-mind complex) then one does not need to do any saadhana(s) (spiritual/religious practice(s)).

In the Santa Ana talk (at around 40 min, 18 sec) the devotee shares his vivid experiences of Sathya Sai Baba strongly rejecting the claims of people who said they were mediators between Bhagawan and the devotee. One devotee tells Swami about claims of a young boy that Swami speaks through him, and asks Swami (Sai Baba) whether it is true (the devotee almost presumes that it is true). Sai Baba then intensely rebukes this devotee saying (according to the speaker-devotee):

You have been here close to me for so many years. How could you even bring this up in my presence? Don’t you have any common sense or not? *Buddhi Unda Leda Neeku? Naaka em pattindi vaadu paada shariramulo cheradani?* What business (need) do I have to enter that dirty body? If I want to talk to somebody else I can figure out a way. *Nenu mataladadante nenu mataladathanu. Neerega mataladathanu.* If I need to speak to somebody I can (will) speak directly.

This was the rebuke - the strong reaction - from Swami at that point of time (when Swami was in His physical body).

The speaker-devotee continues: But somehow these kinds of things are so enamouring - you normally tend to feel that okay this is an easy way out. People tend to believe these kinds of things and want to believe these kinds of things. ... The speaker-devotee then goes on to say that one should not get caught up in these things and instead go for a direct relationship with God.

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Ravi: In this post-Mahasamadhi phase of Bhagawan’s mission I think the above warning about Sai-Baba-speaking-through-somebody-else claims is a very important one. Of course, Swami appearing in the dream of a devotee and advising the devotee could be a very genuine spiritual experience - but that is a personal matter between Swami and the devotee. The problem crops up when somebody tells others that Swami has appeared in a dream and given instructions for other people to follow - that is when that somebody takes on a role of almost a prophet-like person acting as an intermediary between Sai Baba and the devotees. IMHO, from whatever I have heard in Swami’s



discourses and read in Swami's writings, Swami has strongly discouraged belief in such prophet-like intermediaries between Swami and the devotee. Instead, Swami has advised intense prayer to Swami/other forms of God/formless God/one's-inner-self-as-God to get a direct response from God without any intermediaries clouding the matter.

Another small point. Perhaps the reader is already aware of the term 'intercessory prayer'. But just in case the reader does not know about it, intercessory prayer is a common term in English language religious literature. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercession>, <http://www.christlife.org/resources/articles/IntercessoryPrayer.html> for some descriptions and background on it. I think one must clearly distinguish between the mediator types that the speaker-devotee referred to in his Santa Ana talk mentioned above, which Swami strongly disapproved of, and intercessory prayer, which, IMHO, Swami encouraged. As an example of the latter, the prayer *Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu* can be viewed as a broad universal kind of intercessory prayer where we pray to God for the well being of all worlds (as Swami instructed/explained, if I recall correctly) or all the world, if one wants to put it that way.

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## 2.4 April

### Video on the gospel of John - some thoughts (2014-04-16 20:38)

Over the past few days I watched, in parts, The Visual Bible - Gospel of John, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emIHESNWFGL>, 2 hr, 53 min, 12 sec. I found it to be a very engrossing and spiritually powerful account of the life and wonders of Jesus Christ. I thought I should put down my thoughts about the video right away, even though they will lack easy-to-refer info. Next, I plan to, on a part time basis, go through the text of the gospel of John, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john.htm>, and provide my thoughts based on the text readings where I can also easily provide the text references (and extracts).

So here are my thoughts:

- ) The divine/paranormal/miraculous powers of Jesus Christ are shown in a simple and matter of fact way.
- ) The disbelief of many of the "learned" people - especially the Jewish priestly class in Jerusalem - slowly gives way to acceptance of such powers that Jesus has. I find it to be very interesting that the Jewish leaders tend to accept that Jesus has miraculous power. But those were pre-science days. They questioned those who were the beneficiary of such miracles, and their relatives and then accepted it as true (a person born blind who gets vision due to Jesus's intervention and his parents, are questioned). That then led the debate to whether Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and whether these miracles of Jesus are in keeping with Jewish faith and practice. [While I don't recall this video showing Jesus' detractors raising questions whether his powers were due to (black) magic, I recall that Reza Aslan's book, *The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*, does mention it.]
- ) Jesus is heavily critical of some of the Jerusalem Temple practices. Now this Temple was the seat of religious power among the Jews (in Judea, Galilee, Samaria etc. if I got that right) even if military control was under the Roman governor (and so, Roman empire). This challenge of Jesus to the temple authorities including the "finance" guys cannot be tolerated by the existing authorities. [He sets the sacrificial animals free and overturns the tables of the money-changers]. So they plot to have him crucified for rebellion against the Roman emperor - the Jewish Messiah is supposed to be the 'King' of the Jews and their argument is that by claiming to be the Jewish Messiah and so, Jewish King, Jesus is directly challenging the Roman emperor (a serious charge of sedition).
- ) The apostles of Jesus are mainly drawn from simple folk. Jesus himself is from the simple peasant folk of Galilee. They see his miracles and believe. But they also get quickly into doubt. Jesus gets frustrated, at times, by the lack of belief in his divinity among his followers.
- ) Jesus is viewed as a teacher (rabboni) by his followers. So, while the miracles are a vital part of his advent, his teaching is critical. He heals one person suffering from some terrible sickness but then warns him not to sin again as otherwise he would face such sickness again!
- ) Jesus heavily emphasizes the teaching of loving one another, and has a wonderful community good outlook in his dealings with his flock and the people who come to see him. The multiplication of the bread and fish miracle, to me,

shows his intense desire to make all the people who come to him happy. How can the hungry be happy? First and foremost, they must be fed - as simple as that. So he does that by an astonishing miracle of multiplication of food.

) Jesus is deeply concerned about the well-being of his flock after he leaves them (including after his last post-resurrection interaction with the apostles). He is the shepherd and the followers are his sheep who need to be looked after. Peter seems to be given the main responsibility of looking after the flock (according to this gospel, if I got that correctly).

) The first well-publicized miracle, if I recall correctly, is when Jesus turns water into wine, on the request of his mother to rescue a wedding party host family from embarrassment of the wine having run out.

) Jesus knows the thoughts of the people around him and shows that he knows it on many occasions. He also says, if I recall correctly, that he is in his followers/disciples and that they are in him. [Perhaps Jesus was in the highly evolved state of consciousness where he identified himself with all around him and thus knew the thoughts of those around him.]

) Jesus says that he chose his disciples/apostles and that they did not choose him! Very fascinatingly, Jesus knows that Judas Iscariot, who has the money bag responsibility in the flock, will betray him. But he also knows that this must happen and so lets it happen. [I think all kinds of people get drawn to spiritual masters including some chaps with pretty strong negative sides. The truly great thing about spiritual masters which clearly sets them apart from worldly powerful people is that they accept, at least some, negative persons into their community knowing that they will do them bodily (and mental) harm. A Hindu view of the matter may be that it is the Rinanubandha (the bond of karmic debt/relationship across past lives) that draws the spiritual masters' disciples and devotees to him/her, including the ones that eventually turn against the master. The spiritual master sees and knows this Rinanubandha and so accepts such people into his flock even if he/she knows that they will eventually harm him/her and his/her flock.]

) The resurrection of Jesus is viewed (by this gospel, and perhaps all four canonical gospels) as a great spiritual triumph of Jesus over worldly power. Jesus mentions about this triumph and resurrection just before he is arrested but in an indirect way which the flock does not understand then, but after later events, the flock has a better understanding of Jesus' words.

) Jesus says many times that he works his miracles through the power that his father gives him. He says that his father has sent him among people to show them the way to eternal life.

) At times Jesus says that he and his father are one. That gets viewed as blasphemy by many of the public who want to stone him (to death perhaps as that seems to have been the punishment for a man claiming to be God in those times, and even today in some parts of the world).

) I recall only a few instances in this gospel account where Jesus says that the way to the father is through him alone. My view is that these aspects of the gospel are given far, far more importance by some preachers/teachers of Christianity than they deserve.

— end points about gospel video —

I must say that I see a lot of parallel between this gospel account and the devotee experiences of Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba. Perhaps the essential life and teachings of such super-powerful spiritual masters are the same. It is the following, especially after the physical passing away of the spiritual master, that tends to embellish the legacy with exclusive beliefs and practices that sometimes makes the following a new sect or sometimes even a new religion, instead of infusing faith in the essential/core beliefs and practices of established religions and sects (barring beliefs and practices that are hateful towards other religions and sects).

As an example of embellished legacy I think today's Shirdi Sai Baba temple-masjid practices seem to be predominantly Hindu. Perhaps that attracts larger crowds and that is why these practices have taken root. But, from my humble perspective, the essential Muslim/Sufi aspect of Shirdi Sai Baba where he is supposed to have said Allah Malik very frequently, has got covered up/hidden in the Hindu-type worship practices of the Shirdi Sai temple that we see now. However, the books, including those published by Shirdi Sai Sansthan (Trust), if I am not mistaken, do clearly mention about Shirdi Sai Baba's frequent utterances about Allah and the 'fakir' (Muslim (Sufi) ascetic literally but a reference to God/Allah in this case) whose will/wish he followed/obeyed (as an instrument of God) to work miracles just like Jesus said he followed his father's will/wish (as an instrument of God) to work miracles.

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## Views on some sections of the gospel of John (2014-04-18 20:25)

*Last updated on 25th April 2014*

This post uses the gospel of John from <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john.htm>. For the scripture sections that are referred the associated link is provided. Ideally the reader should read the specified sections in the associated link and then the comment prefixed with my name, Ravi.

Scripture: John 2:1-11, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john2v1.htm>

[Ravi: The above scripture sections seems to me to be a simple and straight forward account of perhaps the first well-publicized miracle of Jesus. Jesus was born and raised among simple Jewish peasant folk of Galilee and his followers seem to come mainly from simple peasant folk. They saw these miracles and were inspired to give up their professions and follow Jesus Christ, and then spoke about these miracles and finally wrote them down for posterity. Having had direct experience of some of the paranormal powers of Sri Sathya Sai Baba I find the above account (and later accounts of miracles) to be believable - there may be some inaccuracies in details but I think the essence of these miracle accounts in the gospel are truthful. But yes, some people may demand evidence and believe only if they have evidence - that is their view and their right. However, those who claim that such gospel accounts are an elaborate fraud or simply a piece of fiction, I think, are unable to have a broad view of human experience which includes the possibility of some very, very rare humans transcending ordinary human limitations and having paranormal/divine powers.]

Scripture: John 2:13-20, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john213.htm>

[Ravi: My reading of this, as of now, is that Jesus gets appalled by the commercialization of the main centre of Jewish worship, the Jerusalem temple. His actions though of freeing the animals (who, I understand, were used for animal sacrifice in the temple) and overturning the money-changers tables would have been a serious challenge to the powerful temple establishment. Their demand of a sign from Jesus seems to be quite normal for those times and perhaps for today's times as well. Jesus' response seems to me to be too much for even human believers to accept literally. Perhaps powerful mystics sometimes say things that are very hard to understand from a literal point of view, and so hard to act upon.]

Scripture: John 3:1-7, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john3v1.htm>

[Ravi: I find the above extract to be fascinating. The idea of a second spiritual birth (born-again) makes sense to me, having gone through some thing similar in my life. Further, even the Hindu holy thread-ceremony is supposed to be a (spiritual) re-birth. However I think that aspect of the Hindu holy thread ceremony seems to have got rather lost among many of today's Hindus. It is more of a traditional ritual which one goes through rather than a life-changing event where one re-orient's life making spirituality/religion the primary part of one's life.

As I have been studying powerful contemporary preachers of various religions I find that many of the really powerful speakers have a born-again (spiritually) experience which transforms them and eventually leads them to become preachers or evangelists sharing their experiences and view of the spiritual/religious life with others.]

Scripture: John 3:16-21, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john316.htm>

[Ravi: This is where the exclusivity of the gospel comes in. Believe in God's only son and you will be saved; Else you will be condemned. All I can say is that I do not accept this exclusivity of the gospel. There are other (prophet/avator) sons (and daughters) of God who walked the earth besides Jesus Christ.]

Scripture: John 4:5-19, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john4v1.htm>

[Ravi: The Samaritans were considered to be "below" the Jews. But Jesus, in this case, shows that he is above such petty racism/groupism/casteism. He demonstrates his paranormal knowledge about the woman's 'husbands' and convinces the woman about his divinity. Simple, yet very powerful, demonstration of paranormal knowledge that is very convincing for the peasants.]

Scripture: John 4:23-26, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john4v1.htm>

[Ravi: "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." - I think this would be in sync. with teachings of all the major religions of the world today, including Hinduism. The above extract also has Jesus declaring

that he is the Messiah (Christ) (that has been mentioned in Jewish scripture - Old Testament, I understand).]

Scripture: John 4:39-41, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john4v1.htm>

[Ravi: Word of mouth especially from beneficiaries/witnesses of paranormal knowledge/events was the main way the news of the divine personality spread. Today, it is both oral and written devotees' experiences that spreads the good news of contemporary/near-contemporary divine personalities.]

Scripture: John 4:46-53, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john443.htm>

[Ravi: In this gospel this is the first healing miracle of Jesus. Having heard and read about many such healing miracles of both Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba, I can certainly consider the above account, in essence, to be truthful. And, it is these healing miracles that attract huge numbers of suffering to such divine personalities. Paranormal knowledge about another person's life and thoughts, materialization/material transformation like water to wine are quite amazing but healing miracles are a great wonder and have huge impact on people in general both in terms of the miraculous power of the divine personality and belief in that person as a divine being.]

Scripture: John 5:2-16, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john5v1.htm>

[Ravi: Powerful healing miracle of Jesus. This would have made him hugely famous and thereby earned the envy of the religious establishment.]

Scripture: John 5:19-20, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john517.htm>

[Ravi: Verse/section 19 seems to me to be very similar to Shirdi Sai Baba's words except that Baba used to say Fakir instead of Father. I think these great super-powerful mystics have/had a consciousness where they "see" an immense vista of existence far beyond their own body and mind, and are able to work miracles through being in that consciousness. They perhaps use words like Father and Fakir for this universal consciousness that they are able to experience as being themselves, so that ordinary people can understand it more easily.]

Scripture: John 5:30, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john517.htm>

[Ravi: This can be viewed as the "being just an instrument of the Lord" attitude/approach.]

Scripture: John 6:5-14, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john6v1.htm>

[Ravi: This is the famous miracle of multiplication of five loaves and two fish to many times that to feed the five thousand. Healing and feeding miracles are the easiest for common people to understand and get awed by. Then they are ready to believe that the miracle-maker is a divine personality whose words should be heard and followed, if possible/feasible for them.]

Scripture: John 6:16-21, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john616.htm>

[Ravi: I consider the miracles of Jesus walking on water and "immediately" 'transferring' the boat from the sea to the land they were going to, as possibly real events. For powerful divine personalities like Shirdi and Sathya Sai Babas such extraordinary feats were not unusual at all, and so I consider that these miracles of Jesus may be real.]

Scripture: John 6:26-29, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john622.htm>

[Ravi: The great mystics view their miracles as relatively unimportant as compared to their teachings of the path to eternal life/deathlessness/self-realization. But without the miracles their teachings will not be given much value by the people! So the great mystics, prophets and avatars have to have both miraculous power and spiritual teachings, for them to be accepted by the people at large.]

Scripture: John 6:30-35, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john630.htm>

[Ravi: The religious establishment of the day will staunchly oppose words like in sentence/verse 35. But then, in my view, these super-powerful mystics speak the truth - they have the capacity to take care of their devotees both materially and spiritually. That does not mean that their devotees do not suffer at all. Both Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba used similar words - You look at me, I will look at you; Why fear when I am here. To the faithful these words are true, some times based on first-hand positive experiences from such faith and many times based on second-hand positive experiences from such faith. To those without faith these words don't make sense. I think that's the bottom line in such religious matters. It is not a rational thing at all; it is just a matter of faith.]

Scripture: John 6:41-42, <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john641.htm>

[Ravi: I think this is the toughest part of appreciating divine personalities. They take birth as humans and sometimes look and behave like a human but sometimes perform divine/paranormal acts and impart divine teachings. For (most of) the Galileans who had known Jesus' parents and perhaps had known Jesus as a boy, it was too much for them to accept Jesus as divine! I think it was somewhat similar for the young Sathya Sai Baba among his villagers who had

seen him grow up in Puttaparthi.]

Scripture John 7:1-9, [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7 %3A1-30 &version=NLT](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A1-30&version=NLT) [I am using this site instead of <http://www.rc.net/wcc/readings/john7v1.htm> as the latter omits some of the sentences/verses of this section.]

[Ravi: Super-powerful mystics like Jesus and the Sai Babas spoke the truth and did wonderful miracles. But that upset a lot of people. Truth-tellers have to be critical of the faults in society and that upsets the powerful and influential in society. They turn against the truth-tellers. Miraculous power and associated fame & following rouses the envy of the established priestly and religious elite as their followers may start deserting them and going to the miracle-maker. This anger and envy of some of the establishment even turns into murderous hatred as the above gospel sentences/verses tell us. Jesus himself is saying that (most of) the world hates him because of him faulting it for its evils.]

Scripture John 7:10-13, [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7 %3A1-30 &version=NLT](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A1-30&version=NLT)

[Ravi: I find it utterly fascinating that the gospel itself records that some said Jesus was a good man but others said that he is a fraud who deceives people. Amazingly for me, it has been the same with the Sai Babas. People who do not have the imaginative capacity and/or vision to appreciate the miraculous powers of the Sai Babas chose to ignore the testimony of so many reliable witnesses about the miraculous powers of the Sai Babas, and decided that since the miraculous powers were not scientifically validated they must be fraud!!! (It would be fine if they said that since the miracles have not been scientifically validated they do not know for sure. But some people, including some leading scientists, do not stop there and 'declare' that all the reported miracles are fraud.) Hmm. Two millennia after Jesus, human nature does not seem to have changed much when it comes to appreciation of miraculous power of super-powerful mystics.]

Scripture John 7:14-19, [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7 %3A1-30 &version=NLT](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A1-30&version=NLT)

[Ravi: Fascinating section for me. I was drawn to Sri Sathya Sai Baba by his extraordinarily wise and knowledgeable interpretation of religious teachings in general, and some key Hindu scripture like Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, in particular. I was astounded to know that Sri Sathya Sai Baba had no formal training in Hindu scripture. Then how could he expound so wisely and brilliantly on the core teachings of Hindu scripture? That led me to accept the view that this knowledge was known to him prior to his birth as Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Fascinatingly, with Jesus it seems to have been somewhat similar. Jesus was not trained as a holy teacher. He was a peasant - I think I had read somewhere that he was illiterate, but I am not sure. Anyway, the key point is that he had not studied/was not trained in Jewish scripture. So how was he able to expound on Jewish scripture? Natural question among the knowledge about Jewish scripture people in the temple of Jerusalem. And what a seemingly simple but rock-solid answer, "My message is not my own; it comes from God who sent me"! That differentiates the prophet/avatar from the scriptural expert, IMHO.]

Scripture John 7:25-30, [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7 %3A1-30 &version=NLT](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A1-30&version=NLT)

[Ravi: People are completely baffled when they come to see the knowledge and power of super-powerful mystics like Jesus and the Sai Babas. They turn to scripture to see whether these mystics fit the description of future comings of Avatars/prophets in it. If there are some mismatches between what scripture says of the future comings of God/prophets and these super-powerful mystics they see & experience, they become reluctant to accept the latter as Avatar/prophet. How frustrating it would be to the avatars/prophets to convince people of their divinity! Jesus tries to dispel their doubts regarding scripture saying that the messiah will simply appear and as they know Jesus is from Nazareth so Jesus cannot be the messiah! I find these words of Jesus to be profound even if they seem to be simple, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I come from. But I'm not here on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don't know him. But I know him because I come from him, and he sent me to you.". That's why these avatars/prophets are regarded as saviours. They come to a community, and draw people to them, to help them and save them (Hindu view: save them from leading adharmic/sinful lives which will cause them bad karma and so future suffering, and also provide a way for them to escape out of the bondage of samsara and attain freedom through Bhakti (path of devotion) and/or Jnana (path of spiritual knowledge)).]

— To be continued —

## Two great Christian church leaders are declared to be Saints! Congratulations to the Catholics & Christians (2014-04-30 22:41)

Some notes, small extracts and my comments from/on [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/a-day-of-ancient-ceremony-to-crea-te-two-modern-saints/2014/04/27/290f167f-c579-4694-885b-1f7c26d4d00e\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/a-day-of-ancient-ceremony-to-crea-te-two-modern-saints/2014/04/27/290f167f-c579-4694-885b-1f7c26d4d00e_story.html) :

Pope Francis canonized John Paul II and John XXIII, both towering figures of the 20th century, as saints.

[Ravi: I completely support honouring leaders of the Roman Catholic Church of the 20th century for their service to the catholic church and spreading the life & teachings of the Divine Jesus Christ as captured in the New Testament. I did not know anything about John XXIII prior to this beatification news. But, of course, I had read a lot about John Paul II, whose long stint from 1978 to 2005 (third-longest in church history) and whose globe-trotting ways, made him a well known figure in India and the world. Whatever I had read and seen (on TV and print media photographs) of John Paul II, largely, was very positive. Personally I found his public statements to be largely benevolent, and I personally felt that he was a very likeable person.

However, it is the promotion of these leaders to saint status whereby they become divine icons of intercession between the devotee and God and which is, very importantly, recognized by the catholic church, that I find very interesting. Going by my understanding of the Roman Catholic Church procedure, miracles are needed to promote the missionary leader to saint status. No matter how likeable I found John Paul II I did not associate miraculous powers with him! I mean, I do not recall reading reports of miracles attributed to him in the media prior to his passing away. After his passing away, many wanted him to be made a saint. That perhaps led to the church speeding up the beatification process. Later there were reports of miracles associated with somebody praying to him for divine intercession. Here is an extract about one such reported miracle from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatification\\_of\\_Pope\\_John\\_Paul\\_II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatification_of_Pope_John_Paul_II), "In early 2006, it was reported that the Vatican was investigating a possible miracle associated with John Paul II. A French nun, confined to her bed by Parkinson's Disease or a neurological condition with similar symptoms which can go into remission, is reported to have experienced a "complete and lasting cure after members of her community prayed for the intercession of Pope John Paul II". The nun was later identified as Sister Marie Simon-Pierre.

Sister Marie Simon Pierre is a member of the Congregation of Little Sisters of Catholic Maternity Wards from Puyricard, near Aix-en-Provence. Sister Marie-Simon-Pierre, 46, is working again, now in Paris at a maternity hospital run by her order. She met reporters 30 March 2006 in Aix-en-Provence, during a press conference with Archbishop of Aix Claude Feidt.

"I was sick and now I am cured," she told reporters. "I am cured, but it is up to the church to say whether it was a miracle or not."

It has been suggested, however, that Sister Marie Simon-Pierre did not have Parkinson's Disease as there is no easy way to accurately diagnose the disease short of medical autopsy. Sister Marie Simon-Pierre also suffered a relapse though the Episcopal Conference of France disputed that the relapse (which would have thrown the purportedly miraculous nature of the cure into doubt) was anything more than a rumor."

Ravi: I do not want to get into the issue of whether the above reported miracle is genuine or not. Having directly experienced paranormal power (but subjectively and so I cannot prove it to others) of one powerful near-contemporary mystic, I certainly believe that miracles, including healing miracles, are possible. However my view of how most of them happen is that it is the deep faith in divinity that the experiencer of the miracle has, that creates conditions suitable for the power of that faith to manifest into a miracle (please excuse usage of a somewhat rare word but I felt it be the appropriate word here, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/experiencer>).

The persons/icons/images who/which may have been used by the miracle-experiencer as a channel for boosting his/her faith in divinity may act only as instruments. In this case the instrument of say an image of John Paul II may have been used by the reported miracle-experiencer to boost her faith but I will not go so far as to say that the spirit of John Paul II interceded with God on her behalf as she had prayed to John Paul II, and so caused a miracle to happen. I will say, if one assumes that the reported miracle is genuine, that God (who is present in the depth of her heart and so all-knowing) directly responded to her (perhaps intense) prayers to God whom she viewed/related to through the image of John Paul II, and made the miracle happen.

Many devout people desperately need believable, adorable and respected icons through which to connect to God. Perhaps John Paul II being made a saint fulfills that powerful need among the Catholics as he was a much loved and

respected near-contemporary Catholic Church missionary and leader.]

...

Huge number of pilgrims arrived from Poland, over buses, flights and train, to celebrate John Paul II's elevation to sainthood.

[Ravi: Congratulations to the Polish Catholics and Christians for this great event.]

...

"Born Karol Jozef Wojtyla in Wadowice, Poland, in 1920, John Paul II is seen as the first truly global pope, a charismatic conservative known for stirring oration and staring down communism even as he stood firmly against birth control and divorce."

[Ravi: The first truly global pope! Hmm. So, prior to him, popes may not have been seen and heard so much on the global stage, especially by the laity. That, given the two millenniums history of the Roman Catholic Church, is a very noteworthy point. Staring down communism would have needed enormous guts when he was living in Poland under communist rule as the communists, I presume, would have been strongly opposed to the church (religion is opium of the masses and all that stuff of Karl Marx). I think the birth control opposition part may be quite unacceptable in today's world, and perhaps even the opposition to divorce (if the marriage just does not work).]

...

John XXIII is given the credit for sweeping reforms in the 1960s (Second Vatican Council) one of which was switching the Catholic Mass from Latin to the "common tongues of the faithful".

[Ravi: It changed to the common tongues of the faithful only in the 1960s!!! Hmm. But then Hindu Vedic rituals are still conducted largely, or should I say only, in Sanskrit even today.]

...

In 1981 John Paul II was shot at by a Turkish extremist in the abdomen but survived the assassination attempt. It is reported that John Paul II prayed for the shooter while he was in the ambulance and forgave him. He did not know then who the shooter was.

[Ravi: From whatever I remember reading of Pope John Paul II, I tend to believe the above account (of forgiveness). That's why he was so beloved a holy man not only among Catholics but also among some people from other faiths. It is not easy to be a true man of religion whatever be the religion. Perhaps it is one of the toughest callings in life. The moral and spiritual bar that has been set by great religious leaders of the past is very, very high.]

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## 2.5 May

### **Some (idle) thoughts on a game of life computer program based on Sanathana Dharma! (2014-05-06 12:01)**

A correspondent had passed on two links related to a game programming patterns book, <http://gameprogrammingpatterns.com/>, <http://journal.stuffwithstuff.com/2014/04/22/zero-to-95688-how-i-wrote-game-programming-patterns/>.

That led me to write the following to him (slightly modified) on a game of life which I thought some readers may also want to have a quick look at:

While on the topic of games, I wanted to share with you an idea that I have had with me for a long time - more a sort-of idle thought idea rather than something that I myself will want to get down and program (I think those days are gone for me now).

The idea is about having a game of life as viewed from a Hindu belief perspective with Maya, law of karma, reincarnation, desire, prayer, turning inward to untangle one's inner reality from Maya etc. One could also consider modern perspectives on core aspects of life. For example I read that the four basic instincts of man (and animals) are hunger, sleep, sex (procreation) and self-preservation. But man has something more like conscience which prompts him about right & wrong and tries to hold back the mind which is driven by instinct. The shadripus of Kama (desire especially sexual desire), Krodha (anger), Lobha (Greed), Moha (infatuation/attachment), Mada (arrogance/pride)

and Matsarya (Jealousy) are also important to be added to the mix (though desire has already been mentioned earlier). Samskaras gained over many janmas also are a factor.

What I feel is that if one brings in all of these aspects as variables of some sort for an individual and then brings in interactions with other individuals (same aspects but different values in some sense) and events (e.g. illness) then one reproduces in some limited way, real life! Further, I wonder whether there is a possibility of mathematical equations of some sort which can be used to predict the outcome of such interactions.

Just imagine if such a game shows the more painful outcome for people who have not imbibed Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, as compared to people who have, for the same interactions with other kind of people & events! What a way it will be to teach children (and adults) about the great advantages of following Sathya, Dharma, Shanti & Prema!

— —

A correspondent, Chandu Patel, responded to the above, as follows (slightly edited):

It would be wonderful if such mathematical equations can be formulated! I call it some sort of algorithm. It would be just awesome! Let me know if you come across some pointers/information on such equations/algorithm.

However, it looks like, there is one (major) difference between mathematics and human life. One is so precise and predictable while the other seems to be not. In the former, 2+2 is always 4. For human life (not sure about animal life), smile does not always translate to happiness, crying is not always due to sorrow/suffering, giving is not always noble, a hug does not always signify love, mother's slapping her child is not always a bad act (sometime it is bad if she doesn't slap/beat-up). Because, there is more than just meets the eyes. There is the invisible factor of motive behind it. So, not sure if such equations can be formulated. But then nature appears to be so precise, and so should be the theory of karma. Someone (supernatural/supreme power) must have designed those equations/algorithm, and would know the secret equations/algorithm. But, it seems to be beyond the reach of the normal human.

It is similar to Arjuna's quest for black & white answers to his questions in the Bhagvad Geeta. It appears that Arjuna asked many, many life-questions for which he sought some black & white (with mathematical clarity) answers from Shri Krushna (Krishna). And even Shri Krushna had to tell Arjuna not to go deeper, because *gahanaa karmano gatih* (chapter 4, verse 17) [*Ravi: gahanaa karmano gatih - The intricacies of karma are very hard to understand (deep, impassable, mysterious), <http://vedabase.net/bg/4/17/en1>]. I believe, in the beginning of one of the 4 Vedas itself (don't remember which one), the author sage mentioned that even he doesn't know the secret of how the Karma theory and other laws of nature exactly works, but it works.*

— end Chandu Patel response —

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### **BKS Iyengar, Yoga Guru - NDTV Interview - May 2014 (2014-05-07 17:56)**

Here's a great, I would say must-read, recent interview of BKS Iyengar, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B.\\_K.\\_S.\\_Iyengar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._K._S._Iyengar), by NDTV (I must also say I do not agree with everything Iyengar says but there is a lot one can learn from him): <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/god-has-assigned-a-job-to-every-individual-yogis-jumping-in-to-become-popular-and-entering-the-political-sphere-it-pains-me/99/>

Some comments of mine:

Iyengar mentions that his Padma Vibhushan award from the govt. of India was for 80 years of practicing Yoga.

[*Ravi: Hats off to BKS Iyengar for his dedication, guts and love for Yoga translated to spreading Yoga in the world to improve fitness of body and mind. 80 years of practice of yoga! Awesome, man, awesome!*]

...

The interviewer states, "Anxiety is now the biggest lifestyle disease of our times — not diabetes, cholesterol or blood pressure."

Iyengar answers, "Yes, it is because of the stress factor. There are three remedies — work, word and wisdom. 'Work' means to keep oneself fit, 'word' is to be sincere and honest in your words and 'wisdom' is to surrender to God."

[*Ravi: I think the above Q & A capture the most troubling problem of our times and one interesting solution to it. I would alter the last remedy 'wisdom' to mean love, prayer, worship and surrender to God who is the Antaryaami (the*



*all-knowing and all-powerful controller within each and everyone of us.)]*

...

About Iyengar sleeping only three hours a day and knowing asanas that help him relax even without sleeping.

*[Ravi: That is something! I need my eight hours of sleep everyday or almost everyday :).]*

...

Iyengar reportedly started teaching yoga in 1936. During the initial years, he says he had to popularize yoga and so gave "self-satisfaction" to people as that is what they wanted, through yoga. He says that he taught them how to be satisfied while leading a worldly life.

*[Ravi: During his initial years of making a living as a Yoga teacher, I think I had read somewhere that he had to cater to interests/tastes of his students/customers (including Western ones) some of which were against conventional Indian culture and I think that brought him some criticism. But that early history of Iyengar's yoga teaching seems to be forgotten now and anyway, even India has become a far more liberal place (about sexual aspects of life) than it was when Iyengar started teaching Yoga. For those who would like to read about some dangers of Yoga in terms of sexual licentiousness, here's a New York Times 2012 article which I think has failed to get a proper cultural background of Yoga but does report some real issues in terms of some US (based) Yoga teachers & students, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/health/nutrition/yoga-fans-sexual-flames-and-predictably-plenty-of-scandal.html>.]*

...

Iyengar mentions that yoga generates a lot of cosmic energy in the body and how yoga results in physical, chemical and physiological changes.

*[Ravi: I think talking about cosmic energy or spiritual energy ... is fine. People into yoga and spirituality experience it, though it does not seem to have been measured objectively/scientifically, and so I think it is true. And that reflects in the positive face and body language of the yoga/spiritual practitioner by which people make a causal relationship between such practice and positive effects on the practitioner. But the moment one gets into physical, chemical (and perhaps physiological) territory one is in the realm where science is king! Unless one has strong scientific evidence to back such claims, one is bound to attract criticism from the scientists.]*

...

The interview covers how Iyengar was very sick during his youth and how his yoga teacher turned him to yoga and through yoga to health.

*[Ravi: It is very interesting that quite a few such evangelists of rejuvenation and even medical-cure 'alternative therapy' techniques have a personal rejuvenation experience which makes them a born-again person and later an evangelist.]*

...

About his famous rejuvenation and even cure of famed violinist, Yehudi Menuhin:

*[Ravi: That was a tremendous achievement. And the grateful student/patient helps Iyengar spread Yoga globally. Wonderful human give-and-take to benefit the world at large.]*

...

About problems in popularising yoga abroad and in India:

*[Ravi: Surviving on one meal a day! Very poor response in USA in 1956 which changed dramatically for the better in 1973! Hmm. So it took decades for him (and others) to popularize yoga in the USA!]*

*[Ravi: I think it would really been challenging to popularize Yoga among the Indian populace, at least in most of the middle class and rich class (most of the poor class of India, unfortunately, IMHO, have too many challenges to handle to learn and then practise yoga, though there may be some exceptions), despite yoga being an ancient practice in India. I would not be surprised if such practices had remained confined to small groups/classes of people like ashram inmates, some Hindu social movements, and interested people from the warrior-type classes. Now, especially after Baba Ramdev and his TV yoga evangelism, yoga is all over India! And that's a great thing.]*

...

About commercialism being the biggest threat to yoga:

*[Ravi: I think those are very important observations. A culture of voluntary (not forced) donations from students based on their paying capacity and benefit received seems to be the safest for teaching yoga, spirituality and even religion, IMHO. It is when it becomes a fixed, and usually expensive, fee structure similar to, say, IT training business in India,*

*that these fields become/get perceived as exploitative, business-like fields, which is a tragedy. From my point of view, unlike an IT trainer who can have a powerful motive of making a lot of money, the teacher of fields like yoga, spirituality and religion, has to be willing to live a modest life supported by modest contributions/voluntary payments from the community he/she serves. Yes, some rich patrons may provide a lot of money, or the teacher himself/herself may have inherited money or earned money from some other activities - that's OK. But using these fields to make a lot of money is not OK, IMHO. Wanting to make a lot of money is not the issue - that's fine (if done by righteous means). But then you should not get into fields like teaching of yoga, spirituality and/or religion.]*

— end comments on BKS Iyengar NDTV interview — — — — —

Ravi: A correspondent noted (in response to a mail with similar content as the above) that he is interested in the 'releasing energy' part, and raised a question, releasing energy that was there or creating energy where none existed?

My response to him (edited):

My view, for all it is worth:

My personal experience, which is common knowledge and experience, but I felt it appropriate to mention it as a preface, is that Yoga as well as good, regular (not over strenuous) physical workouts, tend to improve the biological mechanisms which deliver energy and drive to the body (and mind or should I say, so mind?). So one digests food better and gets more energy from the same food which was not giving so much energy earlier, perhaps one gets more oxygen into the blood because the lungs do a better job of 'digesting' the same air that was not giving so much oxygen into the blood earlier. However, here one is not creating energy from 'nothing' - one is just making the process of extracting energy more efficient.

But I have had some fascinating experiences with feelings of powerful energy shooting up from the base of my spine during intense thoughtless-type meditation. Initially I was awestruck as I thought, and still think, that during these experiences the Kundalini energy was "getting released" from the base of the spine, where, according to some yogic literature, it is in a coiled-sort-of-form. I started focusing on this upwards movement of energy from the base of my spine during my meditations. However, some time later, I had some rather scary health problems (aggravated GERD, chest pain + sweating etc.) which resulted even in a brief hospitalization where they put me under observation and conducted tests (including a complicated procedure) to confirm that there was nothing seriously wrong. But I realized that my intense thoughtless-type meditations where I was focusing on these kind of "energy releases" may have something to do with these health problems, and put a stop to such type of intense meditations. And then these problems reduced!

My take away from these experiences are that a) there is truth to these experiences of energy shooting up from the base of the spine that some yogis have mentioned and b) however, these kundalini yoga type of exercises should be done under the direct supervision of a master of such techniques otherwise there could be serious bodily problems. To go a little further on the topic of creating energy/something from nothing, I think that gets into the realm of mystics rather than Hatha Yoga practitioners like Iyengar or even Baba Ramdev. Mystics say that they just tap into the power of the will (Sankalpa shakti in Hindu scriptural jargon) to "will" something into 'material' existence from nothing. The difference, they say, between them and non-mystical people like me/us, is that we do not have that much faith in our ability to simply 'will' something into existence. We doubt it as we identify ourself with our limited mind-body complex.

[I must also say that the last three stages of Ashtanga Yoga (of Patanjali, if I got that right) are Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (oneness/non-dualistic state of consciousness, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samadhi>). Dhyana and Samadhi are more in the realm of the mystics which the Hatha yogi types do not get into much (as I have understood it). But somebody who wants to go the whole Yoga route under a realized Guru would want to get into the higher stages of Dhyana and Samadhi, which may make him/her a mystic who can tap into these supernatural powers.]

To conclude, my understanding now is that the human will has the capacity to create energy as well as matter from only its will and nothing else, but that very, very few people achieve/tap into that sort of capability.

## Differences between Secularism in India and Secularism in the Western world (2014-05-24 16:42)

*Last updated on August 4th 2014*

A recent article in The Hindu about the outcome of the Indian general elections, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/how-modi-defeated-liberals-like-me/article6034057.ece>, had the following lead paragraph, "What secularism did was it enforced oppositions in a way that the middle class felt apologetic and unconfident about its beliefs, its perspectives. Secularism was portrayed as an upwardly mobile, drawing room discourse they were inept at."

At the time I read the article, I was (and had been for quite some time) confused about the exact meaning of secularism, as meant in the Indian context. I thought that perhaps it was/is a very elastic word meaning different things to different people. I then did some browsing on secularism.

According to wikipedia, Indian secularism is different from secularism as understood by the Western world! I think wikipedia seems to have got it right here.

From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism>: "Secularism is the principle of the separation of government institutions and persons mandated to represent the state from religious institutions and religious dignitaries. One manifestation of secularism is asserting the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, or, in a state declared to be neutral on matters of belief, from the imposition by government of religion or religious practices upon its people. Another manifestation of secularism is the view that public activities and decisions, especially political ones, should be uninfluenced by religious beliefs and/or practices."

From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism\\_in\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism_in_India): "Secularism in India means equal treatment of all religions by the state. Unlike the Western concept of secularism which envisions a separation of religion and state, the concept of secularism in India envisions acceptance of religious laws as binding on the state, and equal participation of state in different religions."

With the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution of India enacted in 1976, the Preamble to the Constitution asserted that India is a secular nation. However, neither India's constitution nor its laws define the relationship between religion and state. The laws implicitly require the state and its institutions to recognize and accept all religions, enforce religious laws instead of parliamentary laws, and respect pluralism." [For more on pluralism in the above context, the wiki page, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious\\_pluralism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_pluralism), states, "Religious pluralism is an attitude or policy regarding the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in society".]

The 42nd amendment to the constitution, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forty-second\\_Amendment\\_of\\_the\\_Constitution\\_of\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forty-second_Amendment_of_the_Constitution_of_India), is a complicated affair. The wiki page states:

The 42nd Amendment is regarded as the most controversial constitutional amendment in Indian history. It attempted to reduce the power of the Supreme Court and High Courts to pronounce upon the constitutional validity of laws. It laid down the Fundamental Duties of Indian citizens to the nation. This amendment brought about the most widespread changes to the Constitution in its history, and is sometimes called a "mini-Constitution" or the "Constitution of Indira"

— end wiki extract —

The secular part of the amendment seems to be a relatively insignificant part. From the above wiki page:

The 42nd Amendment changed the characterization of India from a "sovereign democratic republic" to a "sovereign, socialist secular democratic republic", and also changed the words "unity of the nation" to "unity and integrity of the nation"

— end wiki extract —

Ravi: A later government (Janata Party govt.) tried to repeal the 42nd amendment by the 43rd and 44th amendments but could succeed only partly.

Anyway, the secular word in the 42nd amendment does not seem to clearly define Indian secularism. I am quite sure that Indian legal interpretations of this secular word in the 42nd amendment will be viewed as the state treating all religions equally, rather than the state being completely disconnected from religions.

With this background let me have a look again at the lead paragraph of the article, "What secularism did was it enforced oppositions in a way that the middle class felt apologetic and unconfident about its beliefs, its perspectives."

Secularism was portrayed as an upwardly mobile, drawing room discourse they were inept at.”

I think the lead paragraph makes sense only when a particular form of (Western) secularism is considered. From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism>:

Barry Kosmin of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture breaks modern secularism into two types: hard and soft secularism. According to Kosmin, “the hard secularist considers religious propositions to be epistemologically illegitimate, warranted by neither reason nor experience.” However, in the view of soft secularism, “the attainment of absolute truth was impossible and therefore skepticism and tolerance should be the principle and overriding values in the discussion of science and religion.”

— end wiki extract —

So the author of The Hindu article given at the top of this post, may be using the term secularism in the sense of hard secularism which considers “religious propositions to be epistemologically illegitimate”, and therefore wrote that the (Indian) middle class “felt apologetic and unconfident about its beliefs”. I think the author got it pretty badly wrong here. Most Indian middle class chaps would have assumed secularism to mean equidistance from or equal respect to all religions, and therefore would have not had any issues with (Indian) secularism threatening their religious beliefs. I added the following comment (slightly edited to omit a name) to The Hindu article web page but it seems that the moderator did not find it suitable and so rejected it:

It seems to me that Prof. — may be using the term secularism in the sense of ‘hard secularism’ which considers “religious propositions to be epistemologically illegitimate” (according to the Secularism wikipedia page), and therefore wrote that the (Indian) middle class “felt apologetic and unconfident about its beliefs” due to secularism. I think the learned professor is off the mark here. Most Indian middle class chaps (including me) assume (Indian) secularism to mean equidistance from or equal treatment/respect to all religions (see the ‘Secularism in India’ wiki page), and therefore would not have had any issues with (Indian) secularism threatening their religious beliefs, irrespective of whether their religion is a majority or minority one.

— end comment —

A friend who seems to be an atheist or an agnostic raised an issue about the above comment which I also put up on Google+ here. His issue was that Secularism in India wiki page ignores non-religious people. My response to him (slightly edited to omit a name), which satisfied him, was:

The wikipedia page should include non-religious people as well. So a better definition of secularism in India would be treating all religions as well as non-religious people equally or having equidistance from them. I should also add that personal law which deals with marriage, divorce etc. being different for Muslims, Hindus, Christians etc., which is the case in India, should be viewed as an acceptable exception in this definition of secularism in India.

Specifically, secularism in India is not anti-religion or having a disdainful attitude towards religion. I don’t know whether secularism as understood by most people in the Western world has a disdainful attitude towards religion. But some intellectuals may certainly be having such an understanding of secularism (disdain towards religion).

— end response —

Update on June 5th 2014

### **Indian Constitution: Scientific temper and faith in God**

In the past I have come across articles mainly by, and TV debates involving, rationalists and skeptics who have quoted the Indian constitution’s words about scientific temper to challenge religious beliefs of Indians, especially about supernatural phenomena (miracles). Today I was watching the new 16th Lok Sabha MPs take oath and the overwhelming majority “swore before God” or said the equivalent in Indian languages, as part of their oath. I decided to do some digging up on the topic of Indian constitution and faith in God whose results are given below.

Article 51A (of the Indian constitution), Fundamental Duties (<http://www.constitution.org/cons/india/p4a51a.html>) states:

It shall be the duty of every citizens of India-

...

(h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;

— end article 51A extract —

Article 25 (of the Indian constitution), Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion (<http://www.constitution.org/cons/india/p03025.html>) states:

(1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion.

— end article 25 extract —

To my mind, very clearly, the scientific temper part of article 51A has to be read along with article 25, to get the proper sense of what the Indian constitution's view is on scientific temper and religion. In my view, very clearly, the Indian constitution does not ask every Indian citizen to follow scientism [From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientism>, "Scientism is a term used to refer to belief in the universal applicability of the scientific method and approach, and the view that empirical science constitutes the most authoritative worldview or most valuable part of human learning to the exclusion of other viewpoints."]

I would interpret the above articles as allowing for co-existence, within the nation as a whole, of scientific temper as well as religious faith (including belief in supernatural phenomena/miracles). Indeed, such co-existence can also be there in individuals where scientific temper comes into play for most of material life but there is an acceptance that laws of science can be broken/transcended in very rare instances through religious faith (or even other non-religious willpower type of faith).

In any case, in my view, the presence of article 25 in the Indian constitution, completely destroys any arguments that some rationalists and skeptics try to make/imply that the Indian constitution advocates scientism (scientific temper taken to the extreme level of exclusion of other viewpoints like religious faith).

So that's my bookish view. How about the views of the members of the highest law making and decision making body in the land - the Lok Sabha? Here's the text of the oath/affirmation MPs take or should take, as per the third schedule of the Indian constitution (from <http://www.constitution.org/cons/india/s hed03.htm>):

Form of oath or affirmation to be made by a member of Parliament:-

"I, A.B., having been elected (or nominated) a member of the Council of States (or the House of the People) do swear in the name of God/solemnly affirm that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, that I will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India and that I will faithfully discharge the duty upon which I am about to enter."

— end extract of third schedule —

The member has the choice between swearing in the name of God or solemnly affirming. From what I saw today in maybe a total of over an hour plus (with breaks in between) of viewing Lok Sabha TV, an overwhelming majority of members swore in the name of God (or Parameshwar (Sanskrit) [I saw Sushma Swaraj and Uma Bharati take the oath in Sanskrit], Ishwar (Hindi), DaivaSaakshi (Telugu), etc.). It seems to me that an overwhelming majority of members of the 16th Lok Sabha have faith in God. So I am sure that the 16th Lok Sabha's interpretation of the Indian constitution on scientific temper and religious faith will not go towards the extreme of scientism.

Interestingly, the third schedule also has a section on oath/affirmation for Supreme Court judges. Here's the relevant extract:

Form of oath or affirmation to be made by the Judges of the Supreme Court and the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India:-

"I, A.B., having been appointed Chief Justice (or a Judge) of the Supreme Court of India (or Comptroller and Auditor-General of India) do swear in the name of God/solemnly affirm that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, \_439[that I will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India,] that I will duly and faithfully and to the best of my ability, knowledge and judgment perform the duties of my office without fear or favour, affection or ill-will and that I will uphold the Constitution and the laws."

— end extract of third schedule —

Ravi: Any constitution interpretation issues may/would involve the Supreme Court. I wonder how many of the judges of the current Supreme Court swore in the name of God.

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On June 6th 2014, The Hindu carried an article questioning some parts of Shiv Viswanathan's earlier article (referred in the top of this post). Here's that article titled, Let's debate secularism, not rubbish it, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/lets-debate-secularism-not-rubbish-it/article6086156.ece>, by Hasan Suroor. The following comment of mine appears on the article web page (under the name Ravi Ravi):

I entirely agree with, "The fact is that the Indian brand of secularism never discouraged religiosity or the celebration of religion." ... Secularism in India, I think, is viewed more as equal treatment of all religions by the state, as against the state not being involved in any way in religion. India is perhaps the most religious country in the world, measured in numbers of followers of various religions. So how can the state be completely disconnected from religion in India? In Western Europe religion has been in heavy decline and so secularism there seems to mean a very aggressive disconnect between state and religion....How strong Indians faith in God is, is reflected by the overwhelming majority of 16th Lok Sabha members choosing to swear in the name of God rather than solemnly affirm, while taking their oath/affirmation recently...Also, equal treatment to all religions, in secularism in India, should be extended to include humanists who are not associated with religion. — end comment —

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Update on 3rd August 2014

In the book, "Constitution of India", 10/e, P.M. Bakshi writes (Page 3):

The Constitution of India stands for a secular State. The State has no official religion. Secularism pervades its provisions which give full opportunity to all persons to profess, practice and propagate (a) religion of their choice. The Constitution not only guarantees a person's freedom of religion and conscience, but also ensures freedom for one who has no religion, and it scrupulously restrains the State from making any discrimination on grounds of religion.

— end extract — Source: [http://books.google.co.in/books?id=rA39\\_9XtbBkC &pg=PA3](http://books.google.co.in/books?id=rA39_9XtbBkC&pg=PA3)

The above book, in the same page, quotes S. Radhakrishnan, former President of India, from his book, *Recovery of Faith*, as follows:

"When India is said to be a Secular State, it does not mean that we reject the reality of an unseen spirit or the relevance of religion to life, or that we exalt irreligion. It does not mean that secularism itself becomes a positive religion or that the state assumes divine prerogatives.... We hold that not one religion should be given preferential status. ... This view of religious impartiality, or comprehension and forbearance, has a prophetic role to play within the National and International life."

S. Radhakrishnan was a very notable person. From his wiki, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarvepalli\\_Radhakrishnan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarvepalli_Radhakrishnan): Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan ... (5 September 1888 – 17 April 1975) was an Indian philosopher and statesman who was the first Vice President of India (1952–1962) and the second President of India from 1962 to 1967.

One of India's best and most influential twentieth-century scholars of comparative religion and philosophy, his academic appointments included the King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science at the University of Calcutta (1921–1932) and Spalding Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at University of Oxford (1936–1952).

His philosophy was grounded in Advaita Vedanta, reinterpreting this tradition for a contemporary understanding. He defended Hinduism against "uninformed Western criticism", contributing to the formation of contemporary Hindu identity. He has been influential in shaping the understanding of Hinduism, in both India and the west, and earned a reputation as a bridge-builder between India and the West.

— end wiki extract —

Ravi: I am very comfortable with both of the above views (Bakshi and Radhakrishnan). However, a mail correspondent's comment led me to recognize that Radhakrishnan's view (reality of an unseen spirit etc.) may not derive directly from the Indian constitution, and so may not be a representative view of Indians. Bakshi's view above seems to come directly from the Indian constitution which was adopted by the constituent assembly and so was representative of the people of India at large and continues to be in effect. "The Constitution was adopted by the India Constituent Assembly on 26 November 1949, and came into effect on 26 January 1950.", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution\\_of\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_India).

If the people of India want a change in how secularism is specified in the constitution then, it seems to me, the only way it can be done is by making a suitable constitutional amendment, which will require at least 2/3rd majority in both houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amendment\\_of\\_the\\_Constitution\\_of\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amendment_of_the_Constitution_of_India).

Quite a solid setup, I think. It makes me feel real nice to have such a protective framework for freedom of religion as well as freedom to not be religious, in our country. [BTW there is an interesting wiki page on Freedom of religion:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom\\_of\\_religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_religion). I have only glanced at it. Plan to read the whole of it sometime later.]

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Ravi S. Iyer (2014-06-10 11:50:35)

A US based correspondent passed on this article a couple or so days ago, Indian Awakenings: How a holy place and its people helped a Western woman find wholeness. I added the following comment to the above article (under the name of Ravi S. Iyer): Terrific and fascinating article. I think a lot of urban Indians including non-resident Indians (NRIs) will find it inspiring/interesting besides people the world over who are interested in exploring the spiritual. (BTW I am an Indian who has visited quite a few holy places in India, and live in one such place now, but have not been to Rishikesh). Thanks Ms. Ravitz for this lovely account of your wonderful spiritual insights and experiences as well as the (very important) background to them.

### **Swami referred to Shri Narendra Modi as future Prime Minister in 2004 itself! (2014-05-24 20:12)**

From <http://www.sso.net/pnews-2014/modi.htm>:

Below is Shri.Narendra Modi's Guestbook entry after his Interview with Swami on 7th November 2003...

This holy place is a wonderful blend of wisdom, faith and science, covering within itself, all the beliefs and faiths of the world.

*[Ravi: I think the above sentence is a wonderful tribute to Prasanthi Nilayam (Puttaparthi ashram), and I tend to agree with it.]*

...

The article refers to a link in Shri Narendra Modi's website which covers Modi's visit to pay respects at Bhagawan's Mahasamadhi in April 2011 (when Swami gave up His body): <http://www.narendramodi.in/honble-cm-joins-mourners-at-prasanthi-nilayam-to-pay-his-last-homage-to-sathya-sai-baba/>. I have reproduced the short text content there (Modi's website) (the link has a photo of Modi paying respects too):

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi today (April 26th 2011) joined the bereaved family members of the late Sathya Sai Baba and offered flowers at the mortal remains of the spiritual leader at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Mr. Modi who had nearly 30 years' association with Sathya Sai Baba also met and consoled those close to him including his nephew Ratnakar.

While the world as well as Gujarat is deeply mourning his death, the Chief Minister said the Baba would continue to inspire and guide the mankind to walk on the path of selfless service.

Paying his last homage to departed soul, Mr. Modi said, the Baba has won people's heart with his humility, serving the poor, curing the sick and spreading mass education. He has introduced the great Indian culture and spirituality to the world.

Mr. Modi said he was greatly influenced by the life of Sathya Sai Baba and he considered himself fortunate to have received his blessings for serving the poor. He said that serving the poor could be the best and biggest tribute to the departed soul.

*[Ravi: I think it will be truly wonderful if Honourable PM-designate Shri Narendra Modi uses Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's holistic, multi-religion and humanist approach, with Baba's stress on humble and loving service to humanity, especially its poor, as a way to ennoble oneself and "get closer" to the one and only divine reality which religions refer to as God. (Baba teaches that we are all divine but we mistake ourselves to be this human mind-body complex - so "get closer" is a euphemism to unveiling Maya and knowing our ultimate reality which is already very, very close to us as it is (in) the deepest/innermost part of our very being). Even the most ardent critics of Sathya Sai Baba cannot deny that the Puttaparthi model of service to humanity, especially its poor, with hospitals, including superspeciality hospitals offering free service, and its free drinking water project (now managed by AP govt.) in many parts of Anantapur district and elsewhere, does not discriminate against people on the basis of religion or non-religion, and so has been almost universally accepted as a benign influence on a multi-cultural, multi-religion and multi-ethnic society at large, in India and the world.]*

— end Modi website extract —

Ravi: Towards the end of the article (ssso.net article) a tweet from Shri Arun K., who used to do personal service to Bhagawan (and who I am acquainted with as I offered Seva for a couple of months in late 2002 at the place where he was working in Prasanthi Nilayam ashram (at Puttaparthi)), is reproduced. Here's the very interesting part of the tweet, "My mind races back to 2004, when Modi came to see Swami and just after the meeting, Swami called me and said 'future Prime Minister Saar' ... I did not believe it then ..."

[Ravi: Wow! So Swami saw it clearly then. It is just awesome how Swami could see the future events in people's lives. Just like that! I wonder whether Swami told Modi about it. If so, then even if Modi did not believe it then, a part of his mind would have got alerted to the possibility and consciously and/or unconsciously got prepared for that role.]

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## **Hindu, Muslim & Christian views on PM-to-be Modi; Teaching of common core human values of all/most religions in Indian schools & colleges (2014-05-25 14:31)**

*Last updated on May 26th 2014*

I found it interesting to read Hindu, Muslim and Christian views on PM-designate Modi in the Deccan Chronicle today. Some of the views are somewhat sensitive - so please feel free to skip reading the linked articles.

The Hindu view by Ram Madhav: From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram\\_Madhav](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram_Madhav), "Ram Madhav Varanasi is a member of the national executive and also in charge of the media and public relations of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh." Here's his article, Time has come: Modi's tough balancing act, <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/14052-5/commentary-op-ed/article/time-has-come-modi%E2%80%99s-tough-balancing-act>.

The Muslim view by Asaduddin Owaisi. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asadud\\_din\\_Owaisi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asadud_din_Owaisi), "Asaduddin Owaisi (13 May 1969 Hyderabad) is an Indian politician, who is the President of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen. He is a three-time Member of Parliament (MP), representing the Hyderabad constituency in Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Indian Parliament. He was honoured with Sansad Ratna Award for overall best performance in 15th Lok Sabha in 2014." Here's his article, We must have an umbrella Muslim outfit, <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/14-0525/commentary-op-ed/article/we-must-have-umbrella-muslim-outfit>.

The Christian view by Ninan Koshy. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninan\\_Koshy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninan_Koshy), "Ninan Koshy is a noted political thinker, foreign affairs expert, theologian and social analyst. Former director of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs." Here's his article, Test for Modi: Ram temple, Article 370, <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/140525/commentary-op-ed/article/test-modi-ram-temple-article-370>

One of my interest areas is teaching of core religious values of all/most religions in India's schools and colleges, as I think that will instill the common core human values of all/most religions like Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love (love expressed, in some part at least, as service to the family & the community) as well as an understanding of the core belief regarding good results for good actions and bad results for bad actions dispensed by an all-knowing Divine power commonly referred to as God (Formless and all-pervasive God as against deities with paranormal powers; From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deity>, "In religious belief, a deity is a supernatural being, who may be thought of as holy, divine, or sacred. Some religions have one supreme deity, while others have multiple deities of various ranks."). If atheists & agnostics in India have a humanist set of values with a not-insignificant following then that too could be included in these common core human values teaching. In any case suitable human values of/for non-religious groups should also be considered/included. I think that such teachings (of all/most religions and non-religious groups) will produce better holistically educated people who will then contribute to more happiness, peace and joy in society.

[In my mind, there is no doubt whatsoever that something seems to be amiss with regards to human/moral/religious values teachings in typical Western education models. The latest college student shooter incident in the USA drives it home unmistakably, California gunman who killed six was Hollywood director's son, <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/140525/world-americas/article/california-gunman-who-killed-six-was-directors-son>. I just saw what is supposedly the shooter's video message to his community/world (taken prior to



the shooting) - it is quite chilling and a case of a completely lost college 'kid' from a human/moral/religious values point of view. It is pretty harsh and has some explicit/direct language (related to violence & sex), so many readers may want to skip it. But if you do want to view it, here it is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQUW3Km01BM>, 6 min. 56 secs., published on May 24th 2014.

Update: Here's a transcript of the video on CNN website: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/24/us/elliott-rodger-video-transcript/index.html>

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Here are a couple of New York Times articles: About the parents' nightmare,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/26/us/parents-nightmare-failed-race-to-stop-killings.html>, and about the rampage victims, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/26/us/shooting-victims-drawn-to-california-campus-from-near-and-from-far.html>.

My humble view is that if this young man had participated in a mainstream religious youth group's activities, like a youth group in one of the churches and organizations listed on UCSB website here: <http://kiosk.sa.ucsb.edu/Citizenship/religiouslife.aspx>, he would not have lost it the way he did, and six young and innocent people would be alive and kicking today, and the wounded would not have to suffer. The soothing balm provided

to human failings like jealousy and anger

by mainstream and moderate interpretations and practice of great religions of the world should be easily and freely accessible to students of schools and colleges worldwide. [

Practice by/within a peer group that a person can relate to, is the critical part, even if the practice has some flaws but is decent overall.]

Further, students should be encouraged to associate with these religious organizations (of their choice) but there should be no compulsion. For confirmed atheists and agnostics there could perhaps be suitable humanist organization(s) that they could associate with.

BTW I have visited UCSB campus (at least) once in the early 90s when I was on assignment for a month or two in Goleta, a small town/city close to Santa Barbara city, and very close to Isla Vista and UCSB. I don't recall clearly whether I visited Isla Vista though. Anyway, this tragedy does not seem like a distant one to me - I can, in some sense, relate to the pain and suffering the UCSB, Isla Vista and surrounding Santa Barbara community must be going through.

]

In one of the above articles there is a concern about saffronisation of education. But I think if it is teaching of (common core of) all/most religions then it, in all probability, will be acceptable to all the three authors, and perhaps to most of the country.

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## 2.6 June

### **Sathya Sai Baba's Advaita Teachings By John Hislop Ph.D. - youtube video crosses 1000 views over 63 countries in around 8 months (2014-06-23 17:42)**

I am happy to share with you that the following youtube video put up in Nov. 2013 (courtesy saicast.org) has crossed 1000 views over 63 countries, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DI9izOvsUJg>, 1 hr. 26 min. I have copy-pasted below the relevant youtube stats. info.:

Lifetime (Nov 3, 2013 - Jun 21, 2014)

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X

VIEWS

1,031  
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X

ESTIMATED MINUTES WATCHED

13,336

Geography

Views

X

Estimated minutes watched

X

Average view duration

X

United States

237

(23 %)

4,051

(30 %)

17:05

India

227

(22 %)

1,619

(12 %)

7:08

United Kingdom

91

(8.8 %)

114

1,136

(8.5 %)

12:28

Australia

67

(6.5 %)

973

(7.3 %)

14:31

Canada

38

(3.7 %)

964

(7.2 %)

25:21

Malaysia

30

(2.9 %)

457

(3.4 %)

15:14

Germany

26

(2.5 %)

130

(1.0 %)

5:00

Brazil

25

(2.4 %)

259

(1.9 %)

10:20

South Africa

21

(2.0 %)

385

(2.9 %)

18:19

Italy

17

(1.6 %)

56

(0.4 %)

3:17

Singapore

17

(1.6 %)

290

(2.2 %)

17:02

Austria

14

(1.4 %)

407

(3.1 %)

29:05

Argentina

12

(1.2 %)

104

(0.8 %)

8:40

Slovenia

12

(1.2 %)

164

(1.2 %)

13:40

Israel

116

11

(1.1 %)

245

(1.8 %)

22:14

United Arab Emirates

11

(1.1 %)

50

(0.4 %)

4:34

Netherlands

10

(1.0 %)

91

(0.7 %)

9:03

Sweden

10

(1.0 %)

287

(2.2 %)

28:41

Spain

10

(1.0 %)

73

(0.6 %)

7:20

Sri Lanka

8

(0.8 %)

237

(1.8 %)

29:39

Bahrain

8

(0.8 %)

45

(0.3 %)

5:33

New Zealand

6

(0.6 %)

155

(1.2 %)

25:47

Switzerland

6

(0.6 %)

32

(0.2 %)

5:17

Trinidad and Tobago

6

(0.6 %)

10

(0.1 %)

1:39

Mauritius

6

(0.6 %)

118

(0.9 %)

19:37

Trinidad and Tobago

6

(0.6 %)

10

(0.1 %)

118

1:39

Venezuela

5

(0.5 %)

137

(1.0 %)

27:25

Mexico

5

(0.5 %)

13

(0.1 %)

2:30

France

5

(0.5 %)

4

(0.0 %)

0:45

Hong Kong

5

(0.5 %)

0

(0.0 %)

0:00

Portugal

5

(0.5 %)

1

(0.0 %)

0:12

Russia

5

(0.5 %)

4

(0.0 %)

0:53

Ethiopia

5

(0.5 %)

51

(0.4 %)

10:17

Denmark

5

(0.5 %)

10

(0.1 %)

1:56

Ukraine

4

(0.4 %)

12

(0.1 %)

3:07

Japan

4

(0.4 %)

8

(0.1 %)

1:57

Hungary

4

(0.4 %)

3

(0.0 %)

0:42

Nepal

4

(0.4 %)

120



20

(0.2 %)

5:07

Kuwait

3

(0.3 %)

1

(0.0 %)

0:15

Thailand

3

(0.3 %)

5

(0.0 %)

1:43

Chile

3

(0.3 %)

98

(0.7 %)

32:30

Oman

3

(0.3 %)

5

(0.0 %)

1:33

Saint Lucia

3

(0.3 %)

44

(0.3 %)

14:32

Indonesia

3

(0.3 %)

29

(0.2 %)

9:34

Norway

2

(0.2 %)

2

(0.0 %)

0:49

Qatar

2

(0.2 %)

0

(0.0 %)

0:08

Réunion

2

(0.2 %)

0

(0.0 %)

0:00

Cyprus

2

(0.2 %)

12

(0.1 %)

6:00

Poland

2

(0.2 %)

2

(0.0 %)

0:58

Myanmar (Burma)

122

2

(0.2 %)

82

(0.6 %)

40:46

Haiti

1

(0.1 %)

72

(0.5 %)

1:11:41

Philippines

1

(0.1 %)

1

(0.0 %)

0:32

Romania

1

(0.1 %)

0

(0.0 %)

0:03

Macedonia (FYROM)

1

(0.1 %)

90

(0.7 %)

1:30:29

Peru

1

(0.1 %)

1

(0.0 %)

0:36

Colombia

1

(0.1 %)

10

(0.1 %)

10:03

Dominican Republic

1

(0.1 %)

13

(0.1 %)

13:06

Guatemala

1

(0.1 %)

5

(0.0 %)

4:35

Luxembourg

1

(0.1 %)

44

(0.3 %)

43:46

Ireland

1

(0.1 %)

1

(0.0 %)

0:42

Liechtenstein

1

(0.1 %)

1

(0.0 %)

124

1:05

Serbia

1

(0.1 %)

1

(0.0 %)

1:09

Greece

1

(0.1 %)

1

(0.0 %)

1:05

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### **Pope Francis: Poverty is at the center of the Gospel; Communists 'stole' the flag of Christianity (2014-06-30 11:55)**

I love the way Pope Francis speaks his mind going directly to the (spiritual) heart of the issue. Quotes of the Pope and notes from, Pope Francis: Communists 'stole' the flag of Christianity, <http://rt.com/news/169272-pope-francis-communism-christianity/> :

Pope Francis: "I can only say that the communists have stolen our flag. The flag of the poor is Christian. Poverty is at the center of the Gospel".

*[Ravi: "Poverty is at the center of the Gospel"! Wow! That's what has made the world treat some Christian missionaries like Mother Teresa with awe, no matter what the religion of the admirer. I am so happy to see such vocal support for Christian spiritual quest being focused on service of the poor. May God give you more strength in your endeavours to change the more-fortunate society to be more oriented towards service to the less fortunate, Holy Father!]*

Pope Francis joked: "Communists say that all this is communism. Sure, twenty centuries later. So when they speak, one can say to them: 'but then you are Christian'"

*[Ravi: That's pretty cool as a retort. But, of course, communism lacks faith in the divine, and service to the poor being viewed as service to God.]*

Pope Francis said that the gospel cannot be understood without understanding poverty

*[Ravi: Interesting! It is service to the poor, in the slums of Bombay/Mumbai and its outer suburbs (including Dombivli) and in villages, that exposed me to the immense hardships in the lives of the poor, and gave me a far more balanced perspective of my life and how thankful I should be for the kind mercies parents & family and God/destiny/karma showered on me. So I would say that spirituality & religion cannot be well understood without exposure to or experience of hardship, poverty being one of the toughest hardships.]*

Pope Francis severely criticized financial speculation on commodities which impacted access to food for the poor.

*[Ravi: This religious leader is certainly a gutsy man to speak out such truth about the financial markets. As the article mentions in its beginning part, Pope Francis has already been labelled as a Marxist by many! Great to have such a truth-teller whose voice gets heard in the world media.]*

— end article notes and comments —

Ravi: Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teachings emphasize service to man (Manava Seva). I think I have mentioned this incident in earlier post(s) but I felt it appropriate to repeat it here. I was offering Seva as Seva Dal in Sai Kulwant

Hall during a MahaShivarathri function in the 90s (then I lived in Dombivli, an outer suburb of Mumbai). I was a little frustrated with the challenges involved in doing Mandir (Sai Kulwant Hall) discipline duty, and was wondering whether such duty really would help in my spiritual progress! Swami addressed this issue in his discourse that day! He said something to the effect that he had three things to say to people desiring spiritual progress. My ears perked up - I thought this is for me. I expected him to say something about Bhakti marga (path of Devotion), Jnana marga (path of Knowledge) and Karma marga (path of Action). He said, Seva, Seva, Seva (Service, Service, Service)! So, there it was, a crystal clear message that as far as Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was concerned, the recommended path for spiritual progress was service. I am glad to note that Pope Francis, the top person of the Roman Catholic Church, is interpreting the Christian gospel in a similar vein.

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## 2.7 July

### **White collar deaths from overwork in China; Spiritual/Religious Basis for Life typically avoids such tragedies (2014-07-11 10:29)**

Here's a recent article about overwork (culture) killing some white collar staff in China, "In China, 1,600 People Die Every Day From Working Too Hard",

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-07-03/in-china-white-collar-workers-are-dying-from-overwork>

One of the great things about having a spiritual or religious basis for life is that one is clear that life is a very precious gift in which making a living is an important part but not the most important part. The most important part is the spiritual and/or religious part dealing with values like worship & adoration of God, ethical living which includes fulfilling one's role in the family (as sons & daughters, as parents etc.), peace, love and joy.

So making a living alone typically will not dominate such a person's life to the extent of killing him/her from overwork. But they might rise less in their career and make lesser money due to the balance they keep between making a living and living their family and spiritual & religious lives.

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### **Radio Sai article on recent Swami (Sathya Sai Baba) subtle form appearance controversy (2014-07-11 18:37)**

*Last updated on May 20th 2015*

Here's an interesting article by Prof. G. Venkataraman of Radio Sai on rather bizarre claims being made about Swami's (Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's) subtle body (light body) appearances/residence in Muddenahalli and Kodaikanal, [http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol\\_12/01JUL14/TO-FOLLOW-SWAMIS-WISH-OR-NOT-part-01.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol_12/01JUL14/TO-FOLLOW-SWAMIS-WISH-OR-NOT-part-01.htm)

The reference to mail(s) in this regard in the above article seems to be Mr. Isaac Tigrett's mail(s). Here is a link which shows one such mail content, <https://www.facebook.com/christina.hofmann.902/posts/10203813307280314>. The photos in this link show the veteran Sathya Sai community/fraternity leader Shri B.N. Narasimhamurthy as well.

I thought I should also share my two paise (Indian 'cents') on the matter. Please be tolerant of my views :); I could be just plain wrong.

I have heard a lot about the good work done by Shri B.N. Narasimhamurthy and team in setting up new schools following the Sathya Sai education system. I think that is very commendable and Swami would approve of such initiatives in general. After all, it is through education, especially school education, that Sathya, Dharma, Shanti & Prema values can be effectively disseminated in society.

There is a sensitive issue about competition for funding for such activities among the older established trusts and the newly formed (separate) trusts. I think such issues would be common to all spiritual and religious movements, for

example, the Christian missionary movements. Over time, I expect that any raw edges related to this competition for funds will get sorted out.

Perhaps some competition for such activities is a good thing. In commercial services field, monopolies promote bureaucracy and power craze/dictatorial attitudes as many of us in India have experienced in the pre-economic-liberalization era (prior to 1991, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic\\_liberalisation\\_in\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_liberalisation_in_India)). My view (and experience to some extent) is that these negatives about monopoly apply to spiritual/charitable trusts as well. So it may be a good thing that we have some competing spiritual/charitable trusts trying to follow/implement Swami's mission. They can learn good and effective practices from each other and eschew bad and ineffective practices.

**[Update on 1st March 2015:** At the time I wrote the above (July 2014) I had thought that the competition between trusts trying to follow/implement Swami's mission would be an ethical and friendly one. Very unfortunately, I have received reports from reliable sources of what I consider to be unethical and spiritual trap kind of methods being used by the Muddenahalli group in attracting donors as well as workers for their mission. People are told that "Swami is calling them to Muddenahalli" or something like that. Now this call is transmitted through one or two mediums/Swami dream-instructions persons of Muddenahalli. And some people seem to be accepting this medium/dream-instruction call! From whatever I have heard and read of public discourses and utterances of (physical form) Swami, this kind of call delivered through intermediary was never supported by (physical form) Swami. My view is that such a call to come to/go to Muddenahalli must come directly from Swami to the person concerned via a dream or vision or something like that. This intermediary business getting involved in this call is very unethical, IMHO. Some vulnerable Sai devotees may even get scared that they must follow the intermediary delivered Swami instructions or else they may fall into some trouble. That makes such intermediary delivered calls to Muddenahalli a spiritual trap kind-of thing, IMHO. Please forgive me if the words I have used seem strong - I feel compelled to use these words given the great confusion that is now prevailing among many Sathya Sai devotees about this matter.

Another very strange thing about Muddenahalli that I read was that during Christmas 2014 they had two chairs, one for subtle Swami and another for subtle Jesus. Now for Shivarathri 2015, a report mentions three chairs at the Muddenahalli function - one for subtle Swami, another for subtle Shiva in the form of Shirdi Sai Baba and another for subtle Mother Parvathi. I have not heard of physical form Swami (i.e. till Mahasamadhi in April 2011) ever having such additional chairs in public functions for such subtle forms of Jesus or Shiva or Mother Parvathi.

As I have not visited Muddenahalli and seen the current medium there I cannot make any statement about whether he has some spiritual powers or not. Maybe he has some powers whereby he can read the minds of devotees - maybe he is really convinced that he is seeing such subtle forms of Swami (who is giving him spiritual powers), Jesus, Shiva and Mother Parvati. I cannot say that it is all fake - I simply don't know. But what I can say is this. The above mentioned matters are very different from what I saw and heard about Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's (physical form) ways of interacting with devotees and running His mission during the eight and a half years (Oct. 2002 to April 2011) that Bhagavan graciously allowed me to serve Him in Puttaparthi/Prashanti Nilayam while He was in physical form. *[I feel it appropriate to mention here that I provided free service as I sought only spiritual salary from Bhagavan which He graciously showered on me at levels far greater than I had ever expected from Him. I am very deeply grateful to Bhagavan for this spiritual salary that He conferred on me.]* So I have to conclude that the Muddenahalli group has now become an unethical and spiritually strange competitor to the Sathya Sai organizations that Bhagavan Himself set up and nurtured. Further, the Muddenahalli group has become a source of great confusion to Sathya Sai devotees both in India and abroad.

It would be truly wonderful if the Muddenahalli group does not use the "Swami is calling you to Muddenahalli" means of attracting people from the official Sathya Sai organizations. My humble suggestion is that they should leave it to Sathya Sai devotees whether they want to join them or not, without any of this medium calling business. It is their work in furthering Swami's mission in fields like education and medicare that will attract the really committed workers and Sai devotees. I believe that they have ambitious plans of opening many, many Sathya Sai education system free schools as well as many free hospitals in India and elsewhere (e.g. the relatively poor Southern USA state of Mississippi) - that is truly wonderful. I earnestly pray to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba that they get full support for such work that will further Swami's mission of re-establishing Sathya, Dharma, Shanti & Prema in the world. Perhaps if they drop the medium calling business there may be a possibility of them working together with the official Sri Sathya Sai trusts and organizations. After all, the older Muddenahalli trust was (and is) a separate body and seemed to have worked together with the official Sri Sathya Sai trust and organizations without any significant friction or confusion while Swami was in physical form. **end-update of 1st March 2015**

**Further update on 2nd March 2015:** A correspondent had passed on this short video having clips of a recent Q & A session of overseas devotees with Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju, where questions were raised about Muddenahalli. The video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfySaF0DyJg>, is only 8 min. 34 secs., and was published on Feb. 27th 2015. I think Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju asks pertinent questions of the Muddenahalli group which now seems to be threatening to divide the Sathya Sai fraternity in India and abroad, and Prof. Anil Kumar also provides, IMHO, the right advice to devotees about somebody supposedly representing Swami.

I have given a transcript of part of the video below:

Around 3:02 - Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju to Muddenahalli group leaders: My question is: You being Sai devotees you are obliged to explain us, why do you want to be separate. We are devotees. We are confused. I want to learn from you why you are separate. Why? If you have got some genuine reasons please come out with a statement: these are the things that made me get out, start separately. What is it that made you get out of this fold? What is it that made you independent? Let me know. If there are any problems to be one, we will all join together, bring them together and bring back that unity. Removing silly things like fund raising, somebody representing Baba. Am I clear?

...

What is expected of us right now? To be witness to all this? To be silent (in) this situation? He is God; He is God. Whether you certify He is God or not, He is God. You don't need to certify Him. There is no point in telling He did this, He did this to me. What are you doing to Him? What are you doing for Him? .. What we should do now? We should discuss, (deliberate), clearly in depth, what steps should we take to bring back that unity.

...

What made you to establish a separate organization? Make it clear to the public. Because you owe responsibility to all of us. Including me. We are all confused. How long are you going to confuse us? [Deleted 2 short sentences.] Make a public statement. What made you to get out, leave this and establish a separate organization? What made you to name a person as a representative of Baba? What made you go around the world collecting money? What is it that you want? You want positions here? We will request these people to vacate some places and accommodate you because nobody is interested in



positions. I am not interested. Because position will force me to hold on to this place. I am a free bird. So, what do you want? Gentlemen, you have a separate organization now. Why? You should explain. Two: What do you want? You want positions? Come on. We will request them. You want recognition? You are already recognized. And you are making a capital out of it. Is this your gratitude to Swami? What do you want? What steps you want us to take to bring you back and establish unity? Don't separate us. We devotees are one. Our God is one. Don't create confusion among us. Don't unnecessarily preach those things to divide us. Let us know clearly why. And please inform us what steps should we take to bring you together (back). Thank you. [Applause from audience] **end-update of 2nd March 2015**

**Update of 3rd March 2015:** The above updates deal with matters that are troubling the Sathya Sai fraternity, and it was quite troubling for me to put up the above updates in this blog post. After all, the current leaders, especially the top leader, Shri B.N. Narasimhamurthy sir, of the Muddenahalli group are veterans of the Sathya Sai fraternity who we all look up to and even revere for their gigantic contributions to the Sathya Sai movement. I should also mention that we all look up to and even revere Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju too for his gigantic contribution to the Sathya Sai movement.

So I felt it appropriate to add to these updates, Bhagavan's message on experiencing and attaining oneness with God, as this high-level message of Bhagavan may soothe us from the mental agitations that the above updates involve.

"People want to attain God, contemplate on Him and worship Him. But they do not realise that they cannot attain God by merely adopting these practices. So long as you contemplate on Him and desire for Him, it means God is different, you are different. You have to experience oneness with God to attain Him. When is it possible? When you offer yourself to God completely, you become He and He becomes you. Then you realise "You and I are one". The same is stated in the Mahavakyas (profound statements): Tattwamasi (That Thou Art) [*Ravi: You are that (in simpler language)*] and Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman). Only the one who offers himself to God completely can experience oneness with Him. Till such time, God is God and devotee remains a devotee. When you mix sugar in water, sugar dissolves in it and becomes one with it. Similarly if you want to become God, you should offer yourself to God.

It is not possible to understand the principle of oneness so far as you have body consciousness. Atma is beyond the mind and the senses. Buddhigrahyamatheendriyam (the Atma is beyond the ken of senses and can be understood only by the intellect) [*Ravi: I am not sure about the English interpretation here. I am quite sure that Swami would not have meant only the rational faculty which is what I think many people consider the intellect to be. By Buddhi here, He, IMHO, may have meant the combination of rational faculty as well as the intuitive knower/awareness faculty within each of us.*] Only when you transcend the mind and senses can you understand the principle of oneness."

From Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's divine discourse on 5th Sept. 1996 which was printed in Sanathana Sarathi of February 2015. **end-update of 3rd March 2015]**

However, the claim that Swami is going to reside in Muddenahalli (and Kodaikanal) in His subtle form till He becomes 96 years old (solar calendar) (and provide discourses, darshan and instructions through chosen intermediaries), seems to me to be something related to the imagination of some very devoted and senior Sai devotee-leaders. I personally prefer to pray to Swami directly for divine direction (and help, many times :) rather than go to an intermediary.

But then I also recognize that some devotees may prefer to take spiritual/divine advice/direction from such intermediaries especially if the intermediaries are very senior Sai devotee-leaders like Shri B.N. Narasimhamurthy. I guess it

is their (devotees') life and so it is their choice. I will not go so far as to say that they are doing something terribly wrong. However, I would urge them to also pray deeply to Swami and try to get direction from Swami Himself who, I am very deeply convinced by my experiences including (look & gesture) interactions with Bhagawan prior to His Mahasamadhi, is always present as a subtle formless essence in the depths of our own 'hearts'/consciousness. That presence may not respond to shallow prayer but it has been my experience that it has responded, on occasion, to intense prayer.

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A correspondent shared what Swami told him about projection of one's thoughts, and some other views of his (correspondent). He approved me sharing it with others (some readers may want to particularly know what Swami told him). Here it is (I slightly modified it to fix typos/grammar as the correspondent had sent his response hurriedly): Swamy has told several times that he does not require (any) intermediaries to get his mission running & also it is rightly said each one of us has a unique relation with Swamy, we are all directly connected in our own ways. Once when I had an opportunity with Swamy, Swamy said what you see is the projection of your thoughts just like the (projection of the) film projector running on the screen & further said if you believe "IT" is there, it is there, & if not, then nothing at all, but GOD is above all this because I have all this creation in me & I know who is what ... etc. But I too agree with you sir (that) the competition for funds is obvious. Swamy is not limited to Mudennahalli or Kodai, Swamy is present in all our hearts. When I read the above I felt as if people are confused & calling on their own numbers, hence always busy or unreachable; when we recognize or realize the correct number (Swamy), which you rightly (mentioned), we (can) have direct connection rather than indirect.

— end correspondent response extract —

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Here is a great youtube video, Devotion to Baba- Sri B.N.Narasimha Murthy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcKMZseZOa8>, 1 hr. 16 min, published around a year ago. I added the following comment:

Wonderful and spiritually very inspiring account of Swami experiences by veteran Sathya Sai community leader, Narasimhamurthy sir, who served Swami (physical form) in important capacities over nearly fifty years. Thank you so much for this sharing.

— end comment —

BTW in this video Narasimha Murthy sir does not talk about supposed Swami subtle body appearance in Muddena-halli, and so it is quite a non-controversial devotee experience talk, IMHO.

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Readers may want to look at the posts, Claimed paranormal connections via mediums to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba; Splinter devotee groups, dated 24th July 2014, and Adaptation of Pope Francis Tweet; Sai organizations should enable interested persons to have personal encounter with Sai Baba, dated 17th July 2014, as they are related to this post.

Readers may also want to view this post of mine, Non-interference is key to harmonious co-existence between multiple unrelated Sathya Sai trusts/organizations, dated 29th Sept. 2014.

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Update on 14th March 2015

Readers may want to look at two recent posts:

a) How did the current divisive challenge to Sathya Sai fraternity come about? How to counter it? dated March 5th 2015

b) Medium(s) who tell you about some private incident/interaction between you and Sathya Sai Baba - What will you do? dated March 13th 2015

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Update on 17th March 2015

Google search ranks and view count for this post as of March 16, 2015, and my suggestion/plea to resolve this confusion, are available at this post: Subtle Swami (Sathya Sai Baba) controversy blog post search ranks and stats; Let us resolve this confusion NOW, <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/2015/03/subtle-swami-sathya-sai-baba.html>.

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Update on 20th March 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, For spiritual aspirants, which is the lesser evil in an ashram system: spiritual fraud or material fraud? dated March 17th 2015.

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Update on 9th April 2015

Two short extracts from Swami's (Sathya Sai Baba's) discourses about examining the Guru before accepting him (or her) are quite appropriate for this blog post, and so are given below.

So, examine the Guru and his credentials, his ideals and practice before accepting him. Even in My case, do not be attracted simply by stories of what I "create" by a wave of the hand. Do not jump to conclusions with closed eyes; watch, study and weigh. Never yield to any one unless you feel the inner satisfaction that you are on the right path. [From: <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume01/sss01-09.pdf>, 25-3-1958 discourse]

... do not run after Gurus who are themselves suffering from faulty vision and householder's troubles: do not beg from people who are themselves beggars. [From <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume01/sss01-30.pdf>, 29-9-1960 discourse]

*[Ravi: I think the 'inner satisfaction' part mentioned above is crucial. Something deep inside one goes positive/feels right when one is with the right guru for one's spiritual journey, in my considered opinion based on my spiritual journey including the quest for the right guru for me. This going positive/feeling right may not necessarily mean feeling good as the right guru may prescribe and administer a lot of bitter medicine to ensure that the spiritual aspirant's faulty ways are corrected. But even when being given the bitter medicine and not understanding why it is being administered at a superficial/logical/worldly level, something deep inside, at the intuitive level, prompts and is convinced that it is for our own good! Strange (or rather, seemingly strange to the worldly minded) are the ways of the **real** guru.]*

A couple of further extracts from the 25-3-1958 discourse mentioned above, which are also very interesting:

The Guru should not force the disciple to grow with a bent in the direction that he prefers; the disciple has the right to develop on his own lines, according to his samskaaras (tendencies) and bent of mind. The old relationship of Guru and sishyas (disciples) has today become topsy-turvy; rich and influential sishyas now rule the Guru and dictate how he should behave; and the Gurus also, keen on accumulating fame and wealth, stoop to the tactics recommended by the sishyas and thus lower their status.

...

My suggestion to you today is this: just as you attend to the needs of the body, feeding it three times a day, in order to keep it in good running condition, so too, spend some time regularly everyday to keep your Inner Consciousness also in good trim. Spend one hour in the morning, another at night and a third in the early hours of dawn, the Brahmamuhurtha as it is called, for japam (silently/audibly chanting a holy name/mantra) and meditation on the Lord. You will find great peace descending on you and great new sources of strength welling up within you as you progress in this saadhana (spiritual effort). After some time, the mind will dwell on the Name (holy Name/Lord's Name) (wherever) you are and (whatever) you are engaged in; and then, peace and joy will be your inseparable companions.

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Update on 18th April 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, Krishna/Sai Baba on silent witnesses to injustice, and on Yadavas claiming Krishna as theirs; My interpretation in after Sai Mahasamadhi context, dated April 16th 2015.

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Update on 29th April 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, My response to Ms. Terry Reis Kennedy's Facebook post on Muddenahalli subtle body communicator, dated April 25th 2015.

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Update on 5th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, How some talented people, including some spiritual leaders, can psyche themselves into false belief, dated May 4th 2015.

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Update on 6th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, Comment exchanges on Shri Indulal Shah sir's letter supportive of Muddenahalli organization, dated May 6th 2015.

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Update on 17th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, The 'come and experience' Muddenahalli line of argument; Need for unconvinced devotees to write about their experiences, dated May 6th 2015.

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Update on 17th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, Sathya Sai Baba in Trayee Brindavan in 90s: I never need anybody else to approach you, dated May 7th 2015.

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Update on 17th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, Should we simply ignore Sathya Sai Baba Subtle Body claims, and just focus on our spiritual journey?, dated May 9th 2015.

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Update on 17th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, Col. Bose's article authoritatively debunking Muddenahalli chosen communicator claims, dated May 16th 2015.

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Update on 17th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, BONES IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM, SPIRIT IN MUDDENAHALLI? - A heart-to-heart & thought provoking article by Sai university alumnus, dated May 16th 2015.

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Update on 17th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, Is Muddenahalli chosen communicator belief similar to Kurnool Bala Sai Baba belief?, dated May 17th 2015.

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Update on 20th May 2015

Readers may want to look at the post, Muddenahalli light body Sai Baba is NOT related to Puttaparthi Sathya Sai Baba - Conclusion drawn from 1st Jan 2009 Swami discourse, dated May 19th 2015.

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Paul Kelly (2015-02-26 19:48:49)

Narasimhamurthy wasn't presenting himself as an intermediary. He was simply sharing a dream.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-02-28 09:43:12)

@PaulKelly: Here are my two bits on what you wrote. I could be just plain wrong. So do take my words with a pinch of salt.

Well, some of Shri Narasimhamurthy's dreams did have instructions from Swami for others besides him (including at least one then senior administrator in the Sai university), and so in these matters he has acted as a medium in the past, and probably continues to do so today. That is where it gets tricky as Swami, while in physical form, clearly and unambiguously discouraged following such others' Swami dream instructions. Swami dream instructions received directly by an individual in his/her dream is a different matter, of course.

Here I must also mention that the current well known medium in Muddenahalli may not have had the following that he has now if Shri Narasimhamurthy had not openly showed support for the medium. Shri Narasimhamurthy then had (and surely

continues to have in some circles even today) very, very high respect in the Sathya Sai student and alumni fraternity as well as among dedicated servitors in Swami's mission, and I believe he had earned that respect from his dedication and devotion to (physical form) Swami's mission over four to five decades. So when Shri Narasimhamurthy endorsed the current medium in Muddenahalli, this medium got more easily accepted by some Sai devotees, and rose to fame.

saiuvacha (2015-03-02 14:44:03)

Sairam Ravi,

You raise lot of good points and being in the same situation few months back, I can fully understand what lot of Sai devotees are going through. By His grace, I was able to attend the Australian Retreat in Murwillumbah where lot of my doubts were put to rest. Do you really think people like Sri Narasimhamurthy (given 45 years of his life serving Him), Isaac Tigrett (donated more than 100 million US dollars), Sri Indulal Shah (whom Swami himself facilitated in Kulwant hall as a true devotee), Kumar Venkat etc. would stoop so low to raise money even for a noble cause? They are Tyagajivis as referred to by Bhagwan himself as the kind of sacrifices they have made in their lives, most people could not even match in many life times.

Do you really think everyone who believes in subtle form has suddenly gone mad or being scammed by some very clever con artists? Why don't you find out more or even visit Muddenahalli if possible instead of reading all the garbage on internet. If you want to read more about my experience, please visit my blog. I have laid out the reason for setting this blog in my about page.

<http://saiuvacha.wordpress.com/about>

saiuvacha (2015-03-02 15:23:09)

This comment has been removed by a blog administrator.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-03 14:55:58)

@saiuvacha: Thanks for your views. I am very comfortable living in Puttaparthi and trying to follow the teachings that Swami had given while in physical form, and also trying to connect to the inner Swami. I don't see any need for me to visit Muddenahalli unless Swami directly tells me to do so via a dream or vision.

I should also mention that I am not in a position as of now to accept intermediaries/mediums related to Swami as, while in physical form, Swami very clearly advised devotees not to believe in mediums. The intermediaries in Muddenahalli may say that Swami has changed his advise now but I cannot accept that view from the intermediaries. If Swami comes in my dream or gives me a vision where He states that He has changed his advise regarding mediums then I will seriously consider it.

If others like you do believe that subtle Swami is interacting through intermediaries, I do not have any issues regarding that in general. Their life, their choice, is my view.

But I am quite perturbed by reports from reliable sources of people from Sathya Sai organization or general Sai devotees being approached by Muddenahalli group persons with messages of "Swami is calling you to Muddenahalli". That sounds like poaching to me. Why not leave it to Swami to directly interact with such persons and call them to Muddenahalli? I think that would be a more ethical approach to staffing their mission.

saiuvacha (2015-03-04 07:08:16)

Sairam Ravi,

Thanks for publishing my comments. Many sites discussing this issue would not entertain any comments opposing their view hence I felt the need to share my experience with the subtle body in Australia by writing my own blog. I am glad that you are keeping an open mind and that is the need of the hour for all Sai devotees.

Probably it is more difficult for you living in Puttaparthi to accept the subtle body as you must be getting inundated daily with some or the other conflicting reports from different people. For me sitting in Australia, it is easier to be a neutral observer watching the events unfold from a distance. I visited Puttaparthi during Shivaratri in 2014 and stayed there for a week. My travel agent kept pushing me to go to Muddenahalli, saying that lot of miracles are happening there. I refused politely because to me, Swami was in Prashanthi and there was no need to go anywhere else. However all that changed when Swami's subtle body visit to Australia during new year's eve. Four of us decided to go from our centre with an open mind deciding to walk away if there was any talk of money or any attempt to start a new organisation. However no such thing happened and we

came back convinced that Swami was present in the subtle body during the entire retreat and it was HE who spoke through Madhusudhan.

I am not sure who has been approached by whom, in Swami's name hence I can't comment on your last paragraph. But if I was called, I would definitely go and experience it myself. If I felt later that this whole thing is just a charade, I would say so openly and warn everyone about it. What one should not do is to have preconceived ideas about anything and dismiss the whole thing without even experiencing it.

No one can convince anyone about anything. As humans, we form our own opinions based on our own experiences. Just as Vivekananda said "Be an atheist if you want, but do not believe in anything unquestioningly."

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-04 17:45:13)

Sairam Saiuvacha,

Though I live in Puttaparthi, I live outside the ashram, and rarely visit the ashram nowadays. So I write/blog quite independently of any fear or influence of Puttaparthi ashram system. But I must also say that I am a well-wisher of the Puttaparthi ashram system, and so may have some bias towards it.

I entirely agree with basing one's opinions on experience. If some people are having good experiences with Muddenahalli group in general, naturally they will want to continue to have those good experiences by associating with them. While I don't subscribe to subtle Swami based on teachings & directives of physical form Swami, if it works for you and others, who am I to judge or interfere?

My concerns are limited to expressing my view about what I see as unethical poaching of Sathya Sai organization members and Sai devotees by messages of "Swami is calling you to Muddenahalli" being delivered via mediums/intermediaries. However, you do not seem to find any ethical problems with such messages. Perhaps we should just politely agree to disagree on this matter and leave it at that.

saiuvacha (2015-03-04 18:06:59)

This comment has been removed by a blog administrator.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-04 18:10:03)

This comment has been removed by the author.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-04 18:43:57)

@saiuvacha: I decided to put up an edited version of your last comment here as I have great respect for Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju. The edited comment (from saiuvacha) is as follows:

"My comments do sound a bit harsh on retrospect and you can edit/delete those offensive parts but the truth remains that either Prof Anil Kumar should put up the evidence that Muddenahalli camp is collecting money by deceit or (not talk about it). Swami does not require a letter of approval from (anybody) to do what he wants. Why is he trying to stop people from visiting Muddenahalli is beyond me as I see no one from Muddenahalli stopping anyone from going to Parthi. If he is afraid that people will stop coming to Parthi, then I can assure you that most people who visit Muddenahalli would also visit Puttaparthi. It is He who is seeing two where there is only one. Peace. Sairam" end-saiuvacha-edited-comment.

Ravi: @saiuvacha: I cannot edit your earlier blogger comment - only delete it (or provide an edited comment in my name like above). It's OK. We can leave it as it is. The first sentence of your comment above helps to make the debate/conversation more polite.

Jai Sairam!

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-04 21:26:16)

Edited version of saiuvacha comment made on March 2, 2015 at 1:53 AM:

I just watched the video. Anil Kumar is (completely wrong) to suggest that Muddenahalli camp is collecting funds by organising overseas trips. Similar rumours were spread by the Sai Organisation in Australia as well but after attending the Australian Retreat, I can assure you that there was no talk of money or any kind of donations. In fact, all participants were fed 3 times free of cost and not even registration free was charged which is normally the case in such retreats. [Deleted sentence.] It is (Prof. Anil Kumar) who invented or subscribed to the theory of Solar vs Lunar calendar to justify Swami's untimely departure.

[Deleted sentence.] Sorry Professor, You lost me when you came to Australia and when asked about Vedam chanting, gave a cunning answer about cat in the box story. Very different from when you translated Swami's discourse in 2006 during Ati Rudra Maha Yagna, where you thundered from the podium that it is Swami's wish that Vedam should be chanted by one and all irrespective of country, caste, colour, race or religion. Truth remains the same irrespective of time and place. You only told us so Professor. Peace. Sairam

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-04 21:37:01)

Slightly edited version of original comment by Ravi S. Iyer on March 4, 2015 at 4:40 AM

The fund collection methods used by Muddenahalli group during overseas trips may be more subtle than registration fees for retreats. However, my view is that in this post-Mahasamadhi phase, fund collection for proposed service to man/society activities done in a transparent and accountable way, is OK. I mean, one needs funds to meet the expenses for service activities, especially large scale activities like free education institutions and free hospitals.

The problem for people like me is if and when subtle fund collection is done using claimed paranormal connections to subtle Swami, as while in physical form, Swami has very unambiguously warned devotees to stay away from such people.

Regarding your very strong criticism of Prof. Anil Kumar's view about Muddenahalli group fund collection from overseas trips: My view is that Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju would have made his comments based on information received from reliable sources. One should not forget that Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju is one of the most recognized and visible faces of the Sai fraternity over decades with huge level of contacts in the fraternity both in India and abroad. So his words, IMHO, should not be taken lightly.

Of course, Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju is also human and one may not agree with everything that he says. I do not know whether he invented the "theory of Solar vs Lunar calendar to justify Swami's untimely departure". But I do not subscribe to the lunar calendar theory. Like so many Sai devotees, I too was in shock for a few months when Swami gave up His physical body in April 2011 as I had no doubt whatsoever that He would be in His physical body till 96 years of (solar calendar) age. Today I have fully come to terms with His Mahasamadhi. I do not know why He gave up his body then. But neither is it very important for me to know why. He has given enough to us in the 85 years that He was amongst humanity. Now it is upto us to sincerely attempt to follow His teachings (even if we stray a little here and there, sometimes) and further His mission of spreading Sathya, Dharma, Shanti & Prema in the world. Whether we do that as a member of the official Sathya Sai organization or as a member of an organization unrelated to the Sathya Sai organization or in an individual capacity, is upto us and what we are comfortable with, IMHO.

[For the past three years I have not been associated with any Sathya Sai organization even though I live in outside-ashram Puttaparthi, and do my service activities of blogging on spirituality & religion, and on improving the practice of software development in Indian Computer Science and Information Technology academia, in an individual capacity. I should also mention that I decided to opt for individual capacity service as I felt that after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi the attitude & behaviour of some administrators in the Sai university (where I was offering free service as a teacher of software lab. courses and as a technical consultant for student software projects) had changed significantly and was not to my liking. So I felt it was time for me to get a move on.

I continue to have very friendly relations with many people working in the various Sathya Sai institutions in Puttaparthi and also benefit from the Puttaparthi Sathya Sai institutions/activities like the General Hospital, Radio Sai, Sanathana Sarathi, Prashanti Reporter etc. So, while I currently am not a member of the Puttaparthi based Sathya Sai institutions, I am a strong supporter of them.]

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-04 21:44:38)

@saiuvacha: After some more thought on the matter I decided to put up an edited version of your earlier comment referencing Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju and the video with clips of his talk, and put up a slightly edited version of my response comment.

saiuvacha (2015-03-05 03:21:01)

Sairam Ravi, You have done a good job in capturing the essence of my thoughts. Those who wish to interact with me, can always do so by commenting on my blog at <https://saiuvacha.wordpress.com/> thanks again. May Swami bless us all.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-05 08:36:12)

Sairam saiuvacha, Thanks for your comments and co-operation with my editing of a couple of your comments. Amen to "May Swami bless us all".

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-06 10:25:20)

Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju responded to an email where I shared most of my above comment exchange with saiuvacha. His response was as follows:

"VERY VERY GOOD !!!

A most dispassionate, unbiased, open and balanced stand that you have taken is commendable.

I fully agree with your views expressed on every single point.

MAY BABA BLESS YOU."

I responded to Prof. Anilkumar sir as follows:

"Thank you so much for your encouragement and kind words, Prof. Anil Kumar sir. Thank you for your invocation of Baba's blessings on me."

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-11 14:17:54)

This youtube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbCTvS89msQ>, 5 min. 59 secs., has an audio clip of one of the most dedicated and physically very close servitors of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba during the last decades of His physical presence amongst humanity, brother Satyajit Salian.

Satyajit speaks about how Swami intensely rebuked a long-time devotee who was, shockingly, trying to almost convince (physical form) Swami that Swami was speaking through a 14 year old boy in Bangalore who claimed to be a medium of Swami. Swami's words (I presume that Swami would have spoken in Telugu only), as per Satyajit in this video (at 2:25):

"You have been here close to me for so many years. How could you even bring this up in my presence? Buddhi unda leda Neeku? (Don't you have any common sense?) Naaku em pattindi vaalu (vaadu) paadu shariramulo cheradaniki? (What business (need) do I have to enter into that dirty body?) If I want to talk to somebody I can figure out a way. Nenu matlaadaalante nenu matlaadutaanu. Nenu nerega matlaadutaanu. (If I need to speak to somebody, I can speak directly.)"

The audio clip of this youtube video may have been taken from the (original) video of brother Satyajit Salian's talk at Santa Ana, California, USA on 22nd February 2014, which was put up on saicast.org. At 34 min. 35 secs (the actual matter starts after 40 min. 05 secs) in (first of the three videos listed), [http://www.saicast.org/2014/2014FebSatya\\_jit.html](http://www.saicast.org/2014/2014FebSatya_jit.html), Satyajit starts talking about claimed mediums to Swami.

anonymous (2015-03-23 09:18:22)

I have read this complete blog and wish to share few thoughts

.first of all I would like to congratulate Central trust Puttaparthi for effieciently continuing swamis mission to the best possible extent!

!it is hard to satisfy everyone but they are trying their best to extend all facilities to public and Ashram is being run in a very efficient manner !Running a mission Like Sathya sais Is very (read infinite very) difficult task for central trust and it is bound to be have some frictions and criticism ....becoz after all the office bearers are human beings !Swami could run it with little finger because he is God and nothing is beyond his reach!It is very easy to critise or find faults Only if the critics run such Ashrams would they know of the heavy responsibilities day in and day out!

!.Reg Muddenahalli surely it is adding confusion to the sai devotees especially the ones who have been recent or always had some element of doubt!

Mr.Narsimha murthy/Mr.Indulal Shah/MrTigreet are big well known names in swamis circle .No doubt they have been for long associated with Swami ....But for Every devotee Swami /his teachings comes first and rest all are only secondary!

Swami has always been synonymous only with Puttaparthi Prashanthi Nilayam ...Swami has time and again told that He does not need any medium or intermediate person to speak to his devotees .The best part of Puttaparthi is Ther is no Hundi ...No charge for entry no special entrance tickets !...Rich or poor easily can approach Bhagwan !

.The real beauty of Sathya sai organisations is that Money is not collected in any form neither is begged for unless given voluntarily ..Swami has never asked for any money !If Tigrett had given donations .it is his conviction that swamis mission



deserves it !

Reg Narasimha murthy/Indulal Shah?Isaac Tigrett endorsing Muddenahalli..Isaac has the dubious distinction of speaking unpleasent talks(read blatant lies) reg.swamis activities with students !it is also perhaps swamis leela that he made Isaac say such things so that sai devotees are able to know the real person inside and dont trust anyone just becoz they are donors !

It is very unfortunate that these people chose to separate..It is a guess on the part of some long time devotees that perhaps Indulal/Tigrett etc wanted some important posts in Central trust and were not given perhaps due to their age or other factors and hence they chose to break apart!

If they say \*swamis calling\* or mobilising donations then undoubtedly they are misusing swamis name ..They might make umpteen proofs of dreams of talks subtle forms etc., Those might even have proofs//But If they do not follow swamis warning of not to misuse his name in anyway ....then it is nothing worth !

This is nothing new ... Even during his life time he witnessed his image being tarnished through unpleasant talks /false claims ..After his mahasamdhhi media for some time spoke all blatant lies But Slowly they understood the magnitude of Swamis mission and his self less service and now almost all media seem to speak in a revered manner! It seems swami willingly does divine leelas and in the end all confusions are cleared themselves !!!Jai sai ram!

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-23 10:08:37)

@anonymous: Thanks for your comment.

I think your words about some people of the rival group are rather strong. I decided to retain your comment in this form (without replacing it with an edited version cutting out those strong words) as I think this massive confusion churn being caused, especially in some countries outside India, among the Sathya Sai devotee fraternity needs to be resolved, one way or the other. [Recently the rival group had been to Malaysia with supposed subtle Swami through medium/communicator making very big statements. E.g. "I will unite the whole world. Narasimhamurthy told just now, the last few years of mine is only for uniting the whole world." Given the lack of unity in quite a few parts of the world today where people are losing lives in civil war or insurgency kind-of situations, such a statement is really a very, very big one.] Stifling some strong opinions may delay resolution of this confusion.

I have given my views below as points:

- 1) Mr. Tigrett has been a great patron of the Sathya Sai fraternity. One should not forget all the good he has done for the fraternity.
- 2) The dedication and contribution of both Shri Indulal Shah and Shri Narasimha Murthy to the Sathya Sai movement till Swami's Mahasamadhi is enormous. Later generations of Sai devotees (including me) have to be very grateful to them for the platform they helped to create for us to know about Swami and His teachings, and a satsangh where we could attempt to practice those teachings together and learn from each other. I think Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju has got it spot-on when he asked a leader of the rival group to come out with a public statement on why they have separated from us (the mother organization which they themselves played a vital role in creating and shaping). Perhaps if Shri Indulal Shah, Shri Narasimha Murthy and Mr. Issac Tigrett give a joint public statement on the matter, including any divine experiences they have had via the Muddenahalli medium/communicator with supposed subtle Swami at Muddenahalli, then we Sai devotees will have a better picture. So far, all these matters seem to have been discussed behind closed doors by top leaders of the official organization and the Muddenahalli group. Devotees don't know what is happening. I think if the Muddenahalli group veteran leaders mentioned above share directly with Sai devotees their view of the matter (by putting it out on the Internet, say), this confusion can abate. I think they cannot be silent any more - they owe it to the very organization they played such a vital role in creating and growing and which nurtured later generations of Sai devotees like me, to publicly tell us what is happening and advise what we completely confused Sai devotees should do in this matter.
- 3) I agree that overall the Central Trust at Puttaparthi must be congratulated for continuing to run the Puttaparthi setup in the absence of Bhagavan's physical form. You wrote, "Only if the critics run such Ashrams would they know of the heavy (responsibilities) day in and day out!" I entirely agree.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-24 11:08:34)

Slightly edited version of Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju's mail response to me on the above comment exchange with anonymous:  
I am thankful and appreciate you for your valuable services in this area at this moment strongly reminding time and again

the teachings of Bhagwan and thus help those that are confused and need clarity and timely reminder . It is here JNANA the Gospel of Sai/teachings of Swami support our faith so that it would be unwavering, steady and in a way develop CONSTANT INTEGRATED AWARENESS.

We may suggest every one to make copies with excerpts from Swamy's messages regarding this confusion and distribute emphasizing that He will never possess any one and that He does not need any medium and above all that He is totally against fund raising. If you need I can supply material. Let every one know authentically with references.

We may recommend devotees to think deep along these lines and take all possible measures to prevent people from further confusion dilemma and doubt.

We should think of UNITY based on purity leading to divinity.

Let people give up craze for positions in the organization.

Let every one sink differences like caste, region, language etc so that the world will know that we are a spiritual organization and not a social or political organization where these are common and expected.

In view of the present situation we need leaders who can spare more time who can work with vision in full understanding of the recent developments. More than resourceful they need to be more committed to mission of Sai.

Urgent need is to know the pulse/feelings/needs of devotees rather than meetings with pedantic thoughts and expressions.

It is essential to move freely & lovingly amongst devotees.

Come forward with innovative creative novel programs and activities in tune with the aspirations of youngsters/present generation.We should at the earliest come out of routine monotonous repetitive out dated programs .

Every speech /activity should reflect uniqueness of this AVATHAR and we should learn how to portray from SWamy's point of view whatever we say either upanishads or puranas or any spiritual subject.

We need committed people not political opportunists or non-committal, neutral ,so called devotees that observe meaningless silence when there is a threat to the organization and mis-interpretation of His teachings.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-24 11:15:40)

Sairam Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju sir!

Thank you so much for your kind words and your thoughts on this matter.

anonymous (2015-03-24 16:04:28)

Sai ram Mr. Ravi.Thank you for publishing my comments as well as Prof.Anil Kumar's.He has clearly said it .Thanks to him for that! .

.As an outsider (not residing in puttaparathi ) i can assure that thankfully some ardent devotees who reside in various parts outside till today dont know about such confusions (either anything at all or they dont know .in detail). .So it is best if these confusing things are nipped off in bud... My suggestion on the same as a sai devotee:

..1.There are lot of committed people at samiti levels.serving sai as convenors and other office bearers ...They are the persons who are in contact with local sai devotees new or old and also public ..

2.. Their services could be/should utilised in an efficient way in driving away such confusions .be it distribution of material which has swamis talks related to such matters or even organising visual slide shows( showing such teachings to local devotees and interested public .

3.First the office bearers should not have any confusion whatsoever reg swami possessing /talking in subtle form etc ..If they have such confusions that need to be clarified without any doubts b state level of SSSS Organizations .

4..Reg collection of money almost all devoteesknow very well that swami is totally against collection of funds.using his name .But this can be reiterated again and again so that the message is strong!

5.Reg Unity .There is ofcourse some petty politics at all level in some.units .but the best fact is everyone loves swami .so solwly differnces can be over come by driving the message of unity again and again

6.Technological . Innovation is highly necessary for bringing and sustaining youth . also sai youth role models who are practising sais teaching day to day serving the society and leading a peaceful life ! Old ideas of reaching out need to be shed.keeping with times..

7....(If any)Internal politics/desire for power and difference of opinions among the office bearers at all levels need to be nailed and they should be made aware to how to function as One. .

8...Again if such differences exist the next higher authority could address them/advise them privately and take corrective measures.!

So strong extremely committed /knowledgable /District/Zonal /State presidents /office bearers/convenors are need of the hour !

9.SSSO is the Only organization which gives oppurtunity for anyone who wishes to do service irrespective of caste creed religion or social status.and many a times without spending any money!Hence Unity of faith and shedding of all differences need to be encouraged at all times

10. In short .strengthening sai organization at the grass root level is important .in the removal of confusion ..

.This is possible with able guidance and leadership of highly competent state or country or zonal or district presidents as applicable!

The central level of the organization ( perhaps) needs to commence activties targetting the removal of such confusions right from the grass root levels including the international devotees ..The samitis need guidelines on this becoz at the end of the day samitis cant function independently but are finally under the control of central level !.

.SSSO( read the official wing) must continue to flourish well for the sake of the welfare of the universe both the present and future generations..

. . . For want of time and space stopping it here ..

Sorry if any part of my writings was over done grammatically wrong and not keeping in line with the topic.. or inappropriate in the choice of words .You are doing a good job in creating awareness ...At the end of the day Every devotee needs to become confident that Swami is God and he does not need any intermediate person or money to be with devotees .Thank you ..Jai sai ram..

## **Adaptation of Pope Francis Tweet; Sai organizations should enable interested persons to have personal encounter with Sai Baba (2014-07-18 08:36)**

*Last updated on October 6th 2014*

Here is a recent tweet of Pope Francis (twitter handle @Pontifex):

The Church, by her nature, is missionary. She exists so that every man and woman may encounter Jesus.  
— Pope Francis (@Pontifex) July 17, 2014

[Ravi: Text message repeated as sometimes the twitter message box is not shown:

The Church, by her nature, is missionary. She exists so that every man and woman may encounter Jesus.]

I retweeted (RT) this message as follows:

Similar for all religions RT @Pontifex The Church, by her nature, is missionary. She exists so that every man and woman may encounter Jesus.  
— Ravi S. Iyer (@RaviSailyer) July 17, 2014

[Ravi: Text message repeated as sometimes the twitter message box is not shown:

Similar for all religions RT @Pontifex The Church, by her nature, is missionary. She exists so that every man and woman may encounter Jesus.]

My view is that Sai organizations, associated with both Bhagawan Sri Shirdi Sai Baba and Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, should have one of its core objectives as enabling interested persons which includes all devotees, organization members, spiritual seekers, curious visitors etc., to have a personal/individual encounter with Sai Baba (Shirdi Sai Baba or Sathya Sai Baba). Such personal encounters will be key steps in the spiritual transformation and evolution

of people. They will experience the direct heart-to-heart contact with Divinity and will be weaned away from any dependence on supposed Divine intermediaries/intercessories.

Please note that persons giving spiritual advice are different from such supposedly Divine intermediaries. The intermediaries give authoritative instructions supposedly received from their supposedly direct channel to the Divine whereas the spiritual advisors provide advice/instructions based on their perception/intuition of/on the matter for which their advice/instructions are sought. The advisors may even go into a deep prayer/meditation session prior to giving advice so as to be more receptive to spiritual/intuitive vibes on the matter. But the advisors do **not** convey the advice as instructions received directly from Almighty God! In my considered view, taking advice from such spiritual advisors that one has developed trust & faith in, is perfectly fine.

The Sai path, as far as my understanding goes, is open to all faiths and adoration of all divine figures including Lord Jesus Christ. So the attempt to enable personal encounter with Sai Babas may lead to personal encounter with other divine figures like Lord Jesus Christ, Lord Buddha, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama etc., which would be wonderful as well since both the Sai Babas have always emphasized Unity of Faiths. "Sabka Maalik Ek" (English translation of this Hindi sentence: the master/owner/boss of all is ONE/God is ONE) is the famous saying of Bhagawan Sri Shirdi Sai Baba.

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## **Thankful to God & government for freedom of worship; Mosul's Christians face terrible persecution (2014-07-19 20:55)**

*Last updated on July 20th 2014*

Here are two very distressing articles, Christians flee from Islamic State threats, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/christians-flee-islamic-stat-e-death-threats-2014719848721494.html> and

ISIS Forces Last Iraqi Christians to Flee Mosul, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/world/middleeast/isis-forces-last-iraqi-christians-to-flee-mosul.html>

Ravi: 1,700 years! Forms of Christianity that are probably much closer to the preaching and practice of Jesus Christ than the mix of secular power and spirituality/religion that the Roman church became after Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman empire (in 380 AD), are being swept away in lands not very far from the land where Jesus Christ performed his miracles and preached his mission! What a tragedy!

That in today's early 21st century there are religious groups, who at the point of the gun, threaten people of another religion who have been practicing their religion in that city for 17 centuries, to convert, or pay tax/leave, depresses me terribly.

I salute these persecuted Christians for sticking to their faith & religion even if it meant leaving their possessions and their homes to become refugees in other villages. I pray to Almighty God to take care of these persecuted Christians. One of the side effects of reading up on such distressing happenings in the world is that I become very thankful to Almighty God for the great gifts that have been bestowed on me. I was born in a fairly devout South Indian Hindu Brahmin family, became agnostic as a young adult, turned to the faith of my forefathers and found succour in it after I was brought to my knees by a life-crisis, and then got swept away by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, his teachings, his miracles and his movement. [Since the mid-90s Sathya Sai Baba has been and continues to be my revered and beloved Guru and my Ishta Devata (favourite God). Even though his physical form is not present now (passed away in April 2011) I continue to feel his presence now through his teachings and discourses as well as my individual and public/collective memories of him, a lot of which is easily available in print, audio, video and digital forms].

I have been to Hindu temples, Christian churches, Muslim mosques, Buddhist temples, Jain temples ... in India as well as in the USA (mostly Christian churches), Western Europe (mostly Christian churches) and South Korea (Buddhist temples). Never ever have I had any direct restriction placed on my freedom to follow/practise any religious faith or to be an agnostic.

Today I live in a town (Puttaparthi, India) where most of its residents and many of its visitors worship Sri Sathya Sai Baba as an Avatar and a God (somebody to whom one prays for spiritual/material needs/wishes). While some Indians

will not approve of our worship nobody stops us. In fact, while I was in the Maharashtra Sathya Sai organization, I do not recall any incident where we were stopped from doing our worship.

I thank Almighty God and governments of various countries over the world that protect this vital freedom of worship (which includes freedom not to worship), for this great freedom gift they have bestowed on their people.

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## **Claimed paranormal connections via mediums to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba; Splinter devotee groups (2014-07-24 17:41)**

*Last updated on July 28th 2014*

As this is a sensitive matter related to faith in mediums who claim to have the power to interact with/talk to Sathya Sai Baba in some manner, I want to be very careful in my comments. I will just say that so long as the teachings of Swami in such interactions are in line with the teachings of Swami that we were blessed to receive from his physical form, the teachings part of these interactions will not cause any harm to the Sai mission and it may contribute to better dissemination of the Sai teachings. But there may also be a very sensitive instructions/advice part in these interactions applying to specific individuals who approach (or have been approached by) the medium. I personally would very much hesitate to follow such instructions/advice delivered via a medium. If Swami came directly to me in a dream and gave me some instructions/advice, I would certainly consider them seriously, perhaps getting into deep prayer and meditation sessions to get clarity from the inner voice/conscience/inner Swami on such dream instructions/advice. But through a (human) medium? I don't think that is the path for me. However, I respect the choice made by people who are willing to follow the instructions/advice delivered through these mediums. Essentially, it is their life and so it is their choice.

*Update: The post, A more nuanced view on medium messages related to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is a more nuanced view of mine on this topic.*

[I have never had a Swami vision, i.e. appearance of Swami in the form of Sathya Sai Baba in waking state (apart from his physical body prior to his Mahasamadhi), so far at least :).]

In this context I felt it appropriate to share my experiences in a Maharashtra Sathya Sai samithi regarding such matters when Swami was in his physical form itself. I came to know of Swami through Sai literature. Sometime around 1992-93 when I was living in a company provided flat in Andheri (E), Mumbai which was very close to Dharmakshetra (Sathya Sai organization centre in Mumbai, <http://www.dharmakshetra.org/>), I happened to wander into Dharmakshetra on one of my walks (I used to do a lot of leisure walking on holidays typically) and was very taken up by the sayings of Swami put up in the Dharmakshetra main hall. In a short time I was in the Dharmakshetra bookshop and then the great treasure of Sai literature there, available at a very cheap price, cast a tremendous spell on me.

Not very long after this I decided to quit my company job and become an independent software consultant and also move back to Dombivli, in Thane district (Maharashtra), <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dombivli>, on the outskirts of Mumbai, where we (my mother & I) and others of my family (brother & family) & friends circle lived, prior to mother and me moving to the company flat in Andheri (E), Mumbai.

After resettling in Dombivli I decided to look around for any Sathya Sai devotee group in Dombivli (this would be around 1993-94 if I recall correctly). I had no knowledge of the Sathya Sai organization and did not know that there are official Samithis as venues/platforms for devotees to gather and conduct Sathya Sai organization/movement activities. [These were pre-Internet search engine days. Yahoo search started as small directory index to the world wide web in 1994, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Yahoo!](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Yahoo!), and Google came on to the web scene a few years after Yahoo, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Google](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Google).]

One day, in one of the commercial buildings close to Dombivli Railway station, I found a board having the name Sathya Sai associated with a Blood Bank. I went up there, came to know that there were regular bhajan sessions on a particular day (I think it was Sunday) and soon I became a part of that friendly and welcoming community which was being led by a medical doctor (a specialist - pediatrician, in fact) who was also leading the Sathya Sai blood bank

charitable activity. This doctor, who I will refer to as D, was quite a charismatic personality besides his quite towering intellectual stature within that group which was quite a small but well-knit group maybe of around ten to twenty regulars.

Over time (some months, if I recall correctly) I came to know that this group was a parallel/splinter group and that there was an official Sai organization samithi as well in Dombivli. Destiny had taken me first to a parallel/rebel Sathya Sai group! Eventually I started attending both groups. The official samithi group was much bigger (maybe around hundred members then) and had many rules and regulations to be followed (quite naturally as it was part of a big Sathya Sai organization). The splinter group led by D was more dynamic in terms of the service activities it accomplished with a small group of regulars. However, over time, I came to know that D, the leader of the splinter group, claimed some sort of spiritual type powers/insight especially in terms of healing. Further he recommended that people need not visit Puttaparthi as Swami was everywhere (this was in the mid-1990s when Swami was quite active in his physical body). In other words, D was like a spiritual leader with some claimed mystical powers, who also was a practising pediatrician (the bhajan sessions would be held in his clinic waiting room on Sundays, if I recall correctly, when the clinic was closed for his medical practice work). And most of the members in D's group looked up to him as a spiritual Guru (with some healing & other powers) kind of person.

I very much wanted to have Darshan of Swami in physical form, and there were many in the official samithi who were very encouraging of that and even offered to take me along. Further the samithi offered a chance to do Prasanthi Seva where, at the end of the Seva offering, we got the chance of having Swami walk amongst us allowing Seva Dal (us) to take Padanamaskar (reverentially touch his holy feet). Eventually there was a personal incident I had with D which led to me, politely and peacefully, parting ways from his group after which I concentrated only on the official Samithi events.

[A former student of the Sai university (SSSIHL) Prasanthi Nilayam (Puttaparthi) campus, who along with his long-time Sathya Sai devotee parents, provided me lot of information and guidance about Swami and the Sai organization, took me along with him for my first (remembered) darshan of Swami in Brindavan (Whitefield, Bangalore ashram) maybe in 1993-94. (I say remembered darshan as my elder sister (elder to me by 8 years) told me that our family had had darshan of Swami in a public meeting in Bombay/Mumbai when I was a child (must have been in the 1960s) - I have no memory of that as I would have been a toddler then.) This first remembered darshan of Bhagawan had a very strong and positive impact on me. During our visit, Swami attended a function in the Whitefield college auditorium (or some building like that). The former Sai student who was knowledgeable about Swami's typical routine in such visits, positioned me and himself outside and below a balcony/sit-out of this building at around first floor level (if I recall correctly). He said there is a good chance that Swami may come to the balcony/sit-out and give Darshan to devotees assembled outside. Swami did come to the balcony/sit-out and I was thrilled to have a long eye-to-eye contact with Swami from a distance of around twenty or thirty feet perhaps (if I recall correctly). I have a clear memory of that first long eye-to-eye contact I had with Swami even to this day. Somehow that made a deep impression on me. BTW I had got into a fair bit of meditation and deep prayer with my Ishta Devata (favourite God) being Lord Krishna, perhaps a year or so prior to me getting exposed to Sathya Sai Baba through Sai literature.

This first darshans trip led to strengthening of my faith in Bhagawan and also the Sathya Sai organization which eventually resulted in me moving to Puttaparthi in Oct. 2002 and being given the wonderful and blessed opportunity to serve Swami as Honorary Staff/Honorary Faculty/Visiting Faculty from Jan. 2003 to March 2012 in SSSIHL Prasanthi Nilayam (Puttaparthi) campus. This service gave me the blessed and rare good fortune to receive, at physical body level, Swami's Grace in general and his spiritual guidance through his discourses and, very importantly for me, through his looks & gestures during the regular darshans I would have of him.

I am very grateful to this former Sai student and his long-time Sai devotee parents for the wonderful

exposure they gave to me of Bhagawan and the Sai organization, which was an important step in bringing me directly to the lotus feet of the physical form of our beloved Bhagawan.]

Today, with the passage of around two decades, I have a far more emotionally balanced view of the Dombivli splinter group matter (though I must say that some conflicting views of the two groups did confuse and disturb me a lot then as I was a novice to the Sathya Sai movement). Now I am grateful to D (who sadly, I was informed, passed away some years ago) and his group who were my first exposure to congregational Sathya Sai bhajan singing and congregational Sathya Sai service activities. They gave me a lot of encouragement and were very polite towards me even when I decided to stop participating in their activities. I have only good wishes and prayers for their happiness, towards them. I also am of the view now that it is not uncommon for energetic and inspired individuals to break away from an official spiritual group and start a new splinter spiritual group. Even Mother Teresa essentially parted ways (with permission from church authorities) from her original Christian convent to form a new organization which eventually made a great impact worldwide. The important thing is that the parallel organizations should not fight each other and have turf wars. Give people the choice to go to whatever group they want. I think Dombivli samithi as well as the splinter group did an overall pretty good job in co-existing peacefully, even if there were some reports of criticisms hurled at each other by leaders of the two groups at times. I mean, it was just verbal or written criticism, nothing really serious like a police complaint, lawsuit or violence of any kind. In fact, sometimes, to some members at least, it was an entertaining diversion :).

Then there was another interesting and controversial happening in Dombivli samithi. This dealt with the claimed manifestation of vibhuti on Swami's photos in a devotee and samithi member's house as well as letter responses claimed to be from Swami. Devotees would place letters at the altar in this devotee's home (devotee is referred to as X) and some of them (a few, I was told) would receive written responses from Swami later on (next day/next few days, I guess). This was a sensation! This controversy too got handled quite well in Dombivli samithi, I feel. The leaders ensured that samithi events were top priority and so long as X did not hold events at his house that clashed with samithi events, he was free to hold the events and samithi members were free to attend those events. X himself would attend samithi events including bhajans where he was a lead singer. The samithi did not publicize the claimed happenings in X's home in any way and its leaders, when their advice was sought on the claimed letter responses from Bhagawan matter, said something to the effect that the organization view is that Swami does not interact with devotees in this fashion.

But, as far as I can recall, they did not go to the extent of publicly criticizing those devotees who chose to believe in the claimed letter responses received in X's home though they surely would have publicly announced in the samithi quoting from Bhagawan's public discourses and statements which strongly discouraged devotees from believing in such claimed responses from Bhagawan. However, such announcements would have limited impact on those devotees who were caught up in the new sensation :). I should also mention that, as far as I know, there was no written material or any organized publicity by X (or others) of the claimed letter responses from Bhagawan - it was mainly a word-of-mouth spread sensation. Had there been any organized publicity of these claimed letter responses from Bhagawan appearing in X's home, I am quite sure that the samithi leaders would have pointedly and publicly criticized it.

At that time I did not know X very well. However, I felt that I simply did not know enough to believe in the letter responses part or to deny it. I preferred to go by the organization view and did not give much importance to the claimed letter responses. However, I respected the choice of some devotees to believe those letter responses. Again, their life, their choice, was my view. Over the years I came to know X much better. I think his devotion/Bhakti was and is very deep. I have been more inclined towards the spiritual philosophy part of Advaita (as mentioned in the Upanishads) and the Bhagavad Gita from a very young age (including during my adult agnostic days as it was an intellectual sort-of view not needing faith in an interventionist God). Devotion and faith in a God who responds to prayer and intervenes in human affairs (interventionist God) was something that I started developing much later on in life. I tried to strengthen my devotion and faith by learning from/observing the faith of others in the Sathya Sai samithi as well as other theists in general (like a Christian neighbour of mine in Dombivli).

My view now is that X's deep devotion may have resulted in some paranormal events in his home then. I certainly will not say that such events are not possible. Somewhere down the line, I believe, these occurrences in X's home either

stopped or he stopped letting people know about it.

I hope this post will contribute in some small way to ensure that there is peaceful, harmonious and maybe even synergistic co-existence between main Sathya Sai organization(s) and any splinter Sathya Sai devotee groups in this post-Mahasamadhi phase of the Sathya Sai mission. Live and Let Live, as an email correspondent put it.

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The post, A more nuanced view on medium messages related to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is an extension of the topic covered in this post.

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saiuvacha (2015-03-03 04:44:03)

Good to know about your background and how you came to Swami. It is always interesting to know what draws devotees to the Lord like bees to the nectar. Organisation is a very generic word which means many different things to many different people. Depending on who is in-charge and what kind of mindset they carry, the being part of an organisation can sometimes become detrimental to one's spiritual growth. Such organisation can also turn vicious if someone dares to question any policies or question the leadership about why they are not following Swami's teachings both in word and spirit. There is no dearth of like-minded people who are on spiritual quest holding similar outlooks and values they cherish. So instead of arguing and quarrelling all the time, it is better to distance yourself from the organisation and attend informal meetings or so called splinter groups you refer to in your post. Of course you have to exercise your good judgement to see the motive and energy behind all activities carried out by such splinter groups. Sai belongs to whole humanity and each and everyone can connect to him either as an individual or as a group of like minded people. You don't need a big organisation run by some very egocentric individuals trying to boss over everyone in order to gain some self-importance. In such cases a small splinter groups with the right energy is the way to go.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-03 15:10:22)

Thanks for the comment. I tend to agree with your views.

Tagless Kaiju (2015-04-02 01:54:39)

This comment has been removed by a blog administrator.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-04-02 10:33:12)

A comment from Tagless Kaiju on April 1, 2015 at 1:24 PM, had a lot of blank lines at the bottom. So I deleted the original comment and have provided the same comment minus blank lines, below:

Thank you for posting this - I found the article to be a very well-written and well-balanced piece; it is also very mature. Swami's devotees have come (and continue to come) from many different backgrounds and cultures. The perspective of each and every one of us is unique. The Sai Organization certainly has provided a comfortable enough home for many, but it was never likely to be a home for all at any given time (I myself wondered in and out of organizational activities and affiliation; only my faith in Swami was a constant). Organizations are made up of people and those people have conflicts; even our own minds can be divided on some topic or other. When Swami was in physical form, I sometimes wondered what would happen once he was gone, and honestly, we have only to look around at other faiths to see how their human elements behave when the Leader has gone - they always splinter off, and then the splinters splinter off. One size simply isn't going to fit all, not ever (not so long as we remain human :) As you say, the key would really lie in our ability and willingness to work harmoniously, and not to wish ill-will on anyone, to create scandal, or engage in any activity that would encourage dissent. Swami's passing was (and remains) a very, very hard pill to swallow. Surely our very foundations were going to be shaken - and Swami knew this. The task of the Sai Org's elder leadership was to present a strong unified front in the face of devastation, and it remains so. Hence, understandably, newer groups will come under a wary eye and be scrutinized. But that doesn't mean they should not exist. What should exist is dialogue and an open mind, because there is little to stand in the way of these groups existing as long as individuals have a will to be part of them. If we can connect to our inner Sai, we can do this successfully. Again, thank you for providing excellent details and insight.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-04-02 10:44:16)

Thanks for your kind words, Tagless Kaiju. Thanks also for your well written and interesting comment.



I tend to agree with most of your comment. However, I have a dissenting view on the dissent part :-). We have seen (and I have some personal experience of it too) how some dictatorial leaders of some Sai institutions including break-away Sai institutions, after Swami's Mahasamadhi, have tried and succeeded to impose their vision and ideas on Sai institutions or the part of the institutions they head. And these visions and ideas, in my considered view, are quite different, and in some cases, very different, from Swami's vision as seen in how he (physical form) managed the Sai institutions at a top-level but with accessibility to any member of these institutions at Darshan time.

Therefore, today I am of the view that while Swami was in physical form, his Divine insight enabled him to manage the Sai institutions without having a need for dissenting opinions to be aired, except in private. But, after his Mahasamadhi, in the name of discipline and unity, the leaders who are in positions of power, have become all-powerful. Very unfortunately, such absolute kind-of power leads to power-craze and abuse of power, which ultimately damages the institutions and parts of institutions that such leaders manage. Recovery from the damage caused by power craze and power abuse to institutions and/or parts of institutions, can take years!

So I think in this post-Mahasamadhi phase, the Sai mission should bring in a mechanism to encourage some level of dissent, as that will act as a check/brake on power-craze and dictatorial attitudes. This mechanism of encouraging dissent should not be unbridled as that may lead to unbridled mud-slinging like in the democratic political arena :-). Perhaps an independent and powerful Lokpal (ombudsman) or grievance redressal mechanism may do wonders in bringing down power craze and power abuse in the Sai mission.

### **Transcript of short and wonderful Ramana Maharshi Youtube video about his saintly life and self-inquiry teaching (2014-07-25 17:31)**

The video mentioned below has great pictures and video clippings of Ramana Maharshi, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramana\\_Maharshi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramana_Maharshi), and is very much worth seeing if you have not seen such material earlier. Ramana Maharshi is one of my favourite 20th century Indian spiritual teachers and saints and his teachings as well as his life story have been a very important source of spiritual inspiration for me.

Towards the end of the video the commentator talks about Ramana Maharshi's emphasis on the path of self-inquiry. I have been blessed and privileged to hear Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba talk about the same self-inquiry on quite a few occasions in Sai Kulwanth Hall (Puttaparthi main darshan hall). Sathya Sai Baba would say Koham (who am I); Soham (I am He), and would follow it up with I am I (Nenu Nene in Telugu). Sathya Sai Baba's I am I seems to me to be equivalent to the I-I referred by Ramana Maharshi as narrated by the commentator.

Transcript of youtube video, "Ramana Maharshi Rare 1946 Documentary Footage Ramaji Satsang Enlightenment Meditation Advaita", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYztHXDngol>, 6 min. 37 sec., published on Sep. 17th 2012, is given below (the transcript has also been put up as a comment in the same youtube video page):

[Video shows Tuesday, September 1, 1946]

The ashram of Saint Ramana of Arunachala drew crowds of devotees on September the 1st to mark the completion of 50 years since Ramana first set foot on the sacred soil of this historic mountain shrine. From far and near they flocked for darshan of the holy saint who by the severest austerities and profound contemplation has attained spiritual wisdom and serenity unique in the country. Thousands draw comfort from his mere presence for he neither preaches nor (blames?) setting at ease all who come, by the essential goodness he radiates to all around. A good man in a troubled world.

...

[Around 0:52]

He adhered to a punctual routine which included going out for a stroll twice a day. At these times, he would walk up on the slopes of his beloved Arunachala hill, and if any attachment to any thing could be said of him, it was surely an attachment to the hill. He loved it and said it was God himself - the spiritual heart or center of the earth. He seemed to be never so happy as when wandering around its slopes and once remarked that there was not one spot on the hill where he had not set his foot. He also encouraged devotees to walk around the eight mile circumference of the hill as it has been well known from ancient times to be a very potent spiritual exercise.

Generally the Maharshi appeared to be indifferent, a witness to what was going on around him. Nevertheless he was always aware of what was happening and seemed to be very particular about certain matters. First of all he insisted that he should be accessible to devotees and visitors at all times. Even on the day of his death when he had no strength to even hold his head erect, he asserted that devotees should not be prevented from seeing him. He was also very keen that visitors should be fed immediately upon their arrival and food should be well cooked and nutritious. He participated (in) and supervised meal preparations for many years. The Maharshi was adamant that no preferences should be given to him in way of food or conveniences. If it is good for me it must be good for all he would say when some special food preparation or medicine was offered him. He would then make the attendants distribute the items to everyone present before he would take it himself.

In his company one would notice a total absence of distinction between men and women of different castes and creeds, of different races and religions, between a prince and a peasant, an ascetic and a householder. His equality extended far beyond human beings and embraced even plants and animals. His love for and affinity with animals can be compared only to that wonderful child of Christ, Saint Francis of Assisi. They all came to him - dogs, snakes, monkeys, crows, deer, peacocks, chipmunks and cows to name a few. Their silent language was known to him and when he spoke, they understood and obeyed. He arbitrated the monkeys' quarrels. He has been known to speak to the wild leopards and cobras and the whole animal kingdom accepted him as their guardian and defender. All felt his grace and acted with intelligence in his presence. He considered every living creature as equal. Those who came to him deserved an equal share to the land and resources of Ramana ashramam. He often mentioned that this was their territory all along. We humans have just come and occupied it. If they could speak they would claim their rights as well. Besides this, he maintained that every creature from man down to the smallest insect was an equal manifestation of the supreme self, the imperishable one. And even an animal can progress spiritually and on rare occasions, attain liberation. This was demonstrated in the life of the cow, Lakshmi. For over 20 years she lived in the ashram and exhibited a rare devotion to Bhagavan and intelligence in all matters. Bhagavan fully reciprocated her gentle devotion and on her last day when her end was near ...

[Around 5:14]

He often said that the true teaching was in silence. But this does not mean verbal expositions also were not given. And although he authorized many different methods of spiritual practice he however laid the greatest emphasis on the path of self-inquiry. The first and foremost of all thoughts that arise in the mind is the primal I thought. It is only after the rise or origin of the I thought that innumerable other thoughts arise. Search by means of a deeply introverted mind wherefrom this I arises. If we go inward questing for the source of the I the I topples down and immediately another entity will reveal itself proclaiming I-I. Even though it also emerges saying I it does not connote the ego but the one perfect existence.

People of all religions came to him and he never advised any of them to change their faith or abandon their creeds. He answered all (their) questions patiently.

— end transcript —

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### **A more nuanced view on medium messages related to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (2014-07-27 15:16)**

An email response from a correspondent to the contents of a previous blogpost, Claimed paranormal connections via mediums to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba; Splinter devotee groups, was about how he had a pleasant and unpleasant experience with a 'postman' job of delivering a real-life Swami message to another person. That led me to do some more thinking on medium messages and arrive at a more nuanced view on medium messages related to Swami, as given below.

#### **What would I do if I received a message from Swami in a dream to be passed on to somebody (known to me)?**

Hmm. I would be in quite a dilemma as it has never happened to me so far and I hope and pray that I never land into such a dilemma in future :). I think I may be very frank with the intended recipient and tell him/her that I simply don't know why I got the message in a dream, and that I felt it is my duty to pass on the message. He/she is free to consider the message seriously or to reject it completely. I will also mention that Sai organization leaders have provided many

quotations from Swami discourses where Swami strongly discourages giving importance to such messages delivered via others (as against Swami directly giving the message to the person in a dream or vision). But even if one does it in such a careful way, if the message is a very sensitive one (e.g. related to sensitive family issues or critical job issues) the recipient may treat it as an unwelcome interference in his/her personal affairs. I think the Muddenahalli (and Kodaikanal) medium(s) may be facing similar challenges when delivering supposed Swami messages to devotees. Being such a medium must be involving a lot of mental strain not only on the medium but also on his family and close friends, I guess.

**What would I do if I received such a message from another person like a medium/intermediary?**

Once again, it will be a dilemma, at least for the first such message. I think if the medium/intermediary is somebody who I know and respect I will carefully listen to/read the message, and thank him/her for it, though I will also say to him/her that I need to contemplate on the message. Later I would try to connect to the inner Swami/conscience and try to get some inner guidance/comfort level on the message. Depending on that inner connection/inner voice outcome I will either act in accordance with the message or not act on it.

In this context I should also mention that sometimes the medium/intermediary may pass on some information which is known only to oneself and persons very close to one, who the medium/intermediary does not have access to. That may make the recipient believe in the medium's divine powers. I believe that some mediums/intermediaries acquire some such powers like being able to tap into one's past (similar to Naadi reading) but that may be only a limited power and should not lead one to believe that the medium/intermediary has (directly/indirectly) infallible mystic power. For example, my experience in my Naadi reading, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nadi\\_astrology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nadi_astrology), sometime in 1993-94 if I recall correctly, was that the reader was very mystifyingly accurate in his account of my past. I could not sleep properly for the next few nights as I was stunned that somebody was able to read out/interpret from palm leaf records (claimed to have been made by Saga Agasthya, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agastya>, in this case), such intimate details of my past. But some of the specific predictions made for my future did not happen - these were clear and unambiguous failures of the Naadi reader predictions. However, his general sense of how my future would play out, especially on the spiritual side of my life, has been quite correct, so far. [The Naadi readers claimed that they were from the famed for Naadi reading Vaitheeswaran Koil (temple) in Tamil Nadu, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaitheeswaran\\_Koil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaitheeswaran_Koil), and they had come along with a set of Naadis from Vaitheeswaran temple to Navi Mumbai, where I met them, on a (commercial, I presume) visit.]

**But what about the fear factor in not obeying the instructions/advice passed on by the medium?**

This fear factor may be a critical one for many devotees who get such messages. Well, my view is that Swami is famous for his saying, Why Fear When I am Here. Swami is also famous for his AbhayaHasta (don't fear) gesture, [http://www.saibabaofindia.com/june2011/mother-ma-sri-sathya-sai-baba-blessing\\_s-abhya-hasta-mudra.jpg](http://www.saibabaofindia.com/june2011/mother-ma-sri-sathya-sai-baba-blessing_s-abhya-hasta-mudra.jpg). And Swami has said so many times that he is in the depth of our hearts. So one can pray deeply to Swami in our hearts (inner Swami) asking for directions on the message passed on by the medium as well as courage. If the inner Swami/inner voice/conscience does not give any indication towards accepting the message then one can ignore the message and also pray to inner Swami for protection. That, IMHO, should take care of the fear factor involved, for most persons if not all persons, when ignoring advice/instructions passed on by a medium.

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**Awesome and Very Inspiring Christian Songs - Not by power, God is Able, and more by Ron Kenoly (2014-07-30 15:57)**

I found this Christian worship songs video to be awesome and very inspiring, RON KENOLY - GOD IS ABLE FULL CONCERT, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VduWq4O CXU>, 1 hr. 27 min. 08 secs.

From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God\\_Is\\_Able\\_\(Ron\\_Kenoly\\_album\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_Is_Able_(Ron_Kenoly_album)):

"God Is Able is the Christian worship music album recorded by Ron Kenoly and was recorded live at the Atlanta Civic Center in Atlanta and was released in 1994 by Integrity/Hosanna! Music/Sparrow Records."

Ravi: The youtube video seems to be this Atlanta Civic Center live recording and so is around two decades old. The wiki page also has list of songs in the recording.

From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron\\_Kenoly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Kenoly): Ron Kenoly (born December 6, 1944) is an American Christian worship leader, singer, and songwriter whose expressed mission is "to create an environment for the manifest presence of God". His musical style is one of jubilant praise and individual excellence on musical instruments. Although Kenoly himself only plays on one of his recordings, he leads comfortably with his voice and is always backed up by musicians and a large choir.

— end wiki extract —

I left the following short comment on the youtube page: "Awesome and Very Inspiring. Hallelujah! Praise The Lord!" I found Kenoly, as shown in the video, to be very inspiring as a worship leader & singer. His depth of devotion seems palpable and he really took the crowd along with him on his devotional song journey. A masterful demonstration of the power of a gifted worship singer to shower the devotional experience on his audience, at least those who are in tune to receive such devotional experiences.

His wiki page further states:

He began working in full-time ministry in 1985. He started out as a worship leader at Jubilee Christian Center in San Jose, California. Not long after that, in 1987, he was ordained and installed as Music Pastor. As worship leader, his sole focus was leading worship service. When he became Music Pastor, he became the shepherd over the entire music department at Jubilee Christian Center. In 1993, after the success of 2 Integrity recordings, he started receiving invitations from all over the world. Churches not only wanted him to come lead praise and worship, but also to help them develop their music departments. So shortly afterwards, he was named Ambassador of Music at Jubilee Christian Center. He was sent out from the church as an ambassador to the world to help churches develop and find the balance between worship and the Word. In 1996, he received his Doctorate in Ministry of Sacred Music. In 1999, he felt the call to move from California to the East Coast. So, he relocated the ministry to Central Florida where he continues to travel, speak, sing and teach and record. He sings over all the world. Kenoly has also written a few books, one of them written with his pastor, Dick Bernal.

— end extract —

What a great service this man has been doing for the Christian faith! 'Music Pastor' - that was a new term for me. Very interesting! Nothing like song & music to give masses of people the devotional experience. I also found it quite fascinating that he was sent as an ambassador to churches worldwide to "find the balance between worship and the Word". Music & song alone OR sermons + prayer alone does not seem to have the capacity to draw and sustain congregations whether it is Christianity or Hinduism (the two religions that I am somewhat familiar with). What is needed is the right combination of the two, and the proportions of this right combination may vary from congregation to congregation.

I have captured lyrics and notes related to three of the songs in this video which touched me quite deeply, below (for one additional song I have provided an external lyrics link):

1) Around 2 min, 45 secs: Song: Everybody put your hands together and let's praise the Lord. [Ravi: Simple but melodious song which I felt was very nice.] External lyrics link: [http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/r/ron\\_kenoly/put\\_your\\_hands\\_together.html](http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/r/ron_kenoly/put_your_hands_together.html)

["Sophisticated hand-clappers" show their skills around 06 min 17 secs.]

2) Around 26 min 05 secs: Not by power, not by might, But by My Spirit says the Lord [Ravi: I love the words of this song.]

Words of the song (contributed by a correspondent, plus some editing from my side):

Not by power

Not by might

But by My Spirit

Says the Lord

Not by power

Not by might

But by My Spirit

Says the Lord

The weapons of our warfare

Are not of this world

They are mighty through God  
Mighty through God  
The power of His mercy  
And the power of His love  
They are stronger than all  
Stronger than all  
As we worship in unity  
Jesus the Lord  
Victory comes in His name  
By His Word  
... repeat ...  
Not by power  
Not by might

...  
By My Spirit says the Lord  
By My Spirit says the Lord  
By My Spirit says the Lord  
3) Around 36 min 16 secs: Ron Kenoly sings:  
He has given me a song to sing when troubles come  
He has given me a song to sing ...  
He has given me a song to sing when the enemy comes against me  
He has given me a song  
A song of victory  
A song of praise  
A song of overcoming  
Hallelujah!  
A song of libera .. tion  
Ron Keoly speaks:

... Tells of his growing up in his family in Coffeyville, Kansas .. poor family, five brothers, mother was a single parent ... non-resident father ... faced difficult times ... his mother always had a song .... church songs .. all of the family would sit in a row at Union Baptist Church and sing the church songs ... sometimes situation would be difficult like house (rent) not being paid, (no) food in house, things like that. But she could always come up with a song:  
I sing because I am happy  
I sing  
I sing because I am free  
for His eye, His eye is on the sparrow  
Oh and I know.  
Yes I know  
No matter what the bankbook might say, I know  
Oh I know  
No matter what people say about me, I know  
No matter how hard the devil tries to (knock) me down, I know  
I know, I know  
I know, I know  
I know, I know  
I know, I know  
Yes.. He's watching over me  
Sing unto the Lord  
Make a joyful sound  
Lift your voices

And let your praise resound  
Sing a victory song  
In the time of war

Trust in Jesus

The battle is the Lord's

... last stanza repeated many times ...

4) Around 45 min 05 secs: God is Able [Ravi: This is the title song of the recording. The words, the music and the lead & group singing are awesome!]

God is able

God is able

God is able

To do what

He said He would do

God is able

God is able

Yes He is

God is able

God is able

God is able

(To) do what

He said He would do

I think about Daniel

In the lion's den

It didn't look too good

But Daniel put his trust in Him

Shadrach Meshach and Abednego

When the flames grew hot

Chorus: they grew hot

They just put their

Trust in God

And He would not

Let'em go

God is able

God is able

My God is able

God is able

Yes He is able

God is able

He can do what

He said He would do

My God is able

God is able

Yes He is

God is able

God is able

God is able

He can do what

He said He would do

I think about Israel

And the Exodus

Pharaoh sent his men  
But God showed His faithfulness  
So if you think you're in a  
Trial by fire  
When the flames grow hot  
Chorus: they grow hot  
You just put your trust in God  
And He'll never let you go  
God is able  
God is able  
My God is able  
God is able  
He is able  
God is able  
He can do what  
He said He would do  
My God is able  
God is able  
You want to try Him  
God is able  
Because He is able  
God is able  
He can do what  
He said He would do  
He can lift you up  
When trials come your way  
He can give you peace  
Down in your soul  
He is always true  
He'll be there for you  
Will you believe Him  
Will you receive Him  
God is able  
God is able  
God is able  
God is able  
You want to try Him  
God is able  
Cause He can do what  
He said He would do  
God is able  
God is able  
He is able  
God is able  
My God is able  
God is able  
He can do what  
He said He would do  
... God is able lines of above para repeated a few times with slight variations ...  
[Around 49 min 10 sec, The Rap version]

God is able  
I can testify  
If you call on Him  
He won't be denied  
His ear is not deaf  
And His arm is not short  
He'll give you what you need  
So why don't you get smart  
Put your trust in Him  
He can make a way  
He will walk right beside you each and every day  
He will put money in your pocket and food on your table  
I am telling you what I know

God is Able

Our God is Able and His love never fails  
There is no end to His favour  
Our God is Able and His mercy prevails  
His love and kindness last forever  
He's healed our bodies he's restoring our souls  
He's put His righteousness within us  
We got the power of the Holy Ghost  
We've got the mighty name of Jesus

No eye can see  
No ear has heard  
No mind has conceived  
What God has prepared for those who love Him

No eye can see  
No ear has heard  
What God has in store for us

No eye can see  
No ear has heard  
No mind has conceived  
What God has prepared for those who love Him

No eye can see  
No ear has heard  
What God has in store for us

Our God is Able and His love never fails  
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Our God is Able and His mercy prevails  
His love and kindness last forever  
He's healed our bodies he's restoring our souls  
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No eye can see  
No ear has heard



What God has in store for us  
No No No No No No No  
No eye can see  
No ear has heard  
No mind has conceived  
What God has prepared for those who love Him  
No eye can see  
No ear has heard  
What God has in store for us  
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## 2.8 August

### Fascinating phenomenon of impersonators of famous divine figures like Jesus Christ and Sathya Sai Baba (2014-08-01 23:17)

*Last updated on August 3rd 2014*

Some recent incidents led me to refresh my knowledge and also dig up a little on the fascinating phenomenon of impersonators of famous divine figures. Let me start by mentioning some such cases.

#### **Impersonator of Lord Krishna**

This is mentioned in the Bhagavatham (Hindu holy scripture which has the history of Krishna and more). One interpretation of the Bhagavatham section related to this impersonator, available on the net, is the ISKCON related one here: <http://vedabase.net/sb/10/66/en1>. King Paundraka started believing that he was the true Vaasudeva (a name of Krishna), the divine master descended to earth! His impersonation went so far as to result in a challenge, through a messenger, to the real Lord Krishna as follows: "I am the one and only Lord Vaasudeva, and there is no other. It is I who have descended to this world to show mercy to the living beings. Therefore give up Your false name."!!! [BTW Lord Krishna is the son of Vasudeva and hence one of Lord Krishna's names is Vaasudeva - the longer a denoting son of. But in the link above it uses the spelling Vasudeva to refer to Lord Krishna (and not his father).]

Paundraka further says, "O Satvata, give up my personal symbols, which out of foolishness You now carry, and come to me for shelter. If You do not, then You must give me battle." The real Lord Krishna and the (king's court) assembly laughs when the messenger of Paundraka delivers this message.

The real Lord Krishna then takes up the battle challenge of Paundraka. Prior to the battle the real Krishna notes that Paundraka has dressed up like himself (Krishna) and laughs at the impersonation. Later Krishna kills Paundraka in battle by cutting off his head with his Sudarshana Chakra. But the fascinating spiritual aspect is that the Bhagavatham states that Paundraka (his subtle body/suukshma sharira) on his death, merged with Lord Krishna! "By constantly meditating upon the Supreme Lord, Paundraka shattered all his material bonds. Indeed, by imitating Lord Krishna's appearance, O King, he ultimately became Krishna conscious."

Some of the events related to divine masters, especially the Avatars, are very strange even to spiritually well versed people.

#### **Impersonators of Lord Jesus Christ**

Wikipedia has a fairly long list of people who claim to be (second coming of) Lord Jesus Christ here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_people\\_claimed\\_to\\_be\\_Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_claimed_to_be_Jesus)

Another interesting aspect about Lord Jesus Christ is that there are accounts of other miracle workers contemporaneous or near-contemporaneous to Jesus. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical\\_background\\_of\\_the\\_New\\_Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_background_of_the_New_Testament):

The Talmud provides two examples of such Jewish miracle workers around the time of Jesus. Mishnah Ta'anit 3:8 tells of "Honi the Circledrawer" who, in the middle of the 1st century BCE, was famous for his ability to successfully pray for

rain. On one occasion when God did not answer his prayer, he drew a circle in the dust, stood inside it, and informed God that he would not move until it rained. When it began to drizzle, Honi told God that he was not satisfied and expected more rain; it then began to pour. He explained that he wanted a calm rain, at which point the rain calmed to a normal rain.

Mishnah Berakot 5:5 tells of Hanina ben Dosa, who in the generation following Jesus cured Gamaliel's son by prayer (compare with Matthew 8: 5-13). A later story (In the Babylonian Talmud, Berakot 33a) tells of a lizard that used to injure passers-by. Hanina ben Dosa came and put his heel over the hole; the lizard bit him and died.

Such men were respected for their relationship with God but not considered especially saintly; their abilities were seen as one more unknowable thing and not deemed a result of any ultra-strict observance of Jewish law. These men were sometimes doubted, often respected, and even (according to Geza Vermes) addressed by their followers as "lord" — but never considered "saviors" or "messiahs."

— end wiki extract —

### **Impersonators of Sathya Sai Baba**

I think the most famous such impersonator so far, at least in recent years, is Bala Sai Baba of Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, <http://www.sribalasai.com/>. Then we have Nepali Sai Baba, <http://sanjaysai.org.np/>. Both of these persons are look-alikes of our Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Besides the look-alikes there are reports of many non-look-alikes who claim to have some divine aspects/powers which are in some way related to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. For example, some claim that some divine powers have been bestowed on them by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and/or that they are able to connect to/interact with him in some way (the latter are commonly referred to as mediums/channels/intermediaries).

### **What can one make of this phenomenon of divine impersonators?**

Firstly, some of the divine impersonators mentioned above are or were benign and contributed to spread of spiritual values (worship of God, love, joy, peace, service to fellow human being, brotherhood etc.) in society. So, IMHO, they are a positive force for society and this contribution of theirs must be welcomed. But it must also be said that some were initially considered to be benign but later became horrifying figures. The foremost near-contemporary example of such horrifying figures is Jim Jones, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim\\_Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Jones), who claimed to be a reincarnation of Jesus and others, and who led his followers to commit mass suicide (over 900 people died) in 1978. Another such near-contemporary horrifying figure is David Koresh, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Koresh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Koresh), who led 80 odd followers of his to their death in 1993 by defying USA law enforcement authorities which ended up in a deadly armed conflict with them.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, they say. Once divine figures become well known through their miracles and powerful transformational teachings, they inspire large number of people. Some of these inspired people may be getting so taken up by these divine figures that they may start deeply worshiping the divine figure and also identify themselves with the divine figure. That may result in some of them, especially those who consciously/sub-consciously desire paranormal powers, acquiring some spiritual/divine/paranormal powers similar to what the famous divine figure had/has. Some of these people may also start identifying themselves with the same physical features of the divine figure they worship resulting in the look-alike impersonators of famous divine figures.

A tricky and sensitive question is whether such impersonators (look-alikes and non-look-alikes) have the full power that the famous divine figure had/has. I think this gets answered over time. If the impersonators/mediums are able to demonstrate significant divine/miraculous powers consistently over a long period of time and also demonstrate mastery of spiritual knowledge through their teachings/discourses, they will, in all probability, acquire a big following and a big reputation. However, no impersonator of Krishna or Jesus acquired the same heights of fame that Krishna or Jesus acquired.

On Sathya Sai Baba impersonators/mediums, my humble view is that coming anywhere close to, let alone matching, the impact of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba will be an impossible task for any impersonator/medium of Sathya Sai Baba. Only a future avatar like Prema Sai Baba may be able to match or exceed that.

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anonymous (2015-05-04 22:26:08)

A very interesting topic..and well written too

.As everyone knows Sri Sathya Sai Baba avatar is unparalleled.. very unique in so many ways and I fully agree to your humble view that no impersonator /mediums would be able to match him or even come anywhere close to him ..

Sathya Sai Baba is the Only One without a second.!In my humble personal opinion though (though it might sound exaggerated to some )...even the future avatar Prem sai would not be able to match or exceed Sri Sathya Sai Baba .

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-05-05 08:14:20)

Thanks for the kind words and your views. Swami's revelation that Shirdi Sai was a form of Shiva, Sathya Sai having both Shiva & Shakti, and that Prema Sai will be a form of Shakti, can be interpreted in support of what you said about Prema Sai.

I think the Sathya Sai movement has created astounding institutions across the world, based on Swami's teachings, though the cultural aspects of the region the institution is located in may give the interpretation of teachings a suitable variation. Shirdi Sai avatar did not focus on creation of institutions - of course it was a different time period. India was under foreign rule and economically very backward then. The Shirdi Sai sansthan (institution managing the Shirdi Sai masjid (mosque), temple etc. associated with Shirdi Sai Baba, was formed, if I am not mistaken, after Shirdi Sai's samadhi (physical form passing away).

Will Prema Sai focus on creating many new institutions or on re-invigorating the existing Sai institutions, and give definitive instructions on matters like mediums & communicators, divisive forces within Sai institutions, and deviations from original vision of Sai institutions? That would be an interesting thing to study about the career of the coming Prema Sai Avathar.

anonymous (2015-05-06 18:09:38)

Yes u r right reg shirdi sansthan All this were founded only after shirdi sais maha samadhi...In fact I think (as far as I know )in all avatars that was the case ..As far as I know Only in Sathya sai avatar all such institutions were established and guided and nourished in his own physical life time...

By the way . I wish to share what one of my close friends said reg.,some people outside saying had Sri Sathya Sai baba had named some one or even two ..three devotees together as successor specially for central trust all this medium claims and other divisions would not have surfaced easily ..This was what she said as her personal view in reply \*\*\*.Sri Sathya Sai baba loves whole of the universe equally ..he does not know what hatred means ..Though on a superficial level of his love it so appears at times that some devotees are extremely close to Sri Sathya Sai baba very fortunate and blessed and some others are seated very far off ...The chosen ones were blessed with darshan sparshan and sambhasahan no doubt .It does not however mean that Sri sathya sai baba values the rest of the devotees as inferior. ..For him and if we are to look on a deeper level all are same..He has given so many speeches ( sathya sai speaks) where in he has stated the synopsis of which says that we are divine but we are not aware of it or forgot it and he has come to make us remember our divinity ..

. This special devotee/ superior/ very close etc is all mainly due to devotees imaginations .Sri sathya sai is pureness personified and Sais love is the same for all.For him all are his children and hence all are also successors..He would never would have wished that is any one/two/three particular successors be chosen by him and the rest left out Even on a worldly level for a mother all her children are the same at heart though on a outer level she may sing praises of one child and or it might appear she favours some and does not others....But in her deep ehart all are same ..The same is with sai

However Swami did not leave anything abrupt ...He had the future well running of the central trust in mind and he took personal care to see that certain people are posted as office bearers and members ..he must have thought that they should be good enough to take care of all his institutions and various other activities and hence there was no special word from separately him on it..Reg mediums He has spoken outwardly very clearly that such claims are all false..and he has given definite instructions to treat such people mercilessly as one would treat cheats ..If even after that some devotees act otherwise it is their choice..Sai always says we are given choices to think and act as to what is right and wrong..\*\*\* This what she said .

..I personally think .deviations from original vision of Sai institutions..might perhaps happen due to some weak minded students getting attracted to certain matters easily or due to repeated hearing praises and seeing what they think as linked to of such matters and some times thy might be influenced by their peers / senior instructors taking a deviated route ..

## Media article praises Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust for flourishing Sai institutions (2014-08-04 14:28)

I was very pleased to read this article, dated July 23rd 2014, From crisis to credibility: How Sathya Sai's trust turned around the fate in three years,

<http://daily.bhaskar.com/article/NAT-TOP-from-crisis-to-credibility-how-sathya-sais-trust-turned-around-the-fate-in-three-4688779-PHO.html>.

Some notes/small extracts and comments:

Widespread speculations about future of Sai institutions three years ago (at Swami's Mahasamadhi time); many thought these institutions would not survive.

*[Ravi: I think the above words convey quite truthfully what most of the non Sai-devotee world would have thought at the time of our beloved Lord's Mahasamadhi. Perhaps even some of us in the Sathya Sai devotee fraternity may have harboured doubts about the future of these magnificent institutions focused on service to humanity.]*

...

"The institutions built by Sai are flourishing and the credit goes to Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust (SSSCT)."

*[Ravi: Having seen a lot of nonsense that the media indulged in regarding SSSCT immediately after the Mahasamadhi, I am overjoyed to read such praise from the media. I feel that all of us in the Sathya Sai devotee fraternity must be grateful to the SSSCT for steering the institutions founded by Bhagawan which were under their care, through a very traumatic period. I pray that Bhagawan continues to shower His Grace on them and their efforts towards keeping these institutions in good order.]*

...

Embracing transparency, refusing cash donations, internal audit etc. were the measures of SSSCT that gave positive results and earned the continued support of devotees.

*[Ravi: Interesting analysis. In today's globalized world, accountability and transparency are the buzz words for any institution to earn respect. As an Indian who has crossed 50 years of age I am amazed at the level of accountability and transparency that is being ushered in/forced upon various sectors/people in India, including top ministers and top bureaucrats. Two or three decades ago, this level of accountability and transparency was unimaginable. To take just one example, the Right to Information Act (RTI) enables any Indian citizen to get unprecedented level of information from even top govt. agencies including the Prime Minister's Office! That was just unthinkable in the 80s and 90s.*

*\_ I think in today's Internet connected world people expect transparency and accountability from charitable and spiritual institutions too. That SSSCT is being recognized in the media for "embracing transparency" is excellent news.]*

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## Sathya Sai Super (Tertiary Care) Free Hospitals - Lighthouses of hope and goodness (2014-08-06 15:42)

Here's a slightly edited extract from a Sai devotee correspondent's recent email (with approval from the correspondent):

Here I would like to narrate a personal experience when I went to deposit a cheque sent by a devotee friend to the (Sri Sathya Sai) Central Trust office (in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh, India) opposite the South Indian canteen. As I was asked by my friend to deposit the cheque into the "corpus fund" I was asked to wait for my turn. Meanwhile one "visibly" poor man entered. He seemed to be little confused and unsure. I thought he mistook the Central Trust office for canteen token issuing counter. He was holding a 100 rupee note in his hand. Looking at the 100 rupee note and his physical appearance this man reminded me of Lord Krishna's childhood friend "Sudama" (also known as Kuchela in South India). He came up to me and asked (in Hindi) "where is the place to make a deposit to Swami's Trust". I told him you have come to the right place. As I was seated next to him and as we waited for our turn, he started a small conversation. He said he is from a very remote village in the Indian state of Bihar. I asked him how did he come to Puttaparthi. He said his son had a heart related problem and was successfully operated in the Super Speciality Hospital. He continued, "such a big operation was done absolutely free of charge. This hospital should exist

for eternity and beyond so I am offering this 100 rupees which is from my heart and I know it is nothing compared to the huge expenses incurred in running this hospital but I feel it is my responsibility to offer something to Swami's hospital". I really had tears seeing his devotion and more importantly the "impact" made by Swami's hospitals on the poor and downtrodden. He indeed is a very "responsible" devotee who took pains to find the office and made sure his hard earned money went to the continuation of Swami's mission and in spreading His message of love.

— end extract —

Whether one likes or dislikes Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the example set by him and his movement, of setting up and successfully running magnificent NGO (non-governmental organization) hospitals providing free medical care including very sophisticated tertiary care, is a really bright spot in human caring for the marginalized. Here is the wiki page of the Sathya Sai 'super' hospitals, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri\\_Sathya\\_Sai\\_Super\\_Speciality\\_Hospital](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Sathya_Sai_Super_Speciality_Hospital).

That these are "flourishing" even after the passing away of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, as per the media report referred in my recent post, Media article praises Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust for flourishing Sai institutions, is really great news. They can be inspiring examples to other religious and charitable institutions worldwide in that such models can be setup and somehow, good and charitable people including voluntary part-time staff as well as full-time reasonably paid (or sometimes even poorly paid) dedicated staff turn up to run/support these activities. Of course, there may be scope for only a limited number of such institutions in an area as they are dependent on funding and other support from charity inclined people in the community. But my point is that even having one such NGO tertiary care hospital providing free service of decent quality in each state (or, in future sometime, each district) of India (and the world), would be creating lighthouses of hope and goodness for the whole populace.

I should also mention that NGO operated primary health care institutions as well as secondary health care institutions (like general hospitals) offering free service of decent quality also contribute significantly in spreading hope and goodness in the community. However, it is tertiary care hospitals (super speciality hospitals) offering free service of decent quality that awe everybody right from the poor who receive the services to chief ministers and prime ministers who find it difficult to ensure that such services of decent quality are provided in government run health institutions. And so it is these "super hospitals" offering free service of decent quality that become the lighthouse symbols of hope and goodness among the populace.

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### Google search results for Sathya Sai Baba miracles (2014-08-07 10:35)

Google search for the term, **sathya sai baba miracles**, gives the first page of results having 9 positive (view of Sathya Sai Baba's miracles) or neutral result links and 1 skeptic link (media report and not an anti-sai site). The second page of results has 7 positive or neutral result links and 3 negative links including anti-Sai sites. [BTW I did the search from my PC in Puttaparthi using anonymous (incognito) Chrome browser window to avoid any personalization of search results.]

So for general Google search users for Swami's miracles, the rankings seem fair to me given the widespread belief in Swami's miracles - the positive and neutral sites being given prominence but the critical sites also being provided.

Google search for the term, **sathya sai baba miracles scientific investigation**, sadly has the first three results from anti-Sai sites with articles critical of Prof. Haraldsson's, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur\\_Haraldsson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlendur_Haraldsson), investigations on Swami's miracles.

However, the seventh result is Haraldsson's book link and the eighth result is the wiki page on Haraldsson. The other eight links including the above three seem to be of the negative kind.

The fourth and fifth result links in the next page (i.e. the 14th and 15th ranked results) are goodreads.com and amazon.com review links of Haraldsson's book (Modern Miracles:The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet, <http://www.amazon.com/Modern-Miracles-Story-Sathya-Prophet/dp/190873325X>), both of which have my review. So, somebody who is keen to get both views of the matter would probably come across my review which, of course, backs Haraldsson's view that most of the miracles he investigated have to be accepted as genuine from a quantity of human testimony and consensus of (reliable) witnesses point of view, even if direct scientific experiments were not conducted and so cannot be proven/accepted as genuine from a science perspective. [Here's the review on my blog:

<http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/2013/09/review-of-modern-miracles-story-of.html> ]

Google search for the term, **sathya sai baba miracles parapsychology investigation**, gives the first two results from anti-sai sites critical of Haraldsson's work, and then has Haraldsson book link, Haraldsson's wiki and amazon.com customer review. So it is somewhat better for this search term.

Why is it that Haraldsson's book link does not appear as the first result link for these two terms? That is what would be appropriate. After all Haraldsson is the leading scientific researcher into Swami's miracles, and so Google search users for these terms should ideally be presented with his book link first.

The critics/anti-Sai sites are nowhere close to Haraldsson in terms of academic/scientific reputation.

I think there is a bias among scientifically-inclined Google search users to choose the skeptic result links. The majority of these users may want to read that Swami's miracles are not genuine! Google search may be recording that users who use these queries, prefer these links as against the book link and perhaps its algorithm then pushes up these popular result links upwards in the result ranking.

Now I am not saying that Google search users for these terms should not see the skeptic links at all. It is a free world and especially on the Internet everyone has a right to express his/her view and have that seen. But surely, the researcher who has spent years investigating these miracles and interviewing devotees should be given top priority in the results, before that of his casual critics.

Can one say that this indicates that most general (common) Internet users who are interested in such matters, seem to have a positive view of Swami's miracles but that most Internet user scientists and scientifically-oriented persons have a negative view? As I do not know how exactly Google search ranking is done, I don't think I can draw such indications/conclusions. However I would not be surprised if that is how it really is. It is the scientific community and the scientifically-oriented community at large where a majority, especially in the Western world, refuses to accept the possibility that Swami's miracles could be genuine! Sure, they cannot accept that it is scientifically proven as genuine as they have not been performed under scientifically controlled conditions but that does not lead to the conclusion that they are not genuine/cannot be genuine.

Thankfully, in the larger picture of humanity as a whole, such closed-mind-to-miracles scientists and scientifically-oriented people constitute a minority. The majority of humanity is willing to go by faith in God (as viewed by various religions & sects) and His power to perform miracles that transcend normal laws of nature, and the larger 'miracle' of showering His Grace on believers by filling them with love, joy & peace.

In this context, I would like to mention a detailed mail conversation I had a couple or so years ago (after Swami's Mahasamadhi) with a leading US computer science academic & industry figure who was in the skeptic camp, on Swami's miracles. He was simply unwilling to even read Haraldsson's book. He was more interested in trying to show me that I was on the wrong track!!! He was trying to get me to read Dawkins' "The God Delusion" book instead. I stoutly refused to do so as I felt that the title of the book itself was outrageous. [Readers may want to see my blog post, "The God Delusion". What Does it Really Mean?]. After seeing that I was capable of keeping up my end in the argument and was not going to cave in, he gave up on that matter, quite politely, I must say. He still responds to some mails of mine on education and we have a decent "email relationship".

His stand, which I think is what many leading skeptical scientists have, was that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. As Swami did not permit testing under controlled conditions there was no evidence acceptable to science. [I don't understand why so many videos I have seen of Swami materializations are not accepted as evidence! Haraldsson does mention some issues with video evidence but even with some issues I think the video evidence is very worthy of examination.] So no claims about Swami's powers could be accepted. He also mentioned James Randi's 1 million dollar prize to anybody to perform paranormal acts. Since he was a very senior person I did not ridicule him mentioning this 1 million dollars stuff - really evolved spiritual people, let alone Purna Avatars like Swami, cannot be bought by money - not 1 million dollars, not 1 billion dollars and not even 1 trillion dollars! What is money to them! In my considered view, such an approach that completely rejects miracles due to lack of extraordinary evidence is a very blinkered approach. Haraldsson's approach where he looks at how legal systems view such matters is a much more realistic approach. I mean, sure one can say that unless extraordinary evidence is available under controlled conditions, science cannot accept the claims as proven. But neither should one discount that such claims could still be true! Science is not the final word on all of life.

I thought I should also cover Google search results for the term, **Sathya Sai Baba**.

All the ten first page results for the above term are positive (Sai organization sites, devotee sites) or neutral (wikipedia). The second page of results has two anti-Sai site links with the other eight being positive or neutral. So for general Google search users for Swami the rankings seem fair to me.

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### **Why Sathya Sai Baba following will be acceptable to people at large including atheists; Few additional thoughts on religious followings and society (2014-08-14 16:48)**

I recently had a mail conversation with a USA correspondent who seems to be an atheist and a "secular humanist", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular\\_humanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular_humanism). From this wiki page, (the following It refers to Secular Humanism) "It posits that human beings are capable of being ethical and moral without religion or a god. It does not, however, assume that humans are either inherently evil or innately good, nor does it present humans as being superior to nature. Rather, the humanist life stance emphasizes the unique responsibility facing humanity and the ethical consequences of human decisions. Fundamental to the concept of secular humanism is the strongly held viewpoint that ideology—be it religious or political—must be thoroughly examined by each individual and not simply accepted or rejected on faith. Along with this, an essential part of secular humanism is a continually adapting search for truth, primarily through science and philosophy. Many Humanists derive their moral codes from a philosophy of utilitarianism, ethical naturalism, or evolutionary ethics, and some, such as Sam Harris, advocate a science of morality." During that conversation I tried to convey how the Sathya Sai fraternity will be acceptable to people at large including atheist-humanists as a peaceful and helpful group. I thought readers may want to have a look at some extracts of my part of the conversation which are given below (in a slightly edited form):

My (Sathya Sai Baba followers) spiritual group/fraternity focuses primarily on attempts to internalize and practice the spiritual/ethical/moral values of Truth (Hindu word for it: Sathya), Ethical Conduct as interpreted/taught by Hindu religious teachers including Sri Sathya Sai Baba which also typically follows the law of the land but goes beyond it (Dharma), Peace (Shanti) and Love (Prema). While the source of these teachings may not be acceptable to some, the teachings itself of Truth, Ethical Conduct, Peace and Love, will be acceptable to most genuine/enlightened spiritual leaders & groups, genuine humanists including atheist-humanists, most judicial systems & governments, as well as people at large. [The Sathya Sai Baba following also has a fifth value of Non-violence (Ahimsa) but I am not so clear about the following's interpretation of it, especially in the context of Mahatma Gandhi's Ahimsa, and so I have not mentioned it here.]

An important addition to the above is my group's belief in the Law of Karma as well as reincarnation (based on Hindu beliefs reinforced by 'revelations' from Sri Sathya Sai Baba) which essentially says: as you sow so shall you reap. This reaping (of good/bad fruits of good/bad actions) may happen in this birth or a future birth. [There are some exceptions to it too]. This belief gives us added motivation to steer clear of bad/evil actions and try to do good actions. Once again, many may not accept this law of karma, but our group's attempts to steer away from bad/evil/hurtful-to-others actions and engagement in good/helpful-to-others actions, will be acceptable to people at large.

....

The extracts below deal with religious followings and society at large (not specific to Sathya Sai Baba following) On parents influencing children to believe many seemingly strange (religious) matters especially when supported by a community:

My view is that if these values are benign religious/ethical values that is fine. However, if they are malicious values promoting hatred and murder, I consider that to be a tremendous perversion of human life given the great potential human life has towards the good, the kind, the beautiful, the noble and the uplifting. [It must also be said that some atheist-humanists believe in and work for these positive and constructive goals/aspects, and some famous atheist-humanists inspire atheists as well as theists with their positive and constructive work.]

...

My view is that any religious sect whose leaders literally interpret their religious scripture to demand killing of others who are not from their faith, except in self-defense, is not a benign religious sect and is a threat to multi-religion society.

It seems to me that the leaders of most religious groups today in countries like India as well as Europe and the USA disregard the parts of their scripture demanding hurting/killing of others from different faiths even though they may not openly state those parts to be wrong especially in today's multi-religious and multi-cultural, and deeply inter-connected and interdependent world. So, in effect, the groups led by these religious leaders are not malicious or dangerous. They may consider their sect and/or religion to be the only true religion but they do not support physical attacks on people of other sects and religions - so they are not a threat to society at large.

...

My view is that Christians who literally interpret Christian scripture including the Old Testament common to Christians and Jews, if I got that right, and so do not believe in evolution and believe that the world is 6000 years old, should be viewed as somewhat misguided people. But so long as they do not attack people of other religions or no-religion (agnostics & atheists), as far as I am concerned, they are not a malicious or dangerous group. Further, if they try to follow Jesus' teachings of Love Thy neighbour and turning the other cheek towards all people irrespective of their faith or no-faith, I would consider them to be a useful contributor to the community.

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### **Worshipping/viewing music as God (2014-08-22 09:06)**

A correspondent wrote over email (edited extract follows), and provided approval for it to be shared publicly:

Music has this tremendous power - it is the ONLY thing that is common to all cultures of the world (past, present, future) - and it comprises just 7 pure (shuddha) notes and 5 flat (komal or tivra) notes.

If it is one god we talk about - then nowhere is this in evidence except in music. Religions and spiritualists fight over their version of god - musicians do not - they have their ONE god - the 12 notes (swaras).

I think MUSIC is the true god :-)

— end correspondent message edited extract—

My response (edited):

Great man, please enjoy the/your true music God. In my case, some of the beliefs (not full blown experience) that guide my life are drawn from the Upanishads which say that all is God - Isha Vasyam Idam Sarvam! [Isha/Brahman/God lives/permeates all this (world).] What is not God? How a person expresses his/her worship/visualization of God - through music/as music, through/as poetry, through/as idols symbolizing some values/gods, through/as emotions like love, joy and peace - is their choice, IMHO.

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## **2.9 September**

### **India Today July 2014 article praises Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust for smooth running of 'Eternal Empire of the Living God' (2014-09-03 22:45)**

I was not aware of this July 18th 2014 article in India Today, Eternal Empire of the Living God, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/sri-satya-sai-baba-mission-crisis-of-credibility-his-death-three-years-ago/1/372954>. It was brought to my notice by a mail I received today. In early August (2014) I had come across an article in the Daily Bhaskar praising the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust about which I put up a post here: <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2014/08/media-article-praises-sri-sathya-sai.htm> I.

This India Today article carries the sub-title "Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mission surmounts the crisis of credibility arising from his death over three years ago". The article states (He in the quote that follows refers to Sri Sathya Sai Baba), "He's no longer around but the vast network of institutions he built over five decades continues to flourish, managed and guided by an all-powerful caucus, the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust (SSSCT). It's to SSSCT's credit that it has ensured the empire runs smoothly even without its charismatic leader, from the daily prayer schedule and handling of



devotees to the management of assets and institutions.”  
and

”SSSCT has surmounted the crisis of credibility-of being a headless entity- by focusing on transparency.”

The article ends with the sentence, ”The miracle man may be no more but his mission carries on.”

Ravi: I am overjoyed to note that one of the leading news magazines of India has written such a positive article appreciating the tremendous achievement of the Sathya Sai fraternity in general, and the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust in particular, of ensuring that even if Bhagawan is not present in his physical form now, ”his mission carries on”.

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### **Importance of Comparative Religion field; Aug. 2013 talks on Faith based community initiatives by USA Secretary of State, John Kerry & others (2014-09-10 15:21)**

I came across this very interesting short speech by USA Secretary of State, John Kerry, at the launch of the (USA) Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives on Aug. 7th 2013, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/08/212781.htm>

Here are some excerpts from his speech which I found to be very interesting, and some comments of mine:

As Secretary of State, and before that as a senator for 29 years, I have met with faith-based leaders all across the world, had the privilege, obviously, of running for President of the United States, met with many members of our faith-based community here in our country, and I have met with people of all religions and of all life philosophies and belief systems. And that experience has only reaffirmed my belief that there is much more that unites us, and should unite us, than divides us.

Gandhi called the world’s religions beautiful flowers from the same garden ... And there is common ground between the Abrahamic faiths, and, in fact, between the Abrahamic faiths and all religions and philosophies, whether you’re talking about Hindu or Confucianism or any other of the many of the world’s different approaches to our existence here on the planet and to our relationship with a supreme being.

All of these faiths are virtuous and they are in fact, most of them, tied together by the golden rule, as well as fundamental concerns about the human condition, about poverty, about relationships between people, our responsibilities each to each other. And they all come from the same human heart.

[Ravi: From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_Rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Rule):

\_ *The Golden Rule or ethic of reciprocity is a maxim, ethical code or morality that essentially states either of the following:*

\* *One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. (Directive form.)*

\* *One should not treat others in ways that one would not like to be treated (Cautionary form, also known as the Silver Rule).*

\_ — end wiki extract —

\_ *Ravi: I am very happy to know that a powerful USA political leader has such a nice view of religions.]*

...

So we need to recognize that in a world where people of all faiths are migrating and mingling like never before, where we are this global community, which we always talk about, we ignore the global impact of religion, in my judgment, at our peril. And I have talked at length with people like King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, or even King Abdullah, Prince Ghazi of Jordan, and others who are engaged in interfaith efforts, all of whom recognize that their religion, Islam, has to a large measure been hijacked by people who have no real depth with respect to what the faith in fact preaches, but who interpret it in ways that lead people to conflict and even to violence.

So it’s not really enough just to talk about a better dialogue. I think we have to stand up and deliver one. And that’s why I am very proud today to announce the creation of the Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives here at the State Department. Its mission is as clear as it is compelling: It is to engage more closely with faith communities

around the world, with the belief that we need to partner with them to solve global challenges, and there is an enormous partnership, I believe, there for the asking.

*[Ravi: Very interesting.]*

...

Engagement – the engagement that I’m talking about is a two-way street. Our job at the State Department is not just to proclaim or to stand up and pontificate about the things that we want. We have to listen to people about the things that they want. And everybody here today has played a valuable role in promoting the development of countries or preventing conflict, advancing human dignity all across the globe. So we launch this office with a clear intent to keep our door open and to work as cooperatively as possible with all of you.

I am genuinely excited about the possibilities of this. Around the world, from Egypt to Ethiopia, from Peru to Pakistan, religious leaders every day are taking on some of the toughest challenges that we face. They’re healing communities. They’re providing counsel to families. They’re working in partnership with governments for the enduring health of our planet and its people.

...

... if I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion, because that’s how integrated it is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today.

*[Ravi: That is some recognition of the importance today of the academic field of comparative religion.]*

...

And I want to emphasize this to everybody because I know the question will be out there: Is this sort of a departure from the norm? No. We approach this with the full recognition and understanding of – Thomas Jefferson’s understanding and admonition about the wall of separation between church and state. But what we are doing is guided by the conviction that we have to find ways to translate our faiths into efforts that unify for the greater good. That can be done without crossing any lines whatsoever.

One of my favorite passages from the Scripture sums up what Shaun and I think this effort is really all about. It’s a familiar Gospel of Mark in which Jesus says to his disciples, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for the many.”

*[Ravi: I think the universally recognized sign of true spiritual men & women is that they serve and are not keen in being served. There is something truly noble, truly heart-melting about those who serve that is easily felt by sensitive people no matter what be their religion or even if they are atheists/agnostics.]*

...

No one would sit here today, or anywhere else, and suggest that we’re doing such a good job everywhere that we don’t need to bring more people to the table. It is clear, with the numbers of failed states and failing states and growing youthful populations around the world who feel disenfranchised and disconnected and unable to find jobs or get the education they need, we have work to do together and we need everybody at the table. And that’s what this is about.

— end extracts & comments of USA Secretary of State, John Kerry —

This is followed by short speeches of two others. I have given below interesting extracts from their speeches too.

Extracts from Dr. Shaun Casey’s speech:

Mr. Secretary, several years ago, you and I started a conversation about the rich, diverse, and complicated public implications of religious belief and practice. At that time, some were claiming that religion poisons everything, while others were saying that religion would save and solve everything. You knew, however, that the reality was somewhere in between.

I remember thinking at the time how unusual it was for a public figure to see the potential in and the power of religious groups tackling extreme poverty, convincing people to combat global climate change, fighting for global human rights, mitigating conflict and building peace, even at a time when others focused on those religious folk who committed acts of violent extremism, perversely claiming justice in the name of their own faith. From that day forward, I admired your willingness to defy the conventional wisdom that dictated religion was a purely private, personal choice, and thus communities bounded by faith must be entirely left outside of discussions of policy. That is why, today, engaging these communities in the context of policy has always struck me as being a matter of very great and deep importance.

...

Extracts from Ms. Melissa Rogers' speech:

For millions of people, here in the United States and in countries around the world, faith is a fundamental part of their identity. It shapes who they are and how they understand the world around them. It provides a sense of community and a network of support.

*[Ravi: So well said. As somebody who became a man of faith after having been an agnostic for most of my adult youth (till around 30) I can testify to how fundamental faith is as part of one's identity for the faithful. Prior to me being blessed with faith in the divine it was quite a different life (not a bad life but certainly a different life).]*

We have seen the power of religion throughout human history. In our own country, for example, we've seen religious leaders join with others in championing causes like abolition, civil rights, and the eradication of poverty. In so doing, these advocates have often led our nation to heed the better angels of its nature. Similarly, around the world, on issues ranging from health to education to conflict prevention, religious and other civil society leaders are tackling some of our most pressing challenges. They help create more peaceful and secure communities. Of course, as we know all too well, there are also times when religion is abused to promote violence and destabilize communities.

...

The second objective is advancing pluralism and human rights, including the protection of religious freedom. Our engagement with religious and other civil society leaders should strive to promote pluralism and respect for the human rights of all people, including members of minority or marginalized groups. Now, we understand that sometimes civil society leaders and institutions may disagree with our positions on certain issues, but we're committed to having the conversation. Increasing our engagement with a diverse spectrum of religious as well as secular communities will help us to underscore the universality of these critical rights. And here, the new office, of course, will work closely with the Office of International Religious Freedom, among many other State Department offices.

*[Ravi: I really like the "advancing pluralism and human rights, including the protection of religious freedom" part. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious\\_pluralism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_pluralism): "Religious pluralism is an attitude or policy regarding the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in society. It can indicate one or more of the following: As the name of the worldview according to which one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth, and thus the acknowledgement that at least some truths and true values exist in other religions. ..."]*

The third objective is preventing, mitigating, and resolving violent conflict to enhance local and regional stability and security. While it is critical to understand the ways in which religion can be manipulated to exacerbate conflict, religion is not an inherent source of conflict or violent extremism. Strategic engagement with religious leaders can help us to break cycles of violent conflict.

Now, as Shaun and Secretary Kerry have said, a guiding principle for all of this work will be that our actions must be consistent with the United States Constitution. Employees of our government can and should engage faith-based leaders and communities on US policy priorities just as they do other civil society leaders and communities. At the same time, our precious religious freedom guarantees of the First Amendment mean that we must observe some special rules when we engage religious actors and matters, such as ensuring governmental neutrality toward faith.

*[Ravi: Interesting to note the care taken to avoid any issues related to US constitution. I guess it will be somewhat similar in India when it comes to government engaging religious groups.]*

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### **Harvard Pluralism Project: What is (religious) pluralism? (2014-09-23 14:48)**

This article, dated Sept. 20th 2014, Three Cheers for Pluralism Over Separatism, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/21/opinion/sunday/thomas-l-friedman-three-cheers-for-pluralism-over-separatism.html>, by Thomas Friedman quotes views/understanding of Harvard's (religious) pluralism project. However, Friedman uses these views in a more political/social/ethnic pluralism context rather than religious pluralism, IMHO.

Harvard Prof. Diana L. Eck crisply defines her (and the Harvard pluralism project's) view of (religious) pluralism here:

[http://www.pluralism.org/pluralism/what\\_is\\_pluralism](http://www.pluralism.org/pluralism/what_is_pluralism). I have copy-pasted the contents below along with some comments of mine:

### **What is Pluralism?**

The plurality of religious traditions and cultures has come to characterize every part of the world today. But what is pluralism? Here are four points to begin our thinking:

First, pluralism is not diversity alone, but the energetic engagement with diversity. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettos with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies.

*[Ravi: That's very well said.]*

Second, pluralism is not just tolerance, but the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference. Tolerance is a necessary public virtue, but it does not require Christians and Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and ardent secularists to know anything about one another. Tolerance is too thin a foundation for a world of religious difference and proximity. It does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another, and leaves in place the stereotype, the half-truth, the fears that underlie old patterns of division and violence. In the world in which we live today, our ignorance of one another will be increasingly costly.

*[Ravi: I think the far more deeply interconnected and interdependent than ever before, world of today very much needs a deeper understanding of the beliefs and practices of different religious groups, including atheist & agnostic groups, in the world.]*

Third, pluralism is not relativism, but the encounter of commitments. The new paradigm of pluralism does not require us to leave our identities and our commitments behind, for pluralism is the encounter of commitments. It means holding our deepest differences, even our religious differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another.

*[Ravi: I did not understand this point well. What exactly is meant by commitment in this context? Maybe I need an example which may be available somewhere else on the website.]*

Fourth, pluralism is based on dialogue. The language of pluralism is that of dialogue and encounter, give and take, criticism and self-criticism. Dialogue means both speaking and listening, and that process reveals both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the "table" will agree with one another. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table – with one's commitments.

*[Ravi: I fully support the dialogue part.]*

—Diana L. Eck

— end what\_is\_pluralism contents —

Somewhere down the line I hope to read more about the Harvard pluralism project which seems to primarily deal with religious pluralism in the USA. Some of its initiatives, insights and experiences may be applicable, in a modified form perhaps, to other countries including India.

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## **Bangalore to Puttparthi road driving directions/route (2014-09-24 22:26)**

*Last updated on 30th Sept. 2014*

This is a miscellaneous post and not a spiritual one :). Recently I dug up some info. and added some of my own, and got some clarifications/corrections from correspondents, on Bangalore to Puttparthi road driving directions, to pass on to folks who plan to visit me by driving from Bangalore to Puttparthi.

From <http://www.team-bhp.com/forum/route-travel-queries/34714-bangalore-puttparthi-route-advice.html> in early 2008

The route is Hebbal - Yelahanka - Devanahalli - Chikkaballapur - Bagepalli (KA RTO Checkpost) - Kodikonda (AP RTO Checkpost) - Thummalakunta

Thummalakunta is about 9 km from the KA - AP border and identified by a sharp S curve just after an IBP bunk on the

left and an IOC bunk on the right. Turn right here for Puttaparthi ...

— — — end team-bhp.com post extract — — — — —

24th Sept. 2014

Ravi: What is given below is based on Google Maps route, a correspondent's recent input on the matter, and what I recall from my road trips (usually bus, but at least once by car) between Puttaparthi and Bangalore over 5 years ago. From Bangalore to Puttaparthi, the initial and large part of the trip is on NH7, a national highway. So that part of the trip is quite standard stuff. But once one gets off NH7 on the route to Puttaparthi, the roads may not be in great condition and one needs to be careful while driving. For people not familiar with these roads, night driving is certainly not recommended on these roads.

1) The first major turn (highway exit) is from NH7 onto the road to Gorantla. Google Maps for Bangalore to Puttaparthi shows this turn clearly in its recommended route (in blue), [https://www.google.co.in/maps/dir - /Bengaluru,+Karnataka/Puttaparthi,+Andhra+Pradesh/](https://www.google.co.in/maps/dir-/Bengaluru,+Karnataka/Puttaparthi,+Andhra+Pradesh/). A correspondent wrote about this turn/highway exit (slightly edited): "After you pass Kodikonda check-post (Kodikonda is 10km after Bagepalli junction and is prominent with a large number of stationed trucks), travel 5 km and you will reach Budili/Kodur junction which is where you get off the NH7 by taking a right. This where the river Chitravathi crosses NH7. You can see it on the Google Maps. There is clear signage indicating Puttaparthi Road. If you search for directions on Google Maps, this is the route shown."

2) The next important junction is the Gorantla junction (on the outskirts of Gorantla town). The correspondent added the following (slightly edited) about driving directions at this junction: "Heading along this road, you come to the Gorantla junction, entering it from the South. The left (West) is the road to Hindupur(route 87). The right (East) leads you to Gorantla town. You need to head straight(North) from here to reach Puttaparthi."

3) The turn after that is a right turn at Mammilakunta cross to go to Puttaparthi town. I think there is a circle structure put up at this cross. If one goes straight missing this turn then one will shortly pass Sri Sathya Sai Prasanthi Nilayam railway station on the left. That should let one know that one has missed the turn. [If one misses spotting the railway station on the left one will then get into the town Kothacheruvu which one cannot miss, and thereby know that one has to turn back (though there is another way too from Kothacheruvu to Puttaparthi)]

4) The next turn is at Yenumulapalli cross where there is a circle structure. It is a T junction where one takes left to go to Puttaparthi town and most of the traffic goes left. The right turn at this cross leads to Yenumulapalli village with the road being a smaller road. Also this turn has big signboards welcoming people to Puttaparthi.

5) You know you are in Puttaparthi town proper when you cross the music college/campus, student hostels, a planetarium (space theater), a sports complex, the school and college campuses and then a welcoming arch, all in very quick succession. Actually the welcoming arch is a rectangle-type shape. Here is its image on wikipedia, <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Puttaparthi.jpg>. In quick succession again, you will cross the bus station on the right, and the main ashram (foot) entrance on the left, and come across a right turn to the narrow Chitravathi road (very short road segment). The ashram main vehicle entrance is just a little further down the main road on which you entered Puttaparthi town (not Chitravathi road). The main road itself turns left, immediately after which you have the main ashram vehicle entrance on the left.

### **Devanahalli bypass note**

An email correspondent wrote in response to the above route, on Sept. 25th 2014, the following:

Note: Devanahalli is not a stop between Yelahanka and Chikballapur. Its now a bypass. Just stay on the highway. Do not get into Devanahalli or Chikballapur or Bagepalli. You need to get off the highway to get into these towns which you don't need to. Just stick to NH7 and get off only at Budili/Kodur.

### **Alternative but possibly longer route**

1) The turn (highway exit) from NH7 that Andhra Pradesh & Karnataka state transport buses used to take over 5 years ago when I used them for my trips between Bangalore and Puttaparthi was not at Budili/Kodur but further ahead on NH7 at or near Palasamudram (if I recall correctly). Google Maps clearly shows NH7 intersection with route 87 at Palasamudram. Route 87 would be taken till one approaches Gorantla (outskirts of Gorantla town).

2) The next turn is when one approaches Gorantla. If I recall correctly one comes to a T junction with the left turn heading to Puttaparthi and the right turn to Gorantla town. As it is a T junction one is forced to turn left or right and so one cannot miss this turn.

A correspondent remarked about the above route:

"In the directions you have highlighted, you get off NH7 at Palasamudram, taking a right into Hindupur-Gorantla road(route 87). You then reach the Gorantla junction from the West and you take a left(North) to Puttaparathi. This route is around 30km longer. Also, it is not the one most frequently used for Bangalore-Puttaparathi transit."

**Google Maps link for Bangalore to Puttaparathi road map:** <https://www.google.co.in/maps/dir/Bangaluru,+Karnataka/Puttaparathi,+Andhra+Pradesh/>

Some notes related to the above map:

- 1) NH7 is also marked as AH43 on this map. It is also named as the Bangalore-Hyderabad highway.
- 2) Kodikonda is shown only at high zoom but Bagepalli which is the big town on the Karnataka side of the border is shown at lower zoom levels. Kodikonda seems to be at the junction of NH7 with Lepakshi road (shown in yellow on the map and to the left of NH7).
- 3) The Budili/Kodur right turn (highway exit) from NH7 is not clearly labelled (though Kodur is shown as the label of a larger area close to this turn/exit, at higher zoom levels). Thummalakunta, mentioned in above team-bhp.com post extract, is not shown - is Thummalakunta the same as Budili? Palasamudram is clearly shown on the map.
- 4) Palasamudram to Gorantla is named as route no. 87. The left turn/fork before Gorantla town (to get to Puttaparathi) is clearly shown.
- 5) Mamillakunta gets shown on the road towards Kothacheruvu, when the map is zoomed in enough. This road is shown in yellow. At Mamillakunta you can see a right turn leading to a white road labelled on the map as Puttaparathi Main Road.
- 6) The left turn near Yenumullapalli also gets shown when the map is zoomed in enough, and this left turn is shown leading to Puttaparathi town. Zooming in Puttaparathi town shows the student hostels, planetarium (space theatre), school and university campuses as well as Chitravathi Road (a very short road segment) and the 80 feet Bypass road (at which Chitravathi road ends). The map also shows the Chitravathi river in blue but most of the time, in reality, it is a dry river bed.

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Update on 30th Sept. 2014

My folks drove down yesterday from Bangalore to Puttaparathi (and went back to Bangalore in the evening). They took the first major right turn (highway exit) from NH7 (must be the Budili/Kodur one), and did not face any trouble in getting from Bangalore to Puttaparathi. As they started from near Yeshwantpur in Bangalore, they had a smaller distance to cover, and were able to make the trip in around two and a quarter hours.

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## **Somewhat short account of history of early Christianity based on Wikipedia (2014-09-27 21:45)**

*Last updated on October 28th 2014*

This short account of history of early Christianity is a mix of wikipedia links (including some small extracts), and comments of mine. The main wiki page for this topic is Wikipedia's History of early Christianity, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_early\\_Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_early_Christianity) (as of Sept. 2014).

- 1) Prior to and during the advent of Jesus Christ, Jerusalem, the centre of the Jewish faith, was under foreign (Roman) rule. The Jews (at least some of them) expected a 'messiah' who would eject the foreigners and resurrect a Jewish state (centred in Jerusalem). Judaism (religion of the Jews) was divided into sects like the Pharisees and Saducees. Those who sought to incite the people to rebel against the Roman empire and expel it from the Jewish lands by force were referred to as Zealots, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zealots\\_\(Judea\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zealots_(Judea)).
- 2) Judea (containing Jerusalem), Samaria and Galilee are three important regions of Palestine/Israel at the time of Jesus, <http://www.bible-history.com/maps/Map-Palestine-New-Testament-Times.gif>
- 3) Ministry of Jesus: "According to the Gospel writers, Jesus preached for a period of one to three years when he was in his early 30s, in the early 1st century AD.", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_early\\_Christianity#Ministry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_early_Christianity#Ministry)

\_of \_Jesus. What is striking is that Jesus' ministry was a maximum of only three years (according to scholars of early Christianity)! Yet, what an impact he made on the world!

"His ministry of teaching, healing the sick and disabled and performing various miracles culminated in his execution at the hands of the Roman authorities in Jerusalem (but see also Responsibility for the death of Jesus). Shortly thereafter, a strong belief in Jesus' bodily resurrection spread rapidly through Jerusalem, beginning with his closest disciples, which led up to the traditional Day of Pentecost. This event provoked the Apostles to embark on a number of missionary campaigns to spread the "Good News", following the Great Commission handed down by Jesus.", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_early\\_Christianity#Ministry\\_of\\_Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_early_Christianity#Ministry_of_Jesus)

[Ravi: When Jesus was crucified the apostles and other followers would have been utterly devastated. Peter, the foremost apostle of Jesus, himself denied Jesus thrice before the rooster crowed on the day & night of the crucifixion (as foretold by Jesus), <http://biblehub.com/matthew/26-34.htm> & <http://biblehub.com/matthew/26-75.htm>. In the days following the crucifixion, who would have expected the apostles and followers of Jesus to go forth and spread Jesus' teachings, and create a great world religion that is very much alive two thousand years after the crucifixion of Jesus! IMHO, unless there were some great events like the resurrection and the day of the Pentecost (given below), the apostles and followers would not have had the spiritual force and motivation to spread the faith.]

3a - The day of Pentecost is when the Holy spirit descended on the Apostles and other followers of Jesus (after crucifixion of Jesus). For more, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecost> and the Acts extract below.

From Acts 2:1-6:

"

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. "

3b - Great Commission: From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Commission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Commission): "The Great Commission of Christianity is the instruction of the resurrected Jesus Christ to his disciples that they spread his teachings to all the nations of the world. It has become a tenet in Christian theology emphasizing ministry, missionary work, evangelism, and baptism. The Apostles are said to have dispersed from Jerusalem and founded the Apostolic Sees."

From <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2028:16-28:20&version=ESV>:

Matthew 28:16-20 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Great Commission

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

—

4) Apostolic Age: "This period, roughly dated between the years 30 and 100 AD, produced writings traditionally attributed to the direct followers of Jesus Christ (the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers collections) and is thus associated with the apostles and their contemporaries.", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_early\\_Christianity#Apostolic\\_Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_early_Christianity#Apostolic_Age). The following comments relates to additional material of the Apostolic Age section in the wiki link just mentioned.

[Ravi: So initially the teachings of Jesus/Christianity was limited to Jewish converts, and Jewish traditions continued to be followed. Paul, who was not one of the apostles who had been with the bodily-living Jesus (but is still viewed as an apostle in the sense that he was one of the most important preachers of Christianity), reached out to Gentiles (non Jews). The Gentile converts were not willing to follow some Jewish traditions and that resulted in some big issues. The year 50 mentioned in the link above in the context of the circumcision controversy would have been around 20 years after the crucifixion of Jesus.]

...

[Ravi: The important thing to note is that there were Jewish communities in Rome at the time of Jesus Christ. The provinces of Palestine (Judea (including Jerusalem), Samaria and Galilee) at the time of Jesus Christ were under Roman rule. (Jerusalem was connected to Rome via a Mediterranean Sea route as shown by this map of Paul's journey to Rome, <http://burmesebible.com/document/paul/paulrome.gif>).

So some Christian preachers would have gone to Jewish communities in Rome, the centre of the Roman empire, within a few decades, if not years, of Jesus' crucifixion. (The wiki page states that Christianity had been spread by the apostles to Rome within 10 years of Jesus' (crucifixion)). That would have been the beginning of the Christian following in Rome. According to the above, the emperor Nerva around the year 98 officially differentiated between Jews (Rabbinic Judaism) and Christians. Till that time perhaps there was limited persecution of Christians in Rome. Of course, both Peter, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Peter#Martyrdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter#Martyrdom), and Paul, who was a Roman citizen, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle#His\\_final\\_days\\_spent\\_in\\_Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle#His_final_days_spent_in_Rome), are said to have been martyred in Rome around year 60 (in the reign of Emperor Nero). That is around three decades after crucifixion of Jesus Christ. But perhaps only the leaders were persecuted prior to the official differentiation between Jews and Christians in Rome around the year 98.]

5) Post-apostolic period: "Christianity throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries have generally been less studied than the periods that came before and after it. This is reflected in that it is usually referred to in terms of the adjacent periods with names as such "post-apostolic" (after the period of 1st century formative Christianity) and "ante-Nicene" (before the First Council of Nicaea). However, the 2nd and 3rd centuries are quite important in the development of Christianity. ", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_early\\_Christianity#Post-apostolic\\_period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_early_Christianity#Post-apostolic_period). The following comments relates to additional material of the Apostolic Age section in the wiki link just mentioned.

[Ravi: In the apostolic age (till year 100) the apostles and other preachers spread the faith and created a sizeable set of Christian communities. Then came a sort-of consolidation phase where these Christian communities agreed on a "basic list of writings that would serve as their canon". The development of an organizational structure of these communities with a bishop heading a city community is also fascinating. A good part of this work was done by the year 160, which is a hundred years after the (reported) martyrdom of Peter and Paul, the two major apostles of the apostolic age. And by 160 there was the first documented synod to discuss doctrinal issues! I really enjoyed reading and understanding this flowering of the Christian church in its early days.]

...

[Ravi: Could it have been a combination of faith in Jesus Christ/Divinity which responds to earnest prayer (interventionist God), along with improved quality of life of adherents of Christianity due to following teachings like loving neighbours and generally being helpful to others, that led Christianity to attract people from other faiths like paganism? Anyway, the Christian faith spread far and wide in the Roman empire when it was not the official religion of the Roman empire (and was even persecuted at times and in some places). That is a great and wonderful achievement of the Christian faith.]

6) From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_early\\_Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_early_Christianity): "The history of early Christianity covers Christianity from its origins to the First Council of Nicaea in 325."

[Ravi: It seems that the first council of Nicaea strongly established Christianity as a recognised & accepted, if not favoured, religion, in the Roman empire, with full support from Roman emperor Constantine. Further growth in Christianity after this strong support from the Roman emperor himself would have been easier perhaps. So Jesus Christ who was crucified on orders of the Roman governor of Jerusalem (even if the governor was reluctant but was forced to do so by some Jewish leaders of Jerusalem) around the year 30, spiritually conquered the Roman empire around 3 centuries later with the Roman empire embracing Christianity as a state religion! What an awesome spiritual conquest!]

As the early history of Christianity is considered to end at the first council of Nicaea, readers may want to read [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Council\\_of\\_Nicaea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea).



## **Non-interference is key to harmonious co-existence between multiple unrelated Sathya Sai trusts/organizations (2014-09-29 22:36)**

*Last updated on October 6th 2014*

While I do not believe in the claims made by some person(s) of being able to interact with subtle form of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and therefore act as a medium between devotees and Bhagawan, I think what is undeniable is that some Sathya Sai devotees have belief in some of these person(s) and are associating with the activities done by organizations/trusts led by these person(s) and/or their close associates. I wish them well, and I am quite sure most Sathya Sai devotees would wish them well, in their efforts to spread as well as practice Bhagawan's teachings through these organizations/trusts.

However, I believe there are some strange situations where some individual(s) associated with Sathya Sai trust/organization A (including, perhaps, some senior administrative position holder(s), at least in the past, immediately after Bhagawan's Mahasamadhi) take guidance/instructions from leaders/spiritual masters associated with Sathya Sai trust/organization B (with B being totally unrelated organizationally to A)! Now, if this guidance is for personal matters that would be OK, I guess. But if this guidance is for organizational/institutional matters then this is a clear case of conflict of interest, IMHO.

It does not matter whether the concerned office-holder is honorary (free service or on some honorarium) or salaried person on regular pay scales (like sixth pay commission). The office-holder has to be loyal and accountable to the leadership of the organization/trust that has given him that office.

Non-interference in each others' matters is the key to harmonious co-existence between multiple unrelated Sathya Sai trusts/organizations, IMHO. Leaders/spiritual masters of one Sathya Sai trust/organization should not provide instructions/guidance related to organizational matters to office-holders/members of another unrelated Sathya Sai trust/organization. Further, any person receiving such instructions/guidance from leader(s)/spiritual master(s) of other unrelated trusts should politely refuse to accept/follow it.

### **Dharma Sankat (Ethical Dilemma) when given instructions not in tune with Bhagawan's vision & teachings**

Now, at times, a person associated with a Sathya Sai organization may form the view that the leadership of the department he serves in and/or of the organization itself is not in tune with the vision of the founder, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. That view could be a valid or invalid view. But if the person holding that view feels it very strongly then it is best for him to disassociate from that department/organization, rather than stay in that department/organization and muddle through, sometimes taking guidance/instructions from spiritual master type persons who are in another unrelated Sathya Sai organization. The latter can create a lot of confusion, doubt and discord.

*[In this context, I would like to mention that in 2011-12, after Bhagawan's Mahasamadhi, I formed the opinion, right or wrong, that the leadership of the department of a Sathya Sai institution in which I was serving (free service for over 8 years then) seemed to be out of tune with the vision of the founder of the institution, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. When I found that me raising these matters were not being appreciated by higher-ups in the institution, and I was told to simply do what the dept. head says, I disassociated myself from the department and institution. That's a clean break. That's how I resolved my Dharma Sankat. No confusion or doubt, though there was anguish & trauma for me personally, and there was a certain amount of discord as I considered it necessary to publicise the matter within my circle of then-colleagues and friends.]*

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An update with the exchange I had on the above contents (with some minor changes), over email with two correspondents (sharing approved by them).

Correspondent 1 wrote:

Very well written !! Both the points are valid !!

I responded (extract of response):

Thanks a ton for your approval - that means a lot to me.

--

Correspondent 2 wrote:

Here is my 2c!

Firstly, it is unfortunate and undesirable, although perfectly democratic in the free world we live in, to have more than one prominent institute/organization wedded to the vision/philosophy of the creator/inspirer. However, if at all such multiple prominent institutes/organizations (not talking about insignificant localized ones) do come up, then the office bearers should be loyal to the institute/organization he/she is part of and represent. Your suggestion to have a clean break for the dubious ones make perfect sense. The approach you took, given your circumstances, was the right one, IMHO.

It seems, as happens in many spiritual organizations, to be a struggle between the subjective understanding/aspirations of the devotees for the individual spiritual development and the objective framework meant to sustain/support the spiritual development of the mass. This struggle is more noisy in the initial days after the physical departure of the creator/inspirer, but eventually things do settle down, and devotees find their way best suited to them. The noise of this struggle, for right or wrong, can be minimized, if the creator/inspirer publicly designate the official heir (institute/organization) and ask the followers to follow the leadership of only and only that heir, upfront before the physical departure, IMHO.

End of my 2c!

I responded:

Thanks for your valuable view.

My view, nearly three and a half years after the Mahasamadhi of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is that anointing a single individual as successor-head of his movement would not have worked out as people would have expected the single successor-head to even have Swami's awesome mystical powers! Instead Swami had set up a very strong organization with various top-members directly appointed by him, including the main trust of Puttaparthi, the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. So it was clear to all concerned that the designated successor of the Puttaparthi setup was the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust body.

Despite that, some important people who were associated with the Puttaparthi based trust and institutions, moved away and formed their own Sathya Sai trusts and institutions. I guess they felt they could do better spiritual and service activities if they moved away and formed their own setup.

And I moved away to do my individual spiritual and service activities :). C'est la vie! (That's life!)

[Ravi: There was a further exchange with the correspondent but as that exchange touched upon some sensitive points I felt it was best not to share it on this blog.]

— end extracts of exchanges with correspondents —

Ravi: I would like to add that when I initiated my move away to do individual spiritual and service activities I had made a LinkedIn entry in my work experience titled, "Individual Service to Society", in Sept. 2011. Over the past few days I received congratulations from three of my LinkedIn contacts on my third work anniversary for "Individual Service to Society"! I did not realize that so much time has passed since I broke away on my own (though I continued to visit the previous Sathya Sai institution that I was associated with, for an average of just an hour a week to help out an M.Tech. student on his project work, till Feb./Mar. 2012 when I parted ways formally from it). I guess I am quite experienced now in individual service to society (operating out of one's home/flat), and may perhaps be in a position to advise others on the same :).

## 2.10 October

### Harvard Prof. Diana Eck on Shiva Linga worship (2014-10-04 16:52)

Last updated on 5th October 2014

*\_ Note: This post has small excerpts related to Shiva Linga worship from Eck's book, India: A sacred geography. In my considered opinion, her treatment of Shiva Linga worship (in these excerpts) is sensitive, spiritually wise and balanced. However, she does mention some insensitive and inappropriate interpretations after which she provides the spiritually wiser and sensitive interpretation. Some readers, especially devotees of Lord Shiva, may find the insensitive and inappropriate interpretations to be offensive, and so, I request such readers to consider skipping reading the rest of this post.*

Excerpts from India: A sacred geography by Prof. Diana L. Eck, pages 203 & 207-209 - paperback, are given below. I have also provided some comments of mine.

*[Ravi: The excerpt below is part of a summary made by the author (Eck) of a beginning section of Shiva Purana]*

Suddenly, between them, the ground of the cosmos opened and there appeared a fiery shaft of light. It rose up from the depths below and extended upward through space as far as the eye could see. This was the jyotirlinga-the linga of light. It was a column of fire too brilliant to look at, inexpressible in its glory.

...

Shiva's second boon was the linga itself. He says, "This pillar, without beginning and end, will become small in size so that people may behold it and worship it, dear sons." *[Ravi: The reference for this quote is Siva Purana, Vidyeshvarasamhita 9.19]* The myth, then, ascribes to that fiery theophany of light the origin of the symbolic linga to be found at the center of Shiva's worship and in all of Shiva's temples. With such splendid origin, it is no wonder that many Shiva lingas in temples large and small are said to be svayambhu, "self-born" or spontaneously manifest, rather than established by human hands.

*[Ravi: That's the origin of the term jyotirlinga! And the linga in the temple is a symbolically small version of this infinite pillar of light! Very interesting for me, as I am utterly fascinated by Shiva worship nowadays.]*

The self-limitation of the cosmic, the shrinking of the immense to be accessible on a human scale, is a theme played on with brilliance in the mythic lore of many Hindu temples. In one sense every temple contains small images that represent a vast and unfathomable reality. This is the very meaning of the symbolic sensibility at the core of religious life everywhere.

*[Ravi: Terrific! Hats off to Prof. Diana Eck for her superb understanding and expression of the core Upanishadic/Vedanta type beliefs in the imagery and mythology associated with Hindu temples.]*

...

The divine expands, evolving as if from seed, and stretching into the immense, indeed infinite reality of the cosmos, which lives and breathes. And, in turn, the divine withdraws that vast complexity into the seed of Being itself. This dynamic streams through the vivid symbolic realms of Hindu thought and image, and the linga in this world is the symbol par excellence. The infinite contracts and is concentrated in image and form so that the sacred may be present to human sense and vision.

*[Ravi: Awesome, man, awesome!!!]*

...

Unfortunately, even in the 1970s, the translators of the first English edition of the Shiva Purana decided to translate linga as "phallic emblem," perpetuating this symbolic distortion. Such a translation is not completely erroneous, but it does not in the least convey what Hindus have seen and understood in this symbol. It is as inadequate as would be an interpretation of the Christian eucharist that saw the rite first and foremost as ritual cannibalism, eating the body and drinking its blood, and could not get beyond such an interpretation to any deeper and more complex understanding.

*[Ravi: From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist>: The Eucharist, also called Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, and other names, is a sacrament accepted by almost all Christians. It is reenacted in accordance with Jesus' instruction at the Last Supper, as recorded in several books of the New Testament, that his followers do in remembrance of him*

*as when he gave his disciples bread, saying, "This is my body", and gave them wine saying, "This is my blood."*  
— end wiki extract —

*\_ What a fantastic comparison (Eucharist) to show to those Christians who look down upon linga worship!  
BTW Prof. Diana Eck was raised as a Christian, and seems to now have an interfaith approach.*

*\_ It seems to me that a vital aspect of spiritual enlightenment involves broadening the mind and transcending mundane bodily realities (and the body does have quite a few unpleasant mundane realities). It is all in the vision. If one chooses to look at a religious object/image only from a narrow-minded worldly perspective then one gets trapped in that perspective. Instead if one chooses to view it from a spiritually and/or religiously broad perspective (infinite contracted to smaller form so that humans can worship the sacred) then one gets higher spiritual/religious benefits from that worship.]*

...

But the linga, as is clear from the myth of the jyotirlinga, is the symbol or emblem of nishkala Shiva -the fractionless, transcendent, and supreme Lord. The linga is the emblem of Shiva's unfathomable presence.

— end excerpts from Prof. Diana Eck's India: A sacred geography —

Readers may also want to view this post of mine, Sathya Sai Baba Lingodhbhavam and his views on Shiva Linga worship, <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2014/10/sathya-sai-baba-lingodhbhavam-and-his.html>.

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### **Sathya Sai Baba Lingodhbhavam and his views on Shiva Linga worship (2014-10-05 09:44)**

The Lingams (Lingas) that Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba would create/manifest were ellipsoid in shape (photograph links given below), different from the traditional pillar shape of shiva lingams in Shiva temples.

#### **Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Lingodhbhavam**

<http://sathyaibaba.wordpress.com/2008/05/28/sathya-sai-lingodhbhava-mystery-of-the-shiva-lingam/> quotes Shri Kasturi, first editor of Sanathana Sarathi, on the phenomenon of Lingodhbhavam in/by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as follows:

"Until 1956, the Shivaratri all-night vigil and Bhajan could be held in the Prayer Hall itself. Sai Baba sat on the silver chair placed on over a tiger skin on a low platform. When the slower hand of the clock hovered near eight, the Linga or Lingas indicated the desire to emerge and Baba showed signs of physical struggle to smoothen their way out. Year after year, I have stood on His left, holding silver jug of water. Seshagiri Rao stood on the right with a silver plate to receive the Linga as it fell out. At predetermined moments, proceeding through the gullet, the Linga presented itself for public view and personal use. One year eleven Lingas emerged in a row, one behind the other. Another year, there were nine. He has given me one of the nine. It is worshipped with Mantras prescribed in the scriptures. The Linga miracle does happen annually on every Shivaratri day wherever Baba happens to be." (Prof Kasturi, SS, 3/99, p.81)

— end quote —

The same link above has some wonderful photographs of the Lingams created/manifested by/in Swami:

- a) <http://sathyaibaba.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/shiva-lingam-1.jpg>
- b) <http://sathyaibaba.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/shiva-lingams-2.jpg>
- c) <http://sathyaibaba.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/shiva-lingams-3.jpg>

The official Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust website has the following on Lingodhbhavam, [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/devotees\\_experiences/Divine\\_The\\_Sacred\\_Lingodhbhavam.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/devotees_experiences/Divine_The_Sacred_Lingodhbhavam.htm):

The Sacred 'Lingodhbhavam' Wonder

How Baba materializes and brings forth Lingas from His mouth

During the festival of Maha Shivaratri, the festival dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva, Baba usually performs the sacred miracle of Lingodbhavam, the emergence of the Linga (an ellipsoid object symbolizing divinity) from Him. Howard Murphet, who had the privilege of witnessing the event from close quarters, gives a detailed account of this awe-inspiring miracle in his book "Sai Baba: Man of Miracles" thus:

I had been told that every year, one or more Shivalingams have materialised in Baba's body at this sacred period of Shivaratri. He ejects the lingams through His mouth for all to observe. They are always hard, being made of crystal clear or coloured stone and sometimes of metals like gold or silver.

At six o'clock Sai Baba, accompanied by a small group of disciples, came onto the Shanti Vedika and soon after that the speeches began. It was about eight-thirty, powerful electric lights illuminating the group on the platform, when Sai Baba rose to His feet. First He sang a sacred song in His sweet celestial voice that touches the heart. Then He began His discourse speaking, as He always does on such public occasions, in the Telugu tongue.

On the platform Mr. Kasturi was busy making notes of the address which would be published later in both Telugu and English. Sai Baba's eloquence had been flowing in a steady stream for some half-hour when suddenly His voice broke. He tried again but only a husky squeak came. Bhajan leaders among the devotees, knowing what was happening, immediately gave voice to a well-known bhajan and then the great crowd joined in.

Baba sat down and drank from a flask of water. Several times He tried to sing, but it was impossible. Now He began to show signs of real pain. He twisted and turned, placed His hand on His chest, buried His head in His hands, plucked at His hair. Then He sipped some more water and tried to smile reassuringly at the crowd.

Some men around me were weeping unashamedly and I myself felt a flow of tenderness towards the being suffering there before us. I could not grasp the full significance of the event that caused the agony, nor perhaps could most of the great crowd watching, but to understand a thing with the mind is one matter and to feel its meaning in the bones and blood is another. Inwardly I felt that I was sitting at the very heart of something profoundly significant to mankind.

So, instead of blurring my eyes with the tears of sympathy, I kept them fixed on Baba's mouth; my whole attention was glued to that point so that I would not miss the exit of the lingam.

After about twenty minutes, I was rewarded. I saw a flash of green light shoot from His mouth and with it an object, which He caught in His hands cupped below. Immediately, He held the object high between His thumb and forefinger so that all could see it.

A breath of profound joy passed through the crowd. It was a beautiful green lingam, and certainly much bigger than any ordinary man could bring up through his throat. Sai Baba placed it on the top of a large torch so that the light shone through its glowing emerald-like translucency. Then, leaving it there, He retired from the scene.

Mr. Kasturi, who had been present on the platform of the Shanti Vedika when it was produced, described it thus later, in print: "An emerald lingam, three inches high and fixed on a pedestal five inches broad that had formed itself in Him (Baba), emerged from his mouth to the unspeakable joy and relief of the huge gathering."

Reference: "Sai Baba: Man of Miracles" by Mr. Howard Murphet. Page: 43-49 (Paperback Edition). Published by Macmillan India Ltd, 1972.

— end extract from Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust website link —

### **Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on Lingam and Lingam worship**

[http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol\\_02/04Feb15/03\\_Spiritual\\_Blossoms/01\\_Sathya\\_Sai\\_Speaks/sai\\_speaks.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_02/04Feb15/03_Spiritual_Blossoms/01_Sathya_Sai_Speaks/sai_speaks.htm) gives excerpts from a 1974 Shivarathri discourse of Bhagawan. An extract from that:

The manifestation of the Lingam is a part of My Nature. Spiritual Scholars explain it as reminiscent of an epochal event in the past when Shiva challenged Brahma and Vishnu to gauge the height and depth of the Lingam Form He assumed. The two Gods failed and had to accept defeat - that is the usual folklore. Truly speaking, however, the Lingam emerges as a result of prayer by devotees and Divine Grace. You have to recognise in this event a glimpse of Divinity and a sign of Infinite Grace. Just as Om is the sound symbol of God, the Lingam is the Form symbol or the visible symbol of God, the most meaningful, the simplest and the least endowed with the appendages of attributes. Lingam means That in which this merges or dissolves. Eventually, all Forms have to merge in the Formless. Shiva is the Principle of the Dissolution of all Names and Forms, of all entities and individuals. Thus, the Lingam is the simplest sign or symbol of Emergence and Mergence.

[Ravi: Simple but superb explanation of the spiritual & religious significance of the Lingam, IMHO. I loved the

conclusion, "Thus, the Lingam is the simplest sign or symbol of Emergence and Mergence." As simple as that!]

— end 1974 Shivarathri discourse extract —

From a spiritual shopping website:

'The Lingam' is just a symbol, a sign, an illustration of the beginningless, the endless, the limitless – for it has no limbs, face, feet, front or back, no beginning or end. Its shape is like the picture one imagines of the 'Nirankara' (Formless) to be.' Quote Sathya Sai Baba, Prasanti Nilayam on 23 February 1971.

— end extract —

From <http://www.saidarshan.org/baba/docs/saieesh.html>, which is by Late Shri G.V. Subba Rao ("a distinguished diplomat who retired as the Head of the Energy Division in the United Nations", [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/devotees\\_experiences/Lord\\_Sacred\\_Treasures.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/devotees_experiences/Lord_Sacred_Treasures.htm)):

This is the story of an extraordinary materialization by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba of an unusual picture signifying the true form of Shree Sathya Sai.

On one Shankara Jayanthi day Swami asked my late revered father, Sri Ghandikota Subrahmanya Shastri, to address a large gathering of devotees in the spacious Poornachandra Auditorium. My father, a master of Vedhic learning and practice, dwelt at length on the divine qualities and powers of Swami. He compared the divine glory of Baba with several Vedhic divinities e.g. Gayathree, Datthaathreya, Vishnu. By a slip of memory, my father forgot to mention the Shiva aspect of Baba, although Shiva happened to be his Ishta Devatha or favorite form of Divinity. All through the rest of the day he regretted this omission.

BABA's TRUE FORM

The next morning, after the regular bhajan was over, Baba called us inside and graced us with a memorable interview. The discussion centered on the triple Vedhic paths of, Karma, Bhakthi and Jnaana (Work, Worship, and Wisdom) and the triple divinities: Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudhra. At the end, Baba led us into the Bhajan Hall and showed us around the new decorative installations in the Bhajan Mandir. Baba then stopped in front of the Shiridi Baba painting and lovingly materialized an unusual color picture (shown below), declaring to my father: "Idhi naa nija svaroopam" (This is My True Form). This electrified my revered father and also astounded me.

[Ravi: The photo link is [http://www.saidarshan.org/baba/images/sa\\_yeshva.jpg](http://www.saidarshan.org/baba/images/sa_yeshva.jpg). Swami's image is shown within a pillar lingam.]

The first astounding feature of this created picture is that Baba's bust image is at the heart of the Linga form of Maheshvara. Saayeeshvara is thus Lingeshvara, the force pervading the universe. Sadhashiva Linga represents the ever auspicious Aatma beyond all duality. The Lingam is the symbol of creation and the Godhead.

— end G.V. Subba Rao account extracts —

Ravi: I would like to add that I was greatly blessed to observe, from a distance of around fifty to hundred feet (I don't recall the distance very clearly) almost straight in front of him (in the students & staff block), the emergence of lingam from Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mouth during a Shivarathri maybe in 2003 (I don't recall the year clearly so it could be one or two years later). My experience of that Shivarathri Lingodbhavam (and later ones too though I viewed the later Lingodbhavam from the side and from a greater distance, sometimes on closed-circuit TV put up in the packed and overflowing Sai Kulwant darshan hall) was similar to Mr. Howard Murphet's description (book published in 1972) - the physical discomfort and strain that Swami exhibited prior to Lingam emergence, him sipping water frequently, devotees (including me) feeling sad at Swami's discomfort and strain, the Bhajans picking up tempo (with fast-paced Shiva bhajans and the percussion instruments like tabla as well as the crowd singing in chorus, including me, getting into a great excitement kind of mode) as the bhajan leaders and the crowd spotted these signs of imminent lingam emergence, the devotees' eyes (those who could see Swami directly) focused on Bhagawan's face and mouth, the joy and celebration when the linga emerged (I clearly saw the emergence and felt that I had witnessed a great holy event), and, very importantly, the happiness of Bhagawan with the lingodbhavam and the resultant triumphant and celebratory joy of his devotees.

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Readers may also want to view this post of mine, Harvard Prof. Diana Eck on Shiva Linga worship, <http://ravisyer.blogspot.in/2014/10/harvard-prof-diana-eck-on-shiva-linga.html>.

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## Comments on New York Times article: False Teachings for India's Students (2014-10-09 14:05)

Here is a recent article (dated yesterday, 8th Oct. 2014) in the New York Times (NYT) by its editorial board, False Teachings for India's Students, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/opinion/false-teachings-for-indias-students.html>.

Some comments of mine on it:

Mr. Dinanath Batra's role in influencing Indian education policy under PM Modi seems to be the main concern of the NYT editorial board.

On the Wendy Doniger book withdrawal issue: I spent a lot of time understanding this Doniger book pulping affair and have blogged ( & mailed) and publicly commented on forums like The Hindu website on it. [Interested readers can view this blog post of mine on Doniger's book, Book having Baseless Criticism of Hindu Divine Figures Blocked from being Distributed in India, <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2014/02/book-having-baseless-criticism-of-hindu.html>.]

I think the NYT has not been fair by not mentioning that the issue was fought in an Indian court. In my view, Doniger's book (I read some parts of it) had some pretty nasty and outrageous views on Hinduism which could easily have inflamed religious passions and led to communal riots. So I think if Penguin India had continued to fight the case in court, in the interests of maintaining communal harmony and saving lives, the court would have ruled against Penguin India quoting laws related to preventing religious/communal inflammatory material from being published. Now, some Indians (and some readers of this post) may feel that such laws should be changed but the fact of the matter is that these are the laws that are current now, and have somehow enabled India to survive as a country where various religions and sects thrive.

On Mr. Batra's books being made part of Gujarat state curriculum: I have not read Mr. Batra's books. However, I am not in favour of Akhand Bharat ideology, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhand\\_Bharat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhand_Bharat), as current India's neighbours would not like that ideology. I further hold the view that such ideologies should not be part of mainstream Indian education. Regarding aircraft existing in ancient India, I am of the view that it is fine to mention that epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata mention them but it should not be presented as established facts. Essentially I prefer to follow the middle path in this kind of matter. One approach, which seems to be well established in some Indian education circles, is to view Ramayana and Mahabharata as completely fictional, just stories. The other extreme approach is to view well known versions of Ramayana (e.g. Valmiki Ramayana) and Mahabharata as established facts. My middle ground approach is that Ramayana and Mahabharata have not been historically established to be either fictional or factual (non-fictional). They could (i.e. a probability) be based on real-life figures. Some, including me, believe well known versions of Ramayana and Mahabharata to be largely based on real life figures of Rama, Sita, Ravana, Krishna, Pandavas, Draupadi, Kauravas etc. But it is a matter of belief and not historically established fact. This is very much like the miracles attributed to Jesus Christ in the New Testament are beliefs and not historically established fact. I think the Indian education system should follow such middle ground approaches and follow it not only for Hindu religious figures but also for Christian, Islamic and other religious figures.

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## Notes of selected parts of 1995 Romila Thapar lecture: The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics (2014-10-09 22:18)

*Last updated on October 10th 2014*

I recently read "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics", a paper based on a lecture given by leading Indian historian Romila Thapar, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romila\\_Thapar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romila_Thapar), in a conference on eastern studies in Tokyo in 1995, <https://archive.org/details/TheTheoryOfAryanRaceAndIndiaHistoryAndPolitics>. It does provide an interesting overview of the Aryan race theory as related to India, from what I presume is a mainstream academic history perspective.

However, please be warned that Romila Thapar's talk/paper goes by evidence (archaeological, linguistic & textual)

without treating scripture or any spiritual seer/master/mystic's words as holy truth. As an example she goes by 1500 BC as the date for the Rigveda and treats the 4500 BC date for Rigveda as an extreme and unwarranted by evidence date. Whereas people like me who believe in spiritual seers' words consider Rama to have been a real figure around 20,000 years ago i.e. 18000 BC! And Vedic sacrifices are mentioned in Valmiki Ramayana, which we believe to be largely, if not wholly, factual. So people like me believe that the Veda including Rigveda would be older than 18000 BC!

But then mainstream academic historians will go by evidence and I think it will be helpful for people like me to be able to understand/know their view even if I do not agree with their conclusions. My initial impression is that ancient India/Hindu history dating work is not an authoritative one. It is more like a theory based on evidence gathered/available so far. If new evidence becomes available then the ancient India/Hindu history dates may change dramatically. The lack of solid irrefutable evidence like archaeological evidence for Rama's life and reign perhaps is key to academia (or mainstream academia) not being willing to accept Rama as a real historical person, let alone date his life to around 20,000 years back.

The talk/paper is quite dense for a non-historian like me. I have made short notes of selected parts which cover ancient history and some other parts (like politics) of her talk and which is not so dense. Some of the notes below may put some readers off - but that's how mainstream academia views ancient Indian history, like it or not! A few short sentences from Thapar's paper are also given, in quotes.

Notion of biological race was seriously considered in the latter part of the nineteenth century. An Aryan identity, used both for language and race, was considered.

The Aryan identity was applied to Indian origins. Max Mueller's work on Rigveda and other Sanskrit literature played a role in this. Max Mueller held the view that there was a common central Asian homeland for all Aryans, from which a group migrated to Europe and another to Iran and India. [BTW Max Mueller never visited India! So his views were based on his study of Hindu Sanskrit scripture and literature, and perhaps second-hand information about India from others who had visited India.]

Many variations of this Aryan theory were proposed later by historians as well as others.

The Aryan Race theory "received a jolt with the archeological discovery of the Indus civilisation" in the 1920s. The Indus civilisation was urban while the Vedas described a pastoral-agrarian society.

From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus\\_Valley\\_Civilization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization), "The Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) was a Bronze Age civilization (3300–1300 BCE; mature period 2600–1900 BCE) extending from what today is northeast Afghanistan to Pakistan and northwest India (see map). Along with Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia it was one of three early civilizations of the Old World, and of the three the most widespread, covering an area of 1.25 million km. It flourished in the basins of the Indus River, one of the major rivers of Asia, and the Ghaggar-Hakra River, which once coursed through northwest India and eastern Pakistan." ... "The Indus Valley Civilization is also known as the Harappan Civilization, after Harappa, the first of its sites to be excavated in the 1920s, in what was then the Punjab province of British India, and is now in Pakistan. The discovery of Harappa, and soon afterwards, Mohenjo-Daro, was the culmination of work beginning in 1861 with the founding of the Archaeological Survey of India in the British Raj. Excavation of Harappan sites has been ongoing since 1920, with important breakthroughs occurring as recently as 1999."

Rigveda has been dated approximately as 1500 BC (by mainstream historians like Thapar). Indus cities had declined before 1500 BC. In which case, Indus civilisation was prior to Vedic culture.

Others date Rigveda as 4500 BC (which Thapar thinks is unlikely based on linguistic evidence). In which case, the Vedic civilisation would precede Indus Valley Civilisation/Harappan Civilisation.

Notion of Aryan invasion destroying Indus Valley cities has been questioned due to lack of archaeological evidence.

The (gradual) decline of Indus civilisation & cities happened in early second millennium BC. Environmental changes, Persian gulf trade closure and political authority collapse are considered now as the reasons for the decline.

Vedic texts mention the horse and horse sacrifice. So, Thapar argues, if Indus valley cities were Vedic then significant amount of horse bones should have been found in the Indus valley city archaeological sites, which is not the case. So, she argues, that Indus Valley civilisation was not Vedic.

"The notion of an Aryan race identified on the basis of an Aryan language has now been discarded. Language and race are distinctly different categories. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to discard the term 'Aryan' as well, using only Indo-Aryan to identify the language, or else staying strictly within the definition of arya from Sanskrit texts where



it is a linguistic and social qualifier, without the overlay of nineteenth century theories.”

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### **A recent Deccan Herald article - (Sathya) Sai Baba on wrath of God (2014-10-14 16:58)**

Here is an article dated today (14th Oct. 2014) in Deccan Herald, Sai Baba on wrath of God, <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/435817/sai-baba-wrath-god.html>, by a Terry Reis Kennedy, who seems to be based in Puttaparthi.

Some short extracts and comments:

Many people who know I am a devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba ridicule me. They insist that he was nothing more than a magician. They consider those who still take comfort at his Abode of Peace, Prasanthi Nilayam long after he left his body in 2011 must be deluded.

Because Swami taught me not to re-act to such statements in an unkind manner, I just keep quiet. This, of course, is difficult for me because it is as if someone is insulting my own mother.

*[Ravi: She is echoing how many Sathya Sai devotees feel when they encounter uninformed and malicious criticism of Swami and his devotees/followers. Informed and constructive criticism is a different matter - I can take that and engage in a discussion giving my view of the matter. But the uninformed and malicious criticism types seem to have already made up their mind and seem to be interested in "converting" Sathya Sai devotees into skeptics and critics like them, rather than even listen to, forget about accept, a different point of view.]*

...

Though charismatic and forgiving, nurturing and protective, our Sai Ma often showed his Shiva side. He could give you a look that would make you shake with fear. I was very careful in Darshan not to ask for ridiculous things. Once, I asked if he could help me with a love relationship problem and his look was so fierce I understood that no relationship was as important as the relationship I have with God.

*[Ravi: I too have tasted Bhagwan's Shiva fury side which scared the 'hell' out of me! However, later analysis has shown me that every time I faced such fury from him, it was the right "tough love"/bitter medicine that was needed for me to bring me out of my errant ways, and so I am deeply grateful to my Guru, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, for this "tough love". Of course, I have received his "soft love" too.]*

...

He (Swami) also said, "I behave like you, moving, singing, laughing, journeying, but watch out for the blow I inflict ALL OF A SUDDEN to chastise and to warn. I shall scorch the wrongdoer for his wrong, and soothe the virtuous for his righteousness. Justice shall be meted out to all."

— end extracts and comments —

Ravi: I find it quite interesting that Deccan Herald, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deccan\\_Herald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deccan_Herald), which seems to have a significant readership in Bangalore and some other places in Karnataka, has published this article.

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### **Human nature and different paths/ways for motivation and happiness/joy in life (2014-10-25 13:25)**

I recently had a mail conversation with a correspondent, part of which touched upon human nature and different paths/ways for motivation/happiness in life. A slightly edited version of the exchange is shared below (with approval from the correspondent):

As the concluding part of his response a correspondent wrote:

*However, human nature does not change easily.*

I responded:

I entirely agree on your human nature point (does not change easily). I have elaborated on it a little below.

One of the aspects of ashram life (Sathya Sai Baba, Puttaparthi ashram) that I experienced as a free service spiritual

aspirant is that one's human weaknesses (as well as strengths) comes to the fore in the small village type of environment of the ashram. And the royal battle then is with conquering, or at least subduing, one's weaknesses. [Note that now there are well paid (sixth pay commission salary scales)/reasonably well paid employees of the ashram system, some of whom may be serious spiritual aspirants but some of whom may not be so much into spirituality and may be mainly interested in the salary.]

This is where, from a Hindu perspective, the Ramayana and Mahabharata become very good teaching material especially in an ashram environment (but also in regular society environments) as the characters in it have a great mix of good and evil, human strengths and human weaknesses. Sathya Sai Baba used to frequently refer to key incidents in these epics where Rama and Krishna as well as their staunch followers/supporters like Lakshmana, Sita, Hanuman, Yudishtra, Arjuna, Draupadi etc. show how to overcome adversity and one's human weaknesses. He would also point out the key incidents showing the negative traits of the other characters like Kaikeyi+Manthara (as well as some failings of Rama's father Dasharatha), Ravana, Kauravas etc., and teach us to not fall into making the same mistakes as them. Such teachings of Sathya Sai Baba has put the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics in a significantly different and very positive light for me. It may sound very simplistic for many of us modern age people, but actually they contain the crux of the human battle over good and bad tendencies that all or most of us have.

One key learning for me from Sathya Sai Baba's teachings about Rama was that, according to him (and perhaps according to the well known versions of the epic too), Ravana was far more accomplished in scripture (Veda) than Rama. Ravana was also a great devotee of Lord Shiva and had won boons from him. So, generally speaking, Ravana was far more accomplished than Rama. The key difference between them, according to Sathya Sai Baba, was that Rama wanted to be good (was focused on being good) (and was not bothered about achieving greatness), whereas Ravana wanted to be great (from a worldly perspective). That desire for greatness led to Ravana's downfall, whereas Rama showed that he wanted only to be good (Rama declines to rule over Lanka after winning the war and prefers to go back to far more humble Ayodhya). Then Sathya Sai Baba would teach us to be good (like Rama) and not to aim for greatness (like Ravana).

[A relevant extract from Satyopanishad - Upanishad Of Sri Sathya Sai - Part 6 (Questions by Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju),

<http://vishvarupa.com/om-sathya-sai-baba/2009/10/satyopanishad-upanishad-of-sri-sathya-sai-part-6/>

Question) Anil Kumar: Swami! Kindly tell us how to achieve greatness in life?

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba: Never allow this sort of idea to get into your head. You are mistaken if you think that you have achieved something very special and unique by becoming great. No, not at all. Becoming great in life should not be your aim. There are several great people in society. I don't think this is important or that this matters most. Goodness is superior to greatness. Instead of aiming to be great, try to be good. It is far more important to be a good man than a great man.

What is the difference between the two? A great man sees man in God, while a good man sees God in man. Ravana, as portrayed in the Ramayana, was undoubtedly a great man. He considered Rama, the Lord, a mere man. But, Rama was an ideal good man. Rama saw divinity in a bird like Jatayu, in squirrels, and even in rakshasas like Vibhishana. Women like Sabari, illiterate people like Guha as well as saints appear to Rama like his own reflections. So, Rama was good. So, you should try to get the reputation that you are a good man and not a great man.

— end extract from Satyopanisad —]

From a spiritual point of view I think that is a very valuable and very effective teaching of Swami. I have benefited greatly from it. However, from a material point of view, such attitudes in today's competitive world may result in one being characterised (rightly) as lacking (material) ambition. That's what happened to me during the last decade or so of my software industry career (from around 1992-93 to Aug. 2002) when I had turned strongly towards the spiritual path. But I was OK with it as I still made enough money to take care of my responsibilities & needs.

On another comparison note, I wonder whether you were fond of Agatha Christie's books. I was very fond of them. While I enjoyed the Hercule Poirot ones more as a youngster, over time I realized that the Miss Marple ones were more educative and insightful about human nature, which is so similar in its core aspects, whether it be Agatha Christie's UK village(s) of the early 20th century (I guess) or Puttaparthi village (now town) in the early 21st century :). The correspondent responded:

*In my kind of life, competition is important to get the best out of oneself. Often, the competition is with oneself,*

sometimes with people you do not know and may never meet.

*\_ Since I run a bit, I enter races where there may be hundreds or thousands of others. I am not trying to be among the first few (or the first many) but I always try and improve on my timing for that kind of race. During the course of the race, I set small goals (like overtaking the guy with a grey shirt, or not drinking water until I have reached the top of the climb).*

*\_ A lot of my life has been like this. Each year, I try and improve on my lectures to a class (and sometimes fail miserably), or write a research paper that gets many citations, or a newspaper article that people will talk about. I find it helps me improve whatever it is I am doing and it has its own rewards (sometimes rewards that no-one else will even notice).*

*\_ I can envisage a life removed from all this but, for me, I worry that I will fail to realise what I am capable of. Of course, I am talking about material things but I wonder if I would not keep trying to do better whatever it is I was doing.*

I wrote back:

I think I understand the competition part, especially the competition with one's past records/performances, as a means to improve oneself (materially). My view is that the efforts made to improve one's performance is good even from a spiritual perspective. IMHO, where it lands into some spiritually undesirable territory is when one has a strong desire for improved performance as then one becomes unhappy if that desire is not achieved/satisfied.

What I do is to put in efforts to improve myself but try to reduce my emotional attachment to the success (or failure) of the efforts.

[This is on the lines of the message of the famous Bhagavad Gita shloka, Chapter 2, Verse 47 related to activity/work (in the world) - Karmenyeva Adhikaraste Maa phaleshu kadachana ..., as interpreted by Sathya Sai Baba. Please note that, IMHO, the text below, which would have been translated from Telugu to English, uses the word, happy, to indicate short-lived and perhaps shallow joy, as compared to deeper and more lasting joy(s).

From Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Gita Vahini, <http://vahini.org/downloads/geethavahini.html> #ChapterV

If you have an eye on the fruits of your actions, you are liable to be affected by worry, anxiety and restlessness. The question may arise: if the fruits have to be given up, how can one manage to live? But why this weakness of heart, this nervousness? He who has assured, 'Yogakshemam vahamyaham,' will certainly look after that. He will give the wherewithal and the means. All you have to consider is (whether) a happy life is important or is liberation from the cycle of life and death more important? Happy living is only of short duration; the joy of liberation is eternal, unshakable.

On this point many commentators have exercised their intelligence and written differently. Many have said that the giving up of Phala or fruit is advised because there is no right or authority for the doer to desire for the fruit.

This is a great blunder. The Lord has said in the Geetha, 'refuse the fruit' (maa phaleshu), that is to say: the deed yields results, but the doer should not desire the result, or do it with the result in view. If Krishna's intention was to say that the doer has no right for the fruit, He would have said, 'It is fruitless', 'na phaleshu,' (na, meaning no). So if you desist from Karma, you will be transgressing the Lord's command. That will be a serious mistake.

When man has a right for engaging in Karma, he has a right also for the fruit; no one can deny this or refuse his right. But the doer can, out of his own free will and determination, refuse to be affected by the result, whether favourable or unfavourable. The Geetha shows the way: "Do... and deny the consequence." The desire for the result of your action is a sign of Rajoguna: the giving up of action since you cannot benefit by the fruit is a sign of Thamoguna. To engage oneself in Karma, to know that the result will follow; and yet not to be attached to it or getting concerned with it - that is the sign of Sathwaguna.

The Karmayogi who has learnt this secret of "Karma combined with Phalathyaga" should have Samabuddhi, more than Sangabuddhi. For the Sangabuddhi draws him into attachments and entanglements. "This Karma is mine; its results are due to my endeavours. I am the person entitled to it," such are the thoughts which bind the doer. Krishna advises that one should rise above this Sangabuddhi. He declares that Samathwam is the genuine Yoga. (Samathwam yogamuchyathe).

— end Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Gita Vahini extract —]

That (reducing my emotional attachment to success (or failure) of my efforts) has helped me become more contented. But I must also acknowledge that such reduction of attachment to/desire for material success has lessened my level of material success/performance, as compared to earlier days when I was not so much into such spiritual practices/stuff. However, for me now, the most important thing is being in a state of love, peace and/or joy as far as possible (and to try to spread that to others when feasible/receptive), and from that spiritual goal point of view, I think I am more successful than my earlier more-material days.

The correspondent responded:

*The big danger for me is to enter what people call 'a comfort zone' and stop trying. I do much better, physically and mentally, when I feel there are challenges. I am mentally better composed, far less liable to be upset or angry, when I try and push myself a little more physically: to run a little further, or faster, to exercise a little more. I am sure there is a physical effect on my body that makes my mind more relaxed.*

*\_ It's well known that exercises like running produce a burst of endorphins which give a feeling of well being. Perhaps the same effect is produced in different ways with yoga when done properly.*

*\_ It's also well known that limits are what one accepts, rather than what one is capable of. There is always a little more that one can do ...*

*\_ None of this is a reflection on what you said in your messages. It's the way I get motivated.*

I wrote back:

Very interesting.

I think there is a huge variety in attitudes and interests in life, and so there are a lot of different paths/ways for motivation and happiness in life. One needs to explore these paths/ways and get to know what is best suitable for one. Perhaps many times it is a combination of elements of different paths.

In this context, I think it is appropriate to mention the three major paths/ways of life expounded by Hindu philosophy: Karma (action/work), Bhakti (devotion) and Jnana (knowledge/wisdom). As I understand it, these are the major categorizations but they certainly are not mutually exclusive. So Hindu believers would typically be following some mix of these three paths. However, the dominant element at a particular stage in one's life, may be one of these three.

What you have written about seems to be in line with most of the Karma marg (path) approach, which is what well-intentioned and active members of society are comfortable with. The specifics you provide regarding a 'comfort zone' leading to a person not trying to improve/excel, and the need for challenges to keep one motivated and happy (feeling of well being) are interesting, and may be the experience of some people following the Karma marg too.

Of course, faith in God is an important aspect of the Hindu Karma marg, and so it differs in that important aspect from an atheist's/agnostic's approach to an active and challenging material life. The Karma marg person is advised to do his/her actions as a humble devotional offering to God and treat the results of the actions as the will of God. That perhaps provides mental balance to handle success and failure with some degree of equanimity, even when one is deeply involved in an active material life.

The vast majority of Hindus, especially the family based ones (grihastas), seem to be following a path having a mix of Karma and Bhakti. Their devotion to God is of the type that praises God, thanks God for His gifts, asks for worldly help from God to assist them in their material lives (a lot of the Karma Kanda (ritual part) of the Vedas deals with praying for such specific worldly help from God), and also earnestly requests, usually towards the end of one's life or at times of great physical and mental suffering, spiritual refuge. But it is this grihastas group that reveres and helps saints and fosters spiritual ashrams as well as spiritual aspirants, as they believe that such attitudes and actions will be of material as well as spiritual benefit to them. So this grihastas group is a very vital part of the Hindu system. Also it is from these grihastas that some become deeply attracted to spirituality and become attached to spiritual gurus and/or become members of spiritual ashrams.

When followed with a lot of intensity, the Bhakti and Jnana paths, I think are more suitable to detached other-worldly type of people who do not give much importance to material success and are more concerned about their spiritual success/progress. Very interestingly, most mystics fall into this category. But the movements some of them initiate needs missionary kind-of active workers to spread the teachings and demonstrate its practice! So that's where Karma margam people become vital even for spiritual missions. [In this context, I think Ramakrishna was the mystic deeply into Bhakti while his disciple Vivekananda was the Karma marg type.]

BTW the Sathya Sai Puttaparthi setup (at least since I came to Puttaparthi in late 2002) is heavily into action oriented (Karma) path towards God. In this setup, the heavily quoted teaching of Swami is, "Hands that help are holier than lips that pray". People like me who are more into Bhakti and Jnana are exceptions. But my impression, based on my experience of some Maharashtra Sathya Sai samithis (devotee groups), is that the Sathya Sai samithis spread over India (a large fraternity) have a decent mix of people from Karma, Bhakti and Jnana paths.

As far as my understanding goes, many Hindu spiritual setups broadly have two main divisions:

a) The Math/Mutt: This is the seminary type part of the spiritual setup. Here, I believe, the Jnana and Bhakti margam types are dominant. This group is not so visible to the public at large, though its top leader being the public face of the Math/Mutt may be well known. I mean, a person needs to go to such centres and locate people from the group, some of whom may be very reclusive and even avoid general outside contact. [The leader would be accessible to the public during public functions in some limited way.]

b) The Service Mission: This is usually the more well known part of the spiritual setup as it interacts with the public at large through its service activities in spheres of education (secular and spiritual including teachings of the founder), medical service, welfare activities for the poor including food, clothing, and even shelter at times, disaster relief etc. In terms of number of people involved, this service mission part of the setup is typically far bigger than the math/mutt part.

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### **Pope Francis on imagining God creating the world with a magic wand - it is not so (2014-10-30 17:14)**

The recent statements by Pope Francis at some Pontifical Academy of sciences function, on creation, big bang and evolution, has been highlighted by the media. A correspondent had forwarded a link titled, Pope Francis declares evolution and Big Bang theory are real and God is not 'a magician with a magic wand', <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/pope-francis-declares-evolution-and-big-bang-theory-are-right-and-god-isnt-a-magician-with-a-magic-wand-9822514.html>.

Here is a slightly edited extract of what I wrote back in response:

Here's a (the) relevant article from the Vatican, <http://www.news.va/en/news/francis-in-the-pontifical-academy-of-sciences-emph>.

The exact and full quote related to Creation in Genesis is:

"When we read in Genesis the account of Creation, we risk imagining God as a magus, with a magic wand able to make everything. But it is not so. He created beings and allowed them to develop according to the internal laws that He gave to each one, so that they were able to develop and to arrive and their fullness of being."

So clearly he is not supporting a literal interpretation of the account of creation in Genesis. But, at the same time, he does not mention anything that rules out miracles like those mentioned in the New Testament. The belief in miracles i.e. a God who intervenes at times in the material world by doing paranormal acts in response to the devout's earnest call/prayer for help as against a witness God who does not ever intervene, is crucial to the Christian faith (and many other faiths like Islam and traditional forms of Hinduism).

While I think he has done a very courageous and much needed act by clearly showing that he does not support Young Earth Creationism (literal interpretation of Genesis account of creation, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creationism-#Young\\_Earth\\_creationism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creationism-#Young_Earth_creationism)) type of views, perhaps he could have avoided using the 'magic wand' words. His words can be interpreted in a twisted fashion by some people to say that Pope Francis thinks/believes that God's powers are limited!

I think a more toned down statement on the lines of not literally interpreting account of Creation in Genesis, and some

support expressed for scientific view today of Big Bang and evolution, would have achieved the goal of upholding the scientific view in these matters, without upsetting too many Christian preachers. Sure, some preachers may still have been upset but perhaps lesser number of them than now.

On the pope's Big Bang view, "The Big Bang, which nowadays is posited as the origin of the world, does not contradict the divine act of creating, but rather requires it", from a scientific perspective, I don't think all scientists will agree that Big Bang requires a creator. I think it is more a matter of belief (as the scientists cannot say that it is proved that Big Bang does not have a creator). Pope Francis' sentence prior to the earlier statement is, "The beginning of the world is not the work of chaos that owes its origin to another, but derives directly from a supreme Origin that creates out of love." That clearly is a matter of belief and not scientific fact.

On the evolution part of pope Francis' quote, "The evolution of nature does not contrast with the notion of Creation, as evolution presupposes the creation of beings that evolve" as well as what I read in the rest of the vatican article link given above, I don't think it clarifies his stand on Intelligent Design, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligent\\_design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligent_design), - for or against.

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## 2.11 November

### The very different careers of Peter and Paul, the two great apostles of Jesus (2014-11-01 23:54)

*Last updated on November 20th 2014*

Based on my somewhat limited study of early Christianity I now have the impression that the two most prominent apostles responsible for the spread of Christianity after the trauma of the crucifixion of Jesus and the (believed) resurrection of Jesus from the dead, are Peter and Paul. Now Paul did not see Jesus and was involved with the initial persecution of the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem, after they had started spreading the message of Jesus including telling about his resurrection. But Paul became a great messenger of Jesus after a transforming experience.

Recently I saw a couple of videos on Paul, and (most of) a regular movie on Peter. The general impression I have is that while these videos may have immense value for some of those interested in the Christian faith, I am not so sure about how accurate they are from a viewpoint of current mainstream scholarly knowledge about Peter and Paul. When I say scholarly knowledge I refer mainly to academic and other scholars (like theologians) of Biblical literature and related material, including archaeological evidence. These are people who give fair amount of value to Biblical literature as against some scientists who refuse to accept anything in the Bible unless there is scientific evidence available for it. In other words, in my view, academic scholars of early Christianity are very different from some academic and non-academic scientists who are skeptical of the divinity of Jesus.

For this post I have used the following two main sources:

- a) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Peter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter)
- b) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle)

Now the wikipedia pages mentioned above may have some inaccuracies as some wikipedia pages have been reported to have. But I think that overall it seems to have provided a decent range of scholarly and other views on Peter and Paul.

I have also used what I recall from my reading (and viewing video(s) which voice the gospel and enact the scene) of the Gospel of Mark and some other parts of the New Testament (mainly the canonical gospels i.e. gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). [For more on canonical gospels and non-canonical gospels (which, I believe, is also referred to as apocryphal gospels) see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel#Canonical\\_gospels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel#Canonical_gospels) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel#Non-canonical\\_gospels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel#Non-canonical_gospels).]

Note: I have used below, the term Jesus-followers, at times, to refer to the early Christians as these followers were initially viewed as just as a variant sect of Jews and not as a separate religion of Christians.

1] Peter was a Jewish fisherman who was one of the early followers of Jesus. Peter, being a fisherman in that age, is

believed to not have undergone formal education of the type that Paul underwent [Jesus also is believed to have been a carpenter and so not to have undergone any formal education]. Peter, like Jesus and most of the other followers of Jesus, was not a Roman citizen. He witnessed many miracles of Jesus and had a lot of faith in Jesus. Jesus too gave a lot of importance to Peter. However, despite all the faith he had in Jesus, Peter got scared (terrified, rather) at the time of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, and denied knowing Jesus thrice on the day & night of the crucifixion (I am not sure if it is night only or day & night).

Paul also was a Jew. But he was from Tarsus (in modern day Turkey) and had learnt the art of tent-making. Paul was also known as Saul. Paul was a Roman citizen and is said to have inherited this Roman citizenship from his father. Paul is believed to be a Pharisee (sect of Jews at Jesus' time). Paul came to Jerusalem to learn Jewish law under a great rabbi called Gamaliel, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamaliel>. Paul was therefore, not only literate, but a learned man of Jewish law. His learning and his roman citizenship seem to have been vital factors in the success of his evangelical and church organizational mission among non Jews (and some Jews too perhaps) in many parts of the Roman empire, including Rome itself.

2] Peter's faith in Jesus came from his direct experiences of Jesus' miracles, his direct experience of Jesus' paranormal knowledge about people & events, and his interaction with Jesus' after his resurrection. That made him a powerful preacher who perhaps had deeply imbibed Jesus' teachings and had developed immense faith in Jesus (son of God) and God. Along with the brother of Jesus, James the just, Peter would have been one of the main leaders of flock of Jesus after the crucifixion. That Peter and others were able to overcome the devastating blow and terror of the crucifixion, and pluck up the courage to not only express faith in Jesus in private gatherings, but also try to spread the word about Jesus' resurrection and his teachings in traditional Jewish law dominated Jerusalem, is great testimony to the faith in Jesus of Peter and other leaders of Jesus' flock in Jerusalem.

Paul was in the opposing camp of Jewish law students and teachers - not only opposing camp, but actually persecution camp! Paul was active in one of the first (or the first) Christian martyrdoms, that of Stephen in Jerusalem (death by stoning for blaspheming against Jewish law by upholding divinity of Jesus). This happened after the crucifixion (and resurrection) of Jesus. It seems to me that Paul and his community of Jewish law scholars and students may have been derisive of not-formally-educated Jesus and his followers (most of whom may have not been formally educated). It would have been a huge affront to them to get challenged by Jesus through his miracles and his criticism of Jewish law leaders for not following Jewish law in the correct spirit. In other words, Paul was part of the Jewish religious establishment whose dominance and authority was challenged by materially poor, mostly non-scholarly and humble Jesus' and his followers. Paul and co. did not like this challenge and so set out to destroy the challengers! Harsh, but I think that seems to have been the reality then.

Then Paul had a transformational experience where he had a vision of the resurrected Jesus. Scholars are not in agreement on the specific details of this vision (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle#Conversion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle#Conversion)). But the version that seems to have popular acceptance is of Paul having a blinding vision of Jesus on the way to Damascus (to persecute the Jesus-followers there). Paul is said to have recovered his sight after three days through a kind-of miracle done by/through a Jesus-follower in Damascus. From a persecutor of Christians, he became a fervent Christian and one of Christianity's greatest apostles! But his knowledge of Jesus' teachings would have been second-hand (unless he had direct revelation of the teachings too from visions of Jesus which seems rather improbable). Further, perhaps he was impressed by the loving behaviour of the Jesus-followers, some of whom had direct contact with Jesus, that he persecuted in Jerusalem. And maybe, as a student of Jewish law, he would have studied the teachings of Jesus as known to other Jews, especially the Jewish law teachers & students in Jerusalem, and as preached/spread by the followers of Jesus.

3] Peter and most of the other apostles seem to have confined their preaching to other Jews in Jerusalem and other Jewish communities in contact with Jerusalem, the holy city of the Jews, but who were spread across various parts of Asia & Europe (and maybe Africa too). Note that Jesus too preached mainly to the Jews, if not only to the Jews. So early followers of Jesus were more of a sect of Jews who followed a mix of traditional Jewish law and new, or seemingly new, teachings of Jesus. Note that the Jews followed the practice of circumcision. Peter seems to have been one of the beloved leaders of Jesus-followers and seems to have been quite non-controversial.

Paul, who was a Jew but a Roman citizen as well, preached to the Gentiles (non Jews). The Gentiles then included Greeks and Romans. The Gentiles, or perhaps most of them, were not circumcised, and Paul did not insist on

circumcision for them becoming Christians. This expansion of the followers of Jesus, who started getting referred to as Christians, to include non-Jews did not go down well with some of the other apostles and followers of Jesus, including those who had been with Jesus (in physical form). This got resolved in the council of Jerusalem, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle#Council\\_of\\_Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle#Council_of_Jerusalem), where Paul met the Jerusalem church leaders, including Peter, James and John, and they decided to accept the Gentiles as Christians without the need for circumcision. Paul seems to have been somewhat controversial in his efforts to spread Christianity among the Gentiles. Perhaps there may have also been some controversy about whether his teachings about Jesus were the same as the teachings of Jesus by the Jerusalem church (having leaders like Peter, James and John) as Paul did not interact with Jesus in physical form.

4] Peter seems to have been mainly based in Jerusalem and surrounding areas perhaps. His brief visit to Antioch is recorded, and he may have visited Corinth. Peter is believed to have gone to Rome during the last period of his life, and is said to have been martyred there, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Peter#Death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter#Death)

Paul seems to have been a very vigorous traveling missionary, visiting and revisiting various places in Asia and Europe as part of his missionary efforts. He seems to have been the main missionary who formed and nurtured the early Christian following in Rome. His being a Roman citizen may have helped significantly in overcoming opposition to his missionary efforts in Rome and other places in the Roman empire. As a pioneering missionary Paul seems to have faced the greatest hardships among the apostles. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle#Hardships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle#Hardships) quotes from a section of the New Testament (Corinthians) that Paul faced a lot of prison, flogging, deadly danger, shipwreck, hunger, thirst, cold etc. Perhaps Paul has been and continues to be a great hero for the vigorous and hyperactive type of Christian evangelists.

5] Peter seems to have been the chief apostle in the Jerusalem church which was the centre of the early Christian faith, though the brother of Jesus, James the just, was viewed as the leader of the Jerusalem church. I mean, the main evangelist of the Jerusalem church then seems to have been Peter even if James the just was the organizational leader. Jesus was very pleased with Peter's faith in his divinity and referred to him as the rock on which his church will be built, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Peter#.22Rock.22\\_dialogue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter#.22Rock.22_dialogue) (this is the origin of the name Peter being appended to his previous name of Simon, giving him the expanded name of Simon Peter). The Roman Catholic church gives Peter prominence among the apostles by referring to him as the first Bishop of Rome, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Peter#Catholic\\_Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter#Catholic_Church). "Furthermore, they consider every bishop of Rome to be Peter's successor and the rightful superior of all other bishops." So the current pope, Pope Francis, is also viewed as successor to Peter as bishop of Rome. However Peter does not seem to have left behind many writings though the Gospel of Mark (one of the four canonical gospels) is said to have been written by John Mark, an assistant of Peter, and so this gospel is "seen as the closest to Peter's viewpoint", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Peter#Mark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter#Mark).

Paul, perhaps due to his scholarly knowledge, was very influential through writings attributed to him, a lot of which is included in the New Testament. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle#Writings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle#Writings), "Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 14 have been attributed to Paul; 7 of these are widely considered authentic and Paul's own, while the authorship of the other seven is disputed. The undisputed letters are considered the most important sources since they contain what everyone agrees to be Paul's own statements about his life and thoughts. Theologian Mark Powell writes that Paul directed these 7 letters to specific occasions at particular churches. As an example, if the Corinthian church had not experienced problems concerning its celebration of the Lord's Supper, [1 Cor. 11:17-34] today we would not know that Paul even believed in that observance or had any opinions about it one way or the other." And "In Paul's writings, he provides the first written account of what it is to be a Christian and thus a description of Christian spirituality. His letters have been characterized as being the most influential books of the New Testament after the Gospels of Matthew and John."

So Paul seems to have been the great organizer of Christian religion and his writings influenced the leading thinkers/reformers of the Western Church (Roman Catholic and protestant churches). From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle#Western\\_tradition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle#Western_tradition), "Augustine's foundational work on the gospel as a gift (grace), on morality as life in the Spirit, on predestination, and on original sin all derives from Paul, especially Romans. In the Reformation, Martin Luther expressed Paul's doctrine of faith most strongly as justification by faith alone. John Calvin developed Augustine's predestination into double predestination." It is very interesting for me to note that the key organizer of the Christian religion as we know of it today was somebody who did not have



direct interaction with Jesus!

6] Peter was a married man as per the New Testament.

Paul wrote in Corinthians (part of New Testament) that he was unmarried. Some scholars believe he was married (maybe after he wrote Corinthians) but New Testament scripture gives the impression he was unmarried, <http://www.libertygospeltracts.com/question/prequest/paulwife.htm>.

—- end main part of different careers of Peter and Paul —

**Additional Info:**

In this context it is important to note that Peter and Paul are believed to have been martyred in the 60s (AD), at which time the Jerusalem church would have still been vibrant and powerful among the small Christian community across the various places in Asia & Europe where it had taken root. [There is some speculation that the martyrdom of Peter (and Paul) could have been triggered by charges that Christians of Rome were responsible for the Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD, which devastated Rome, raging for six days, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Fire\\_of\\_Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_Rome). Nero was the Roman emperor then. From <http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/PETEMART.HTM>, "It is universally recognized that Peter suffered martyrdom in Rome during Nero's time. The traditional date is 67, a date common to Peter and Paul. But while even most scholars accept this date for Paul, research—especially in recent times—tends to pre-date Peter's martyrdom to the year 64 (the year of the fire in Rome and of the first great persecution campaign against the Christians)."]

[Note that Jesus crucifixion date is considered by scholars to be between 30 and 33 AD, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion\\_of\\_Jesus#Chronology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus#Chronology)]

However in 70 AD, Jerusalem, which had been occupied (captured from the Romans) by Jewish defenders (rebels/zealots) in 66 AD, suffered a terrible sacking of the city by the Romans. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Jerusalem\\_\(AD\\_70\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(AD_70)), (the famous Roman historian Josephus writes) "This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind. And truly, the very view itself was a melancholy thing; for those places which were adorned with trees and pleasant gardens, were now become desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down." and "The slaughter within was even more dreadful than the spectacle from without. Men and women, old and young, insurgents and priests, those who fought and those who entreated mercy, were hewn down in indiscriminate carnage." "Josephus claims that 1.1 million people were killed during the siege, of which a majority were Jewish, and that 97,000 were captured and enslaved ..."

After such a carnage the Jerusalem church too would have got devastated with most of its members either being killed, enslaved or having fled Jerusalem. Then the leadership of the Christian community would have moved to other cities like Antioch and Rome, with Rome eventually becoming the main centre.

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Given below is a slightly edited mail exchange with a correspondent on the above contents of this post:

Correspondent (C) wrote: They really contributed so much to spreading the message of Christ. In Peter's case ...He got direct experiences and proof for Jesus divinity; whereas Paul, he never had darshan (holy viewing) of Christ but still dedicated his life for the spread of Christ's Love.

This gives us a direct indication that God sees only the pure heart of His devotees, to select his true sevaks (servants) and not money, power and qualification.

So in Sai's mission, we have many Sai Peters :-)

Sai Pauls are yet to come :-)

Ravi (R) responded: Very interesting observations :).

C: Sir, what is canonised gospel?

R: Canonized gospels are the accounts of Jesus Christ that were selected to be incorporated in the New Testament (part of Bible). From what I read, they are four - gospels of Matthew, Mark, John and Luke.

Some other gospels which were not included in the New testament are available on the net, and these are referred to as apocryphal gospels. They are NOT part of the bible - i.e. not officially approved versions.

C: I also want to know about old and new Testaments... In the article you mentioned St Paul's direct messages are included in 7 books of New Testament. Are they apart of Bible sir?

R: The Bible has two parts: Old testament and New Testament. The old testament part is related to the Jewish faith and so is common with the Jews - remember, Jesus was a Jew. The New Testament is the part related to Jesus Christ and this is specific to Christianity. As far as I know, the Jews do not treat the New Testament as holy scripture related to Jewish faith.

C: I have seen one documentary on Jesus life recently. In that they mentioned about Jesus married life. Is this true, sir?

R: The churches (Roman Catholic & others too, I believe) strongly deny these reports, and either say or imply that they are the work of people who want to create sensational stuff that sells and makes them money. I don't know enough of Christian scripture - both official accounts (where Jesus was unmarried) and unofficial accounts (some of the unofficial accounts mention that Jesus was married, it seems) - to have a considered opinion on the matter.

However, my view is that the divinity of Jesus does not get affected by whether he was married or not. Krishna, who is one of my Ishta Devatas (favourite Gods), was married to multiple wives!

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## **Response to Hindu article of Karan Thapar critical of PM Modi's beliefs about Ganesha and Mahabharata (2014-11-03 20:39)**

*Last updated on 14th Nov. 2014*

On November 1st, the Hindu carried this article by Karan Thapar, The two faces of Mr. Modi, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/comment-the-two-faces-of-mr-modi/article6553304.ece>.

I submitted the following comment (in two parts) to the above webpage (version below has small corrections):

I think Mr. Thapar is reading too much into honourable PM Narendra Modi's statements about genetic science and plastic surgery in the context of Mahabharata and Lord Ganesha. It is not as if Mr. Modi is directing scientists to agree with his view. It is Mr. Modi's belief and, IMHO, he is entitled to it. Mr. Thapar views such matters as false - fine, he is entitled to his view. My personal view is that some paranormal capabilities and events of Hindu epics & scripture may be true like some of the miracles attributed to Jesus in the New Testament may be true. But I think that some Hindu epics/scripture like some parts of some of the Puranas should not be read literally but allegorically. In response to Mr. Thapar drawing attention to article 51A (h) of the Indian constitution about duty of Indians to have a scientific temper, I would like to draw readers' attention to article 25 of the Indian constitution which gives every Indian the right to profess, practise and propagate religion subject to some some matters like public order and morality.

So article 51A (h) should be read along with article 25 to get the right sense of the Indian constitution. My personal view is that scientific temper is fine for areas where science & technology is dominant like computers and space missions but there are areas of life where science is silent or not very knowledgeable like how to lead a happy, peaceful and harmonious life, and whether a person carries something like samskara and karma before he/she is born and after he/she dies. Rational thinking is not everything in life; religious belief and intuition also play a vital

role in the lives of many Indians including, it seems, the Hon'ble PM.

— end comment —

As the above comment did not seem to go past the moderator, I tried a truncated version of the above comment removing sentences related to my personal views. But that too did not go past the moderator!

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There was a follow up article to Karan Thapar's article in The Hindu dated 13th Nov. 2014, Why do our scientists not speak out?, by one of the regular Hindu Science & Technology columnists, D. Balasubramaniam, <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/why-do-our-scientists-not-speak-out/article6591259.ece>.

I submitted the following comment on the above web page (slightly re-formatted):

The article is quite interesting but I felt it did not cover the view that some part of Hindu scripture and scripture of other religions like Christianity could be true. The absence of evidence related to some extraordinary events written in these scripture does not mean that they have been proven to be false accounts or imaginative accounts. As science or history using science cannot unambiguously prove that such scripture is false, these matters move into an area of belief.

With reference to Karan Thapar's article critical of PM Modi's belief in some aspects of Hindu scripture, my view is that it is Mr. Modi's belief and he is certainly entitled to it. Mr. Modi is certainly not asking/directing all Indian scientists to accept his point of view in this regard. Karan Thapar has a different view and Karan Thapar too is entitled to it.

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### **Very sad and scary 'incident' involving 75 year old Australian lady in Puttaparthi (2014-11-09 18:34)**

This post is about a recently discovered case of a murder of a 75 year old Australian lady in Puttaparthi. Please skip reading the rest of this post if you want to avoid such stuff. [I did not want to use the word murder in the title and so used 'incident'.] After some thought I decided to put it up in this spiritual blog instead of a miscellaneous blog as Sathya Sai devotees may want to know about this unfortunate incident and how to avoid similar incidents in future. Over the past few days I have been seeing rather unusual 'Missing' notices showing an elderly white lady stuck in a few places in Puttaparthi. I presume that the lady mentioned below is the same as the one mentioned in these missing notices.

Yesterday I was shocked to read this article in The Hindu, Missing Australian woman's body found, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/missing-australian-womans-body-found/article6576766.ece>.

A small extract from it:

"An Australian woman, Lutgate Tony Berly Anne (75), missing since August was found murdered and buried in the outskirts Puttaparthi on Friday. Police cracked the case after arresting two persons. Anantapur Superintendent of Police S.V. Rajasekhar Babu told The Hindu that the woman was murdered by S. Bhagavantudu, a watchman of the apartment where she was staying, and his friend B. Potuliah as she had asked the former to return Rs. 20,000 of the Rs. 30,000 she had paid him for arranging accommodation for her. She wanted the amount back as she found the flat not comfortable as was promised by Bhagavantudu. The officer said the woman was strangled by the duo on August 29 in the apartment itself. They later buried the body outside Puttaparthi town with the help of a car driver, Nagaraj."

Ravi: There are multiple versions of this, with the some reports mentioning that the local Puttaparthi police are quoting a reason of the murderers wanting to rob her. However, I think the Anantapur SP (top policeman for the whole district of Anantapur of which Puttaparthi is a part) is the right official source to go by. I find the above account to be quite plausible. Some of the poor in Puttaparthi (may be from surrounding villages but could be migrants from other parts of AP too) depend on such services to foreigners and other visitors. The dangerous issue in the account above is the foreigner elderly lady demanding some money back (Rs. 20,000) from the local person (watchman). Once one gives money to these poor locals one should forget about seeing the money back. I think the poor lady committed a mistake in demanding money back from them when she did not like the flat. Perhaps she threatened to

complain to the police (which is not uncommon for Western foreigners in Puttaparthi to do). That may have made the two locals desperate. Anyway, in their possible desperation they did the horrible act of killing the old lady and then tried to dispose the body. My God! All this happened in the small town (outside-ashram Puttaparthi) where I live.

The main learning from this, in my humble view, is that it is best not to fight with locals over money. Demanding money back from locals is a strict no-no. The poor in Puttaparthi are quite desperately poor. Such people can easily lose it when pushed too much. Sure the police do catch many of such criminals especially when pressure is applied. But what's the solace one can get from having these desperately poor criminals in jail? It is far better to avoid such issues in the first place and, if one does lose some money to the locals, it is best to just forget about it.

As I went out for my regular walk yesterday evening around 5.30 PM, I saw a body being cremated on the (now dry) Chitravathi river bank, which is the main cremation site in Puttaparthi, and a lot of people gathered there including some Western foreigners and a policeman. Later I was told that it was the above mentioned lady, whose body must have been exhumed and then cremated.

I browsed the net to see if there are more reports on it. I was surprised to see rather detailed coverage by some foreign media outlets. And also surprised to know that during this missing period (her being missing was noted from sometime in September) her friends & family had put up a campaign to locate her, and to put pressure on the Indian police authorities to locate her! I have given below a couple of foreign media articles on this matter.

1) Australian grandmother Toni Anne Ludgate killed while doing charity work in India, <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/australian-grandmother-toni-anne-ludgate-killed-while-doing-charity-work-in-india/story-fni0cx12-1227116994708>.

A small extract from it:

Ms Ludgate's daughter, Traci Harding, said her mother was a source of happiness to all she knew.

"She was that kind of a person, everybody's mum, everyone was always at our place. If someone was having problems they would end up at ours," she said.

"We're just happy to have found her so that we can put her to rest."

Ms Harding said her mother would be cremated in India and that the family would not be able to attend due to the short timeframe which it needed to take place.

"She was in love with the place; she had a karmic connection to it even. Considering what's happened you've just got to look at that," she said.

"She had a deep connection with this place, she wanted to end her days there - not like this obviously. She wanted an Indian burial and wanted her ashes spread at the ashram."

[Ravi: What a tragedy! She did not have to go this way! This seems to have been an avoidable tragedy. She should not have fought with the locals over that money. She was, and I am, living in an economically backward area of India with a heck of a lot of poverty, and not in a country like Australia with its presumably far better law enforcement and public safety setup.]

— —

This one, Body of grandmother missing in India for two months found in a shallow grave as police arrest security guard and two other men for her murder, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2826430/Three-men-arrested-Sydney-grandmother-missing-India-month-dead.html>, has a lot of details and photos of the family and other related photos.

Her daughter, Traci Harding, is an Australian author who has a wiki page, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traci\\_Harding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traci_Harding). I am filled with sadness over this tragedy.

I pray to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to shower His Grace on the lady's suukshma shareera (subtle body) and on the lady's family members & friends.

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Today I found the following two articles which provide additional info.

This link, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/killer-loses-nerve-mystery-of-missing-aussie-solved/99/>, has a photograph of the killer-watchman pointing out the spot where he and his accomplices buried the lady's body, to the police.

A small extract from <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/11/09/hindu-funeral-ceremony-held-australian>

murder-victim :

Despite the way her mother died, Ms Harding said she didn't feel any anger towards the guard [Ravi: watchman in Indian English].

"I feel sorry for him," she said.

"I'm not a seek-retribution person, it's up to the Indian authorities to decide what to do with these men."

Ms Harding gave permission to the ashram to give her mother a traditional cremation ceremony on Saturday.

— end extract —

Ravi: While I still feel very sad about this very avoidable tragedy over 20,000 Rupees, I do appreciate the noble and spiritually mature attitude of the lady's daughter in not seeking revenge/retribution. My belief in these matters is that the killer(s) will have to suffer the bad Karma of their acts, one way or the other.

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## Handling Dengue in Puttaparthi (2014-11-11 23:25)

*Last updated on 17th Nov. 2014*

*Note: I put up this post on this spiritual blog as some Sathya Sai devotees visiting /living in Puttaparthi may be interested in this topic. Over the past few weeks I have heard of some cases of Dengue (pronounced as Dengee by some and as Dengu by most Indians I discussed it with), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dengue\\_fever](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dengue_fever), in Puttaparthi. I also read about recent Dengue cases in Mumbai. From the wiki link on Dengue given earlier:*

Dengue fever, also known as breakbone fever, is a mosquito-borne tropical disease caused by the dengue virus. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, and a characteristic skin rash that is similar to measles. In a small proportion of cases the disease develops into the life-threatening dengue hemorrhagic fever, resulting in bleeding, low levels of blood platelets and blood plasma leakage, or into dengue shock syndrome, where dangerously low blood pressure occurs.

...

As there is no commercially available vaccine, prevention is sought by reducing the habitat and the number of mosquitoes and limiting exposure to bites.

Treatment of acute dengue is supportive, using either oral or intravenous rehydration for mild or moderate disease, and intravenous fluids and blood transfusion for more severe cases.

— end extracts from wiki page —

One important issue/problem with Dengue is that there is no "medication targeted directly at the virus". So those who contract an acute form of the disease ideally need hospitalization with IV drip and blood platelet transfusion for faster recovery and better chances of recovery.

Puttaparthi, at least outside-ashram Puttaparthi where I live, does have fair amount of mosquitoes. While one can and should take suitable precautions in one's flat to keep mosquitoes out, it is not possible to ensure that one may not be bitten by mosquitoes when one is outside. [Coincidentally, I received an email today advertising a (wearable) mosquito repellent band gadget, <http://www.gizmobaba.com/Products/Household-Gizmos/Gizmobaba/GB137-Gizmobaba-Mosquito-Repellent-Band-Gadget!-Set-of-6-SEE-VIDEO!/pid-6594764.aspx>. First time I heard of something like this.] Now, my understanding is that even if one is bitten by a Dengue infected mosquito it is not necessary that one will contract dengue (or an acute form of dengue). I guess that may depend on the state of one's physical health/immune system.

But what does one do if one or one's friend/relative, God forbid, does catch dengue, especially an acute form of dengue, in Puttaparthi? One source told me that when a patient reports high fever (like 103/104 degrees Fahrenheit), joint pain etc., it is not clear what is the cause. It could be viral fever, typhoid, dengue etc. So the doctors typically prescribe paracetamol for a couple of days. If the fever does not subside over these two days then the doctor may suspect dengue. This source told me that doing the dengue (blood) test privately costs a thousand rupees! I was surprised to note that the test is so expensive.

However, it is good to know that the blood test for dengue can be done privately in Puttaparthi even if it costs a thousand rupees. I mean, if one has high fever for a couple of days or more which is not being controlled by paracetamol then, those who can afford a thousand rupees can get this test done and know whether it is dengue or not. There may be a question of reliability of the privately done test but I think they do seem to have the equipment and access to a trained technician to do it.

If somebody does contract an acute form of dengue (and is tested dengue positive) then if the ashram hospital is able to provide the hospitalization and treatment, it will be the best option. But sometimes the hospital could be full and so may not be in a position to admit the patient. What are the available options then?

The best option then, for those who can afford it and have care-givers who can accompany them, is going to a private hospital in Bangalore.

However, many people in outside-ashram Puttaparthi are single & live alone (like me) and many are elderly. They may have some friends who are willing to provide them care but are not in a position to travel and stay for long in Bangalore. For such people, even if they can cough up the money, going to a private hospital in Bangalore is not a workable option.

What about small private hospitals in towns close to Puttaparthi like Kothacheruvu or Bukkapatnam, which are easily accessible by Auto, and so friends based in Puttaparthi can provide support with some Auto commuting? One source told me that all these private hospitals are run by R.M.P. doctors. Now R.M.P. seems to stand for Registered Medical Practitioner but it is a lesser qualification than the standard minimum allopathic doctor qualification in India nowadays which is M.B.B.S. (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery). So some doubt was raised about the quality of medical care provided in such private hospitals in Kothacheruvu and Bukkapatnam.

What goes through my mind is that if one or two of these private hospitals in Kothacheruvu & Bukkapatnam, which cater to the local populace, have acquired a good reputation among the locals, one could explore that option, if the Bangalore option is ruled out. Would they not be able to provide safe "intravenous rehydration" and "intravenous fluids" (IV drips)? However, blood platelet transfusion may be beyond them or it may not be very safe to get it done there even if they provide that facility.

P.S. Here is an article about a dengue vaccine discovery, Dengue drug can give Sanofi \$1-bn India biz, [http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/dengue-drug-can-give-sanofi-1-bn-india-biz-11411100045\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/dengue-drug-can-give-sanofi-1-bn-india-biz-11411100045_1.html).

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Given below is a correspondent's response (slightly edited to fix a typo). My response to it (slightly edited) is shown with the prefix Ravi, indented and italicized :

There is a widely-accepted remedy for the lowering of platelets which occurs with dengue. This is to take the juice of a green papaya leaf regularly (once or twice a day). From what I can discover, the remedy was discovered in Malaysia and has been studied empirically there for its effect. It certainly seems to work, but the mechanism is not yet known. Green papaya juice is meant to be extremely bitter, even more so than bitter melon (karela).

This will treat one of the more unfortunate symptoms of dengue, the lowering of platelets which can make the person vulnerable to other infections. I do not know if it has any effect on those who suffer from dengue shock syndrome in which major organs start to fail in a short time.

*Ravi response: A friend of mine, based in Puttaparthi, who recently contracted dengue, was hospitalized in the ashram hospital here, recovered and got discharged, told me about this remedy too. He said that he used it, and that it, in addition to blood platelet transfusion (from blood donors who came forward to assist) and other medical aids, contributed to his platelet count getting back close to normal or normal. Your mention of the same remedy confirms it for me.*

My interest in dengue grew when my wife and I had it at the same time about four years ago. She had it in its usual form and was weak for about a month. In my case it started off other problems and I was out of commission (mostly in bed at home but also in hospital) for over three months.

Ravi: Oh Lord!

Dengue is avoidable. Local bodies need to spray against the mosquito and eliminate all pools of standing water. Houses need to be sprayed against the mosquito. All this means work that local bodies tend to avoid until there is a public uproar, by which time it is too late and they do not have the right kind of insecticide and what they do have is substandard (all of which has happened in Pune). It is no excuse to say 'dengue is spreading everywhere, what can we do?' We must all do what we can locally. An aedes mosquito from Puttaparthi is not going to come and bite me in Pune but one from the water collected in the neighbouring building site probably will.

*Ravi: Thanks for these words (as well as the rest of the response). They spur me to do what I can, within my limitations, to raise this matter with local outside-ashram Puttaparthi municipal authorities. I will also talk about it to my building manager to eliminate any local pools of standing water (especially near a small garden that we have), and perhaps have some spraying done around the building privately (not waiting for municipal people to do it).*

*I use Hit mosquito spray for my small flat/apartment. I now plan to spray my flat with it on a regular basis.*

— end correspondent response (and my response to it) —

The same correspondent later passed on this article, Papaya Extract to Treat Dengue: A Novel Therapeutic Option?, from NIH, USA journal, Annals of Medical & Health Sciences Research, dated May-Jun 2014, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4071726/>

Two small extracts from the concluding part (titled Discussion) of the above mentioned journal article:

From the various reports published in scientific literature, it appears that C. papaya L. leaf extract does have beneficial properties in dengue. It has been shown to bring about a rapid increase in platelet count. This could be possibly attributed to its membrane-stabilizing property.

...

Papaya extract no doubt offers a cheap and possibly effective treatment for dengue. However, currently, it is also necessary not to rely entirely on the leaf extract and ignore standard treatment for dengue until the benefits are established. Large scale randomized clinical trials in dengue-confirmed patients is necessary to establish their usefulness.

— end small extracts from journal article —

Small further update:

A Puttaparthi based correspondent wrote (slightly edited):

As far as I know no patients are rejected (in ashram general hospital) due to lack of space, if they really need hospitalisation.

— end Puttaparthi correspondent response —

Ravi: Today (12 Nov. 14) evening I asked about the charges for the "dengue test" in a private Puttaparthi clinic. It is Rs. 800/-.

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Updates (Nov. 14th & 16th 2014):

A little while back I bumped into my municipal councillor on the main road of Puttaparthi. He noted the info. about the two dengue cases I knew of near where I live. He informed me that a general body resolution was already adopted in the (Puttaparthi) municipal corporation to acquire two fumigation devices/equipment (don't recall the word he used). Sometime this month itself he said that fumigation will be done in all areas of Puttaparthi as a measure against mosquito borne diseases like dengue.

I told him about the high cost of the dengue test in Puttaparthi private clinics (Rs. 800/-). He told me that he will check whether that test is being done at municipal hospitals in this area, and explore options to make such tests available at lower cost. So next time we bump into each other he may provide me info. on that.

I also checked today with a local private clinic doctor (not sure whether he has M.B.B.S. qualification though he clearly

is an authorised medical practitioner), Dr. Gopal Reddy, who has acquired a very good reputation among locals in Puttaparthi. He told me that he does (organizes) the dengue test, and also can organize hospitalization treatment. I did not feel it appropriate to quiz him on further details at this point of time. I must also add that he speaks fluent English, seems knowledgeable and has the air of a very efficient and can-do person.

Later I came to know that an M.B.B.S. doctor called Dr. Rama Krishna comes to his clinic in Puttaparthi in the late afternoon. I was told that he and his wife (also M.B.B.S.) have a small hospital in Kothacheruvu. So that is another option. Dr. Rama Krishna's clinic here can also administer IV drip when he is here.

There is also Dr. Damodar's polyclinic where an M.B.B.S. qualified doctor may be available. IV drip during day time can be done there as well.

It is important to also mention the government homoeopathic hospital which is currently handled by a very experienced, capable and friendly doctor. He surely is worth consulting on dengue cases, IMHO. He may advise hospitalization (in allopathic treatment hospitals) for patients who are in need of such treatment, and may be able to provide advise on which hospital is suitable given the background of the patient.

Note that government run allopathic primary health centres are also available, I am told, in nearby Enumalapalli village as well as in Kothacheruvu town. Anantapur, the district headquarters town/city, about two hours drive from Puttaparthi (and so far less convenient for commuting than Kothacheruvu which is much closer and well connected by Auto & Bus to Puttaparthi), has a full fledged government hospital, and, I believe, well equipped private hospitals too.

So I get the impression that Puttaparthi locals who can afford some level of hospitalization expense (much lesser than Bangalore private hospital expenses, I presume), do use services of private doctors like Dr. Gopal Reddy. Dr. Rama Krishna (as well as the current govt. homoeopathic doctor) for diagnosis and treatment of diseases like dengue. If my impression is right then Puttaparthi is better equipped to handle many cases of dengue (exceeding limited capacity of ashram hospital) than I had thought earlier.

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### **Songs of the Hindi film Satya Sai Baba with Anup Jalota playing role of Swami (2014-11-16 20:55)**

The official trailer of the Hindi movie Satya Sai Baba with Anup Jalota playing role of Swami is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfAbayOofWU>, 3 min 6 secs.

The songs can be heard here (no video - still frame), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoWcwAFATi4>, 34 min 27 secs.

I thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed the following song:

LAGI RE LAGAN MOHE LAGI @ 13 min. 3 sec (13:03 till around 18:43): It is a pukka Bollywood (Bombay/Mumbai's Hollywood) song but with a spiritual message, sung by Sukhwinder Singh with lyrics by Naqsh Layalpuri. I think such songs will have tremendous appeal for the general public. BTW I am a born-and-bred Bombay/Mumbai fellow (spent most of first four decades of my life in Bombay/Mumbai) - Hindi film songs (till the early 90s) are an inextricable & deep part of my life! So I just loved this Bollywood style song on Swami when I heard it first. Don't know though how Sathya Sai devotees into Parthi style songs will take it - it is a pretty different style.

A correspondent liked the O Maa Sai Maa song. BTW the list of songs and their start time in the video is provided in the comments - clicking on the start-time positions the video to that time.

I googled to see if the movie has been released but did not get clear results. So I don't know whether it has been released.

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### **Before & After pics: Puttaparthi Clean India (Swachh Bharat) activity on Chitravathi riverbed (2014-11-17 20:18)**

*Note: I added this post to this spiritual blog as I felt some Sathya Sai devotees would like to read this post.*



Day-before-yesterday (15th Nov.) my municipal councillor told me about a Swachh Bharat (Clean India) activity, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swachh\\_Bharat\\_Abhiyan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swachh_Bharat_Abhiyan), scheduled for yesterday morning around 10 AM at Chitravathi riverbed, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chitravathi\\_River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chitravathi_River). I thought it would be a small affair. But when I went there yesterday morning I was surprised to see a large amount of people as well as earth mover machines in action. Lots of govt. & local administration officials & representatives as well as a large police contingent were present.

I was very happy to see school boys, young girls perhaps school girls, citizen groups and even policemen participate in the cleanup activity. It gave a sense of oneness to Puttaparthi town (outside-ashram). While I did not participate in the cleanup myself I thought I could contribute by clicking some photographs, which have been put up here: <https://plus.google.com/u/0/photos/+RaviSlyerSai/albums/6082219311016853473>.

Today (17th Nov.) I had a look at the Chitravathi riverbed area that was being cleaned up yesterday and was very pleasantly surprised to see a dramatically cleaner Chitravathi riverbed. To see how it looks today, please see pics here: <https://plus.google.com/u/0/photos/+RaviSlyerSai/albums/6082619342658290449>.

Of course, the earth mover machines would have done the major part of the work in this wonderful cleanup activity. But what the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan has done is that it has given an opportunity for school children, interested citizens and even policemen to participate in the activity. Even I who only took pics feel that I am a small participant in the activity and so it is, in a sense, my activity. If I feel that way just imagine how schoolchildren who participated in the activity would feel - they would be really happy & proud to see this dramatically cleaner Chitravathi river bed. Citizens & policemen who participated would also feel happy like me.

Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi and his team, as well as the leaders of the state and municipal authorities who got involved in this activity, deserve hearty congratulations for this Swachh Bharat initiative they have taken. I pray to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba that the Swachh Bharat initiative in Puttaparthi continues in this healthy way leading to a much cleaner Puttaparthi.

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A USA based correspondent, Chandu Patel, commented on the After pics Google+ post:

Looks cleaner! Ravi, indeed your contribution (as the unofficial photographer) is also there. I want to share that, Deloitte (the company where I work) organizes annual one-day event to do charitable work (including cleanup drive), where all employees are expected to participate (and the day is counted towards a work-day, and not a time-off or leave day). I remember, one member in each of these teams, who performs unit of the charitable work, is assigned the photography task to take picture and share on the company intranet.

I responded:

Interesting info., Chandu. Thanks.

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**Does Swami recommend using "harmless" lies for the common good, at appropriate times?**  
(2014-11-19 08:59)

A recent mail exchange with a correspondent triggered this post.

My view is that Swami's (Sri Sathya Sai Baba's) public teaching, from Sanathana Dharma, is:

*Sathyam Bhruyath* (Speak the truth),

*Priyam Bhruyath* (Speak that which is pleasant/loving),

*Na Bhruyath Sathyam Apriyam* (Don't speak the unpleasant truth).

Now this is a general rule and, surely, there will be some exception cases. For example, when questioned in any investigation of fraud, it is far better to be truthful about any fraud one knows of, related to the investigation, than not speak about it as that will amount to concealing fraud in an investigation, and could land one into significant amount of trouble.

But what about "harmless" lies used for the common good? Well, the danger is that what one views as harmless may not be viewed as harmless by others. Lying to get out of difficult situations is a common failing. So one could get into the spiritually very bad habit of lying to escape out of problems, and rationalize that lying by telling oneself that it is "harmless" and that it is for the common good.

I have been a victim of such lies from some senior administrators in an ashram institution. It was convenient and useful for them and they perhaps thought it is a "harmless" lie for the common good. But it certainly did not do good for me and was not harmless for me! When I found out about such lies I took the senior administrators to task, and quit the institution that I was involved with. The senior administrators did not even have the decency to apologize for their lies! I then lost all respect for the people who indulged in such lies and used it for their benefit, and did not want to associate with them any more.

But then I was offering free service and so could walk away from the place where I was offering service. For people who depend on salary from the institution they are working for, they may not be able to walk away from the institution. For them, the challenge may be to safeguard one's good character traits from the bad influence of some fellows who could even be in senior management/administrative positions. Like when Krishna came, we had Pandavas as well as Kauravas. So even in ashram systems, and the world at large, there are good Pandavas like Yudishtra and bad Kauravas like Shakuni and Duryodhana. I guess one can view one's field of work & home life as a Kurukshetra (some cynics spell it as crook-kshetra) where one has to learn from Krishna's teachings to Arjuna and other Pandavas, and somehow survive materially and somehow progress spiritually too :).

BTW there could be some/many mistakes in what I have written above. I am not perfect and do have my human flaws too. But I can say that I very rarely indulge in even "harmless" lies. I think that adherence to Sathya (truth) helps me overcome my flaws, at least to some extent.

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### **Need for haves to do some direct service of the have-nots, for social harmony (2014-11-27 20:16)**

*Last updated on 30th Nov. 2014*

In a mail exchange, a correspondent mentioned (includes a small later clarification from correspondent), "a small distance can separate a poor area (like a slum) from a wealthy area, yet people can live for years in the wealthy area without ever seeing a poor area." To this I (Ravi) add, or rather elaborate: without ever spending time in that poor area and understanding the challenges of living in that poor area (slum).

I agree on the comments of the correspondent about living in a wealthy area without ever seeing a poor area. I think it is a great problem which exacerbates the rich/poor disconnect and which perhaps is a big factor contributing to social tension and strife, whether the country be a materially developing one like India or a materially developed one like USA. My experience in a spiritual organization with a lot of focus on service to the poor (Sathya Sai Seva Samithi), for nearly a decade, while I was in working in the software industry in Mumbai (around 1993/94 to 2002), was that its weekly or fortnightly service activities for the very poor in the slums and elsewhere, not only helped the better off in the spiritual organization have some understanding of the challenges faced by the very poor, but also the understanding of how essentially human both the very poor and the better off are. It helped in establishing a connect/common bond between the very poor and the better off. I think such efforts are greatly appreciated by the poor and it contributes to reducing social tension. Instead of a spiritual organization doing such stuff, it could be a non-faith-based NGO. But the essential point is human interaction between the better off and the poor, with the poor being served by the better off, even if it is just once in a fortnight for a few hours. Government welfare schemes, even if they deliver some money/services to the poor, cannot create this human bond in the community between the haves and the have-nots.

In this context I should also mention that my first exposure to such social service was in a non-faith-based environment, when I was a Physics undergraduate in Mumbai's Ruia college, <http://www.ruiacollege.edu/> (in the early 80s when I was in my late teens/early twenties). The Indian academic system then had, and perhaps even now has, a special scheme called National Service Scheme which encouraged college students to participate in it, and provided some sort of academic credit for participation. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Service\\_Scheme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Service_Scheme), "The National Service Scheme (NSS) is an Indian government-sponsored public service program conducted by the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Government of India. Popularly known as NSS, the scheme was launched in Gandhiji's Centenary year, 1969. Aimed at developing student's personality through community service, NSS is a voluntary

association of young people in Colleges, Universities and at +2 level working for a campus-community linkage. The cardinal principle of the NSS programme is that it is organised by the students themselves, and both students and teachers through their combined participation in community service, get a sense of involvement in the tasks of nation building.”

I have fond memories of my interactions via NSS with rural India, with health related activities in slums, with a school focusing on specially-abled children (deaf and/or dumb children), family planning related efforts of Indian government then ... Even though my family at that time was facing quite some economic challenges and I was having only enough pocket money to get by, it was clear to me that I was far better off than many others in my city (Mumbai) and country. I think the world at large i.e. countries of all types: under-developed, developing and developed countries, should have more of such human contact between haves and have-nots where the haves serve the have-nots, even if it is a once-a-month kind of affair.

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### **Sathya Sai Baba on Truth from 1958 discourse (2014-11-28 09:38)**

I think today's thought for the day from Prashanti Nilayam is something that is very close to my heart.

Have faith that Truth will save you in the long run; stick to it, regardless of what might befall. For if you are true, the sense of guilt will not gnaw your insides and cause pain. It is cowardice that makes you hide the truth; it is hatred that sharpens the edge of falsehood. Be bold and there is no need for a lie. Be full of love and there is no need for subterfuge. The easiest habit is speaking the truth, honesty; for if you start telling lies, you will have to keep count of them and remember how many you have told to whom, and be always alert not to contradict one lie with another! Love a person and you need no longer deceive the person with a lie; you will feel that the loved one deserves the truth and nothing less than the truth. Love saves a good deal of bother. (Divine Discourse, March 3, 1958)

From Thought for the day for Nov. 28th 2014, <http://www.theprasanthereporter.org/>

Sathyam Naasti paro Dharmaha - there is no dharma (right conduct) greater than truth. Sticking to the truth always is not easy though. Not speaking the unpleasant truth is not difficult - that is not indulging in untruth. But, at times, one slips into the convenient lie rationalizing that it is just a 'white lie' which will not harm anybody. Anyway, I think the above extract from Swami's 1958 discourse (4 years before I was born!), is a great gem of a spiritual teaching which serves as a lighthouse of inspiration even if one cannot achieve it always.

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### **One cannot hide anything from Swami; Sathya Sai Baba, the Dharmadhikaari i.e. Great teacher/giver/authority of Dharma (Ethical living) (2014-11-30 15:36)**

"Always remember, Swami knows everything. I am always watching - not just from yesterday or day before. From several crores of years; from several past births of yours. Do not think you can cover my eyes and get away with doing whatever you want." - Sri Sathya Sai Baba, from <http://sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.in/2013/04/i-am-watching-over-you-from-several.html>.

I would like to share that, in my slightly over eight years of serving in Prashanti Nilayam campus of SSSIHL (university founded by Bhagawan) when Swami was in physical form (Jan. 2003 to April 2011), and having quite regular darshan of Swami whenever he was in Prashanti Nilayam, there were many occasions when there was eye contact between Swami and me. It took me some time to become sensitive to Swami's facial expression when he looked at me. Over time it became very clear to me that when he looked at me even if it was just for a few seconds, he somehow knew what I was thinking then and what I had done earlier. It was not a face-reading kind of effort - he would just know. If I had done something really good he would smile, he once even showed an Abhaya Hasta specifically to me, and once has told me, 'very happy'. If I did something bad, something he did not like, his expression was dismissive - unmistakably dismissive if one has the sensitivity to understand such facial gestures, and on a rare occasion or two, furious. [I vividly remember Swami's fury and, I will be very honest here, even today I am afraid of Swami's fury though I have

not had any dream or other interactions with Swami after his Mahasamadhi. I am very thankful for that fear as it keeps me from doing stupid and bad things.] The facial interaction experience would occur at darshan usually and when I would analyze it, after getting to the peaceful solitude of my room/flat later on, I was almost always able to correlate his expression with something that I had recently done. Later, it reached a point where I simply knew that Swami knows everything about my activities and that I cannot hide anything from him. So if I did something stupid & foolish/bad then the next darshan experience of Swami was not going to be a pleasant one for me. As simple as that and as effective as that - from a spiritual discipline point of view.

Once at Darshan time when I was angry about something with him (quite foolish of me and due to my misunderstanding of his teachings, but I was then in the grip of a deep emotional problem), he accepted the angry thoughts I directed to him (nothing spoken and from a distance of ten to twenty feet perhaps), and gave me a 'caught you'/'got you'/'Aha' kind of facial expression which was quite suitable given the emotional problem I had created myself. To my shock, after he finished the round of Darshan, he gave an unscheduled discourse - mike(s) and translator had to be hastily arranged. It was crystal clear to me that this unscheduled discourse was in response to my angry thoughts at him. You may not believe me - that's fine. It is difficult to believe such experiences one has of Swami. Here's the text of the discourse he gave on that day, 18th May 2010, in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prashanti Nilayam, as given in sssbpt website, [http://sssbpt.org/pages/Prasanthi\\_Nilayam/dd18052010.html](http://sssbpt.org/pages/Prasanthi_Nilayam/dd18052010.html):

### **REALISE THAT YOU AND I ARE ONE**

Everybody is afraid of Yama, god of death. He goes about in every corner of the world and takes away the life principle of those whose life sojourn on earth comes to an end.

### **Chastity Endows Women with Immense Power**

When he took the life of Savitri's husband Satyavan, Savitri was full of grief and prayed to him to bring her husband back to life. She said, "Either you give back my husband's life or take my life also. I cannot live without my husband; we are one". When Yama wanted to go away after taking the life of her husband, Savitri blocked his way and did not allow him to move. Yama had no choice but to listen to her prayer. He asked her, "Mother! What do you want"? "Give my husband back to me because it is not possible for me to live without him," said Savitri. Ultimately, Yama had to yield to her prayer and revive Satyavan. Yama not only brought Satyavan back to life, but granted many boons also to both Savitri and Satyavan, happy as he was with the chastity and determination of Savitri. It was because of her power of chastity that Savitri could bring her dead husband back to life.

Chandramati was another great woman of the sacred land of Bharat who set a shining example of chastity in the world. When she along with her husband Harischandra and son was crossing a forest, it was suddenly engulfed in wild fire, which threatened their life. Then Chandramati prayed, "If I am truly a chaste woman and have been adhering to Dharma all my life, let this wild fire be extinguished". And lo and behold, the fire was extinguished in a trice and the entire forest became calm and serene. So great is the power of penance and chastity of a chaste woman! But she was always humble and expressed gratitude to God, saying, "It is by the grace of God that I have been able to uphold the Dharma of a chaste woman". She always followed her husband and could never bear separation from him even for a moment. That is the hallmark of a chaste woman. Both husband and wife should live together in harmony whole of their life. (Here Bhagavan narrated the story of King Harischandra and his chaste wife Chandramati, who in spite of undergoing untold sufferings upheld the virtues of truth and righteousness and set a shining example of virtuous life.)

This land of Bharat has given birth to many noble women like Damayanti who reduced an evil-minded hunter to ashes with the power of her chastity and Sita who proved her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed. (Telugu Poem)

### **Life Finds Fulfilment when Husband and Wife Live in Unity**

When Sita was put to fire test, the fire god himself manifested out of it and told Rama, "Sita is a woman of great chastity". There were many women of chastity in the sacred land of Bharat like Sita, Chandramati, Damayanti and Savitri. People are afraid of Yama, the god of death, but Yama is afraid of the women of chastity. Just as Savitri could bring her dead husband back to life by the power of her chastity, Sita could also come out of blazing fire unscathed by the power of her chastity. All these examples of chaste women of Bharat set the ideal that for a woman her husband is God. These ideals set by such chaste women made India a teacher of the world and leader of all nations. Except in Bharat, in which country of the world do you find examples of women who brought their dead husbands back to life?

Even if you search the entire world, you cannot find such chaste women. Such is the sacredness of this land of Bharat. That is why God loves to incarnate in Bharat. Just as women should observe Pativrata Dharma (Dharma for a chaste woman), men should also adhere to Sativrata Dharma (Dharma for an ideal husband). A woman must be a Pativrata (chaste woman), so also her husband, a Sativrata (ideal husband). The wife should never go against the command of her husband, similarly, the husband should conduct himself according to the wishes of his wife and should look after her with great love. But, unfortunately, there are only a few men today who observe Sativrata Dharma though a large number of women adhere to Pativrata Dharma. God is pleased with those women who observe Pativrata Dharma. When there is unity between husband and wife, they can achieve anything and find fulfillment in life. Draupadi had five husbands and she considered them as her five life-breaths. Women today should observe chastity like Sita, Savitri, Draupadi and Damayanti. It is the sacred land of Bharat where you find such a large number of Pativrata women and nowhere else. People who leave such a sacred land and go to other countries waste their life.

You say, my body, my handkerchief, so on and so forth. But who is this 'my'? That is the Self or I. I means Atma. Without realising the Atma, all spiritual practices like Yajnas and Yaga are of no use. You say, this is mine and that is thine. What is the use of doing any spiritual practice unless you give up the feelings of mine and thine? Get rid of the narrow feelings of mine and thine and realise that you and I are one.

— end divine discourse text —

Bhagawan struggled to speak during this discourse. I was completely bowled over by Bhagawan's willingness, despite his many physical body problems then, to teach me, and others, through a discourse about the dharmic way of life, a significant part of which was related to my angry thoughts directed at him. I am very, very deeply grateful to Bhagawan for having been such a dedicated spiritual teacher even to a foolish & angry fellow like me then. To me it was clear that while giving the discourse, Bhagawan was playing the role of the Dharmaadhikaari (the authority, the giver of Dharma i.e. ethical code of living). Whether one wants to accept it or not is a different matter. He did his role of teaching Dharma. After this experience that I had with Bhagawan, I became much more dedicated to him and his mission, even if I was & still am not able to follow all his teachings - but I certainly try. He did not care about his own physical body suffering at 84 years of age - he was far, far more concerned about delivering his teaching about Dharma. What a shining example of a teacher of Dharma! I offer my humble, loving and very respectful obeisance at the feet of my great spiritual master & teacher of Dharma, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

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## 2.12 December

### **Sathya Sai Baba on ages-old conflict between atheists (& agnostics) and theists (2014-12-05 14:26)**

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has said,

"The conflict between persons who accept God and deny Him, those who declare that God is to be found in this or that place and those who affirm that He can be found nowhere, is never ending; it has been continuing throughout the ages. Remember that it is unnecessary to awaken a person already awake and it is easy to awaken a person who is asleep. You cannot awaken, however much you try, a person not wanting to awaken! Those who do not know, can be taught by means of simple illustrations what they do not know. But those afflicted with half-knowledge and proud of that acquisition are beyond any further education. Your two eyes give a picture of a vast expanse of space, but they cannot see your whole body! For that, you need two mirrors - one in front of you and one behind. So too, to know your reality, you need the mirrors of Self-confidence (Atma-vishwas) and Divine Grace."- Divine Discourse 23rd Nov 1976, From [http://media.radiosai.org/sai\\_inspires/2014/SI\\_20141205.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/sai_inspires/2014/SI_20141205.htm).

I find the above to be a superb capsule of theistic wisdom relating to this ages-old conflict between atheists (& agnostics) and theists. I think there is a lot of truth in the words that those who are proud of their half-knowledge are beyond further education (unless something happens that breaks down their pride), and that they are like people who don't want to awaken to spiritual knowledge/wisdom.

Ancient India certainly had active atheism philosophers. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism\\_in\\_Hinduism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism_in_Hinduism) lists

some philosophies of ancient India like Mimamsa and Samkhya which border on atheism, I understand. The Brahma Sutra, which is a Vedanta school doctrine, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahma\\_Sutras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahma_Sutras) has sections arguing strongly against Samkhya philosophy (yoga), if I recall correctly. At least, Adi Shankara's interpretation and commentary on Brahma Sutra, which is what I read/studied (as translated to English by somebody but having the original Sanskrit text also), argues strongly against atheist-type philosophies like Samkhya, if I recall correctly.

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## **Tributes pour in for Late Supreme Court Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer; Justice Iyer about Sathya Sai Baba (2014-12-05 21:35)**

*Last updated on 8th December 2014*

Ex-Supreme Court justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V.\\_R.\\_Krishna\\_Iyer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._R._Krishna_Iyer), passed away yesterday (Dec. 4th 2014) at 99 years of age. Tributes have poured in for him from across the political spectrum and from many legal luminaries.

PM Narendra Modi tweeted:

Fine lawyer, eminent jurist, incredible philosopher & above all a phenomenal human being. I bow to Justice Krishna Iyer and

My association with Justice Krishna Iyer was special. My mind goes back to our conversations & the insightful letters he would write to me.

—

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar tweeted:

Justice VR Krishna Iyer was a man of unparalleled integrity & vision. (1)

When I was reluctant to start an organisation, he insisted & was founder trustee of Ved Vignan Mahavidyapeeth (1st Art of Living Ashram). (2)

My association with Justice VR Krishna Iyer goes way back to 1978. We would have hours of discussion on ethos, philosophy & future of India. (3)

I have seen Justice VR Krishna Iyer turning from a non-believer into a sincere seeker. (4)

From <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/krishna-iyer-death-a-phenomenal-human-being-says-modi/article6662399.ece> :

CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat said, "Throughout his life, Krishna Iyer stood for the cause of justice, equality and socialism. With his moral stature and deep compassion for the downtrodden, he played the role of a people's tribune till the end of his life."

RSS Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat said, "It was only recently I had an opportunity of meeting him, which was an invigorating experience for me. What appealed to me the most was his sense of purpose and unadulterated love for all. An erudite scholar, he was content with simple living."

"As a lawyer, legislator, jurist, judge and campaigner, he was a unique phenomenon, never lured by power, position or temptations of any kind," Kerala Governor and former Chief Justice of India P. Sathasivam said in a statement.

Ex attorney general of India, Soli Sorabjee writes in this article, He took human suffering seriously, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/krishna-iyer-death-he-took-human-suffering-seriously/article6662400.ece>. Small extracts from it:

Krishna Iyer had all the attributes expected of a judge: erudition, quickness of mind, good memory for decided cases and patience in deciding cases. Above all, Krishna Iyer possessed one outstanding quality. He took human suffering seriously, an indispensable requirement in the dispensation of justice. That is what made him not only a great judge but also a human being par excellence.

Krishna Iyer's life was spent not in hankering after fame and fortune with pomp and glory but in the service of humanity with transparent sincerity.

...

One outstanding human quality of Krishna Iyer was compassion. Compassion, not pity. There is a marked difference. Compassion is whereby we make others' misery our own and which moves us to the relief of those who are in distress.

—  
The article, Leaving a light, Justice Krishna Iyer passes away, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/justice-krishna-iyer-passes-away/article6661758.ece>, gives a bird's eye view of his life & career.

An interesting thing about him was that he started out as a communist in Kerala, and was a minister in a communist Kerala govt. before going back to the legal profession, eventually becoming a judge in Kerala High Court and then Indian Supreme Court.

An earlier article, on his 100th birthday (i.e. completion of 99 years of age), A unique blend of judicial virtues, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/comment-on-justice-krishna-iyer/article6600153.ece>, by a senior advocate of the Supreme Court gives a very interesting account of Justice Krishna Iyer's judicial achievements. A couple of short extracts and my comments on the article then, are given as points below:

*[Ravi: That's very interesting. I must confess that till a few years back I was not having much idea about the great contribution by such supreme court judges in changing the India that I lived in, to give more "relief to the disadvantaged and underprivileged". The Indian constitution's text is one thing but how it gets interpreted in administration of the country is another. Today I have a far better appreciation of the role the Indian Supreme Court has played, and continues to play, over the past few decades in ensuring that governments at the centre and the states interpret the constitution in a way that favours the common citizen of India. Hats off to these supreme court judges who have made such great contributions to the nation's well being as a whole. That Justice Krishna Iyer had played a very important role in steering the Indian Supreme court to this positive direction is something that I did not know. Now I better understand why he is treated as a revered figure by some top lawyers and politicians (especially lawyer-politicians).]*

*[Ravi: Fascinating Supreme Court history related to one of the blackest periods of post-independence India, the period of Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi. My God! What power and what impact these judgements of the Supreme Court judges have. And Krishna Iyer had to keep at bay one of the most brilliant lawyers, I believe, of independent India, Nani Palkhiwala!]*

\_ [From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Emergency\\_\(India\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Emergency_(India)), "In India, "the Emergency" refers to a 21-month period in 1975–77 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi unilaterally had a state of emergency declared across the country." ... "The order bestowed upon the prime minister the authority to rule by decree, allowing elections to be suspended and civil liberties to be curbed. For much of the Emergency, most of Gandhi's political opponents were imprisoned and the press was censored. Several other atrocities were reported from the time, including a forced mass-sterilisation campaign spearheaded by Sanjay Gandhi, the Prime Minister's son. The Emergency is one of the most controversial periods of independent India's history."]

Justice Krishna Iyer's crowning glory and finest hour were after retirement. He spurned the lure of pelf and power and governmental patronage and became an unrivalled champion of social justice, constitutional values and the rule of law. He blossomed into an iconic and inspirational figure both nationally and internationally.

*[Ravi: That's what seems to have made him a really loved figure by the people at large.]*

The renowned Australian Judge Michael Kirby, a former President of the International Commission of Jurists, described him as "incontestably one of the great spirits of the common law of this century."

*[Ravi: Really! It gives me great happiness to know that one of India's former judges has achieved such eminence internationally.]*

— end extracts and comments —

A correspondent passed on this tribute article by former Solicitor General, Harish Salve, titled, Justice V R Krishna Iyer: Man who rescued Supreme Court from supreme shame, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Justice-V-R-Krishna-Iyer-Man-who-rescued-Supreme-Court-from-supreme-shame/articleshow/45380178.cms>.

Two small extract from it:

Some eminent lawyers of the generation before us had mixed feelings about the man who led the revolution in jurisprudence which helped a then-floundering Supreme Court find its identity . He challenged the status quo and thus had his share of critics and followers. The gen next has his judgements to read. For my generation, he was the

architect of the Supreme Court, post Emergency . As Professor Upendra Baxi said, from the Supreme Court of India he made it the Supreme Court for Indians. He defined fundamental rights as well as charters of freedom, not just to acquire and hold wealth, but freedom from poverty and misery.

...

Post Emergency , the Krishna Iyer jurisprudence breathed new life into what was seen as a listless institution. Supreme Court today stands tall and is the most powerful institution of its kind in the world and its work has shown that it is sui generis. India needs such a court even if other countries do not have or need such a court.

[From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sui\\_generis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sui_generis), Sui generis is a Latin phrase, meaning "of its own kind/genus" and hence "unique in its characteristics".]

— end extracts —

### **Justice Krishna Iyer and Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

From <http://vahini.org/sss/iv/loveon-d.html>

The summer course in Indian Culture and Spirituality in 1979, laid emphasis on the Bhagavad Gītā.

...

Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer of the Supreme Court of India, while inaugurating the month-long course in the presence of Bhagavan, said, "It is time that we wean our colleges from becoming houses of vice and violence, with students getting addicted to drugs and cultivating only materialistic desires. Baba's balm of Prema must penetrate Karma, kindle Jnana and sublimate into Dharma." He spoke on the inadequacy of science and its inability to restore peace, morality and brotherhood. He stressed that India must discover her soul and listen to the voice of the sages. Bhagavan pointed out that leaders of today had no will to promote moral and spiritual excellence in their people, while the people themselves had no urge to warn their leaders of the disasters that lay ahead when this foremost duty was neglected.

From page 273 of *Wandering in Many Worlds: An Autobiography* By V. R. Krishna Iyer [Google Books link: <http://books.google.co.in/books?id=A4FKhMcmpdQC&pg=PA273>]

My judicial preoccupations put limitations on my occult travels, but on superannuation I became a freer agent. Among the most sublime spirits I have come across in my temporal life is Bhagavan Satya Sai Baba, whose presence and performance are unusually divine. I was once his critic but in my evening mood I did seek darshan of this great soul preserving my scepticism and refusing to jettison the test of verified testimony before coming to any conclusion. I was uplifted and felt myself humble before his lofty personality. He did perform what others could never have done. I have received more than one ring as Baba waved in the air and produced the golden product. He gave gold chains and other wonderful objects to those who came as established devotees and had the privilege of darshan. But while these miracles were far more than magic and were utterly real beyond the laws of nature as we understand them, I have been stunned by his profound speeches. But my purpose was different. What is death? Where are we after death? Is there a communicable link between the living and the dead? What divine process can materialize this life-death continuum? Satya Sai Baba has not yet taken me through this threshold. Message is for the living. They say that he can and indeed, if I can trust Dr. Malini of Madras, she has spoken to her deceased father at the instance of Baba himself. I suspend judgement, although, I have conducted my pursuits in other directions with mediums and met with some success in the field of communication with the dead.

— end extract —

A correspondent passed on this youtube video, Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer, (1915-2014) Speaks on Sathya Sai Baba, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRhMytWj4tI>, 3 min. 26 secs.

Here's a transcript (slightly edited) of Justice Iyer's short talk:

"Sathya Sai Baba whom I have visited several times is Himself Divine. To my mind, he is not mundane but he is Divine. Humanity has to be salvaged. And that can be done not by material prosperity but by Divinity. And here is Sathya Sai Baba - Divinity personified. He has given messages. There have been sages and sages but (for) modern times there is one saint called Sathya Sai Baba. His teachings are profound, profound. And you will never find a similar sage anywhere you go around the world - you will not see that divine class of person. His main message is: (Manava) Seva Madhava Seva. Whenever I see him, he gives a message which is great.

He was running a teaching institution (which) had an annual day - he took me in. And then I told Baba people do not believe me when I tell them that education is totally free in your institutions. He called a boy.



He asked him (which class) are you (in)? I am in the fifth standard.

What is the fee you pay? Nothing.

Then he called another man, an African.

What do you do? I am doing Ph.D.

What is the fee you pay? Nothing.

Are you satisfied? Yes, I am satisfied, Baba.

Everything is free. Surgery is free. One of the finest hospitals but free. Free medicine. Free hospitalization.

Free salvation of the mundane man and making him feel what he is - spiritual being that he is. This is the great teaching. So he says, Madhava Seva (Manava) Seva. Serve man, serve man. And that is the way you can serve God. Humanity through divinity. This is Sathya Sai Baba's teaching.

I have nothing more to say, except to say that I have not seen a greater humanitarian than him. See the God within you, he said. You are searching for God in all kinds of places. But remember there is God within you. So see that God which is within you. Realize what you are. And then you will truly become what you should become, namely, a divine human being.

Namaste!"

— end transcript —

Ravi: Wonderful words about Swami from a champion of justice, especially for the poor, in Indian judiciary. I am so glad to see such powerful recognition of and support for Swami and Swami's message.

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### **Very compassionate, Christian brotherhood message of Pope Francis to brutally persecuted Iraqi Christians (2014-12-07 11:10)**

I saw a recent short video message (1 min 17 secs) from Pope Francis on his twitter account, to Iraqi Christians, which touched me very deeply, <https://twitter.com/Pontifex/status/541260856915292160>. Truly, the holy father, Pope Francis, is an inspiring religious leader whose compassion and Christian brotherhood for the suffering and the persecuted show us how genuine he is, as a true follower of the teachings of Christ. His words, taken from the English captions in the video, are as follows:

"I wish I could be there with you. But since I'm not able to travel there, I am here with you this way. I am very close to you during these difficult times. When I returned from my visit to Turkey, I said that Christians are being driven out of the Middle East and undergoing great suffering. I thank you for the witness you are giving. And I know how much suffering there is in this witness. Thank you. Thank you so much. It seems like they do not want the presence of Christians in these places, but you are there giving witness to Christ."

The video is also available on youtube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htY0l2HaWY8>.

I earnestly pray to Lord Jesus Christ to help the Christians and others who are being brutally persecuted in Iraq and elsewhere.

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### **The power of Namasmarna (remembering name of the Lord) to keep the mind under control in today's busy world (2014-12-09 10:34)**

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba said:

Keep the Name of the Lord always radiant on your tongue and mind. That will keep the antics of the mind under control. When the lamp is burning, darkness will not spread its fumes around you. When the word for Brahman (Supreme Universal Reality), Om, is spelt with the last breath by the one dying, they attain the Divine. To make that final utterance of Om, just as the flower blossoms on the creeper of life, you need to dwell upon Om all through the years of your current life. The Geeta advocates the process of continuous meditation in a neat little formula: mam anusmara yuddhya cha! - "Keep Me in your memory and fight!" The cue here for you is to fight the battle of life, have

God in your consciousness as your Charioteer at all times. This is not merely a direction for Arjuna; it is a prescription for all humanity.

- Divine Discourse, June 9, 1970. From [http://media.radiosai.org/sai\\_inspires/2014/SI\\_20141209.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/sai_inspires/2014/SI_20141209.htm).

Ravi: In today's busy world, I think the above words are very, very valuable. Of course, one should also have faith in the power of Namasmarna. That faith can come from reading teachings of contemporary/near-contemporary spiritual masters and other holy scripture. Perhaps the most famous example in Hindu scripture, of spiritual transformation by chanting the name of the Lord is that of Valmiki who turned from a hunter to a saint by chanting the name of Lord Rama (in an unusual way - Mara rather than Rama), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valmiki#Early\\_life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valmiki#Early_life).

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### **A few short quotes from Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba on Himself (2014-12-11 23:41)**

I tweeted a few short quotes of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on Himself from "Who is Sai", [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/SriSathyaSaiBaba/Who\\_is\\_Sai.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/SriSathyaSaiBaba/Who_is_Sai.htm). I felt it appropriate to make a short blog post of them too. Please note that I added a few English words (translation) for Sanskrit words in the extracts below.

Here are the quotes that I tweeted (<https://twitter.com/RaviSailyer>):

I can solve any problem however knotty. I am beyond the reach of the most intensive inquiry and the most meticulous measurement.

Only those who have recognised My Love and experienced that Love can assert that they have glimpsed My Reality. For, the Path of Love is the Royal road that leads mankind to Me.

Only those who have dived deep and contacted the underlying principle of Love can visualize Divinity with some clarity.

I am Ananda, Shaantham, Dhairyam (Bliss/Joy, Equanimity/Peace and Courage). Take Me as your Aathma thathwam (principle of your spirit/being); you won't be wrong.

Resolve from this day to see only the good in others, to develop the good in yourselves. That is the best Saadhana (spiritual practice).

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### **Harvard Prof. Diana Eck on land of Krishna and relationship of love (bhakti) between young Krishna and devotee-villagers (2014-12-16 16:40)**

Given below are short extracts from, and comments on, Harvard Prof. Diana Eck's book India: A Sacred Geography, Chapter 8, The land and story of Krishna:

And they (village folk of Braj) were saved-as are those who love Krishna even today-not by the wisdom of the scriptures, not by the asceticism of the renouncers, not even by the ritual ministrations of priests, but simply by their unwitting and unconditional love for Krishna, by the relationships of love called bhakti. This word bhakti and all it represents in expressing human relatedness to God is surely one of the most important words in the Hindu vocabulary. The stories of the love of Krishna and Krishna's reciprocating love explore and expand the meanings of bhakti. The villagers of Braj, like Devaki and Vasudeva on the night of Krishna's birth, recognize, in one sense, that Krishna who lives among them is extraordinary. They glimpse his divinity in a religious world in which divine "incarnation" is not so uncommon. They even glimpse the full majesty of Krishna as Supreme, creator and sustainer of the whole universe. But such glimpses cannot be sustained; for the whole point of the love of Krishna is to expand the spontaneous and natural love of the heart.

*[Ravi: What a superb and enlightened understanding of the love of gopis and others who came in contact with Krishna and loved him! I find the last sentences in the above paragraph to be very, very insightful - not possible to sustain glimpsing/viewing Krishna as the Supreme, creator and sustainer of the universe. I don't know about the expanding*

*of spontaneous and natural love of the heart but what was possible to sustain which the gopis (and some other Krishna contemporary-devotees) achieved and are revered for, and sought to be emulated in this regard, is "their unwitting and unconditional love for Krishna, by the relationships of love called bhakti". Of course, "Krishna's reciprocating love" would have helped the gopis (and some other Krishna contemporary-devotees) to deepen and solidify their bhakti towards Krishna.]*

...

The lives of Jesus, the Buddha, and Krishna were larger than life, to be sure, and yet these lives are mapped on a landscape that lends itself to the memory and the pilgrimage of ordinary people.

*[Ravi: The paragraph having the above sentence has a lovely and concise expression of the commonality between the devotion/worship of the "holy land" associated with Krishna, Jesus and Buddha! The above sentence is an insightful gem of spiritual understanding of pilgrimage - lives of the divine figures being larger than life yet their human form lives were associated with a holy land that ordinary devotees can relate to.]*

...

Gokul calls to mind and heart one of the strongest forms of devotional love: the unconditional love of parents for their children. Perhaps pilgrims to Gokul will tell one of the traditional accounts of Mother Yashoda and her love of Krishna that remind them that the baby was the Supreme Lord, and yet a baby nonetheless.

*[Ravi: While I am no expert in the study of devotional life, the fair bit of devotion to various forms of God by many devotee friends & family that I have been privileged to witness and be deeply touched by, leads me to tend to agree that the unconditional love of parents for their children is one of the strongest forms of devotional love. But then some of the famous tests of devotion to God by God in scripture of some religion(s) have involved testing the willingness of the parents to give up even their child(ren) for God!]*

...

In the love of baby Krishna, the utterly spontaneous, selfless, joyful love of parents for their children becomes a paradigm for the kind of love we might have for God. It is called vatsalya, a term our Braj pilgrims certainly know. It means, literally, the mothering love of a cow for her calf, her vatsa. The mother cow's milk flows spontaneously in the presence of her calf. Vatsalya is that kind of love. Although Yashoda glimpses Krishna in his fullness, she is mercifully enabled to forget the cosmic vision so that she can simply love Krishna, naughty and playful, with the full force of a mother's love. So it is that those who come to Gokul might buy for their home altar the most popular of all images of Krishna, the crawling baby with a ball of butter in his fist. This is the mischievous child, the butter thief, who constantly steals Yashoda's freshly churned butter, and, of course, her heart.

*[Ravi: The butter thief baby Krishna is an image that I have seen so very often in Hindu homes. It certainly is a very popular image of Krishna.]*

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## **SALT-II 1979, Brezhnev to Carter: 'God will never forgive us if we don't succeed'; Russian cosmonauts in 2014 openly show faith in God (2014-12-19 15:01)**

Yesterday I had sent a mail to some correspondents as follows:

Around 27:50 in the video, Cold War 19 out of 24: Freeze (1977 - 1981), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7qFJQPjqPw>, former USA president Jimmy Carter says, while reminiscing about a Vienna meeting in June 1979 to sign the SALT-II treaty, between him & his team and former USSR president Leonid Brezhnev & team, "When I proposed that we make these changes in nuclear weaponry he (Brezhnev) said, 'God will never forgive us if we don't succeed.' Coming from a leader of an atheistic, communist country, this surprised everyone. I think the most surprised person at the table was Gromyko who looked up at the sky like this (raising his hands with outstretched palms) and did his hands in a peculiar way as though this was a shocking thing for Brezhnev to say."

Ravi: I find it utterly fascinating that the Soviet leader Brezhnev referred to God in this super-powers meeting. So even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, belief in God was making inroads in Russia. Today, in post-Soviet Russia, one gets the impression that faith in God has made a powerful comeback. Wonderful turn of events, IMHO.

— end mail main contents —

A correspondent, in his response, passed on this very interesting link, "Faith, the Final Frontier: Russian Spaceships Blessed by God", <http://www.vocativ.com/world/russia/russian-space-program/>, dated July 2014. The initial part of the article shows a Soviet Russia propaganda picture of a cosmonaut floating in space and has the slogan, "There is no God". The article goes on to say that Russian spacemen today have a very different take. Here's the pic put up by a Russian cosmonaut around a week before the article was written (24th July 2014), <http://instagram.com/p/qola5BwKG2>, which shows around half a dozen religious (mostly, if not all, Christian) icons put up inside the multi-billion dollar International Space Station with two of the three cosmonauts in the pic having a religious icon attached to their uniform/body as well. The article also mentions that priests regularly sprinkle Russian space rockets with holy water prior to launch.

Ravi: What a dramatic change in Russia! Sure, there would be many atheists and opponents to Russian cosmonauts putting up religious icons in their/international space stations. But from a 'There is no God' cosmonaut poster in Soviet Russia, to religious icons put up by Russian cosmonauts in the international space station, is truly a dramatic change.

I am reminded of the current head of Indian Space Research Organization, ISRO, which is the main organization handling India's space program, frequently visiting Tirupathi Balaji temple to get the blessings of Lord Venkateswara prior to important space/satellite mission launches, and also to give Thanks for successful mission launches/other operations. To read about one such visit in Oct. 2014, see <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhrapradesh/isro-chairman-prays-at-tirumala/article6500911.ece>.

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### **Simple but very insightful words from Sathya Sai about human instincts and techniques for sense control (2014-12-19 16:55)**

An extract from thought of the day at Prasanthi Nilayam (Puttaparthi ashram):

Generally people get drawn to sense objects, for they are victims of instincts. And instincts come along with the body and aren't derived by any training. The infant seeks milk from the mother, no training is needed for this. However for the infant to walk and talk, some training is necessary, because these actions are not automatic but are socially prompted, by example and by imitation of others. Training is essential even for the proper pursuit of sense pleasure, for it is the wild and untrained search for such pleasure that promotes anger, hatred, envy, malice, and conceit. To train the senses along salutary lines and to hold them under control, certain good disciplines like repetition of the name, meditation, fasts, worship at dawn and dusk, etc. are essential.

(from Bhagavatha Vahini, Ch 1, "The Bhagavatha")

The full thought for the day is available here: <http://www.radiosai.org/pages/calthought2.asp?mydate=12/19/2014>

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### **Very interesting trust-building broker role by Pope Francis in restoration of US-Cuba diplomatic ties (2014-12-19 17:08)**

Some short extracts (in quotes) from, and comments on, "Under Francis, a Bolder Vision of Vatican Diplomacy Emerges", <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/19/world/europe/pope-francis-vatican-diplomacy-mediator-cuba.html>

So Pope Francis stuck his neck out for amity and trust between USA & Cuba. Perhaps, like in business, it is the calculated risk taker who achieves great success, even in religious/spiritual movements. And, like in business, there will be failures which the religious/spiritual leader has to take in his/her stride, and perhaps learn from it.

"Just as John Paul, the first Polish pope, had a unique credibility as a voice against Communism in Eastern Europe, so, too, does Francis — the first Latin American pope — now benefit from a unique credibility in the developing world."

Ravi: Fascinating comparison! It seems to be quite valid. With a Latin American pope, are we in for a resurgence of

faith in God in communist/socialist countries of Central and Latin America, like the Polish pope ushered in a resurgence of faith in God in communist Eastern Europe? For theists like me, that would be a wonderful and exciting change.

"The papacy is one of the world's great opinion formers"! Hmm. Interesting.

The rapport with world leaders is the critical thing. I think that's where Pope Francis has done very well.

"Francis has brought back the Holy See on the international stage"

Ravi: The Holy See coming back on the international stage under the very humane and loving, or to put it in simple terms, nice guy, Pope Francis, is a very good thing for the world, IMHO.

— end extracts & comments —

An extract from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/the-pope/11300391/Pope-Francis-brokered-US-Cuba-deal-at-secret-Vatican-meetings.html>

Announcing the thawing of relations between the two countries, President Obama said he wanted to "in particular" thank the Pope, who happened to celebrate his 78th birthday on Wednesday.

Mr Obama praised his "moral example, showing the world as it should be, rather than simply settling for the world as it is."

[Ravi: "moral example" - that's what religious & spiritual leaders ought to be. Nothing like teaching by example in spirituality and religion. Everybody knows the theory of doing good and being good - the hassle lies in the practice of it. A 'moral example' spiritual/religious teacher inspires people to try to follow his/her 'moral example'. Pope Francis has taken the world by storm on this aspect of his life & leadership.]

An extract involving criticism from <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2014/12/17/pope-francis-helped-broker-the-restoration-of-us-cuban-relations/>

US Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican whose parents immigrated from Cuba in 1956, blasted Obama for not securing more concessions from Cuba in exchange for restoring diplomatic relations, and also took a swipe at Pope Francis' role.

"I would ... ask His Holiness to take up the cause of freedom and democracy, which is critical for a free people — for a people to truly be free," Rubio, a Catholic, told Talking Points Memo. "I think the people of Cuba deserve the same chances to have democracy as the people of Argentina have had, where he comes from; as the people of Italy have, where he now lives.

"Obviously the Vatican's its own state, but very nearby," the senator said. "My point is I hope that people with that sort of prestige on the world stage will take up the cause of freedom and democracy. The Cuban people are the only people in this hemisphere that have not been able to elect a leader in more than 55 or 60 years. That's outrageous."

[Ravi: Well, my humble view is that US Sen. Rubio is taking too much of a hard line on this. I think, in today's world, USA (or any other country/institution) cannot really impose democracy on other sovereign countries. The people of those countries have to struggle for it if they desire it strongly. A revolutionary-type of imposition of democracy in some parts of the Arab world a few years ago (Arab Spring) does not seem to have worked out well. Let each country chart out its own form of governance and its own destiny.]

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### **Comment on The Hindu article "Bring back all converted Hindus, says RSS chief" (2014-12-21 10:18)**

The Hindu, dated Dec. 20th 2014, carried this article, "Bring back all converted Hindus, says RSS chief", <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/en-act-law-against-conversion-says-rss-chief-bhagwat/article6711131.ece>. I submitted the following comment to the above web page:

In my view, converting people to another religion using material allurements is doing a great disservice to the prophets, mystics & founders of various religions. If proselytising organizations, no matter what their religion (even Hindu proselytising organizations), offer material allurements as a prize for religious conversion then such proselytising organizations should be strongly discouraged from such activities as these kind of activities will not only disturb the delicate harmony between followers of various religions & sects in India, it will also wreck the religious & spiritual life of those converted in this fashion.

However proselytising organizations that win converts from other religions by the teachings & practice of their reli-

gion/sect should be free to do so. Freedom to choose & change one's religion/spiritual path is a fundamental freedom which should not be denied to any Indian, and I believe this freedom is enshrined in the Indian constitution.

— end submitted comment —

I later got an email from The Hindu that my above comment has got rejected! No reason was provided for the rejection.

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## **Comments on Prof S.N. Balagangadhara's paper, 'What do Indians Need, A History or the Past?' (2014-12-22 20:12)**

*Last updated on 2nd February 2015*

This post became a longish one over time as I added material to the original post. It has been divided into the following sections:

My comments mail to ICHR on Prof. Balagangadhara MAKA paper/presentation

Prof. Harbans Mukhia's comments

Prof. Rajaram Hegde's comments

Prof. Romila Thapar's views on related matters & comments

Chairperson ICHR, Prof. Y. Sudershan Rao's comments

### **My comments mail to ICHR on Prof. Balagangadhara MAKA paper/presentation**

Given below is the text of an email I sent today (22nd Dec. 2014) to the Member-Secretary of the Indian Council of Historical Research, <http://ichr.ac.in/>

I am a retired-from-commercial-work software consultant, and blogger on spirituality and religion, who found the discussion related to Prof. S.N. Balagangadhara's recent Maulana Abul Kalam Azad memorial lecture convened by ICHR, to be of great interest.

I went through most of Prof. Balagangadhara's paper (37 pages) titled, "What do Indians Need, A History or the Past? A challenge or two to Indian historians", [https://www.academia.edu/9462514/What\\_Do\\_Indians\\_Need\\_a\\_History\\_or\\_the\\_Past\\_A\\_challenge\\_or\\_two\\_to\\_Indian\\_historians\\_Parts\\_I\\_and\\_II](https://www.academia.edu/9462514/What_Do_Indians_Need_a_History_or_the_Past_A_challenge_or_two_to_Indian_historians_Parts_I_and_II), and the comments on the lecture/paper put up on ICHR website. Given below are my comments on those parts of the paper and comments that were of interest to me.

With reference to the paragraph in Page 9 where, Prof. Balagangadhara talks of a "radical disjunction between what the historians think they are doing ('seeking explanations about the past') and what they do (collect factoids)":

I disagree with the above words OR maybe I did not get the right meaning/context related to it. The history books I read including some volumes of Will Durrant's history of the Western & Middle-Eastern world certainly gave me some decent explanation about the past of the peoples in these parts of the world. Sure, there could be some flaws in those explanations but they certainly were not simply a collection of (dusty) records/factoids.

...

In Pages 9 & 10 of Prof. Balagangadhara's paper he mentions the different attitudes to history of Peter Comestor and Babbington Macaulay as well as similarly different attitudes of the "European intellectuals (who) looked at the Greek myths during the Italian Renaissance" and the "'heroes' of the European Enlightenment". The former groups viewed the myths 'sympathetically' from which kernels of truth had to be extracted whereas the latter groups viewed the myths as imagination of poets and so not historical facts. I found these sections to be very interesting and informative.

...

With reference to the paragraph on Page 11 of Prof. Balagangadhara's paper dealing with attitudes of Catholics and Protestants towards miracles:

I find the above paragraph to be quite startling. Balagangadhara (Balu) claims that Protestants did not believe (and perhaps his view is that they still do not believe) in miracles outside of what is recorded in the Bible. I tried to check this with some sources on the net.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/384816/miracle/34104/In-classical-antiquity> and <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/384816/miracle/34101/Christianity> give some info. on it. The latter link states, "Belief in miracles is thus obligatory in the Roman Catholic Church, although belief in any specific miracle is not necessarily so. Classical Protestantism, however, has confined its belief in miracles to those recorded in Scripture."

So Classical Protestantism may not believe in miracles outside of those recorded in scripture but that may have got diluted over time in various Protestant groups/sects.

From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestantism>:

Pentecostalism, as a movement, began in the United States early in the 20th century, starting especially within the Holiness movement. Seeking a return to the operation of New Testament gifts of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues as evidence of the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" or to make the unbeliever believe became the leading feature. Divine healing and miracles were also emphasized.

— end wiki extract —

So at least one sect of Protestants which originated in the early 20th century, do believe in miracles outside of those recorded in scripture.

The other startling issue in the above paragraph is the poor view of History that Protestants are claimed to have. I will not accept that view unless there are other established sources of knowledge which supports that view.]

...

With reference to paragraph in Page 12 of Prof. Balagangadhara's paper dealing with Macaulay being a child of the Protestant attitude to the human past:

Balu claims that European enlightenment thinkers 'merely reproduced' in secular garb (Balu's view of) the Protestant attitude to the human past! I wonder whether this claim is backed by leading authorities of history.

Balu then states that Macaulay was a child of (Balu's view of) the Protestant attitude to history. I looked up wikipedia on Macaulay, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Babington\\_Macaulay,\\_1st\\_Baron\\_Macaulay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Babington_Macaulay,_1st_Baron_Macaulay) #Historian, which notes that he was also a historian. I could not spot any mention in the above wiki page, of Macaulay having the kind of attitude towards history that Balu claims Protestants had/have.

Interestingly, Macaulay is referred to as a "Whig historian". From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whig\\_history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whig_history), "Whig history (or Whig historiography) is the approach to historiography which presents the past as an inevitable progression towards ever greater liberty and enlightenment, culminating in modern forms of liberal democracy and constitutional monarchy. In general, Whig historians emphasize the rise of constitutional government, personal freedoms, and scientific progress. The term is often applied generally (and pejoratively) to histories that present the past as the inexorable march of progress towards enlightenment." ... 'While Macaulay was a popular and celebrated historian of the Whig school, his work did not feature in Butterfield's 1931 book. According to Ernst Breisach "his style captivated the public as did his good sense of the past and firm Whiggish convictions".'

So I find it hard to accept that Macaulay had the attitude to history that (in Balu's words) "Human history does not edify; at best it disappoints. Any human flourishing that we might want is not provided by stories about the past."

The next claim of Balu is that today's 'historical attitude' is solidly rooted in (Balu's views of) Protestant Christianity. Really? Second half of 20th century and early 21st century historians' ideas about why study the human past and how it ought to be done, are not based on sound rational lines! I find this very, very hard to accept as I am quite sure that leading historians from the world over would be able to provide a very good rebuttal to this claim of Balu.]

...

With reference to the first two paragraphs under section 'The common end' in Pages 12 and 13 of Prof. Balagangadhara's paper:

I think, as Indians, we have to accept that Western science & technology, and so its military hardware, was way, way ahead of what Indians had, when India came under British rule. The British rulers naturally would have been able to dictate terms to Indian intellectuals by policies of favouring those who accepted the British views and ignoring or even punishing those who dared to challenge British views. After independence the Indian intellectuals would have been able to start the process of getting freed from the deeply embedded British influences. I guess that would have taken a few decades. But, say around the last quarter of the 20th century and early 21st century, wouldn't some Indian historians have taken an independent (free from British imposed views) view of Indian history?

Prof. B.P. Sahu and Prof. Harbans Mukhia in the comments to Prof. Balagangadhara's lecture, <http://ichr.ac.in/comm.doc>, argue that over the past fifty years or so, at least some Indian historians have taken a non-Eurocentric view of Indian history. Further their comments state that Indian epics and puranas also contribute in some way (though not as historical events) to this understanding/view of Indian history.

Regarding Ramayana and Mahabharata (traditionally accepted versions of these epics in India), I personally believe that they must be largely truthful accounts but with some inaccuracies/variations perhaps. Specifically I believe Rama and Krishna to have been superhuman/divine figures who accomplished superhuman tasks. But these are my beliefs. I do not view them as scientifically/historically established facts as I have the impression that historians have not been able to find incontrovertible proof regarding Rama and Krishna having been historical figures and having accomplished the superhuman tasks that the epics & puranas state. So I can understand Indian historians not being willing to accept that Rama and Krishna definitely were historical figures. Some Indian historians may even take a stand that they may be fictional figures created by imaginative poets of the past. I will not agree with the view of the previous sentence but, in the absence of scientific/archaeological data that proves historicity of Rama and Krishna, I think they are entitled to have such a view. However, if they state that it has been established that Rama and Krishna are not historical figures (like an American professor of religion claims, in the case of Rama), I will vehemently disagree with them. Absence of scientific evidence is not evidence/proof of absence.]

...

With reference to the paragraph in Pages 18 and 19 of Prof. Balagangadhara's paper describing the distinction drawn by a young Indonesian between a story and history:

This angle of Balu's paper, namely, 'historicity of epic (e.g. Ramayana) is irrelevant to its truth', may be a crucial part of the paper. However, this angle does not interest me as I believe that most of (the widely accepted versions in India of) the Ramayana and Mahabharata are truthful accounts. I also realize that many Indians, including rationalists/intellectuals/historians, will not agree with my beliefs in this regard, and so this angle of Balu's paper may be of great interest to them.

...

With reference to paragraph in Page 32 of Prof. Balagangadhara's paper giving his understanding of adhyatma:

In my belief based on my understanding of Hinduism including Advaita, 'Ananda' is one aspect of (the goal/fruit of) adhyaathma. Perhaps the more important aspects are knowing from experience (or experiencing) that one's existential reality is an unchanging truth felt in one's being ('sat') separate from the changing mind and body, and, at a higher realization level, experiencing that one is in all of creation/life and all creation/life is in one. The latter involves experiencing feelings of others like joy, sorrow, hunger, pain etc. Even higher levels of realization involve knowing (intuitively, I guess) the past and cause-effect karma of oneself and others, within a life and across multiple lives.

Now, I realize that my above beliefs would not be acceptable to many, especially in the intellectual and academic community. Specifically, Indian history will not treat such beliefs as the (established) truth. That's fine by me.

----- end (main) text of mail sent to ICHR -----

[An update on 2nd February 2015:

*I was quite pleasantly surprised to note that the Indian Council of Historical Research, <http://ichr.ac.in/>, updated its comments document, to include comments from me (and others). The document link is available on the home page link given in earlier sentence. The document link url is <http://ichr.ac.in/comm.doc>, and my emailed comments provided above appears from page 3 onwards. Another email of mine which has extracts from Prof. Balagangadhara's paper as well as Prof. Mukhia and Prof. Sahu's comments is also included later on in the document.]*

I thought it appropriate to include some extracts from **Prof. Harbans Mukhia's comments** titled, 'The Changing Face (and Fate) of History' (<http://ichr.ac.in/comm.doc>, Pages 4 & 5) on Prof. Balagangadhara's paper/lecture. I have also included some comments from me within square brackets [].



[Ravi: Please note that I tried to get the email id. of Prof. Mukhia to take permission from him for putting up the extracts below on my blog but was not successful. Mail to his JNU email id listed in his jnu profile page, <http://www.jnu.ac.in/FacultyStaff/ShowProfile.asp?SendUserName=hmukhia>, bounced back. I have presumed that he will not mind me putting up the extracts below from his comments which are freely available on the above mentioned/linked comments document put up on ICHR website without any copyright notice on it.]

During the 18th, 19th and much of the 20th century, History, much like other science and social science disciplines, was dominated by the Positivist/Marxist paradigm which had posited an objective reality out there amenable to recovery through incremental knowledge of facts which would ultimately reveal the truth.

...

The embedded certitude of the existence of a singular, unambiguous Truth and its recovery was premised here, emulating the methods of natural sciences. 'Scientific History' was the elevating phrase used by its practitioners. It also had a clearly European provenance.

[Ravi: 'provenance' is defined as place of origin and/or chronology of ownership.]

Over the decades the realization grew that unlike the facts of the natural sciences which are given and immutable, social 'facts' resulting from human action are malleable. History as a social science does not have the luxury of a single Truth, but diverse truths, open to a variety of interpretations.

...

In lieu of a Euro-centred history, the consensus among professional historians all around is that the world we inhabit was made up of contributions from all societies, civilisations and cultures throughout the past, whether in the arena of crops, techniques, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, ideas, cultural mores, whatever.

[Ravi: That's very good.]

...

Positivism, by emphasizing the singularity of Truth, had differentiated between history as the embodiment of the Truth and mythology as its opposite, implicitly fictitious. The use of 'myth' for mythology was especially conducive to this misunderstanding. The evolving vision, however, looks at mythology too as comprising 'facts', although of a different order than the facts of historical events. Mythology actually has a much wider reach in all human societies than historical facts have and requires a much subtler comprehension. Thus the study of mythologies of different societies and cultures brings to the surface a whole range of values they had imbibed over the millennia underneath the overarching good vs evil syndrome.

[Ravi: Positivism viewed mythology as implicitly fictitious! That seems to be the problem with some historians who say that it is "established" that Rama is not a historic/real figure! How can that be "established"! Ridiculous! All they can say is that they do not have scientific evidence to establish that Rama was a historical/real figure, like Jesus has been "established" as a historical/real figure even if the miracles attributed to him in the New Testament are not "established" as genuine/true in the academic field of history.]

...

For long history had a mono-causal explanation: conflict between civilisations embodied in religious difference. The Christian crusades against Muslims; the 'Muslim' rule in medieval India and so forth. All other facets that contribute to social and historical change were subsumed in it. Today, religion is one among a milieu of facets which constitute historical causation and historical change, important but not determinist. Indeed, no single facet is given the determinist status.

[Ravi: I was so happy to read the above. Many conflicts around the world today, which are painted as purely religious conflicts by some sections of writers, politicians and the media, seem to me to be rooted in socio-economic issues. While extreme interpretations of religion may be an important factor in these conflicts, the socio-economic issues may be the real driving factors for the conflicts.]

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The small extracts given below are from **Prof. Rajaram Hegde's comments** titled, What have we gained by "Historical Consciousness?", (<http://ichr.ac.in/comm.doc>, pages 6 to 11) on Prof. Balagangadhara MAKA lecture/paper and discussion (involving Prof. Rajan Gurukkal). I have also included some comments from me within square brackets []. Unless we have theories about the cultural differences between the West and India, social sciences in India will

not advance beyond the colonial era. As a part of this exercise, one has to understand what these Western terms and concepts mean, and build hypotheses on Indian culture to explain the meanings of Indian terms and concepts. Balagangadhara has initiated such a task. A basic ground work is needed to make any further propositions about Indian history and culture.

...

The early colonial scholars who tried to reconstruct Indian history had noticed the lack of a sense of history or historical consciousness in Indian culture. This very fact made them initiate the project of writing a history of India. Our Itihasa and Purana corpus was labeled as myths. Some scholars argued that these myths also contain historical information. Since then a further debate has come into existence: do Indians really lack a sense of history? Due to the lack of sources, Indian history was reconstructed on the basis of these so-called myths too. Today Indian Historians believe that these myths are disguised histories. [Ravi: From <http://faculty.gvsu.edu/websterm/ways.htm>, (In the context of Greek mythology being viewed as disguised history) "Early philosophers tried to rationalize the fantastic events in myth by claiming that they were distortions of historical fact."]

...

I find Balagangadhara's paper a significant step forward, in the right direction, in this context. His arguments account for my intuitions of Indians who are brought up with the itihasa-purana tradition. Answers to questions like, 'What do Indians mean by Itihasa?', 'What is its role in our life?', 'How can we rediscover our accessibility to this tradition?', are important for him.

[Ravi: I fully support Indians rediscovering accessibility to the tradition of Hindu itihisas and puranas. I have had fair level of exposure to a system (not as a student but as an observer and as a software lab. course teacher) where the itihasa-purana traditions were and are taught as Sunday School (for students in regular schools/colleges) or as a kind-of religion-moral subject as well as extra-curricular activity (for schools/colleges/campuses following regular board/university syllabus but in a strong multi-faith with Hindu faith being dominant environment). It seems to me that the teaching of history in the schools and colleges/campuses referred above, was and is as per the syllabus of the associated educational board/university and was separate from the teaching of/exposure to itihisas and puranas. But, as I was not directly associated with teaching of history, I am not sure if my presumption is correct.]

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**Views of Prof. Romila Thapar**, one of India's distinguished historians, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romila\\_Thapar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romila_Thapar), on Itihasa-Purana 'historical consciousness' and related matters:

From <http://www.amazon.in/The-Past-Before-Historical-Traditions/dp/0674725239>

The Past Before Us - Historical Traditions of Early North India Hardcover - Import, 8 Nov 2013

by Romila Thapar (Author)

[Book Description]

The claim, often made, that India—uniquely among civilizations—lacks historical writing distracts us from a more pertinent question, according to Romila Thapar: how to recognize the historical sense of societies whose past is recorded in ways very different from European conventions. In "The Past Before Us," a distinguished scholar of ancient India guides us through a panoramic survey of the historical traditions of North India. Thapar reveals a deep and sophisticated consciousness of history embedded in the diverse body of classical Indian literature. The history recorded in such texts as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata is less concerned with authenticating persons and events than with presenting a picture of traditions striving to retain legitimacy and continuity amid social change. Spanning an epoch of nearly twenty-five hundred years, from 1000 BCE to 1400 CE, Thapar delineates three distinct historical traditions: an Itihasa-Purana tradition of Brahman authors; a tradition composed mainly by Buddhist and Jaina scholars; and a popular bardic tradition. The Vedic corpus, the epics, the Buddhist canon and monastic chronicles, inscriptions, regional accounts, and royal biographies and dramas are all scrutinized afresh—not as sources to be mined for factual data but as genres that disclose how Indians of ancient times represented their own past to themselves.

— end extract —

Ravi: Terrific! Going by the above description of her book, Prof. Romila Thapar has taken a non-Eurocentric view of ancient Indian history. That, if true, disputes the view that all leading Indian historians of today suffer from/have

British colonial attitudes to Indian history. Yes, she may not view (any single version of) Ramayana and Mahabharata as a factual account but then I guess the academic field of history will need decent evidence before (any single version of) Ramayana and Mahabharata can be accepted as factual/historical accounts. However the description states that she "reveals a deep and sophisticated consciousness of history embedded in the diverse body of classical Indian literature" and I presume that this literature would include Ramayana and Mahabharata. If so, the influence of Hindu versions of Ramayana and Mahabharata on the 'historical consciousness' of the majority Hindu population of India, as well as on the non Hindu population but to a lesser extent perhaps, may be an accepted 'social fact' in Indian history. [BTW I plan to read this book in the near future.]

From <http://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/making-sense-past-and-present-romila-thapar>

[Prof. Romila Thapar in an answer to a question:] There is a tendency to assume that if as a historian you are studying the 'Mahabharata', you are doing it because you are treating it as sacred literature. But you are not. As a historian you are treating the text in the context of its society and you are analyzing it in a secular, rational fashion. This creates problems because for the person of faith, these are events that happened and these are the people who actually lived and taught and so on, whereas for the historian whether the persons and events are historical is not the prime historical concern. What matters is to ascertain the broader historical context that the texts describe and their function as literature encapsulating society. We have no actual evidence that these people lived. Till we find that actual evidence, we can't make a judgment on it. These are two separate realms but unfortunately what is happening today is that there is a tendency on the part of people speaking for faith - not everybody but a small fraction - to demand that the historian concedes historicity to that which the people of faith believe to be history. This the historian cannot do. History today has to be based on a critical enquiry, not on faith.

— end Prof. Thapar answer extract —

Ravi: I tend to agree with Prof. Thapar on this. Till historians find evidence that the persons mentioned in Mahabharata (one of the well accepted versions of it in India) were real people, historians can't say that they were historical figures. I would like to add that neither can they say that they are fictional as the absence of evidence (so far) is not evidence of absence. Now I have faith that most of the Mahabharata (well accepted/popular version(s) in India) is true mainly because my spiritual master, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, said it is true. I believe that Sri Sathya Sai Baba had (mystical) knowledge of actual events related to Mahabharata and Ramayana. But that is a matter of my faith in Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mystical powers - I cannot expect a historian to go by such faith and accept (most of) Mahabharata as historical fact. However, the same historian may, in the belief/faith and intuitive aspects of his/her personality, accept (most of some version of) Mahabharata to be a truthful account (but still not historical fact as that needs rational evidence).

The article, **Fallacies of Hindutva Historiography by Romila Thapar**, dated Jan. 3rd 2015, <http://www.epw.in/discussion/fallacies-hindutva-historiography.html>, seems to be a response to Prof. Balaganadhara's MAKA lecture.

I found the following extract from her article to be very relevant for this post:

These (historiographical) changes have occurred primarily in India but also in universities outside India that teach and research Indian history, such as in Japan, Europe and the United States. Historians of the 19th century may have been searching for "the truth" about the past, but we no longer do so. We cannot arrive at the ultimate truth of what is not fully accessible to us. This is even more so in the study of ancient history. What we try to do is to analyse the evidence that we have and attempt to understand and comprehend what the many pasts of a complex Indian society may have been, and how they may have been interrelated.

— end extract —

Ravi: Thapar's clear statement that we cannot arrive at the ultimate truth of ancient history of India as it is not fully accessible to us, must be applicable to Ramayana and Rama. So, it seems to me, historically it may be virtually impossible to establish whether Rama is a historical figure or a non-historical/fictional figure. It is just too far back in the past!

I submitted the following comment (slightly edited to fix a typo) to the article web page (comment under moderation now):

As a person who is not a scholar of history, I find this article by one of India's leading historians to be quite informative and thought provoking with regard to the challenges involved in scientifically/rationally determining (to the extent

possible) the history of ancient India related to Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas. However, it seems to me that a largely common core set of events and characters across multiple Hindu versions both of Ramayana and Mahabharata, has got embedded in the consciousness of many Hindus and is viewed as a 'religious' truth by them (including me). How does one balance the approach of scientific history with accepted versions of Ramayana & Mahabharata among religious Hindus in India today, seems to be the big challenge for Indian historians now. I wish them all the best and hope that the debate & the arguments remain civil and do not become a mini Mahabharata war :-).

— end submitted comment —

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**Chairperson ICHR, Prof. Y. Sudershan Rao, on Balagangadhara MAKA lecture and Ramayana & Mahabharata as truths**

Short extracts from, and comments on, [http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2014-11-17/news/56174738\\_1\\_ramayana-history-indian-council](http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2014-11-17/news/56174738_1_ramayana-history-indian-council), dated Nov. 17th 2014:

[Prof. Y. Sudershan Rao [YSR]:] Professor Balagandhara is a very well known philosopher and theoretician. I invited him to speak because he's neither Marxist nor Rightist in his approach. His question to Indian historians was that do Indians need a history or a past and whether historiographical methods can be applied to our Itihasas and Puranas.

...

[YSR:] History writing in India is just about 300 years old and is not exactly reflective of our past. The first generation of history writers in India was European, the second generation was nationalist and the third generation in the post-Independence era was dominated by Marxists, who use European tools of analysis. The Europeans have not considered Puranas and Itihasas as historical sources and simply called them myths. If Rama's story is not true then how has he survived in the collective memory for so long? People do not care whether Ram is historical or not. He is truth for them. India's need is a special study of its past and the truth of its past cannot be denied. We need to Indianise our history writing.

[Ravi: I find this to be very interesting. However, it seems that some leading Indian historians are concerned about this effort. As just a reader of history and not a history academic, I find this debate fascinating.]

[Interviewer:] You say Ramayana and Mahabharata are "truths", but we have many versions of both in our country. So what is the real truth?

[YSR:] I am not here to question the beliefs of people. The content of one Ramayana may be different from the other but the existence of Ram, Sita and Ravan is consistent. That's the truth. I might not know anything about my great great grandfather but I can't deny his existence for lack of evidence or how else would I be here? Similarly Rama's existence need not be proved by historical procedure. What benefit are you (historians) going to get if you deny the existence of Rama? Why do you want to try to prove he is not there?

[Ravi: Can simply the existence of multiple versions of Ramayana and Mahabharata in India make all the versions completely false? Is it not possible that over centuries and millennia after the actual events of Ramayana and Mahabharata (according to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Rama was living around 20,000 years ago and Sri Krishna was living around 5,000 years ago, <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/2015/01/sathya-sai-on-historicity-of-rama-and.html>), the accounts of events took various forms as they were passed on from generation to generation and moved from one region to another? Is it not possible to extract a largely common kernel of persons and events from some well known versions of these epics in India? I must also mention that such a largely common kernel of the epics may still need supporting evidence for it to be considered as established historical truth. But, it seems to me, that this largely common kernel cannot be viewed automatically as historical falsehood if supporting evidence is not available - it would have to be viewed as not resolved whether it is true or false.

Even the gospels including the non-canonical gospels related to Jesus Christ have some differences in their account of events about Jesus Christ and his disciples. Does that mean all the gospel accounts, including the non-canonical gospels, are completely false? I believe the historian view is that it is not established that all the common parts of the gospel accounts are historical truths. Neither has it been established that they are historical falsehoods.

From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical\\_reliability\\_of\\_the\\_Gospels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_reliability_of_the_Gospels):

"Almost all scholars of antiquity agree that Jesus existed, but scholars differ on the historicity of specific episodes described in the Biblical accounts of Jesus, and the only two events subject to "almost universal assent" are that

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and was crucified by the order of the Roman Prefect Pontius Pilate. Elements whose historical authenticity is disputed include the two accounts of the Nativity of Jesus, the miraculous events including the resurrection, and certain details about the crucifixion."

I am quite shocked to know from Prof. Y.S. Rao's comments that some historians seem to deny the existence of Rama and are trying to prove that Rama was "not there". How can they "prove" that Rama was not existent! I think such efforts need to be strongly challenged academically and, outside academia, intellectually. For an example of such views and my criticism of it, please see my post: Criticism of (non) Historicity of Rama content in Harvard Religion Prof. Diana Eck's 2012 book, India: A Sacred Geography, <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/2015/01/criticism-of-harvard-religion-prof.html>. ]

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### **Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on Jesus Christ and His teachings (2014-12-25 12:19)**

From <http://www.sathyasai.org/calendar/christmas.html>

Christ determined to make the giving and sharing of love his main objective in life. Such love was met with many obstacles and losses. Christ considered a true man to be one who could face obstacles and move forward in love. Don't give in to losses and pain. Don't be carried away with pleasure. Face everything with equanimity.

Divine Discourse: 25 December 1995

...

As Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." Thus all persons are messengers of God. This means that they should divinise themselves. When can men call themselves sons of God? Recognize what pure actions are done by God, selflessly for the sake of all. There is no trace of self-interest in Him. Everything He does, says, or thinks is for the good of others. ... Men can describe themselves as "sons of God" only when they are completely free from selfishness and become Godly. To call yourself the "son of God", you have to manifest the qualities of the Father.

Divine Discourse: 25 December 1994

...

Jesus taught that God is love. Instead of recognizing this basic truth, men are allowing hatred, envy, and other evil qualities to pollute their love. Man is gifted with the quality of love not to express it for selfish purposes but to direct it toward God. Jesus declared that there was nothing great about returning good for good. People should do good even to those who harm them.

Divine Discourse: 25 December 1988

...

Jesus. Their duty is to glorify the great message of Jesus. The most important message of Jesus is the establishment of "Peace on Earth and goodwill among men." Without peace, mankind cannot achieve progress in any sphere -material, spiritual or moral. ... There is no use in merely invoking the name of Jesus and praying to Him without regard to His most vital message: "God is in everyone. Do not revile anyone. Do not cause harm to anyone." This was Jesus's greatest message.

Divine Discourse: 25 December 1985

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From [http://www.saibabaofindia.com/an\\_exposition\\_on\\_jesus\\_by\\_sathya.htm](http://www.saibabaofindia.com/an_exposition_on_jesus_by_sathya.htm)

Like most seekers, Jesus first searched for the Divine in the objective world. But He soon realised that the world is a kaleidoscopic picture created by one's own imagination, and sought to find God within himself. ... From the attitude of being a 'Messenger of God', he could now call himself the 'Son of God'. The bond of relationship increased. The

'I' was no more distant light or entity. The light became a part of the 'I'. With body-consciousness predominant, He was a messenger. With the heart-consciousness in the ascendant, He felt greater nearness and dearness. So, the son-father bond seems natural at this stage. Later as the Atman-Consciousness was established, Jesus could declare: 'I and My Father are One'. The three stages may be described as: 'I was in the Light', 'the Light was in me', and 'I am the Light', and may be compared to the Dwaita (dualism), Vishishta-adwaita and Adwaita (non-dualism) stages as described in Hindu philosophy. The final stage is the one when all duality has been shed. This is the essence of all religious disciplines and teachings".

Divine Discourse: 25 December 1978

...

So, when asked by people who He was, He could reply: 'I and my Father are One'. Jesus tried to teach the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man. Tradition-minded and egoistic men considered Jesus a false prophet and they tried by every means to thwart His mission. Jesus, however, did not waver. Faced with opposition, He continued to be an example of living truth, and tried to purify the society.

...

People talk of Christ's sacrifice as evidenced by his crucifixion. But, he was surrounded and bound, and crowned by the crowd who captured him with the crown of thorns, and later, nailed to the cross by his captors. A person bound and beaten by the police cannot say that he has sacrificed everything, for he is not a free man. Let us pay attention to the sacrifice that Jesus made while free, out of his own volition. He sacrificed his happiness, prosperity, comfort, safety and position. He braved the enmity of the powerful. He refused to yield or compromise. He renounced the ego, which is the toughest thing to get rid of. Honour Him for these. He willingly sacrificed the desires with which the body torments man. This sacrifice is greater than the sacrifice of the body under duress. The celebration of His birthday has to be marked by sacrificing your at least one desire or two, and conquering at least the more disastrous urges of ego.

Divine Discourse 25 December 1972

...

Religions arise from the minds of good men, who crave to make all men good. They strive to eliminate the evils and cure the bad. It is therefore appropriate that the birthday of Jesus, who felt the need to save mankind and who strove to achieve it, be celebrated. But the celebration must take the form of adherence to the teachings, loyalty to the principles, practising the discipline and experiencing the awareness of the Divine that He sought to arouse.

Divine Discourse 25 December 1972

...

From <http://www.oocities.org/hotsprings/resort/1239/1Jesus.html>

Jesus sacrificed His life for the regeneration and welfare of mankind. Today, there are some who exaggerate the so-called differences between different faiths and, for their own selfish purposes, exploit these differences; they thereby bring a bad name to the founders of those religions, who were spiritual giants. No Prophet, or Messiah asked his followers to hate other religions or the followers of other faiths. Every religion has declared that God is One and that the Divine dwells in every being. Jesus also proclaimed the truth that the One Spirit resides in all beings.

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### **Sathya Sai on ways to overcome religious (and other) differences/conflicts (2014-12-26 08:56)**

With a lot of heat being generated over religious conversions/re-conversions in India today, and also conflicts in many parts of the world where religious differences play a significant role, though not necessarily the singular or most important role, today's thought for the day at PrashantiNilayam ashram is very apt.

"Embodiments of Divine Love! Adhere sincerely to your faith and traditions. Wherever you may be, do not give room for religious or any kind of differences. When we examine the root cause for differences or conflicts, you will find that the real reason is selfish minds, wearing the garb of religion or any other cause, and inciting conflicts amongst the people. If you desire to secure genuine peace in the world, you must hold morality (neethi) as superior to your community (jaathi). Cherish good feelings as more important than religious beliefs. Mutual regard (mamatha), equal mindedness (samatha) and forbearance (Kshamatha) are the basic qualities necessary for every human being. Only the person with these three qualities can be regarded as a true man. Hence all of you must cultivate these three sacred qualities assiduously. Using these qualities, give up all kinds of differences. Then love will develop in you. When love grows, you will have a direct vision of God." - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Divine discourse, 25th Dec 1990.  
From <http://www.radiosai.org/pages/calthought2.asp?mydate=12/26/2014>

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## 3. 2015

### 3.1 January

#### **Sathya Sai Baba on historicity of Rama and Krishna (2015-01-09 14:40)**

*Last modified on 13th Jan. 2015*

The link, [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/25616/9/09\\_chapter %204.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/25616/9/09_chapter%204.pdf), quotes the American follower of and writer on Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Dr. John Hislop, from one of his books on Sri Sathya Sai Baba. [For more on Hislop please see [http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol\\_02/13July01/02\\_Cover\\_Story/cover\\_story.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_02/13July01/02_Cover_Story/cover_story.htm)] The relevant quote is given below:

John Hislop: Sometimes Swami speaks of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as if they were historical, and sometimes as if they were to be taken as representative of every individual's inner conflicts, virtues, bad qualities etc. Are these events and people historical fact?

[Sathya] Sai Baba: Yes they are a record of historical people and incidents... Rama was a real person and an Avathar. And Dasaratha was His father. Krishna was real and the events of His Avathara were real. Rama's life, over the ages, has been altered and distorted somewhat, and Swami's story of Rama will be a classic through several Yugas.

John Hislop (2002) Conversations with BSSSB [Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba]

— end shodhganga link extract —

The youtube video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7R8FwlxwUk &t=1m40s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7R8FwlxwUk&t=1m40s), Interview with Sathya Sai Baba part - 3, is part of a 1978 interview of Sathya Sai Baba with overseas devotees of his. From around 1 min, 40 secs in the video the conversation is as follows (Please note that Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mother tongue was Telugu, and that most of his public discourses were in Telugu, which usually would be (immediately) translated to English by a translator. But in interviews with foreigners, He, I believe, usually used to speak in English, as was the case in this interview.):

Questioner: Swami, when were the days of Krishna and Rama? How long ago was that?

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: Many thousands of years.

Questioner: 5000, 10,000?

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: Krishna is 5,860 years ago. 5,860 years ago.

Questioner: Thank you.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: Rama is not .... Rama is 20,000 years ago. Rama is 20,000 years ago. Between Rama & Krishna, many thousands, 15,000 years.

[Note that the first video of this series, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBPZbAj2oHY>, gives the following description/title at the beginning of the video, "Swami gives interview to oversea-devotees 24th of december 1978".]

— end video segment transcript —

So, Sri Sathya Sai Baba has clearly declared/revealed through his mystical knowledge of the past that both Rama and Krishna are real/historical figures and also the period when they lived. For those who believe in such revelations from Sri Sathya Sai Baba, which includes me, Rama and Krishna were real figures who exhibited divine/supernatural/paranormal powers. However, I am quite sure, scholars of history will not accept such revelations as historical fact unless they have evidence of some sort to substantiate the revelation.

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#### **Criticism of (non) Historicity of Rama content in Harvard Religion Prof. Diana Eck's 2012 book, India: A Sacred Geography (2015-01-10 23:37)**

*Last updated on 11th January 2015*

This post refers to the following book: *India: A Sacred Geography*, by Harvard Prof. of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies, Diana Eck, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana\\_L.\\_Eck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_L._Eck).

[Citation: Eck DL. *India: A Sacred Geography*. New York: Harmony, Random House; 2012., <http://scholar.harvard.edu/dianaeck/publications/india-sacred-geography>]

The extracts given below (in italics) from Eck's above book are from near the end of chapter 9, *Following Rama: The Ramayana on the landscape of India*.

*R. K. Dasgupta, a historian from Calcutta University, writes "Researchers in ancient Indian history, in India and abroad, have established that the Rama legend is a part of Indian mythology, the character in Valmiki's great epic having no historical basis."*

— end Eck book extract —

Ravi: On browsing the Internet I came across this link having the article by R.K. Dasgupta with the above quote, Ram as political tool, <http://www.geocities.ws/khalid2277/aftab/rampolitical.html> (also available at [https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/FRIENDS\\_of\\_UP/conversations/messages/13](https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/FRIENDS_of_UP/conversations/messages/13)). The bottom of the web page states, "The author, an eminent scholar is former Director, the National Library of India. Collected from the editorial column of *The Sunday Statesman* dated 1st July 2001 ..." I also looked up wikipedia for R.K.Dasgupta historian and came up with this link, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabindra\\_Kumar\\_Das\\_Gupta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabindra_Kumar_Das_Gupta), which states, "Rabindra Kumar Das Gupta (2 July 1915 – 3 February 2009) was a Bengali Indian scholar of Bengali and English literature and a social and cultural commentator." So, it seems that Prof. Diana Eck has mistakenly thought R.K.Dasgupta to have been a historian. The wiki page states that he was an academic in (the field of) English and that he had a stint with University of Calcutta in that capacity.

In the R.K.Dasgupta article, the paragraphs after the 'no historical basis' sentence given above, try to provide justification for the conclusion arrived at. Here's the first paragraph after the sentence:

The standard history of India, which is now valued both by the academic and the general readers, is Vincent A Smith's *The Oxford History of India* (1920) revised by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, AL Basham, JB Harrison and Percival Spear (1958). In this work Ramayana is presented as "neither historical nor allegorical, but a poetic creation based on mythology" (p57) Hermann Jacobi (1850-1937), the German Indologist, who visited India twice is the first European to write one whole book on Ramayana – *The Ramayana: History, Contents with a concordance of the printed recensions*. (1893; Eng tr, SN Ghoshal, 1960). The work presents the Ramayana as a work based on mythology. In his *History of Sanskrit Literature* (1900) Arthur A. MacDonnell too affirms that the Ramayana "is based on Indian mythology". EW Hopkins wrote his epic mythology (1915) to show that our two ancient epics draw their story from ours traditional legends.

— end first paragraph after 'no historical basis' sentence —

I think the historians mentioned above, with one historian's acquaintance with India highlighted by him having made two visits to India, have to be viewed as colonial-era historians with a bookish and Euro-centric view of history. Two visits to India by one of these historians is not really a credential for proper study of an ancient land like India, in my view. BTW some of the Britain and other parts of Europe based historians of the colonial era did not even visit India but were viewed as experts on India based on their study of Indian literature! Max Muller, whose portrayal of India seems to have been quite positive in that colonial age, is one of them - yes, he never visited India though he claims to have had many Indian (native) friends! From [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Max\\_M%C3%BCller](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Max_M%C3%BCller), "Though I have never been in India, I have many friends there, both among the civilians and among the natives, ..."

Now for the second and third paragraphs after the 'no historical basis' sentence

We may now turn to our own scholars' view of the Ramayana. In December 1975 the government of India and our Sahitya Academy organized an international seminar on the Ramayana, which was inaugurated on 08/12/1975 and ended on 12/12/1975. The consensus on the nature of the material of the epic was that it was mythological. On 15/01/1976 Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (1890-1977) who had already spoken at the

international seminar gave an address on the subject again. Dr. Chatterjee third address on the Ramayana was given at the National Library, Kolkata, on 13/02/1976. His opinion on the historicity of the Ramayana is quoted by Anil Kumar Kanjilal in his introduction to Dr. Chatterjee's unfinished work on The Ramayana: Its Character, Genesis, History, Expansion and Exodus (1978). Dr Chatterjee says about Ramayana "there is evidently no historical core below the surface - no scholar of India now thinks that Rama, the hero of Ramayana, was a historical person, who can be relegated to a particular period of time". The motto of Dr. Chatterjee's book on the Ramayana is a quotation from Rabindranath's poem "Bhasa O Chhanda first published in Bharti in 1898.(Included in the third volume of "Rabindra Rachanavali" (1983,pp 1285-1288) Toward the end of this poem Narada tells Valmiki, "Sei satya ja rachibe tumi, / ghate ja ta sab satya nahe. / Kavi tava manobhumi/ Ramer janamsthan, Ayodhyar chey satya jena (whatever you compose will be true; that which actually happens is not all true. O poet your mind is the birth place of Rama and you must know that to be truer than Ayodhya) here the Bengali poet raises Rama beyond history if only to affirm that he is a divine being. Valmiki's poem of twenty-four thousand anushtub verses and forty-eight thousand lines is not a historical tale; it is a revelation of a (c)elestial being .The poet indeed frees the Ramayana from the taint of historicity and for this alone he deserves the adoration of all worshipper of Rama.

— end second and third paragraph after 'no historical basis' sentence —

Ravi: The 1975 (Indian) Sahitya academy gave a consensus view that Rama was mythological. Well, that was a Sahitya (literary) academy view - not a history academy view. The person quoted, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, was not a historian but a man of literature! From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suniti\\_Kumar\\_Chatterji](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suniti_Kumar_Chatterji): "Suniti Kumar Chatterji (Bengali: ...) (26 November 1890 - 29 May 1977) was an Indian linguist, educationist and litterateur." The poem of Rabindranath Tagore having Narada say something to Valmiki is not history but a poet's imagination. I am outraged by the sentence in R.K.Dasgupta's article extract above, "The poet indeed frees the Ramayana from the taint of historicity and for this alone he deserves the adoration of all worshipper(s) of Rama." Rabindranath Tagore was one of India's great poets and I too have enjoyed and been inspired by some of his poetry. As a poet, Tagore had the literary license to put some words in Narada's mouth, and he was entitled to his view that Rama is not historical. But taking that (Tagore's poem) as evidence/proof of Rama not being historical, and that Ramayana was supposedly freed from the taint of history, is completely unacceptable from a scientific or rational point of view, in my opinion. That Prof. Diana Eck, one of the eminent (academic) scholars of Hinduism in the world today, from Harvard university, USA, thought R.K.Dasgupta was a historian, and further used only the above mentioned article of his, to inform her readers including, I am quite sure, academic students & scholars of Hinduism, about the historicity of Rama, is a sad state of affairs. I think it indicates that the view that Rama is established to be a non-historical/fictional figure has got deeply rooted in many top academics in the world, including India. [Please note that her book was published in 2012 and so is quite recent.]

What could be the basis for this view? Unfortunately, Prof. Diana Eck does not quote any meaningful basis for such a view. But then she is not a historian. I need to read some recent books by reputed historians that cover this topic to know the basis for such a view. I have read that historians mention some hundreds of versions of Ramayana across many parts of Asia. Fine, but that does not mean all versions are false and that all are simply the imagination of various poets! There could be a common kernel of real incidents and real characters including Rama which over centuries and millennia got distorted into hundreds of differing versions.

Another point could be lack of archaeological evidence about Rama. But that may simply be due to the large time gap of many millennia between Rama's period and today. Anyway, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Based on my current limited knowledge on this topic, I think a rational/logical stand would be that due to lack of strong evidence it cannot be established historically/scientifically that Rama was a real figure nor can it be established historically/scientifically that Rama was a non-historical/fictional figure.

A later extract from same chapter of Eck's book:

*To say one thinks of Rama in mythic rather than historical terms does not diminish his importance, but amplifies it. It is to speak of a story that is profoundly important in Hindu culture, not because it factually happened in this place or that, but because it goes on taking place in the lives of people for whom it is meaningful and in the tales and travels*

of Hindu pilgrims.

— end Eck book extract —

While I appreciate the effort of Prof. Eck to highlight the value of Ramayana to Hindus, I strongly disagree with the view that thinking of Rama in mythic terms amplifies his importance. Based on belief in my spiritual master's words about Rama, today I have deep faith that Rama was a real person and that the key events of Ramayana like Rama being exiled just before his scheduled coronation, Sita being kidnapped by Ravana, Rama killing Ravana and returning to Ayodhya with Sita and Lakshmana etc. are real events. Very importantly, the sterling character of Rama including his superhuman adherence to Dharma (righteous conduct) are real, making him a real ideal of Dharma and good character (Maryada Purushottama). This reality of Rama (for me) makes Rama a very powerful role model who I can deeply admire and even try to emulate to some small extent when it comes to adherence to Dharma. If instead, I viewed Rama as simply a poet or drama writer's imaginary/fictional character then I may not be so inspired by it. I think most countless devotees of Rama in India and other parts of the world, like me, view Rama as a real historical character which is what makes Rama a powerful icon/god to them.

For more about my spiritual master's words about Rama please see my blog post, Sathya Sai Baba on historicity of Rama and Krishna, <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2015/01/sathya-sai-on-historicity-of-rama-and-ht ml>. BTW some readers may not have belief in these words, and scientific historians cannot accept it as truth without supporting evidence - that's fine by me.

Eck continues to argue in a religiously enlightened way about the power of Ramayana even if it is a myth. [Please note that her arguments about Ramayana are mixed up with the Ayodhya Ramjanmabhoomi (birthplace of Rama) controversy. I prefer to stay away from the Ayodhya Ramjanmabhoomi controversy and focus only on the historicity of Rama aspect.] I thought I could give a small extract which comes a few sentences after the above extract in Eck's book, to give readers an idea of this excellent writing of hers:

*The legend of Rama, told in Valmiki's Ramayana and in many regional Ramyanas, is far too deeply and widely embedded in Indian consciousness to be either affirmed or destabilized by a bricks-and-mortar controversy in late-twentieth-century Ayodhya.*

*\_ The issues raised here are critical and have to do with the very nature of religious and historical consciousness, and the relation of the power of myth to the so-called facts of history. How does one search for the "historical" figure of Rama, whose story is deeply embedded in the Indian imagination? This is the story of the prince who lost his kingdom on the eve of his coronation, who was sent into exile in the forest, who lost his beloved wife Sita, carried off by a rakshasa. Indeed, he lost everything but his fervent adherence to dharma, to righteousness. This myth has moved through many centuries and many communities. It has extended its influence throughout India and beyond India into wider Southeast Asia....Its power has never needed to be bolstered by the DNA of the archaeological or historical record.*

— end Eck book extract —

Ravi: I think Eck should have added in her one-sentence capsule of Ramayana above, the killing of Ravana by Rama, rescuing Sita and going back triumphantly to Ayodhya. That is very important as it shows that eventually Rama, the great example of Dharma, won, thereby giving hope to countless devotees of Rama, over centuries and millennia, that they too may/will eventually win in the difficult and crisis periods of their lives, if they stick to Dharma like Rama did (and pray for dharmic success).

I tend to agree with Eck that Ramayana's "*power has never needed to be bolstered by the DNA of the archaeological or historical record*". But that was and is the case when Ramayana is not taught in schools as historically established to be a poet's imagination. [I believe that is the case in India, as of today.] The effort of some historians to establish that Rama is a non-historical/fictional figure through history scholarship articles may lead to school children being taught the same, which will surely have a negative impact on the power of the Ramayana over these school children. This negative impact may hold sway for the whole life of at least some of these school children.

Therefore I think it is essential that Hindus who believe that Rama was a real figure (as well as non-Hindus who subscribe to such a view) and who are interested in how history views Rama, should subject history scholarship which states that Rama has been established to be a non-historical/fictional figure to intense scientific/rational scrutiny (or contribute to such scrutiny in some way). This scrutiny, I am very sure, will expose scientific/rational flaws in such

history scholarship. That, in turn, will change the way leading academics of fields that deal with Ramayana like Prof. Diana Eck (Prof. of Religion) view this matter.

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### **Not a loving hug but an eyeful of pure love preferred by some spiritual recluses (2015-01-15 17:51)**

I came across this article on Google+, How To Interact With The Introverted. If Only People Would Understand This..., <http://www.trueactivist.com/how-to-inter-act-with-the-introverted-if-only-people-would-understand-this/>.

Added the following comment to it on Google+:

Pretty insightful, in simple language with great cartoons. Would like to add that some introverts are reclusive, especially the inner-sadhana (spiritual effort) types, and may enjoy their solitude (as against loneliness). Many of the reclusive inner-sadhana spiritual types may not permit the loving hug, and instead may prefer to simply exchange an eyeful of pure love.

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### **Where do we locate subjective truth: as fact or fiction? (2015-01-15 18:19)**

Yesterday, Jan. 14th 2015, The Hindu carried a very controversial opinion article, "In maya, the killer and the killed", <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/in-maya-the-killer-and-the-killed/article6785735.ece>, by DEVDUTT PATTANAIAK. I feel the article is deeply flawed as it does not give an outright condemnation of the Charlie Hebdo violence. In fact, the lack of such a condemnation makes some readers, as shown by comments on the article web page, assume that it is trying to justify that violence! However, the article does have some good points too. A small extract given below is one that I found to be quite good:

And here is the problem — measurement, that cornerstone of science and objectivity.

We can manage the measurable. But what about the non-measurable? Does it matter at all? Emotions cannot be measured. The mind cannot be measured, which is why purists refer to psychology and behavioural science as pseudoscience. God cannot be measured. For the scientist, god is therefore not fact. It is at best a notion. This annoys the Muslim, for he/she believes in god, and for him/her god is fact, not measurable fact, but fact nevertheless. It is subjective truth. My truth. Does it matter?

Where do we locate subjective truth: as fact or fiction?

— end extract —

It also talks about how today the 'barbarian'(brawn) is being forced to respond, when provoked by the intellectual(brain), in a language he does not know (brain).

Ravi: My view is that in today's age, people of all walks of life have to learn to either ignore malicious & destructive criticism or tolerate it if forced to view/hear it. Tolerance towards malicious criticism has become the key quality that the spiritual/religious person needs to cultivate. Polite criticism of spirituality/religion should be welcomed as such criticism can prevent or keep in check any wrong-doings of spiritual/religious groups.

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### **Sathya Sai Baba on differences between Rama and Krishna Avatars (2015-01-16 19:08)**

From Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's discourse on 4 Sept. 1996, as provided in the discourse text here: <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume29/sss29-40.pdf>

#### **The distinction between Krishna and Raama**

Today we celebrate the birthday of Krishna. Where was he born? In a prison. What were his possessions? Nothing. Born in a prison, he was taken to the house of Nandha and then he went to Mathura. He owned nothing. But he

became the greatest figure in the world. What does this show? Worldly possessions are not the secret of greatness. Krishna's greatness consisted in his permanent state of Anandha (bliss).

If you recognise the distinction, between Krishna and Raama, you will appreciate better the nature of Krishna. Krishna always smiled at the outset and carried out his task later. For Raama, the deed came first and then the smile. Krishna made women cry. Raama wept for the sake of women. Raama went into the battle only after having a strong cause for it. Krishna first provoked the conflict and then determined its outcome.

The Krishna principle revels in delight. The Raama principle is based on the concept of baadhyatha (obligation).

The Raamaayana is intended to promote the reign of Truth and Righteousness on earth. The Krishna Avathar was intended to give a perennial message to the world. He sought nothing for himself. He kept nothing for himself. He gave away everything to the people. He slayed his maternal uncle, Kamsa. He installed on the throne Kamsa's father Ugrasena. He did not covet the Kingdom. He befriended the Paandavas, defeated the Kauravas and crowned Dharmaja as the emperor. He did not make himself king. He was a king without a crown. He was the king of kings. He had no kingdom of his own. But he ruled over the hearts of the millions. It is this profound truth that is proclaimed by the Krishna-thathva (Krishna principle).

If you enquire deeply, you will find that every Avathar has incarnated to convey a special message and carry out a particular mission.

— end extract —

The above website in its index page for 1996 discourses, <http://www.sssbpt.info/english/sssivol29.html>, also has the discourse mp3 download link: [http://dl.radiosai.org/DD\\_1996\\_09\\_04.mp3](http://dl.radiosai.org/DD_1996_09_04.mp3) (13+ MB size). The above part is slightly after 39 min 10 secs into the mp3 file. I have given a rather literal English translation below based on my middling understanding of Telugu and using the above translation as well as Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju's on-the-spot translation when I had doubts. I have provided some Telugu words in parentheses. [Please note that Swami would use words and phrases like bank balance that conveyed the core message to listeners. This should be properly interpreted and not taken literally.]

Krishna was born. Where was he born? What were his (aastu-paastulu) possessions? Nothing. He was born in a jail, grew up in Nanda's house, and went to Mathura. What was his property? He has no property at all. He has no (bhoomi); does not have one naya paisa bank balance. But he became the greatest person in the world. What does it mean? The worldly property is not his property. The worldly money is not his money. All these are passing clouds. That which is permanent is Anandam (happiness/bliss). Krishna was always happy (in Anandam).

If you (study) the difference well between Krishna and Rama, you can understand it easily. Krishna first (mottamodati) has the smile (navvu) and then (does) the work (pani). Rama first (mottamodati) has (does) the work and then the smile. It is Krishna who made women (strilaku/strilu) cry. It was Rama who cried for women.

[I did not follow some of the Telugu for these crucial sentences starting at 40:29, and so have reproduced text from Radio Sai document and Prof. Anil Kumar's on-the-spot English translation. I have also given the Telugu words.

RadioSai doc. text: Raama went into the battle only after having a strong cause for it. Krishna first provoked the conflict and then determined its outcome. The Krishna principle revels in delight. The Raama principle is based on the concept of baadhyatha (obligation).

Prof. Anil Kumar on-the-spot translation (the parentheses words are added by me): It was Rama who was hurt and (then) waged war. It was Krishna who found a plea (an excuse) to fight (war). In fact, Krishna started fighting with everybody (and defeated everybody). That is the gulf of difference between Treta age and Dwapara age. The nature of Krishna is one of bliss (Anandamu). Rama stands for responsibility (duty).

Ravi: My attempt at capturing Swami's Telugu words (there could be errors as Swami was in real rapid-fire Telugu, at least for a non-Telugu fellow like me): Kaanathokkinchukoni kaayiniki poinattivaadu Ramudu.

Kaanuthokki kayyaniki thesukunattuvadu Krishnudu. Andarthona yuddhaniki siddham aaiyipoyi andarni oodiste vacchadu Krishnadu. Kanukane treta yugamuluku dwapara yugamuluku undinattivanti vithyasam ilaanti (...) untayi. Krishnatattvamanettivantidi chala oka vidhamaina ... anandamaina ... tattvam. Ramatathawamanettivantidi oke vidhamaina ... badhyata thattwam.

Ravi: Some personal thoughts on this. In my youth I had read some accounts of Krishna's life, of course, but then I was not sure how true it was, especially the miracles/paranormal events mentioned in the accounts. Sometime in the early 1990s when I was around 30 years old, I turned to faith in Krishna and Hinduism in general due to some very tough life challenges. I had not yet got into the Sathya Sai fold and knew very little about him (Sathya Sai Baba). At that time, with faith that the scriptural accounts about Krishna are largely truthful (and not fiction), I studied the life of Krishna in an abridged version, translated to English, of the part of the Bhagavatha Purana that dealt with Krishna's life, and read some of the relevant parts of Mahabharata. I was struck by how Krishna, in the versions I read, seemed to marshal events in such a way that led to the Mahabharata war. Yes, he did act as an (unsuccessful) peace envoy too. But, overall, it seemed that he was determined to destroy most of the Kshatriya kings then as they were ignoring dharma. It was as if he felt that the Mahabharata war (great war of those days) was inevitable, and he was ready for the bloodlust and killings that happened in it, leading to tremendous sorrow for the kin of the slain, and a victory full of sorrow for the Pandavas as they too faced very heavy losses besides the sorrow of having killed their cousins (Kauravas) and other relatives.

Swami's words on Krishna above seem to confirm my views based on my limited readings on the life of Krishna. That is, Swami clearly states that Krishna fought with everybody (who strayed from Dharma) and won against everybody. He provoked the conflict (Swami must be referring to Mahabharata here). This is in marked contrast to Rama, who did not provoke conflicts but fought only when necessary/required/challenged. I find this key comparison point Swami has made between Rama and Krishna to be utterly fascinating and very insightful.]

[Swami's discourse literal translation continues:] Ramayana is meant to propagate truth (sathya) and righteousness (dharma). Rama + aayanam is Ramayanam. Krishna's thatwamu (principle/story) is not like that. He came to teach the world. He did not desire anything. He did not have any attachments. He gave everything to the people. He killed his maternal uncle (Menamaama) Kamsa. He gave the kingdom to Kamsa's father, Ugrasena. He (Krishna) did not take it. He went to the side of the Pandavas, defeated the Kauravas, and installed Dharmaraja (Yudishtra) of the Pandavas as king/emperor. He (Krishna) did not become king/emperor. He was a king without a crown (Kiritamu leni raju). He is a king of kings (Maharaja-rajaa). He has no kingdom. The hearts of everybody is his kingdom. This is the kind of truth taught by Krishna (principle) (Krishnatatthwamu).

In fact, if you inquire about it you will find that each Avatar has incarnated for demonstrating (conveying) a particular (separate/different from that of other Avatars) ideal (message).

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## **A question about showcasing religious pluralism to US President Obama and Indian PM Modi (2015-01-25 10:30)**

*Last updated on Jan. 27th 2015*

Some time ago (on Jan. 24th, 2015) I added the following question (on the mygov.in portal) for the joint radio address by US President Obama and Indian Prime Minister Modi scheduled to be aired on Jan. 27th 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Modi-Obama-Man-Ki-Baat-on-January-27-at-8pm/articleshow/46004291.cms>.

— start question —

Mr. President & Mr. Prime Minister, as USA and India are two of the world's largest and deeply religious countries in the world, is it possible for USA & India to take the lead, in today's rather tense inter-faith world environment, to showcase to the world a path by example, for a multi-faith environment which includes atheists & agnostics (religious pluralism) where all (or most) can live peacefully, respecting faiths other than one's own (including atheist & agnostic attitudes/views)?

— end question —

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An update related to Delhi townhall meeting of US president Obama on Jan 27th 2015:

From "US President Barack Obama addresses town hall meeting", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sGFUPEtNAg>: [A little after 51:30] Our nations are strongest when we see that we are all God's children. All equal in His eyes and worthy of His love. Across our two great countries, we have Hindus and Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jews, Buddhists (Jains) and so many faiths. We remember the wisdom of Gandhiji who said, for me the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden or they are branches of the same majestic tree [audience applauds] - branches of the same majestic tree. Our freedom of religion is written into our founding documents. It is part of America's very first amendment. Your article 25 says that all people are equally entitled to freedom of conscience, the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion. In both our countries, in all countries, upholding this fundamental freedom is the responsibility of government but it is also the responsibility of every person. In our lives, Michelle and I have been strengthened by our Christian faith. But there have been times where my faith has been questioned by people who don't know me, where they said I adhere to a different religion, as if that were somehow a bad thing.

Around the world we have seen intolerance and violence and terror perpetrated by those who profess to be standing up for their faith but in fact are betraying it. No society is immune from the darkest impulses of men. And too often religion has been used to tap into those darker impulses as opposed to the light of God. Three years ago, in our state of Wisconsin, back in the United States, a man went into a Sikh temple (and) in a terrible act of violence killed six innocent people, Americans and Indians. In that moment of shared grief, our two countries reaffirmed the basic truth as we must again today. (That) Every person has the right to practise their faith how they choose, or to practise no faith at all, and to do so free of persecution and fear and discrimination. [Audience applauds].

The peace we seek in the world begins in human hearts. It finds its glorious expression when we look beyond any differences in religion or tribe and rejoice in the beauty of every soul. Nowhere is that more important than (in) India. Nowhere is it going to be more necessary for that foundational value to be upheld. India will succeed so long as it is not splintered along lines of religious faith, so long it is not splintered along any lines, is unified as one nation. And it is when all Indians, whatever your faith, go to the movies and applaud actors like Shah Rukh Khan or when you celebrate athletes like Milkha Singh or Mary Kom. And every Indian can take pride in the courage of the humanitarian who liberates boys and girls from forced labour and exploitation who is here today - Kailash Satyarthi [audience applauds], our most recent winner of the Nobel prize for peace. So that's what unifies us. Do we act with compassion and empathy? Are we measured by our efforts, by what Dr. King called the content of our character rather than the colour of our skin or the manner in which we worship our God?

In both our countries, in India and in America, our diversity is our strength and we have to guard against any efforts to divide ourselves along sectarian lines or any other lines. And if we do that well, if America shows itself as an example of its diversity and yet (shows) the capacity to live together and work together, in common effort, in common purpose; if India, as massive as it is, with so much diversity, so many differences, is able to continually affirm its democracy, that is an example for every other country on earth. That's what makes us world leaders. Not just the size of our economy or the number of weapons we have. Our ability to show the way in how we work together. How much respect we show each other. And finally our nations are strongest when we empower our young people. Because ultimately you (the young audience in the town hall meeting) are the one who has to breakdown these old stereotypes, these old barriers, these old ways of thinking. You know, prejudices and stereotypes and assumptions - those are what happens to old minds like mine (-:-). I am getting grey hair now - I was more youthful when I first started this office.



## Conversation on 'secular parenting' & religion between USA scientist & Indian technologist (2015-01-29 12:56)

*Last updated on 5th Feb. 2015*

Here's the pdf document version of Conversation on 'secular parenting' & religion between USA scientist & Indian technologist.

And here's the Word document version (same content) of Conversation on 'secular parenting' & religion between USA scientist & Indian technologist.

The deep indentation formatting requirements of the document/post was difficult to be done using this blog's editor (it would have required elaborate hand-coded HTML tables, IMHO) and so it has been provided in pdf and Word document versions linked above.

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## 3.2 February

### An Indian's view of USA President Obama speech at (USA) National Prayer Breakfast meeting 2015 (2015-02-07 15:20)

Extracts from and comments on, Remarks by the (USA) President at National Prayer Breakfast, dated February 5th 2015, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/05/remarks-president-national-prayer-breakfast>. [The video is available here: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2015/02/05/president-obama-speaks-national-prayer-breakfast>, 24 min 08 secs.]

Many times as President, I've been reminded of a line of prayer that Eleanor Roosevelt was fond of. She said, "Keep us at tasks too hard for us that we may be driven to Thee for strength." Keep us at tasks too hard for us that we may be driven to Thee for strength. I've wondered at times if maybe God was answering that prayer a little too literally. But no matter the challenge, He has been there for all of us. He's certainly strengthened me "with the power through his Spirit," as I've sought His guidance not just in my own life but in the life of our nation.

[Ravi: Fascinating and actually, quite inspiring for guys like me!]

...

[A large extract:]

But we also see faith being twisted and distorted, used as a wedge – or, worse, sometimes used as a weapon. From a school in Pakistan to the streets of Paris, we have seen violence and terror perpetrated by those who profess to stand up for faith, their faith, professed to stand up for Islam, but, in fact, are betraying it. We see ISIL, a brutal, vicious death cult that, in the name of religion, carries out unspeakable acts of barbarism – terrorizing religious minorities like the Yezidis, subjecting women to rape as a weapon of war, and claiming the mantle of religious authority for such actions.

We see sectarian war in Syria, the murder of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, religious war in the Central African Republic, a rising tide of anti-Semitism and hate crimes in Europe, so often perpetrated in the name of religion.

So how do we, as people of faith, reconcile these realities – the profound good, the strength, the tenacity, the compassion and love that can flow from all of our faiths, operating alongside those who seek to hijack religious for their own murderous ends?

Humanity has been grappling with these questions throughout human history. And lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ. Michelle and I returned from India – an incredible, beautiful country, full of magnificent diversity – but a place where, in past years, religious faiths of all types have, on occasion, been targeted by other peoples of faith, simply due to their heritage and their beliefs – acts of intolerance that would have shocked Gandhiji, the person who helped to liberate that nation.

So this is not unique to one group or one religion. There is a tendency in us, a sinful tendency that can pervert and distort our faith. In today's world, when hate groups have their own Twitter accounts and bigotry can fester in hidden places in cyberspace, it can be even harder to counteract such intolerance. But God compels us to try. And in this mission, I believe there are a few principles that can guide us, particularly those of us who profess to believe.

And, first, we should start with some basic humility. I believe that the starting point of faith is some doubt – not being so full of yourself and so confident that you are right and that God speaks only to us, and doesn't speak to others, that God only cares about us and doesn't care about others, that somehow we alone are in possession of the truth. Our job is not to ask that God respond to our notion of truth – our job is to be true to Him, His word, and His commandments. And we should assume humbly that we're confused and don't always know what we're doing and we're staggering and stumbling towards Him, and have some humility in that process. And that means we have to speak up against those who would misuse His name to justify oppression, or violence, or hatred with that fierce certainty. No God condones terror. No grievance justifies the taking of innocent lives, or the oppression of those who are weaker or fewer in number.

And so, as people of faith, we are summoned to push back against those who try to distort our religion – any religion – for their own nihilistic ends. And here at home and around the world, we will constantly reaffirm that fundamental freedom – freedom of religion – the right to practice our faith how we choose, to change our faith if we choose, to practice no faith at all if we choose, and to do so free of persecution and fear and discrimination.

[Ravi: I chose not to break up the above extract into smaller pieces so that readers can clearly see the context in which Obama makes the much-discussed and much-criticized in India, reference to India, "Michelle and I returned from India – an incredible, beautiful country, full of magnificent diversity – but a place where, in past years, religious faiths of all types have, on occasion, been targeted by other peoples of faith, simply due to their heritage and their beliefs – acts of intolerance that would have shocked Gandhiji, the person who helped to liberate that nation." Given the context where Obama is mentioning various countries in the world where acts of religious intolerance have occurred (including USA in the past), in my humble opinion, as an Indian I think we should not make such a fuss about his comment. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, one of India's noted contemporary spiritual leaders, had tweeted, "Isolated incidents doesn't mean India is intolerant. Obama should have met religious leaders while in India for better understanding.", <https://twitter.com/SriSri/status/563397472358105088>. Perhaps Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is right. Obama, as the USA president, has his view and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar disagrees with that view and has openly expressed his disagreement. Let's just leave it at that and not get offended at Obama's statement above.

Rather, the lines we Indians (and others) should take from the above extract of Obama's speech are gems like these:

\* So this is not unique to one group or one religion. There is a tendency in us, a sinful tendency that can pervert and distort our faith.

\* I believe that the starting point of faith is some doubt – not being so full of yourself and so confident that you are right and that God speaks only to us, and doesn't speak to others, that God only cares about us and doesn't care about others, that somehow we alone are in possession of the truth.

\* And that means we have to speak up against those who would misuse His [God's] name to justify oppression, or violence, or hatred with that fierce certainty. [Ravi: It is this 'fierce certainty' that makes some of the misguided faithful so powerful.]

\* No God condones terror. No grievance justifies the taking of innocent lives, or the oppression of those who are weaker or fewer in number.

\* And so, as people of faith, we are summoned to push back against those who try to distort our religion – any religion – for their own nihilistic ends.]

...

The United States is one of the most religious countries in the world – far more religious than most Western developed countries. And one of the reasons is that our founders wisely embraced the separation of church and state. Our government does not sponsor a religion, nor does it pressure anyone to practice a particular faith, or any faith at all. And the result is a culture where people of all backgrounds and beliefs can freely and proudly worship, without fear, or coercion – so that when you listen to Darrell talk about his faith journey you know it's real. You know he's not saying it because it helps him advance, or because somebody told him to. It's from the heart. That's not the case in theocracies that restrict people's choice of faith.

[Ravi: I think the above words are very important for today's multi-faith (including no faith) reality in most countries of the world including India. Whether one likes it or not (I like it), this multi-faith (including no faith) reality will continue to be around in the foreseeable future in most countries of the world including India.]

...

And, finally, let's remember that if there is one law that we can all be most certain of that seems to bind people of all faiths, and people who are still finding their way towards faith but have a sense of ethics and morality in them – that one law, that Golden Rule that we should treat one another as we wish to be treated. The Torah says "Love thy neighbor as yourself." In Islam, there is a Hadith that states: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." The Holy Bible tells us to "put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Put on love.

[Ravi: I love the last sentence, 'Put on love' :-). I feel it appropriate to mention Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teaching, "Love is God. Live in love.", from 15th December 2007 discourse of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, <http://www.sathyasai.org/discour/2007/d071215.pdf>. Some more quotes from it:

"There is no greater God than love. Love is God."

"People call God by many names such (as) Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Allah etc. But all names refer to the same God. If you call Him Allah, He responds. Similarly, if you call Him Jesus, or Zoroastra, or Rama, He will respond. All these names were given by man. God is not born with these names. Original name of God is only love."

Whatever our beliefs, whatever our traditions, we must seek to be instruments of peace, and bringing light where there is darkness, and sowing love where there is hatred. And this is the loving message of His Holiness, Pope Francis. And like so many people around the world, I've been touched by his call to relieve suffering, and to show justice and mercy and compassion to the most vulnerable; to walk with The Lord and ask "Who am I to judge?"

[Ravi: Inspiring!]

...

His Holiness expresses that basic law: Treat thy neighbor as yourself. The Dalai Lama – anybody who’s had an opportunity to be with him senses that same spirit. Kent Brantly expresses that same spirit. Kent was with Samaritan’s Purse, treating Ebola patients in Liberia, when he contracted the virus himself. And with world-class medical care and a deep reliance on faith – with God’s help, Kent survived. (Applause.)

And then by donating his plasma, he helped others survive as well. And he continues to advocate for a global response in West Africa, reminding us that “our efforts needs to be on loving the people there.” And I could not have been prouder to welcome Kent and his wonderful wife Amber to the Oval Office. We are blessed to have him here today – because he reminds us of what it means to really “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Not just words, but deeds.

[Ravi: Awesome!]

Each of us has a role in fulfilling our common, greater purpose – not merely to seek high position, but to plumb greater depths so that we may find the strength to love more fully. And this is perhaps our greatest challenge – to see our own reflection in each other; to be our brother’s keepers and sister’s keepers, and to keep faith with one another. As children of God, let’s make that our work, together.

As children of God, let’s work to end injustice – injustice of poverty and hunger. No one should ever suffer from such want amidst such plenty. As children of God, let’s work to eliminate the scourge of homelessness, because, as Sister Mary says, “None of us are home until all of us are home.” None of us are home until all of us are home.

As children of God, let’s stand up for the dignity and value of every woman, and man, and child, because we are all equal in His eyes, and work to send the scourge and the sin of modern-day slavery and human trafficking, and “set the oppressed free.” (Applause.)

[Ravi: This man is some speaker! I find it truly inspiring to see a democratically elected politician holding the world’s most powerful political position, speak words that one normally hears only from inspired preachers!]

If we are properly humble, if we drop to our knees on occasion, we will acknowledge that we never fully know God’s purpose. We can never fully fathom His amazing grace. “We see through a glass, darkly” – grappling with the expanse of His awesome love. But even with our limits, we can heed that which is required: To do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

I pray that we will. And as we journey together on this “march of living hope,” I pray that, in His name, we will run and not be weary, and walk and not be faint, and we’ll heed those words and “put on love.”

[Ravi: Amen.]

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### **Why Sathya Sai Baba insisted on service (seva) in Prashanti Nilayam, Puttaparthi? (2015-02-08 11:14)**

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was famous for his insistence on worshipful service to fellow man/woman (Manava Seva is Madhava Seva) as the main spiritual sadhana (practise/discipline) to be followed for all those who came to him. Yes, Namasmarna (devotional chanting/ remembrance of the name of the Lord) and Bhajan (devotional songs/singing), were important too, but his advice was that most of one’s time must be spent in service activities,

singing bhajans while doing the work, if feasible, or even silently chanting the name of the Lord, if feasible. For Kali Yuga, this was the best spiritual practise according to Swami, the Kali Yuga Avatar. Today's thought for the day in Prashanti Nilayam ashram throws some further light on why Swami insisted on service for all who came to Prashanti Nilayam (Puttaparthi):

You have worked very hard in your life discharging worldly duties and come to Prashanti Nilayam, seeking rest for the body and peace for the mind. That being so, it might look strange if you were asked to undertake some kind of work here also. In the olden days the Guru would collect his disciples in the forest and give them different types of work, sometimes for 10 to 12 years. This was done with a purpose. One important object of work is purification of the Chittha (heart). Once the heart is purified one is ready to receive the teachings of the Guru. Therefore in earlier times the disciples were given work in the beginning so that they slowly get purified. Only when the teacher was satisfied regarding the student's ripeness for receiving spiritual instruction, would he start teaching Brahma Vidya (the supreme knowledge). (Divine Discourse, 7Jul 1985)

From: <http://www.radiosai.org/pages/calthought2.asp?mydate=2/8/2015>

I think the above message has helped very much to improve my understanding of why Swami insisted on service activities, and also given me vital background information on how Gurus of the past ages would train/discipline spiritual aspirants who came to them. 10 to 12 years of service to the Guru/ashram as a process of Chitta shuddhi (purification of heart/mind OR inculcation of right attitude as a spiritual aspirant/student) before Brahma Vidya was taught to newcomer spiritual aspirants! Well, spiritual knowledge (Brahma Vidya), was and, IMHO, typically still is, not for the faint hearted or quick results oriented person. Shraddha and Saburi i.e. faith and patience, as Bhagavan Sri Shirdi Sai Baba would say, are the vital attributes to inculcate and foster, for the spiritual person.

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### **Indian PM, Shri Narendra Modi, appalled at the news of temple being built in his name (2015-02-12 13:23)**

From <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=115368> dated 12th February 2015:

PM appalled at the news of temple being built in his name

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has said that he is appalled at the news of a Temple being built in his name.

"Have seen the news about a Temple being built in my name. I was appalled. This is shocking and against India's great traditions. Building such Temples is not what our culture teaches us. Personally, it made me very sad. Would urge those doing it not to do it. If you have time and resources, please devote the same towards fulfilling our dream of a Clean India," the Prime Minister said.

— end PIB text —

This is picked up from the following three tweets of PM Narendra Modi:

- <https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/565711345547747330>
- <https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/565711528167751684>
- <https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/565711752273608704>

More on the temple is provided in this article, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/temple-dedicated-to-modi-s-hocks-him/article6885629.ece>.

An update:

The latest news is that the Modi statue/idol inauguration in the temple is cancelled, <http://www.oneindia.com/india/narendra-modi-temple-s-inauguration-cancelled-after-pm-expressed-displeasure-1651325.html>.

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### **Swami (Sathya Sai Baba) made Jesus, Rama and Krishna real for me (2015-02-12 22:27)**

A Sai devotee told me that Swami, i.e. Sathya Sai Baba, made Jesus real for him. He had read parts of the New Testament earlier but it was not with faith that Jesus was a real person. It was after he came to Swami that Jesus (of the New Testament) became real for him.

I think it is similar for me. In my youth I had doubted the reality of divine powers attributed to Rama and Krishna. Reading about Swami and becoming part of the Sathya Sai fraternity gave me some degree of faith in the reality of not only Jesus, but also Rama and Krishna. Later, as a teacher in his university at Prashanti Nilayam, I had direct experiences of Swami's divine/paranormal powers, which has convinced me that Jesus, Rama and Krishna were real figures with divine/paranormal powers. So Swami has made Jesus, Rama and Krishna real for me.

I am now reading leading historian of ancient India, Romila Thapar's book, "The Past Before Us. Historical Traditions of Early North India", <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674725232>. I just finished reading the chapter on Mahabharata. The next chapter is on Ramayana. What is striking for me about the Mahabharata chapter is that divine powers of Krishna are not considered to be real, even if she considers some part(s) of Mahabharata like the Kurukshetra war to be a historical event. As a historian, I guess, she cannot go by belief like me. What a great difference faith makes in readings of epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. The same is the case for the vital book for Christians, The New Testament.

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### **Not YOLO man, YAALA man; And Karma man, Karma! (2015-02-15 10:46)**

*Last updated on 15th Feb. 2015*

I enjoyed watching this light-hearted short video (1 min 58 secs) of Obama which has gone viral and was even talked about in Indian national TV news channels, <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=1631492713658271>.

Towards the end of the light-hearted video which shows the US president doing goofy "Things Everyone Does But Doesn't Talk About" (quoted words are the title of the BuzzFeed video), a co-actor in the video acts as if he is shocked at Obama acting as if he is taking a basketball shot in a room which seems to be a room in the White House. Obama then acts a little sheepish and then says, "Can I live?" He follows that by saying "YOLO, man" with a broad smile. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YOLO\\_%28motto%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YOLO_%28motto%29), 'YOLO is an acronym for "you only live once"'. Perhaps the most important political message in the short video is about the USA new health insurance system (Obamacare). I loved the video as it showed how human even an in-office US president is.

But later, the YOLO thing stayed in my mind. I had watched the video yesterday evening. Today morning I somehow felt I should respond to YOLO as a way of life. Hindu belief related to this, which has been confirmed by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is about reincarnation/rebirth (unless a person gets moksha/liberation/merger with the divine) and karma (typically, good acts result in good reactions and bad acts result in bad reactions, that have to be experienced by the person-doer in the future, in the same birth or in a future birth).

Now, the response to YOLO is not really a response to Obama's light-hearted video. The YOLO there has to be taken

in a light-hearted way.

As I played around with a short response to YOLO, I came up with YAALA (You Almost Always Live Again) :-). So now the line I have is:

### **Not YOLO man, YAALA man; And Karma man, Karma!**

I also plan to tweet the following:

Not YOLO (You Only Live Once) man, YAALA (You Almost Always Live Again) man; And Karma man, Karma!

[Update: Here's the tweet url: <https://twitter.com/RaviSailyer/status/566828956691607553>.]

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An update:

I was fascinated to later come across another very similar response to YOLO. In late 2013, the singer-rapper, Mathangi "Maya" Arulpragasam aka M.I.A., [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M.I.A.\\_%28rapper%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M.I.A._%28rapper%29), of Sri Lankan heritage, responded to YOLO with YALA in a song of hers. From <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/videos/m-i-a-answers-yolo-with-y-a-l-a-2013-1022> dated Oct. 22nd, 2013: "M.I.A. is not so sure about this YOLO business: "If you only live once, why we keep doing the same s\*\*\*?" she asks on new song "Y.A.L.A.," which stands for "you always live again." After teasing a snippet of the new tune last week, she posted the full track online today. It's also available as a download for those who pre-order her upcoming record Matangi, out November 5th."

The lyrics of the rap song are available here: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/yala-lyrics-mia.html>. I am not into rap and so am not able to appreciate the lyrics so much. But I am able to relate to the last part of the song where YOLO is questioned and reincarnation and Karma are mentioned as a response to it. Here's the last part (one word is partly starred):

YOLO?

I don't even know anymore

What that even mean though

If you only live once why we keep doing the same s\*\*\*?

Back home where I come from, we keep being born

Again and again and then again and again

That's why they invented karma

— end extract —

Of course, I don't agree with the view that Karma was invented. I believe that Karma is a reality that can be "seen" by genuine mystics/"seers". Also, she omits mention of the very important possibility of Moksha/liberation from the birth-and-death (or death-and-birth) cycle.

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### **At Christian event, Indian PM Narendra Modi expels all doubts about secular India and freedom of religion in India (2015-02-17 23:49)**

*Last updated on 18th February 2015*

Non-Indian readers may please note that the term secularism in India is commonly understood to mean equal treatment of all religions by the state. For more please see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism\\_in\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism_in_India).

At the National Celebration of the Elevation to Sainthood of Kuriakose Elias Chavara, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuriakose\\_Elias\\_Chavara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuriakose_Elias_Chavara), and Mother Euphrasia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphrasia\\_Eluvathingal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphrasia_Eluvathingal), today (17th Feb. 2015) in New Delhi, Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, and a couple of other ministers in his govt. spoke. PM Modi's speech in particular, according

to the Vote of Thanks speaker, Monseigneur Sebastian Vadakumpadan, a Syrian Christian faith leader, culminated in **"expelling all the doubts we had in recent times about the pursuit of the secular India"**. The faith leader also said, based on the PM's speech, **"Everybody will have freedom to profess and propagate his faith. And we are very grateful to you (PM Modi)."**

I was very pleased to see the video of this event which resulted in such confidence among leaders of the Syrian Christian community. I think other Christians in India, as well as people of other faiths like Islam, Sikhism, Jainism etc. too may find the words of PM Modi very reassuring. I decided to make a transcript of parts of this video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXGj0w7ggSk>, and have given it below.

[Around 21:40, Dy. Chairman of Rajya Sabha (upper house of Indian Parliament), Dr. P.J. Kurien, of the Congress party and from a Syrian Christian family hailing from Kerala, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P.\\_J.\\_Kurien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P._J._Kurien), speaks (slightly edited):]

Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modiji, ....

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to participate in this function and say a few words. In fact, I have (had) the great opportunity and fortune of going to Vatican and attending the canonization ceremony of Chavara achhan (father in Malayalam, language of Kerala) Euprasia amma (mother), the two great citizens of this country. I thank the honourable Prime Minister who took (the) initiative in sending a delegation to represent our country, and, of course, he chose me as the leader of that delegation also, which was already mentioned here (by a previous speaker). And I witnessed the canonization ceremony. It was a moment of great joy and satisfaction and also to see that the tricolour, the national flag, flying in Vatican. [Applause. Video shows PM Modi also applauding.]

Dear friends, Chavara acchhan and Euphrasia amma, they are not just saints. They have not become saints because Pope has announced it or formalized it or declared it. They lived in body and flesh as saints. ... And, as it is already mentioned here, it is actually Chavara acchhan who started the educational revolution of Kerala. Kerala is the most literate state today. But the beginning is Chavara acchhan. And it may be interesting to you to know that Chavara acchhan even started a Sanskrit school [applause] because he - it is part of history - he had a vision to understand the greatness of Indian culture. And so, he thought that the study of Sanskrit is important to have a better apprehension of Indian culture. So he started a Sanskrit school. This is perhaps not known to many people. Therefore I would say that both lived for others. And they worked for the betterment of society. ...

Now friends, Andrew ... has already said, Christianity came to India in the first century A.D. itself. It is Saint Thomas, the disciple of Jesus Christ, who reached the Malabar coast in A.D. 52. Yes, some Hindu families embraced Christianity. Not a large number, (but a small) number. But remember, today, the Syrian Christians or the Saint Thomas Christians are the descendants of those small Hindu families. [Light applause] Look how they flourished. How? Who protected them? Who preserved them? Who promoted them? There was no Indian constitution at that time. I tell you, it (was) the Hindu rajas of the Kerala state who protected [Applause] and promoted them.

[Ravi: From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Thomas\\_Christians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Thomas_Christians): "*The most commonly believed tradition of origin among Saint Thomas Christians relates to the arrival of Saint Thomas, one of the 12 disciples of Jesus at the ancient seaport of Muziris ( in present day Kerala) in AD 52. Further, the tradition claims that Thomas converted a large number of Jews who were already present in Kerala that time along with 12 Nambudiri brahmin families namely Nedumpally, Pakalomattom, Maliyekkal, Sankarapuri, Kalli, Kalliamkavu, Payapilly, Palakkappilly, Koykkam, Muttodal, Madeipur and Panakkamattom. Most of the modern day Saint Thomas Christians trace their ancestry to these Jewish or Brahmin roots.*"]

I will narrate a small incident of history which happened in my place, in my own place (in Kerala). 500 years ago, some people were carrying a dead body in a boat to a distant place for (burial). On the side of the river which is Mani... river adjacent to my house, the ruler, a Hindu ruler, saw the dead body being taken to a distant place. He asked, where are you taking the dead body? Then they said for burial to such-and-such a place. The ruler said, Oh! such a distant place! Why do you go there? Come here. I am giving you land. I am giving you place for the church. And 500 years ago [applause], at a place called Kannupa..., my place, that church, 500 years old is still there as an eloquent expression of the protection given by the Hindu rulers to the Christian community. [Applause]. If any one of you are interested I can take you there - that 500 year old church is there. And interestingly that is adjacent to the temple. You from Kerala may be interested. Come and see, adjacent to the temple, the church is there, 500 years ago. That was, and that is, our tradition and culture.



And, if today, there is some semblance of intolerance or some incidents of violence or attack, I would like to say, they are only aberrations, they are only aberrations. And I am sure those aberrations will be dealt with seriously. Our honourable Prime Minister is here. His presence itself is reassuring. I have no doubt about it. [Applause]

Friends, when most of the modern world was groping in darkness, India was shining. We gave to the world the slogan, Vasudaiva Kutumbakam, world is one family. We prayed for the world, Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu (May all the world be happy). Swami Vivekanandaji, the embodiment of Sanathana Dharma, the embodiment of Indian culture, our culture, the embodiment of Indian spirituality, our Bharateeya Aadhyathmikatha, he has said, all religions are like rivers flowing into the sea. All will reach (the sea). Ultimately all religions will reach the same goal. We may be Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Jains or Parsees or any religion. We are all praying to the same God. We may be any community, caste, creed or religion or may be speaking any language, we are the children of Mother India, Bharatmata. [Applause]. Therefore, where is the place for intolerance and hatred and violence. There is no place for it. Let us all shun violence. Our duty is to work for the welfare of Mother India and serve Mother India.

...

But I cannot conclude my speech without a word of thanks to the honourable Prime Minister. [Dr. Kurien looks at PM Shri Modi who is also looking at Dr. Kurien] Sir, it is very kind of you, it is very gracious of you, and very benevolent of you, that you came here today. I was actually apprehensive that you may be forced to cancel (your) visit because it is such a difficult situation. The president of Sri Lanka is here, so many other ... but yet, you committed and you stood (by) your commitment [applause]. This shows, this shows your commitment to the plurality of India. I have no doubt about it. I thank you on behalf of all the organizers. Chavara acchhan and Euphrasia (amma) - they are actual saints. They lived as saints. His holiness, the pope, formalized and declared their sainthood. This function in the presence of honourable Prime Minister, honourable finance minister and honourable minorities minister and in the presence of all of you, makes that sainthood or articulates that sainthood as a national event and it gives a national acceptance to that sainthood. Thank you very much. Jai Hind! [Applause]

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[Around 49:55 His Beatitude, George Cardinal Alencherry, the Major Archbishop (head) of the Syro Malabar church, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maran\\_Mar\\_George\\_Alencherry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maran_Mar_George_Alencherry), speaks (slightly edited):]

Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modiji, other honourable ministers, my dear brother bishops, P.J. Kurienji and other distinguished guests on the dais and off the dais, to you all, my Namaskar. As it was already mentioned here, India is a country of sages and saints. We call them by various names: swamijis, sadhus, gurus, sannyasins, acharyas etc. In India, it is the popular recognition that makes a person holy or saintly. In the Catholic church, the life witness of a publicly venerated person will be examined in different ways and his or her holiness will be approved by the church through an official declaration by the pope. This process of declaring a person (a) saint is called canonization. The Catholic church in India has five such canonized saints. They are: Saint Gonsalo Garcia, Saint Joseph Vaz, Saint Alphonsa, Saint Kurikose Elias Chavara and Saint Euphrasia. The latter three saints belong to the Syro Malabar church of which I am the present head.

The (Saint) Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Saint Euphrasia were canonized, as it was said here, recently on November 23rd 2014 and it is to celebrate their memory that we have arranged this national meet of distinguished persons with your esteemed presence. We thank you very much in the name of all the Christians in India for this generous gesture from your part to be with us for this celebration.

The Syro Malabar church is the largest community of Saint Thomas Christians also called Syrian Christians who trace their origins from the evangelization work of Saint Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, in the first century A.D. The Christian churches, in general, practise their faith assimilating the cultural elements of the country where they live. Therefore the allegation that Christianity is a foreign religion in India is not true to facts. [Applause]. We are Indian citizens who love our country and who have contributed very much to the nation building through educational, health-care and social service activities. The Christians in India are only 2.3 percent of the total population, and during the decades of the two previous censuses, the Christians got reduced by point 5 (0.5) percent. It is against this numerically small minority community that some have levelled the complaints of proselytization. The Catholic church, as you know well, is the champion of religious freedom and the Catholics in India wholeheartedly adhere to this principle.

Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara whose sainthood we are celebrating today was not only a person of inestimable spiritual

values but also a great social reformer. At a time when universal primary education was not thought of in Kerala or in any part of India, he asked all the churches to establish schools and open their doors to people of all religions and castes. [Ravi: From his wiki page, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuriakose\\_Elias\\_Chavara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuriakose_Elias_Chavara), "In 1864, while he was serving as the Vicar General of Syrian Catholics, he ordered to start a school along with every church (palli) which was successful in making free education available for everyone." ]

When people who belonged to the upper caste were alone eligible for education, he changed the system by offering opportunities to people of all castes and religions to study in the schools of the church. He also opened a school for the study of Sanskrit as was mentioned by Shri P.J. Kurien. Not only started it, but opened it for all the students of all castes and religions. He was very particular that all the students should study Sanskrit, the classical language of India. Saint Euphrasia, whose canonization we are celebrating also along with Saint Chavara, was a person endowed with great spiritual strength and values. Christianity whose essence consists in reaching out to the poor and the dispossessed, which values love of neighbour irrespective of caste and creed, was fully alive in the life of Saint Euphrasia. Honourable Prime Minister Modiji [video shows PM looking at his left which would be towards the speaker Major Archbishop Alencherry], **we do firmly hold that conversion is a matter of one's personal decision and that conversion cannot be done through fraud or false means.** [Applause]

**If anyone uses forceful ways to propagate one's religion, he or she is to be taken to task by the laws of the country.** Making new anti-conversion laws will pave the way for creating animosity among believers of different religions thereby destroying the peace and harmony that exist today. Christians do not believe in revenge or retaliation. We do not support vendettas. But this shall not be taken by the evildoers as our weakness under which cover they can trample us down. [Applause]

During the past few weeks, five places of worship and a school have been ransacked by people who are led by anti-Christian ideologies. This happened in this capital city. I thank you very much for the action you have taken for the attack on the school and I hope [applause] and I request your honour to take further steps needed to provide protection to our churches and institutions of service.

...

Let our country flourish with the plans and projects of your government. And we are with you for the development of this country in all the way. And let there be peace and harmony among the people of diverse religions, languages and cultures holding on to the principle of unity in diversity. Once again, thanking you for your encouraging presence, I conclude, Jai Ishwar, Jai Hind! [Applause. PM Modi (and Finance minister Arun Jaitley) too is (are) shown applauding]

[Around 59:52, PM Narendra Modi speaks. I have picked up the transcript from the entry titled "Text of PM's address at the National Celebration of the Elevation to Sainthood of Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Mother Euphrasia (17-February 2015)" for February 2015 in this link: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/pmreleases.aspx?mincode=3> (The release ID of the note/document is 115529 but using relid=115529 in the url did not work when I tried it.)

I have also included my comments with prefix Ravi: and enclosed in square brackets, and added applause within square brackets when there is applause.]

### **Text of PM's address at the National Celebration of the Elevation to Sainthood of Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Mother Euphrasia**

Cardinal George Alencherry

Archbishop Andrews Thazhath

Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulangara

Archbishop Anil Couto

Shri Arun Jaitley,

Dr. Najma Heptulla,

Shri P.J. Kurien, Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha

Monseigneur Sebastian Vadakumpadan

I am delighted to participate in this function to celebrate the elevation to sainthood of two great saints of Kerala - Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Saint Euphrasia. The whole country is proud of their recognition. [Applause] Their elevation was preceded by that of Saint Alphonsa, who also hailed from Kerala. [Applause]

The life and deeds of Saint Chavara and Saint Euphrasia are an inspiration not only to the Christian community, but

to humanity as a whole. [Applause] They are shining examples of dedication to God through selfless service for the betterment of mankind.

[Ravi: Clear statement from PM Modi appreciating "shining example" of the two recently canonized Indian Catholic (Syrian Christian) saints.]

Saint Chavara was a man of prayer and also a social reformer. In an era when access to education was limited, he stressed that every church should have a school. He thus opened the doors of education to people from all sections of society.

Few outside Kerala know that he started a Sanskrit school, and also a printing press [Ravi: at that time. Applause]. His contribution towards women's empowerment was also noteworthy.

Saint Euphrasia was a mystic who dedicated her life to prayer and devotion to God.

Both these saints dedicated their life to God through service of fellow beings. The ancient Indian saying: [Ravi: Sanskrit words in English (Latin) script - "Aatmaano mokshaartham jagath hithaayacha"] - welfare of the world is the way to moksha (salvation) - explains their life.

Friends,

Spiritualism is rooted in India's heritage. Indian saints and Greek sages had intellectual and spiritual exchanges thousands of years back. India's openness to new ideas is manifest in the Rig Veda: [Ravi: Sanskrit words in English (Latin) script - "Aano bhadraha kritvo yantu vishwataha"] Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides. This philosophy has guided our intellectual discourse since time immemorial. Mother India gave birth to many religious and spiritual streams. Some of them have even travelled beyond Indian borders.

The tradition of welcoming, respecting and honouring all faiths is as old as India itself. [Applause] As Swami Vivekananda said: We believe not only in universal [Ravi: tolerance], but we accept all religions as true.

**What Swami Vivekananda had said a century ago holds good and will, for ever, not only for this nation but also for this government or for that matter any government in India, run by any political party. This principle of equal respect and treatment for all faiths has been a part of India's ethos for thousands of years. And that is how it became integral to the Constitution of India. Our Constitution did not evolve in a vacuum. It has roots in the ancient cultural traditions of India.**

[Ravi: Clear and completely unambiguous declaration by PM Modi of his BJP govt's support and commitment for religious pluralism in India.]

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore had inspired us to dream of a land where the mind is without fear and the head is held high. It is that heaven of freedom we are duty bound to create and preserve. We believe that there is truth in every religion. [Ravi: Sanskrit words in English (Latin) script - "Ekam sath vipraha bahuda vadanti" (Truth is one; sages call it by different names)]

Friends,

Let me now come to the issue which is central and critical for peace and harmony in the contemporary world. The world is increasingly witnessing division and hostility on religious lines. This has become a matter of global concern. In this context, the ancient Indian plea of mutual respect for all faiths is now beginning to manifest in global discourse. This long felt need and urge for mutually respectful relations led to the interfaith conference on 'Faith in Human Rights' at the Hague on tenth December, 2008. This was coincidentally also the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.

Religious leaders representing every major world religion - Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism and indigenous religions met, discussed and pledged to uphold the Universal Declaration and of freedom of religion or belief.

In their historic declaration, they defined what constitutes freedom of faith and how it is to be safeguarded.

**We consider the freedom to have, to retain, and to adopt, a religion or belief, is a personal choice of a citizen. [Applause]**

[Ravi: Crisp and unambiguous support for religious freedom including adopting (converting to) a religion from PM Modi. Of course, it is understood that such religious conversion is not under coercion or under inducement of material gain.]

The world is at cross roads which, if not crossed properly, can throw us back to the dark days of bigotry, fanaticism and bloodshed. [Ravi: Very well said by honourable PM. This seems to be the plain and unvarnished truth given the

*events in some parts of the Middle East and even incidents in Europe.]*

This harmonious convergence among religions could not be achieved even when the world entered the third millennium. And now it has been [Ravi: ?; perhaps it should be read as: And now we have been in the third millennium for some time]. This shows that the rest of the world too is evolving along the lines of ancient India. [Ravi: I did not get the connection with the preceding sentences.]

Speaking for India, and for my government, I declare that my government stands by every word of the above declaration. [Applause] **My government will ensure that there is complete freedom of faith and that everyone has the undeniable right [Applause] to retain or adopt the religion of his or her choice without coercion [Applause] or undue influence.**

[Ravi: What more does anybody want as statements from PM Modi in support of freedom of religion!]

**My government will not allow any religious group, belonging to the majority or the minority, to incite hatred against others, overtly or covertly. [Applause]**

[Ravi: The intent is clear. However, very unfortunately, some acts of religious/communal hate speeches and even violence, have been occurring in the past decades and even now. But, at the top level in the govt., the intent is very clear that there should be no incitement of religious/communal hatred. That's very good.]

**Mine will be a government that gives equal respect to all religions. [Applause]**

**India is the land of Buddha and Gandhi. Equal respect for all religions must be in the DNA of every Indian. [Applause] We cannot accept violence against any religion on any pretext and I strongly condemn such violence. [Applause] My government will act strongly in this regard.**

With this commitment, I appeal to all religious groups to act with restraint, mutual respect, and tolerance in the true spirit of this ancient nation which is manifest in our Constitution and is in line with the Hague Declaration.

Friends,

I have a vision of a Modern India. I have embarked on a huge mission to convert that vision into reality. My mantra is Development - [Ravi: Hindi words in English (Latin) script - "Sabka saath sabka vikaas" (All being and contributing/participating together; all progressing)]. [Applause]

**In simple terms it means food on every table, every child in school, a job for everybody and a house with toilet and electricity for every family. [Applause] This will make India proud.** We can achieve this through unity. Unity strengthens us. Division weakens us. I sincerely request all Indians, and all of you present here to support me in this huge task. [Applause]

Let the elevation to sainthood of Saint Chavara and Saint Euphrasia, and their noble deeds inspire us:

-to maximize our inner strength

-to use that strength for transforming society through selfless service

-to fulfil our collective vision of a developed and modern India.

THANK YOU [Ravi: VERY MUCH].

[Applause]

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[Around 1:13:50, Vote of thanks by Monseigneur Sebastian Vadakumpadan (slightly edited) ]

Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji, ...

Today we have been enriched by this meeting. I would say that all the speeches (were) an extended speech or an integrated speech, **culminating in the words of our Prime Minister expelling all the doubts we had in recent times about the pursuit of the secular India** ... It is a landmark and in unequivocal words the Prime Minister has made it clear, India will remain secular. [Applause] **Everybody will have freedom to profess and propagate his faith. And we are very grateful to you.** ... We have been enriched (on) various aspects of secular India. ... All (speakers) have spoken about various aspects of secular India. It culminated in an excellent speech expelling all doubts of everybody here [applause] and all the Indians, in all the parts, in all the remote parts of India and abroad. This was an excellent occasion for our Prime Minister to expel our doubts and give us confidence. Thank you very much. [Applause. PM Modi also applauds.] I also extend grateful thanks to all the dignitaries who have spoken homogeneously and have promised to work together with the Modiji government. [Applause]. I thank all the media persons and all who have attended the meeting - I don't want to say any particulars about that. And I want to say a word of thanks particularly for all the departments related to the Prime Minister's office. They have been very kind, ..., very gentle and generous

(when) we went to meet them ... to get everything done so easily. It was a pleasure to work with them. Thank you. [Applause] Thank you for all those who are here to make this meeting a success. Thank you.

[Ravi: PM Modi (and Major Archbishop Alencherry) stands up with folded hands and looks towards the audience. PM is given a standing ovation by the participants. PM Modi shakes hands with Archbishop Alencherry and prepares to leave.]

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Some relevant information about numbers and percentages of various religion followers in India, from [http://censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_And\\_You/religion.aspx](http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx):

At the census 2001, out of 1028 million population, little over 827 million (80.5 %) have returned themselves as followers of Hindu religion, 138 million (13.4 %) as Muslims or the followers of Islam, 24 million (2.3 %) as Christians, 19 million (1.9 %) as Sikh, 8 million (0.80 %) as Buddhists and 4 million (0.4 %) are Jain. In addition, over 6 million have reported professing other religions and faiths including tribal religions, different from six main religions.

[Ravi: In a table just above the earlier extract, the entry 'religion not stated' has numbers of 727,588 (persons) and 0.1 percent (actually it should be < 0.1 percent). Atheists & agnostics would be part of this, perhaps a significant part. Therefore openly declared to census, atheists & agnostics in India as per 2001 census is less than 0.1 percent!]

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### 3.3 March

#### **Sathya Sai Baba on how to experience and attain oneness with God (2015-03-03 10:29)**

People want to attain God, contemplate on Him and worship Him. But they do not realise that they cannot attain God by merely adopting these practices. So long as you contemplate on Him and desire for Him, it means God is different, you are different. You have to experience oneness with God to attain Him. When is it possible? When you offer yourself to God completely, you become He and He becomes you. Then you realise "You and I are one". The same is stated in the Mahavakyas (profound statements): Tattwamasi (That Thou Art) [Ravi: *You are that (in simpler language)*] and Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman). Only the one who offers himself to God completely can experience oneness with Him. Till such time, God is God and devotee remains a devotee. When you mix sugar in water, sugar dissolves in it and becomes one with it. Similarly if you want to become God, you should offer yourself to God.

It is not possible to understand the principle of oneness so far as you have body consciousness. Atma is beyond the mind and the senses. Buddhigrahyamatheendriyam (the Atma is beyond the ken of senses and can be understood only by the intellect) [Ravi: *I am not sure about the English interpretation here. I am quite sure that Swami would not have meant only the rational faculty which is what I think many people consider the intellect to be. By Buddhi here, He, IMHO, may have meant the combination of rational faculty as well as the intuitive knower/awareness faculty within each of us.*] Only when you transcend the mind and senses can you understand the principle of oneness.

[From Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's divine discourse on 5th Sept. 1996 which was printed in Sanathana Sarathi of February 2015.]

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#### **How did the current divisive challenge to Sathya Sai fraternity come about? How to counter it? (2015-03-05 18:36)**

Last updated on 29th March 2015

This post was triggered by very anxious mails of an overseas devotee who was worried about the current divisive challenge breaking up UNITY of the Sathya Sai fraternity/organization(s).

My not-so-important take on the general situation now with reference to what I see as the divisive challenge that a

rival group is threatening the Sai fraternity with, is as follows (Please note that I currently am not a member of any Sai organization):

The vacuum caused by Swami's physical absence has been traumatic to the Puttaparthi/Prashanti Nilayam ashram system. While the activities still go on in some fashion, the old atmosphere of sanctity, devotion to and, very importantly, fear of, Bhagavan seems to have come down significantly. In my considered view, fear of Bhagavan if one did not do one's job properly or did something improper, kept everybody in the ashram system - manual workers, technicians, teachers, doctors and even ashram administrators - in check (this includes me as I was then a teacher with the Sai university). Now that fear seems to have largely gone and the power structure has changed to a regular human management structure, with its attendant flaws. And this seems to be a common issue with most ashrams in the transition phase after the passing away of the founder. So, in my considered view, one can't really find fault with any particular person or group of persons. *C'est la vie* - that's life.

*[The following four paragraphs have been significantly updated on 29th March 2015]*

In this situation, I think some leaders of the Sai fraternity may have felt that something must be done. The initial phase, a few months after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi (April 2011), was when one such leader started claiming that Bhagavan is giving instructions to him regarding the mission, in his dreams. Most people in Puttaparthi were not willing to accept it but some did, especially a senior administrator in the Sai university (who is no longer associated with it). The senior administrator accepting it, IMHO, seems to have then created what I see as a typical political party problem with those, especially other administrators in the Sai university, who were willing to go along with or not oppose the senior administrator (under the influence now of the Sai fraternity leader's claimed Swami dream instructions) being, in some sense, favoured for positions (teaching and non-teaching positions) in the university. I repeat that I have written , it seems, so I am not sure about the last sentence above. Further, I must also say that I believe that the senior administrator had the good of the university and its staff and teachers, at heart. I don't think he had any personal motive behind all this. He was doing it with noble and good intent but my view is that his belief in the claimed Swami dream (and perhaps other non-dream) instructions of the Sai fraternity leader, misled him into taking some actions which created significant problems for the Sai university and the top administrators of the ashram system, in the traumatic period following Swami's Mahasamadhi.

It must also be mentioned that a few months after Mahasamadhi, the salaries of regular staff (as against honorary and temporary kind of staff), first in the university, and other ashram institutions later on, was significantly hiked to quite well-paid levels (Indian sixth pay commission levels, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth\\_Central\\_Pay\\_Commission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth_Central_Pay_Commission)). I personally feel that this move should have been delayed for some time (a year or so) after Mahasamadhi as it was unknown then what amount of donation and other funds would continue to come to the ashram system. I think most staff would have understood a freezing of salaries for a year or so, to overcome the traumatic period following the Mahasamadhi. I mean, one would expect gratitude from existing staff towards Swami being shown by them postponing salary increase for a year. IMHO, that would not have been too much to ask, especially of university staff including teaching staff, who were expected to be the models to be followed by others.

Note that almost all of the other administrators of the Sai university were well known to this (veteran) Sai fraternity leader (getting claimed Swami dream instructions). So I would not be surprised if many of the other administrators had direct interactions, at this time, with the claimed Swami dream instructions Sai fraternity leader. Outspoken veterans who questioned instructions of the new power structure/group in the university were forced/chose to part ways. While I certainly was not a veteran in the Sai university (I had offered around eight and a half years of free service in the university at that time, mainly as a teacher of software lab. courses and as a technical consultant for student project work), I too was not willing to follow instructions which I felt were not in keeping with how the university was being run earlier under the top leadership of physical form Swami. My work, along with students, for an online school education project which was very much favoured by Bhagavan in the last year or two of His physical form, was heavily opposed by the department head, and when things boiled over to the senior administrator, the senior administrator chose to support the department head instead of backing me for doing good work on this project, and that too done for free! [For more details on it, please see my blog post: My perception of senior ex-administrator of a spiritual-cum-secular university being sarcastic about bhajans (devotional songs/singing).] So I too was forced to eventually part ways with the Sai university.

But this confusion that reigned in the Sai university did not seem to have any big impact on the Sai fraternity in India

and abroad. The other activities of the group under the Sai fraternity leader (with claimed Swami dream instructions) seems to have been mainly in the area of creating new schools following Swami's model of free value-based education. I felt that was a wonderful activity that this group was doing even though it involved formation of a new trust to fund and manage these activities. Yes, the funds gathering part under the name of Swami and sometimes, I am told, using the claimed Swami dream instructions as messages to devotee-donors who accepted/believed in these messages, did bother some leaders. But I don't think it really impacted the Sai fraternity in a big way, and so was not really getting viewed as a serious divisive threat to the Sai fraternity.

*[End of the paragraphs that have been significantly updated on 29th March 2015]*

It was in May 2014 that the bizarre claim of a medium that he (and he alone) could see and interact with a special subtle form of Swami based in a particular place, got publicized on the Internet and among Sai devotees in Puttappathi and elsewhere. This claim was fully endorsed by some Sai fraternity leaders of the rival group, including, very importantly, the Sai fraternity leader mentioned above who had claimed to receive dream instructions from Swami, which lent significant weight to the medium's claim. Some months after this, the rival group activity, including foreign trips which seems to have got them more devotees & donors, has reached levels where it threatens to divide the Sai fraternity. [When a splinter group is a small one it can peacefully and quite harmoniously co-exist with the large parent body. It is when the splinter group assumes a significant size that it becomes a divisive challenge to the parent body, IMHO.]

Some supporters of the rival group may feel that there is no effort to divide the Sai fraternity. But I think it is an inescapable fact now that there are two divisions in the Sathya Sai fraternity: one that believes in medium(s) of the rival group who claim to interact with a special subtle Swami based in a particular place, and one that does not, with the official Sai organization being part of the latter. I too am part of the latter group i.e. I don't believe in medium(s) who claim paranormal connections with subtle form of Swami (different from inner voice/conscience/inner Swami), and this disbelief is based on advice/instructions given by physical form Swami.

But significant number of people now seem to believe in this medium(s). The group also seems to have done a good job in recreating the sanctified atmosphere of darshan of (and, I am told, interviews with) Bhagavan. So some people are getting attracted to it. Further, as they are a small start-up kind-of group they seem to show good material results in terms of beautiful buildings/facilities constructed, for the donations they receive. Perhaps they have many Tyagajeevi (persons willing to dedicate/sacrifice their entire life for a cause and who live a simple/inexpensive life) type volunteers which brings down the expenses of their service activities significantly as compared to other organizations who rely on reasonably well paid staff. So donors may feel that their donation money is being put to good and very effective use by this rival group. I see this as a positive feature of the rival spiritual group for which they should be appreciated, and other spiritual organizations may benefit by learning from them.

How does one counter the divisive influence of this rival group on the Sai fraternity? My view is that directives issued by the Sathya Sai organization heads are and will be heeded by most office bearers and paid officials/workers. Non-office-bearer devotees are not bound to follow such instructions and some may be curious to see what the medium experience is all about. So some will surely continue to go to the rival group centre to see and decide for themselves. I think devotees should be provided clear information about the claims of this rival group and its means of attracting devotees based on reports from Sai devotees and organization members who have been there in the past. The notices already issued by organization heads on (physical form) Swami's instructions about such matters should be made easily available to devotees (also be put up on Sai organization websites perhaps) [- see updates of 14th and 15th March 2015 towards the bottom of this post]. Q &A sessions like the one Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju recently had with Malaysian and perhaps other overseas devotees (whose youtube video clips have the aggressive plea from him to the rival group leaders to come back and be united) may be very effective in letting devotees understand this matter.

Beyond that, I think nothing much can be done. I mean, if devotees still want to go there and are happy there, it is their life and their choice. The organization cannot dictate terms to non-office-bearer devotees. [Office-bearers who associate with the rival group should be asked to relinquish their position in the official Sathya Sai organization. Otherwise there will be no value for the words of the organization heads.]

That's my take on this matter. Hope it helps :-). But, I repeat, I am not part of the Sathya Sai organization now and so these views of mine are just a devotee's views, and so, not so important.

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Update on 6th March 2015

Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju responded to the above blog post contents sent to him over email, as follows:

"Thanks for the information .Comments are very apt precise and to the point .

Quest for truth is noblest of all and the publication of it is one's own duty .

You are doing that sacred important duty and I fully endorse hundred percent your views ,"

I responded:

"Thank you so much for your encouraging words, sir."

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Update on March 7th 2015: What is the responsibility of us Sai devotees who have been blessed to have experienced (physical form) Swami directly and who choose to follow Swami's instructions/advice regarding mediums, when we are asked about the rival group by others (Sai devotees or non-Sai devotees)? Others may have heard about the activities of the rival group and may be asking us based on that info. BTW here is an article dated today from the Deccan Chronicle website, Karnataka ashram rivals Puttaparthi, <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/150307/nation-current-affairs/article/karnatak-a-ashram-rivals-puttaparthi>. The info. in it is not accurate but certainly conveys the main issue about a Karnataka rival trust & ashram with a former Sai university student claiming to be (to have access to subtle form of) Swami, and doing things similar to what Swami did like receiving letters and giving interviews.

My view is that it is fine if one mentions that the activities of the rival group in terms of maintaining a sanctified atmosphere in their ashram, deep devotion to Swami, and establishment of free Sathya Sai system of education institutions and free Sathya Sai system hospital(s), are commendable and deserve praise and even emulation. But if one stops there and does not inform the inquirer about the vital aspect of the rival group which is about medium(s) claiming access to special subtle form of Swami (Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba) based in a particular place, **NOT** being in accordance with instructions/advice of physical form Swami then one is failing in one's duty to Swami. One need not impose one's view on the inquirer. Just inform him/her that this is what physical form Swami has said on the matter (to **NOT** believe in such mediums) in various public discourses. After that, in my considered view, our job is done and our conscience can be clean in this matter. If the inquirer still chooses to go to the rival group, believes in the medium(s), and is happy there, maybe that is the path for him/her. Who are we to judge?

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Update on 14th & 15th March 2015:

Here is a note issued on this matter on 11th June 2014 by the chairman, Prashanti Council (International Sathya Sai organization head), <http://www.sathyasai.org/files2014/20140610FollowtheDivineMaster.pdf>.

Here is the "Cautionary Note" issued on this matter on Nov. 28th 2014 by the All India President of the official Sai organization, and this note states that it is approved by the Board of Trustees of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust (Puttaparthi/PrashantiNilayam): [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pdf/Cauti onary %20Note %20to %20Devotees.pdf](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pdf/Cauti%20onary%20Note%20to%20Devotees.pdf).

Narendra Lodhia (2015-03-11 14:01:15)

Just stay FOCUSED ON BABA. Once u loose that, it may take time to come back or it's too late. REMAIN BLESSED AND FOCUSED TO SWAMI OUR MASTER. There can be only one captain in the the ship.

Pardha Saradhi Uppala (2015-03-16 16:47:07)

Though I do agree, Swami neither comes nor departs, and is ever-present, the life after Swami's physical departure seems so meaningless really.

I am sure the times after Rama's or Krishna's return to Vaikuntha would have been the same. Swami Himself mentioned that once Krishna left His physical body, Arjuna forgot all the mantras of archery (Astras) and was easily defeated by normal people in fight, while he killed earlier several great warriors when Krishna was beside him in His physical body.

I am sorry if my tone is of hopelessness but I feel without the physical presence of Paramathma, the physical appearance of Prakriti (current earth) appears like that of a widow. Nothing matters anymore, one way or the other. Puttaparthi or Muddenahalli or Whitefield.

Blessed is Sai Geetha, who left her physical body, saying she could not exist in a Mandir where Her Lord is not present. (You



can see a youtube video of Swami's Discourse where He describes these sacred feelings of Sai Geetha). How can lover have any meaning without the existence of Beloved?

We are eternal too, like how Swami is, at the level of Atma. But at physical level, we are incomplete without His physical presence. As long as we are in physical form.

I could not convince myself otherwise however hard I tried since 24th Apr 2011.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-16 17:45:21)

I think I can empathize with your feelings. For us at Puttaparthi/Prashanti Nilayam, who had taken His darshans almost every day for granted, the void was terrible. Perhaps for persons like me with a strong leaning then to meditation and Advaita it was not as bad a blow as it was for people who were mainly on the Bhakti margam and who had lot of physical proximity to Him. But even I was totally lost for around 3 months after Mahasamadhi, just going through the motions of my activities (at that time I was offering Seva as a teacher at the Sai university at Puttaparthi). We also had to endure the commotion and confusion of the post-Mahasamadhi transition phase in Puttaparthi which was like salt being poured on our open wounds.

Over time, for me at least, one thing emerged very clearly. Bhagavan was devoted to His mission of re-establishing Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema in the world. The way to repay Bhagavan for all that He did for us devotees is NOT to get lost in sorrow and trauma. Instead He would surely have wanted us to pray for mental strength to His formless aspect now and contribute to His mission in whatever way we could. At the very least, we could try to share with others, irrespective of whether they are Sai devotees or non-Sai devotees, in at least some part of our daily life, the selfless love that He gave us. That may then help us get closer to realizing/experiencing the formless Swami who has always been, continues to be, and will always be in the depths of our hearts/consciousness.

anonymous (2015-03-23 09:31:47)

SwWami is always the Sun shining from Prashanthi Nilayam ..Ofcourse the void of physical absence is not at all easy to deal with !

We wonder some times if Swami withdrew his physical form in silence just becoz he was aware that people would terribly miss him and if he had issued a warning that he was to depart then people would sink into permanent depression !!!He did not want to make u anyone unhappy at any time hence he shed his physical form like a flash !!!!

Leave alone spirituality Swamis service actieies are unparalled in Human history!!!Central trust can never match him in any way ....But they are trying their level best!!! Of course there would always be comparsions and criticisms ..Ther would be frictions between members/tensions etc It is very understandable There are only human beings and sai devotees who long for swamis darshan and there is no physical motivation from swami either!It is tricky situation for them!

But what needs to be appreciated is that central trust is managing it quite well till now in the absence of physical Swami which is a big void which could never be filled!!In swamis physical absence everyone knows that donations and funds wont be coming in the same manner as it was earlier! With all such difficuties Central trust is really doing a good work!Swamis grace is defintely there for the trust othrwise simply it is not possible ! Present age where every thing is doubted and viewed with suspicion..Hence some times even central trust would come under scanner and members tormented but swami's grace would always protect them/gude them and guard them becoz swamis mission needs to go on for the benefit of the universe!

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-23 13:33:17)

I agree that Puttaparthi Central Trust is doing a great job in Swami's physical absence and, as you put it, even when "there is no physical motivation from swami". But I think it must also be said that in the immediate aftermath of the Mahasamadhi (for maybe a year or so), at least a few senior people in ashram institutions seem to have become power-crazy and seem to have behaved in very arrogant and aggressive ways. [I have had some personal experience of such behaviour :-) which led me to part ways.] That naturally resulted in a suitable reaction with many talented and capable people choosing to part ways as now there was no physical form Swami to keep them glued to the ashram system.

However, a year or so after Mahasamadhi, I think the situation had stabilized as even those in powerful positions in the ashram system realized that if they continued to behave arrogantly, talented and capable people will stay away from them, and that would impact the output of the area they were managing. And I think that such a traumatic transition period was perhaps inevitable. After all, it was the most powerful avatar (god-man) in Hindu scriptural history (and perhaps other religions'

scriptural history too) who had given up His body leaving behind an enormous power vacuum.

The Old Manvantara (2015-04-07 19:07:43)

Ravi, I tried to post a few days ago but I'm not sure it went through. I just want to say again that I enjoy reading your insightful blog. The comments seem very level-headed and are clearly presented. As far as I can see, you are among the very few who are even attempting to dialogue on this important issue - an issue it seems all devotees at some point need to consider and weigh in on. As long as all are willing to communicate and put Swami first, we can hope for a dynamic resolution and not merely dark divisions; at least, that's what I'm hoping for.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-04-07 22:55:28)

Thanks for the kind words Old Manavantara, and I am glad to know that you enjoyed reading my blog.

### **Comment exchanges related to medium(s) claiming to interact with subtle form of Sathya Sai Baba (2015-03-06 23:01)**

*Last updated on 24th March 2015*

I felt it appropriate to reproduce below the comment exchanges (as of 6th March 2015) on my post, Radio Sai article on recent Swami (Sathya Sai Baba) subtle form appearance controversy, <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/2014/07/radio-sai-article-on-recent-swami.html>. I have made minor grammatical-type fixes to the copied comments below which do not really change the content.

Paul Kelly, February 26, 2015 at 6:18 AM

Narasimhamurthy wasn't presenting himself as an intermediary. He was simply sharing a dream.

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Ravi S. Iyer, February 27, 2015 at 8:13 PM

@PaulKelly: Here are my two bits on what you wrote. I could be just plain wrong. So do take my words with a pinch of salt.

Well, some of Shri Narasimhamurthy's dreams did have instructions from Swami for others besides him (including at least one then senior administrator in the Sai university), and so in these matters he has acted as a medium in the past, and probably continues to do so today. That is where it gets tricky as Swami, while in physical form, clearly and unambiguously discouraged following such others' Swami dream instructions. Swami dream instructions received directly by an individual in his/her dream is a different matter, of course.

Here I must also mention that the current well known medium in Muddenahalli may not have had the following that he has now if Shri Narasimhamurthy had not openly showed support for the medium. Shri Narasimhamurthy then had (and surely continues to have in some circles even today) very, very high respect in the Sathya Sai student and alumni fraternity as well as among dedicated servitors in Swami's mission, and I believe he had earned that respect from his dedication and devotion to (physical form) Swami's mission over four to five decades. So when Shri Narasimhamurthy endorsed the current medium in Muddenahalli, this medium got more easily accepted by some Sai devotees, and rose to fame.

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saiuvacha, March 2, 2015 at 1:14 AM

Sairam Ravi,

You raise lot of good points and being in the same situation few months back, I can fully understand what lot of Sai devotees are going through. By His grace, I was able to attend the Australian Retreat in Murwillumbah where lot of my doubts were put to rest. Do you really think people like Sri Narasimhamurthy (given 45 years of his life serving Him), Isaac Tigrett (donated more than 100 million US dollars), Sri Indulal Shah (whom Swami himself facilitated in Kulwant hall as a true devotee), Kumar Venkat etc. would stoop so low to raise money even for a noble cause? They are Tyagajivis as referred to by Bhagwan himself as the kind of sacrifices they have made in their lives, most people could not even match in many life times.

Do you really think everyone who believes in subtle form has suddenly gone mad or being scammed by some very clever con artists? Why don't you find out more or even visit Muddenahalli if possible instead of reading all the garbage on internet. If you want to read more about my experience, please visit my blog. I have laid out the reason for setting this blog in my about page.

<http://saiuvacha.wordpress.com/about>

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 3, 2015 at 1:25 AM

@saiuvacha: Thanks for your views. I am very comfortable living in Puttaparthi and trying to follow the teachings that Swami had given while in physical form, and also trying to connect to the inner Swami. I don't see any need for me to visit Muddenahalli unless Swami directly tells me to do so via a dream or vision.

I should also mention that I am not in a position as of now to accept intermediaries/mediums related to Swami as, while in physical form, Swami very clearly advised devotees not to believe in mediums. The intermediaries in Muddenahalli may say that Swami has changed his advice now but I cannot accept that view from the intermediaries. If Swami comes in my dream or gives me a vision where He states that He has changed his advice regarding mediums then I will seriously consider it.

If others like you do believe that subtle Swami is interacting through intermediaries, I do not have any issues regarding that in general. Their life, their choice, is my view.

But I am quite perturbed by reports from reliable sources of people from Sathya Sai organization or general Sai devotees being approached by Muddenahalli group persons with messages of "Swami is calling you to Muddenahalli". That sounds like poaching to me. Why not leave it to Swami to directly interact with such persons and call them to Muddenahalli? I think that would be a more ethical approach to staffing their mission.

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saiuvacha, March 3, 2015 at 5:38 PM

Sairam Ravi,

Thanks for publishing my comments. Many sites discussing this issue would not entertain any comments opposing their view hence I felt the need to share my experience with the subtle body in Australia by writing my own blog. I am glad that you are keeping an open mind and that is the need of the hour for all Sai devotees.

Probably it is more difficult for you living in Puttaparthi to accept the subtle body as you must be getting inundated daily with some or the other conflicting reports from different people. For me sitting in Australia, it is easier to be a neutral observer watching the events unfold from a distance. I visited Puttaparthi during Shivaratri in 2014 and stayed there for a week. My travel agent kept pushing me to go to Muddenahalli, saying that lot of miracles are happening there. I refused politely because to me, Swami was in Prashanthi and there was no need to go anywhere else. However all that changed when Swami's subtle body visit to Australia during new year's eve. Four of us decided to go from our centre with an open mind deciding to walk away if there was any talk of money or any attempt to start a new organisation. However no such thing happened and we came back convinced that Swami was present in the subtle body during the entire retreat and it was HE who spoke through Madhusudhan.

I am not sure who has been approached by whom, in Swami's name hence I can't comment on your last paragraph. But if I was called, I would definitely go and experience it myself. If I felt later that this whole thing is just a charade, I would say so openly and warn everyone about it. What one should not do is to have preconceived ideas about anything and dismiss the whole thing without even experiencing it.

No one can convince anyone about anything. As humans, we form our own opinions based on our own experiences. Just as Vivekananda said "Be an atheist if you want, but do not believe in anything unquestioningly."

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 4, 2015 at 4:15 AM

Sairam Saiuvacha,

Though I live in Puttaparthi, I live outside the ashram, and rarely visit the ashram nowadays. So I write/blog quite independently of any fear or influence of Puttaparthi ashram system. But I must also say that I am a well-wisher of the Puttaparthi ashram system, and so may have some bias towards it.

I entirely agree with basing one's opinions on experience. If some people are having good experiences with Muddenahalli group in general, naturally they will want to continue to have those good experiences by associating with

them. While I don't subscribe to subtle Swami based on teachings & directives of physical form Swami, if it works for you and others, who am I to judge or interfere?

My concerns are limited to expressing my view about what I see as unethical poaching of Sathya Sai organization members and Sai devotees by messages of "Swami is calling you to Muddenahalli" being delivered via mediums/intermediaries. However, you do not seem to find any ethical problems with such messages. Perhaps we should just politely agree to disagree on this matter and leave it at that.

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 4, 2015 at 7:56 AM

Edited version of saivacha comment made on March 2, 2015 at 1:53 AM:

I just watched the video. Anil Kumar is (completely wrong) to suggest that Muddenahalli camp is collecting funds by organising overseas trips. Similar rumours were spread by the Sai Organisation in Australia as well but after attending the Australian Retreat, I can assure you that there was no talk of money or any kind of donations. In fact, all participants were fed 3 times free of cost and not even registration free was charged which is normally the case in such retreats. [Deleted sentence.] It is (Prof. Anil Kumar) who invented or subscribed to the theory of Solar vs Lunar calendar to justify Swami's untimely departure. [Deleted sentence.] Sorry Professor, You lost me when you came to Australia and when asked about Vedam chanting, gave a cunning answer about cat in the box story. Very different from when you translated Swami's discourse in 2006 during Ati Rudra Maha Yagna, where you thundered from the podium that it is Swami's wish that Vedam should be chanted by one and all irrespective of country, caste, colour, race or religion. Truth remains the same irrespective of time and place. You only told us so Professor. Peace. Sairam

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 4, 2015 at 8:07 AM

Slightly edited version of original comment by Ravi S. Iyer on March 4, 2015 at 4:40 AM

The fund collection methods used by Muddenahalli group during overseas trips may be more subtle than registration fees for retreats. However, my view is that in this post-Mahasamadhi phase, fund collection for proposed service to man/society activities done in a transparent and accountable way, is OK. I mean, one needs funds to meet the expenses for service activities, especially large scale activities like free education institutions and free hospitals. The problem for people like me is if and when subtle fund collection is done using claimed paranormal connections to subtle Swami, as while in physical form, Swami has very unambiguously warned devotees to stay away from such people.

Regarding your very strong criticism of Prof. Anil Kumar's view about Muddenahalli group fund collection from overseas trips: My view is that Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju would have made his comments based on information received from reliable sources. One should not forget that Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju is one of the most recognized and visible faces of the Sai fraternity over decades with huge level of contacts in the fraternity both in India and abroad. So his words, IMHO, should not be taken lightly.

Of course, Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju is also human and one may not agree with everything that he says. I do not know whether he invented the "theory of Solar vs Lunar calendar to justify Swami's untimely departure". But I do not subscribe to the lunar calendar theory. Like so many Sai devotees, I too was in shock for a few months when Swami gave up His physical body in April 2011 as I had no doubt whatsoever that He would be in His physical body till 96 years of (solar calendar) age. Today I have fully come to terms with His Mahasamadhi. I do not know why He gave up his body then. But neither is it very important for me to know why. He has given enough to us in the 85 years that He was amongst humanity. Now it is upto us to sincerely attempt to follow His teachings (even if we stray a little here and there, sometimes) and further His mission of spreading Sathya, Dharma, Shanti & Prema in the world. Whether we do that as a member of the official Sathya Sai organization or as a member of an organization unrelated to the Sathya Sai organization or in an individual capacity, is upto us and what we are comfortable with, IMHO.

[For the past three years I have not been associated with any Sathya Sai organization even though I live in outside-ashram Puttaparthi, and do my service activities of blogging on spirituality & religion, and on improving the practice of software development in Indian Computer Science and Information Technology academia, in an individual capacity. I should also mention that I decided to opt for individual capacity service as I felt that after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi the attitude & behaviour of some administrators in the Sai university (where I was offering free service as a teacher of software lab. courses and as a technical consultant for student software projects) had changed significantly and

was not to my liking. So I felt it was time for me to get a move on.

I continue to have very friendly relations with many people working in the various Sathya Sai institutions in Puttaparthi and also benefit from the Puttaparthi Sathya Sai institutions/activities like the General Hospital, Radio Sai, Sanathana Sarathi, Prashanti Reporter etc. So, while I currently am not a member of the Puttaparthi based Sathya Sai institutions, I am a strong supporter of them.]

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 4, 2015 at 5:13 AM

@saiuvacha: I decided to put up an edited version of your last comment here as I have great respect for Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju. The edited comment (from saiuvacha) is as follows:

"My comments do sound a bit harsh on retrospect and you can edit/delete those offensive parts but the truth remains that either Prof Anil Kumar should put up the evidence that Muddenahalli camp is collecting money by deceit or (not talk about it). Swami does not require a letter of approval from (anybody) to do what he wants. Why is he trying to stop people from visiting Muddenahalli is beyond me as I see no one from Muddenahalli stopping anyone from going to Parthi. If he is afraid that people will stop coming to Parthi, then I can assure you that most people who visit Muddenahalli would also visit Puttaparthi. It is He who is seeing two where there is only one. Peace. Sairam" end-saiuvacha-edited-comment.

Ravi: @saiuvacha: I cannot edit your earlier blogger comment - only delete it (or provide an edited comment in my name like above). It's OK. We can leave it as it is. The first sentence of your comment above helps to make the debate/conversation more polite.

Jai Sairam!

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 4, 2015 at 8:14 AM

@saiuvacha: After some more thought on the matter I decided to put up an edited version of your earlier comment referencing Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju and the video with clips of his talk, and put up a slightly edited version of my response comment.

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saiuvacha, March 4, 2015 at 1:51 PM

Sairam Ravi, You have done a good job in capturing the essence of my thoughts. Those who wish to interact with me, can always do so by commenting on my blog at <https://saiuvacha.wordpress.com/> thanks again. May Swami bless us all.

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 4, 2015 at 7:06 PM

Sairam saiuvacha, Thanks for your comments and co-operation with my editing of a couple of your comments. Amen to "May Swami bless us all".

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 5, 2015 at 8:55 PM

Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju responded to an email where I shared most of my above comment exchange with saiuvacha. His response was as follows:

"VERY VERY GOOD !!!

A most dispassionate, unbiased, open and balanced stand that you have taken is commendable.

I fully agree with your views expressed on every single point.

MAY BABA BLESS YOU."

I responded to Prof. Anilkumar sir as follows:

"Thank you so much for your encouragement and kind words, Prof. Anil Kumar sir. Thank you for your invocation of Baba's blessings on me."

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 11, 2015 at 1:47 AM

This youtube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbCTvS89msQ>, 5 min. 59 secs., has an audio clip of one of

the most dedicated and physically very close servitors of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba during the last decades of His physical presence amongst humanity, brother Satyajit Salian.

Satyajit speaks about how Swami intensely rebuked a long-time devotee who was, shockingly, trying to almost convince (physical form) Swami that Swami was speaking through a 14 year old boy in Bangalore who claimed to be a medium of Swami. Swami's words (I presume that Swami would have spoken in Telugu only), as per Satyajit in this video (at 2:25):

"You have been here close to me for so many years. How could you even bring this up in my presence? Buddhi unda leda Neeku? (Don't you have any common sense?) Naaku em pattindi vaalu (vaadu) paadu shariramulo cheradaniki? (What business (need) do I have to enter into that dirty body?) If I want to talk to somebody I can figure out a way. Nenu matlaadaalante nenu matlaadutaanu. Nenu nerega matlaadutaanu. (If I need to speak to somebody, I can speak directly.)"

The audio clip of this youtube video may have been taken from the (original) video of brother Satyajit Salian's talk at Santa Ana, California, USA on 22nd February 2014, which was put up on saicast.org. At 34 min. 35 secs (the actual matter starts after 40 min. 05 secs) in (first of the three videos listed) here: <http://www.saicast.org/2014/2014FebSatyajit.html>, Satyajit starts talking about claimed mediums to Swami.

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anonymous, March 22, 2015 at 8:48 PM

I have read this complete blog and wish to share few thoughts.

First of all I would like to congratulate Central trust Puttaparthi for efficiently continuing swami's mission to the best possible extent!

It is hard to satisfy everyone but they are trying their best to extend all facilities to public and Ashram is being run in a very efficient manner. Running a mission like Sathya Sai's is very (read infinite very) difficult task for central trust and it is bound to be have some frictions and criticism ....becoz after all the office bearers are human beings. Swami could run it with little finger because he is God and nothing is beyond his reach! It is very easy to criticise or find faults. Only if the critics run such Ashrams would they know of the heavy responsibilities day in and day out!

Reg. Muddenahalli, surely it is adding confusion to the Sai devotees especially the ones who have been recent or always had some element of doubt.

Mr.Narsimha murthy/Mr.Indulal Shah/MrTigreet are big well known names in Swami's circle .No doubt they have been for long associated with Swami ....But for Every devotee Swami /his teachings comes first and rest all are only secondary!

Swami has always been synonymous only with Puttaparthi Prashanthi Nilayam ...Swami has time and again told that He does not need any medium or intermediate person to speak to his devotees. The best part of Puttaparthi is there is no Hundi ...No charge for entry no special entrance tickets. Rich or poor easily can approach Bhagwan!

The real beauty of Sathya sai organisations is that Money is not collected in any form neither is begged for unless given voluntarily ..Swami has never asked for any money! If Tigrett had given donations .it is his conviction that Swami's mission deserves it !

Reg. Narasimha murthy/Indulal Shah/Isaac Tigrett endorsing Muddenahalli..Isaac has the dubious distinction of speaking unpleasant talks(read blatant lies) reg. Swami's activities with students. It is also perhaps Swami's leela that he made Isaac say such things so that Sai devotees are able to know the real person inside and don't trust anyone just becoz they are donors!

It is very unfortunate that these people chose to separate..It is a guess on the part of some long time devotees that perhaps Indulal/Tigrett etc wanted some important posts in Central trust and were not given perhaps due to their age or other factors and hence they chose to break apart!

If they say \*Swami's calling\* or mobilising donations then undoubtedly they are misusing Swami's name ..They might make umpteen proofs of dreams of talks subtle forms etc., Those might even have proofs//But if they do not follow Swami's warning of not to misuse his name in anyway ....then it is nothing worth!

This is nothing new ... Even during his life time he witnessed his image being tarnished through unpleasant talks /false claims ..After his Mahasamadhi media for some time spoke all blatant lies But slowly they understood the magnitude of Swami's mission and his self less service and now almost all media seem to speak in a revered manner! It seems Swami willingly does divine leelas and in the end all confusions are cleared themselves !!!Jai sai ram!

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 22, 2015 at 9:38 PM

@anonymous: Thanks for your comment.

I think your words about some people of the rival group are rather strong. I decided to retain your comment in this form (without replacing it with an edited version cutting out those strong words) as I think this massive confusion churn being caused, especially in some countries outside India, among the Sathya Sai devotee fraternity needs to be resolved, one way or the other. [Recently the rival group had been to Malaysia with supposed subtle Swami through medium/communicator making very big statements. E.g. "I will unite the whole world. Narasimhamurthy told just now, the last few years of mine is only for uniting the whole world." Given the lack of unity in quite a few parts of the world today where people are losing lives in civil war or insurgency kind-of situations, such a statement is really a very, very big one.] Stifling some strong opinions may delay resolution of this confusion.

I have given my views below as points:

1) Mr. Tigrett has been a great patron of the Sathya Sai fraternity. One should not forget all the good he has done for the fraternity.

2) The dedication and contribution of both Shri Indulal Shah and Shri Narasimha Murthy to the Sathya Sai movement till Swami's Mahasamadhi is enormous. Later generations of Sai devotees (including me) have to be very grateful to them for the platform they helped to create for us to know about Swami and His teachings, and a satsangh where we could attempt to practice those teachings together and learn from each other. I think Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju has got it spot-on when he asked a leader of the rival group to come out with a public statement on why they have separated from us (the mother organization which they themselves played a vital role in creating and shaping). Perhaps if Shri Indulal Shah, Shri Narasimha Murthy and Mr. Issac Tigrett give a joint public statement on the matter, including any divine experiences they have had via the Muddenahalli medium/communicator with supposed subtle Swami at Muddenahalli, then we Sai devotees will have a better picture. So far, all these matters seem to have been discussed behind closed doors by top leaders of the official organization and the Muddenahalli group. Devotees don't know what is happening. I think if the Muddenahalli group veteran leaders mentioned above share directly with Sai devotees their view of the matter (by putting it out on the Internet, say), this confusion can abate. I think they cannot be silent any more - they owe it to the very organization they played such a vital role in creating and growing and which nurtured later generations of Sai devotees like me, to publicly tell us what is happening and advise what we completely confused Sai devotees should do in this matter.

3) I agree that overall the Central Trust at Puttaparthi must be congratulated for continuing to run the Puttaparthi setup in the absence of Bhagavan's physical form. You wrote, "Only if the critics run such Ashrams would they know of the heavy (responsibilities) day in and day out!" I entirely agree.

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 23, 2015 at 10:38 PM

Slightly edited version of Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju's mail response to me on the above comment exchange with anonymous:

I am thankful and appreciate you for your valuable services in this area at this moment strongly reminding time and again the teachings of Bhagwan and thus help those that are confused and need clarity and timely reminder . It is here JNANA the Gospel of Sai/teachings of Swami support our faith so that it would be unwavering, steady and in a way develop CONSTANT INTEGRATED AWARENESS.

We may suggest every one to make copies with excerpts from Swamy's messages regarding this confusion and distribute emphasizing that He will never possess any one and that He does not need any medium and above all that He is totally against fund raising. If you need I can supply material. Let every one know authentically with references.

We may recommend devotees to think deep along these lines and take all possible measures to prevent people from further confusion dilemma and doubt.

We should think of UNITY based on purity leading to divinity.

Let people give up craze for positions in the organization.

Let every one sink differences like caste, region, language etc so that the world will know that we are a spiritual organization and not a social or political organization where these are common and expected.

In view of the present situation we need leaders who can spare more time who can work with vision in full under-

standing of the recent developments. More than resourceful they need to be more committed to mission of Sai. Urgent need is to know the pulse/feelings/needs of devotees rather than meetings with pedantic thoughts and expressions.

It is essential to move freely & lovingly amongst devotees.

Come forward with innovative creative novel programs and activities in tune with the aspirations of youngsters/present generation. We should at the earliest come out of routine monotonous repetitive out dated programs . Every speech /activity should reflect uniqueness of this AVATHAR and we should learn how to portray from Swamy's point of view whatever we say either upanishads or puranas or any spiritual subject.

We need committed people not political opportunists or non-committal, neutral, so called devotees that observe meaningless silence when there is a threat to the organization and mis-interpretation of His teachings.

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Ravi S. Iyer, March 23, 2015 at 10:45 PM

Sairam Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju sir!

Thank you so much for your kind words and your thoughts on this matter.

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### **Some Shlokas from Chandogya Upanishad VI chapter including Tat tvam asi (You are That) Mahavakya, and comments on it (2015-03-08 22:30)**

*Last updated on March 10th 2015*

#### **Some abstract/high-level but simple theological/philosophical Hindu scriptural view of existential reality**

In June 2010 I had prepared a document of 12 pages on some largely abstract theology verses (shlokas) from a famous Hindu scripture, Chandogya Upanishad, VI chapter including **Tat tvam asi** (You are That) Mahavakya (Great Saying), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tat\\_Tvam\\_Asi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tat_Tvam_Asi), and comments on/interpretation of it by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Prof. Max Muller, and a few others. I also added some notes of mine to it. Given below are the links to the pdf and Word versions of the document.

a) Pdf document: <https://iami1.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/chandogyachapter6someslokas.pdf>

b) Word document: <https://iami1.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/chandogyachapter6someslokas.docx>

Being a 'nominal'/by-name-only Sama Veda Brahmin, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaveda>, I have been quite intrigued by this Upanishad, as it is from the Sama Veda, right from my childhood. [If I were a proper practising Sama Veda Brahmin of old, like my paternal family ancestors over centuries and, quite surely, over millennia, I should have learned chanting (and perhaps understanding) the Sama Veda in my childhood, and have considered chanting, and perhaps further interpreting and also teaching Sama Veda, as the vital (God-ordained) activity for the rest of my life.] Over the years I have re-read and re-studied Chapter VI of this Upanishad which perhaps is the most spiritually significant part of this Upanishad. The understanding of it has usually changed, most times for the better, over these re-reads.

I think it is a reflection of the immense power of holy scripture like the Upanishads and the deep truths they contain that our understanding of them improves with our maturity both in life and in spirituality. Swami Sivananda of Divine Life Society said, "There is no book in the whole world that is so thrilling, soul-stirring and inspiring as the Upanishad. The philosophy taught by the Upanishads has been the source of solace for many, both in the East and the West. The human intellect has not been able to conceive of anything more noble and sublime in the history of the world than the teachings of the Upanishads." [From <http://www.dlshq.org/religions/upanishads.htm>]

I am quite certain that a future re-read of this portion of Chandogya upanishad some years and perhaps some more spiritual experiences down the line will give me more insights. But right now I am quite pleased with my understanding :-).



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**Medium(s) who tell you about some private incident/interaction between you and Sathya Sai Baba - What will you do? (2015-03-13 18:32)**

*Last updated on March 29th 2015*

**What if some medium told you about some private incident/interaction between you and physical form Swami - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba?**

Will you then believe that the medium is really interacting with subtle form (sukshma sharira) of Bhagavan? Will you then start following advice/instructions given by this medium who says they are from subtle form/body of Bhagavan?

**What if all the above happened with me? What would I do?**

Well, firstly I may have some doubt about whether information about the private incident/interaction between (physical form) Swami and me, may have been passed on to the medium by somebody else in physical form. In other words, the medium found out this info. through normal means (and not paranormal means). For example, physical form Swami used pet-names, quite funny pet-names many times :-), to refer to Sai university students. This pet-name would become common knowledge among student peers during that batch's stint at the university. Now, if a medium refers to a former student by using the pet-name, I, for one, would seriously consider the possibility of this information having been passed on to the medium by other former Sai university students, who know about this pet-name. I would **not** immediately get convinced that the medium has demonstrated knowledge about a private matter between me and (physical form) Swami.

But what if the matter is really a private one between me and Swami, not known to anybody else, and the medium tells me that matter? Then I would accept that the medium has demonstrated some paranormal power. This power could be due to the medium himself having acquired spiritual powers to read the mind and memories of others. But it could also be that this knowledge is revealed to the medium by subtle form/body of Swami or some other spiritual power masquerading as subtle form of Swami. So I will then certainly be somewhat open to the possibility that the medium's claim of interacting with subtle form of Swami is really true. But I would still not be one hundred percent certain that the medium is really interacting with subtle form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, as it could be explained by other possibilities like the two other possibilities I mentioned above.

**What will it take for me to get convinced that a medium is really interacting with subtle body of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba?**

Well, I don't have a crisp answer for this. But let me just share my current thoughts on it. I would expect that the way Swami's subtle body runs the mission will be similar to how physical form Swami ran the Puttaparthi based mission. I would have a lot of doubts if a claimed subtle body based mission gets involved in activities which were unheard of in the physical form mission at Puttaparthi, like:

- a) The claimed subtle body along with the medium going abroad to well off countries
- b) Approaching devotees and donors with messages communicated mainly through a medium instead of the subtle body, at least sometimes, directly interacting with devotees and donors
- c) Having chairs in public functions for subtle bodies of Jesus, Shiva (Shirdi Sai) and Parvathi

I will not accept such a mission to be a mission that is being run by subtle body of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, OR I will say that the subtle body mission is very different from the physical body run mission, and that I would prefer to associate with the latter rather than the former.

Another key test for me would be the deep scriptural and spiritual messages that the medium conveys as Swami's messages. If a medium states that Swami is saying that when I came as Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Allah ... I did ..., then it fails the scriptural/religious test for me. Allah is the formless God in Islamic theology. How can a spiritual master conversant with Islam, which Shirdi Sai Baba certainly was and Sathya Sai seemed to have full knowledge of Shirdi Sai form, say that Allah took a form? I don't think physical form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has ever said something like: when I came as Allah. As Rama and Krishna are avatars and physical form Swami has told us that He was Rama and Krishna earlier, Swami saying, when I came as Rama and Krishna, is fine.

A medium providing discourses of Swami which are similar to what physical form Swami has given on countless

occasions on spiritual/human values like Sathya, Dharma, Shanti & Prema, can be simply attributed to an intense study by the medium of physical form Swami's discourses.

If a medium claims to "see" subtle body of Swami and points followers to where the subtle body is seated, and the medium claims to "hear" words of this subtle body seated physically separate from the medium, then when the medium gives discourses of subtle body of Swami I would expect the medium to "listen" for a few minutes to subtle body Swami, then convey what he heard to the audience, get back to "listening" to Swami and so on. This would be like how physical form Swami when giving discourses in Telugu would pause every few minutes (or less) for the English translator to say the English translation of what Swami said. If instead, such a medium who "sees" and "hears" subtle body of Swami which is physically separate from him, gives a continuous discourse as if it is Swami within the medium's body who is speaking now, then I would be confused and have some doubts about the medium.

#### **Mission of such mediums may still flourish**

Now even if I do not accept such claimed mediums to Swami subtle body like I mentioned above, I will not say that the medium is a fake. The medium may genuinely believe that he is seeing Swami's subtle body/form, and he may have acquired some spiritual powers, and his motives may be completely noble. So this medium may be a positive force for his followers, and the mission that the medium is deeply involved with may flourish.

#### **Danger of mediums becoming Hitler or Stalin type megalomaniacs**

The challenge for the mediums may be to avoid getting trapped into some power-craze/megalomania as he/they attract(s) more and more devotees, including famous people. [(Megalomania is) "A psychopathological condition characterized by delusional fantasies of wealth, power, or omnipotence", <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/megalomaniacs>.] The craze to control people and through people, institutions, is, very unfortunately, quite a common human failing, which one sees even today in dictatorial organizations as well as authoritarian governments of some countries. Spiritual followings/movements are typically dictatorial with everybody expected to fall in line, in the name of discipline, with the orders of the top leader(s). So once a spiritual group leader(s) (medium(s) in this case) gets a critical size following, then he/she/they can easily fall into a Hitler or Stalin type of megalomania trap which can eventually lead the followers and the mission astray. One might think that such medium(s) may never become like that. But the history of megalomaniac dictators like Hitler and Stalin teaches us that once leaders of dictatorial setups achieve a critical-size following they can easily crush dissent even from original mentors as at that time even the original mentors can be easily dispensed with.

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Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju responded over email to the above blog post contents as follows:

"Wah!!! Very nice ,quite analytical ,to the point and convincing.!!!MAY BABA BLESS YOU !! GOOD JOB INDEED, ANILKUMAR"

[Ravi: The word, "Wah!", or more commonly "Wah-Wah!", is a Hindi word which may be translated roughly as "Wow!" in English.]

I responded back, "Thank you so much, Prof. Anilkumar sir."

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I thought of also adding Abraham Lincoln's quote on power. Most readers may know the quote about power corrupting and absolute power corrupting absolutely. But Lincoln's quote is a more discerning one, IMHO. Perhaps it is based on his experience with being in power and dealing with powerful people as the president of USA, especially during USA's civil war.

**Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.** - Abraham Lincoln.  
From <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/abrahamlin101343.html>.

#### **Swami's words on power craze:**

Prashanti Nilayam thought for the day of 17th March 2015, <http://www.radiosai.org/pages/calthought-2.asp?mydate=3/17/2015>:

People create and develop in themselves an abounding variety of selfish habits and attitudes, causing great discontent for themselves. The impulse for all this comes from the greed for accumulating authority, domination, and power. Greed for things can never be eternal and full; it is just impossible for anyone to be satiated in fulfilling greed. Omnipotence belongs only to the Lord of all (Sarveswara). You may feel elated to become the master of all arts,

owner of wealth, possessor of all knowledge, or repository of all the scriptures, but where did these come from? You may claim that you earned this through your own efforts, labour, and toil. But surely, it was given to you by someone some way or other. The source from which all authority and all power originate is the Lord of all. Ignoring that omnipotence, and deluding yourself that the little power you acquired is your own — is indeed selfishness, conceit and pride (ahamkara). (Prema Vahini, Ch 14) - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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#### **Swami's words on "I know all" pride:**

Prashanti Nilayam thought for the day of 29th March 2015, <http://www.radiosai.org/pages/calthought-2.asp?mydate=3/29/2015>:

If the I-consciousness in you, produces the pride "I know all", a fall is inevitable; the delusion causes death. The secret of salvation lies in the realisation of this danger. Rebirth is inevitable if this danger is not averted. Immerse yourself in spiritual practices, then the world and its worries will not affect you. It is only when you are far from this truth that you suffer, feel pain, and experience travail. At a distance from the bazaar, one hears only a huge indistinct uproar. But as you approach it, you can clearly distinguish the separate bargainings. So too, till you get to know the reality of the Supreme, you are overpowered and stunned by the uproar of the world; but once you enter deep into the realm of spiritual endeavour, everything becomes clear and the knowledge of the reality awakens within you. Until then, you will swirl in the meaningless noise of argumentation, disputation, and exhibitionist flamboyance. (Prema Vahini, Ch. 16) - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Aarthi (2015-03-15 21:44:27)

This comment has been removed by a blog administrator.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-15 22:19:17)

Slightly edited (to hide email id) comment of Aarthi made on March 15, 2015 at 9:14 AM

Sairam sir. Thank you for sharing your views. This definitely gave me clarity. Could u mail me at xxxxxxxx. I would certainly like to exchange thoughts over an email conversation

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-15 22:24:31)

Sairam Aarthi!

I am happy to know that the post helped you get some clarity on this rather bewildering matter. I am afraid I am not in a position to engage in mail conversations with blog-visitors as of now. Please do not mind :-). Sairam!

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-16 09:53:13)

A correspondent who has had the great privilege of serving and experiencing Bhagavan in physical form for many years, to whom the contents of the blog post had been sent over email, responded, "Very well analyzed and written...Kudos!!"

### **Subtle Swami (Sathya Sai Baba) controversy blog post search ranks and stats; Let us resolve this confusion NOW (2015-03-16 23:57)**

*Last updated on 17th March 2015*

As of today (16th March 2015), these are the Google search rankings for my main blog post on claimed subtle body/form of Swami (Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba) in Muddenahalli, "Radio Sai article on recent Swami (Sathya Sai Baba) subtle form appearance controversy", <http://ravisier.blogspot.com/2014/07/radio-sai-article-on-recent-swami.html>, for the search terms given below (this ranking changes over time like 1st becoming 3rd or something like that but not a drastic change like 1st becoming 11th):

1st rank - Sathya Sai baba Muddenahalli subtle body

1st rank - Sathya Sai baba Muddenahalli subtle form

3rd rank - Sathya Sai Baba Muddenahalli light body

4th rank - Sathya Sai Baba subtle body

5th rank - Sathya Sai Baba subtle form

4th rank - Sathya Sai Baba light body

5th rank - Sathya Sai Baba light form

*[Please note that Google search giving the above rankings was done in an incognito Chrome browser window to avoid any personalized search results/rankings.]*

So my above post has become an important source of information for people searching on Google for this matter. That has brought me the rather unexpected, difficult and, frankly, quite unpleasant, burden of ensuring that I do my duty to Bhagavan and the Sathya Sai devotee fraternity/samajam as well as I can by conveying information on this currently very controversial matter in a truthful (as far as I know), sensitive and unbiased manner.

The above mentioned post has the anguished and rather aggressive plea of the veteran and very respected Sai fraternity/community leader Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju to the leaders of the Muddenahalli group (which includes the veteran and very respected Sai fraternity/community leader Shri B.N. Narasimha Murthy sir) to re-unite with the official Sai organization. It also has a set of comments exchanged between an Australia-based Muddenahalli group supporter and me, with Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju endorsing my views in this comment exchange.

The view count for this post since it was first published on July 11 2014 (slightly over 8 months ago) is 2852 (Stats. picture)

Last week saw a burst of viewing activity for this post. It had 1217 views from 9th March 2015 to today, 16th March 2015 (Stats. picture). The viewers are from various countries of the world. The top-ten audience countries for this week's visitors to my blog (top post is the above mentioned post) are (Stats, picture): India, United States, Singapore, United Kingdom, Australia, Malaysia, Canada, Germany, South Africa and Switzerland.

Two important recent posts about this matter, which I have provided links to, in the above post are:

How did the current divisive challenge to Sathya Sai fraternity come about? How to counter it?, <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2015/03/how-did-current-divisive-challenge-to.html>, dated March 5th 2015. Total views so far: 518 , Views this week: 470

Medium(s) who tell you about some private incident/interaction between you and Sathya Sai Baba - What will you do?, <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2015/03/mediums-who-tell-you-some-private.html>, dated March 13th 2015. Views this week: 78

Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju has endorsed the contents of both the above posts.

**Why am I doing all this? Am I being over-enthusiastic? Do I have an ulterior motive in putting up such posts, including this one?**

The over-enthusiastic charge is something I have faced earlier in Puttaparthi. Perhaps my international software industry experience of nearly two decades has made me a person who raises questions and who decides to take the initiative at times. That may be viewed as being over-enthusiastic in some Puttaparthi circles. So be it.

My motive in putting up these posts is to just freely express my opinion to interested people on matters that may be of interest to them. I do not want to earn money by this effort (this blog is not monetised) nor am I interested in acquiring any position in any organization by this effort. Further, I am not against the Muddenahalli group in general. What I am really bothered about is that some people of the Sai fraternity who are known to me, including past students of mine at the Sai university, are confused big-time about the supposed subtle body of Swami in Muddenahalli which interacts with a particular medium (and that medium only). I feel it is my duty to my friends in the Sai fraternity, as well as to Swami, to try to dispel this confusion. *[It seems that the term used for this medium in Muddenahalli is "communicator". However, essentially the "communicator" seems to be playing the role of an intermediary/medium between devotees/people and the claimed subtle body of Swami at Muddenahalli. So whatever I have said in this post about the Muddenahalli medium applies to the Muddenahalli "communicator".]* If the Muddenahalli medium is really interacting with subtle body of Swami in Muddenahalli then why does he not meet the leaders of the Sai organization in Puttaparthi and convince them of this by demonstrating subtle body Swami's omniscience/paranormal knowledge to them? If Puttaparthi Sai organization leaders are convinced then all or most of the Sai fraternity will follow suit.

We will all be overjoyed that Swami is available for our leaders and devotees to interact with through the medium. The confusion will get resolved and there will be unity in the Sai fraternity.

But if the medium is not able to convince Sai organization leaders of subtle body Swami's omniscience/paranormal knowledge then the medium should stop this medium business. What a sorry figure the Sai fraternity is cutting when TV media channels are hinting at the unheard of in Hindu scriptural history of the Avatars (including Rama and Krishna) or in the history of Shirdi Sai Baba, subtle body/light body darshan, sparshan and sambhashan claims being made at Muddenahalli! And I don't think this was something that pleased official Sai organization people. I definitely felt very bad at the vicious attack that the TV media channel made on our brothers (and sisters) in the Muddenahalli group without mentioning any of their wonderful service activities.

As Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju asked in his recent talk (part-transcript provided in my main blog post mentioned above), "What is expected of us right now? To be witness to all this? To be silent (in) this situation?" After listening to these questions posed by Anilkumar sir, I felt that I should not be silent in this situation. We need to resolve this matter of supposed subtle body of Swami in Muddenahalli which communicates with a medium (and that medium only), one way or the other. That is MY ONLY MOTIVE in putting up these posts. NOTHING ELSE. I repeat I am NOT AGAINST Muddenahalli group or their wonderful service activities. Let us Sai devotees resolve this confusion NOW. It is really high time. If we don't do it now, God knows what further embarrassment we may face in future.

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### **For spiritual aspirants, which is the lesser evil in an ashram system: spiritual fraud or material fraud? (2015-03-18 11:52)**

*Last updated on 20th March 2015*

For novice (and even some experienced) spiritual aspirants today, perhaps one of the biggest challenges in figuring out which (Indian) ashram system is best suitable for them, is in dealing with the various allegations of fraud made against almost every ashram system. *[This post is about Indian ashram systems. I don't have any direct exposure to non-Indian ashram systems but some parts of this post may apply to non-Indian ashram systems too.]* Some sections of Indian television media revel in making sensationalist and wild allegations against Indian ashrams and god-men and god-women. I think that must be getting them a lot of eyeballs and so, advertisement revenue :-).

The reality is that ashram systems are also composed of people who have come from regular society, and bring with them the good and bad of regular society, even if their intention is to eventually eschew all the bad. So some level of corruption and fraud is inevitable, IMHO, in any decent-sized Indian ashram system.

Now from a spiritual ashram perspective, there are two types of corruption and fraud: spiritual and material. Material corruption and fraud is against the law of the land. However, until hard evidence is produced to prove material corruption and fraud before law enforcement and judicial authorities, mere allegations only serve to malign individuals. And, unfortunately, uncontrollable jealousy is one of the worst evils in ashram systems, which does lead some people to make wild and malicious allegations without clear supporting evidence, against others.

[I think most people (including me) certainly suffer from some jealousy but they try to keep it under control. It is when the jealousy is uncontrollable that it becomes very damaging in ashram systems. Perhaps the worst form of this jealousy is that which is directed towards wealthy ashram residents whose lifestyle reflects their wealth. In my considered opinion, a spiritual aspirant who is jealous of the wealth of an ashram resident has lots and lots of spiritual effort in front of him/her, as that kind of jealousy is a terrible spiritual flaw. How does another ashram resident being wealthy create a problem for one's spiritual journey? In fact, it may even help in that the wealthy ashram resident may even provide some financial help, when required, to the **genuine** spiritual aspirant.]

But then there is an issue of public perception. Repeated allegations from various sources, over time, creates a public perception, irrespective of whether it is true or false, about the extent of material corruption in an ashram system. Going in for audited books of accounts and publicly shared balance sheet for the ashram system, like in the case of commercial companies, does serve to reduce this public perception of corruption to some extent.

From an individual spiritual aspirant perspective, what matters is whether in his/her activities in an ashram, he/she

is facing material corruption or fraud. If that is not there then the spiritual aspirant can happily pursue his/her spiritual efforts in the ashram ignoring any allegations of fraud/corruption elsewhere. If and when the aspirant starts facing some material corruption issues, he/she should immediately move out of that activity to ensure that his/her honest reputation in financial/material matters is not damaged. But there is no need, IMHO, to become an anti-material-corruption crusader as that may interfere with the spiritual goal with which one has come to the ashram. Simply move away from material corruption areas, and if one finds that too many areas in the ashram system have got infected with material corruption then it is time to move away from the entire ashram system and maybe look for another suitable one.

On the other hand, spiritual corruption and fraud are very disturbing to spiritual aspirants. Small levels of inconsistency between teachings and practice of ashram system leaders should not lead an aspirant to immediately jump to the conclusion of spiritual corruption and fraud. With some more maturity in the spiritual path, these small levels of inconsistencies become either very minor or one even understands them to be proper for that time, place and situation. However, if ashram system leaders project something which even some of them suspect to be false, but which allures followers, we get into what I consider to be spiritual fraud. In my humble view (some readers may disagree with it and that's fine), an example of it is attracting followers of a spiritual master who has somewhat recently given up his body by having mediums/communicators who claim to communicate/interact with the subtle body/form of that spiritual master, when that spiritual master had repeatedly in public discourses clarified that he never uses mediums/communicators and that his interactions with his followers/devotees is a direct relationship without the need for any intermediaries. The void/vacuum felt by followers due to the physical absence of the master, for some followers, now gets filled by the medium/communicator! They feel happy, spread the word and the following gathers strength.

Now, am I saying that all mediums are frauds? Well, I am not an expert on mediums. But in the history of great spiritual masters and avatars like Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Shirdi Sai Baba etc. we do not find any mediums who communicated to their subtle body forms, to have become well accepted by the community, and stood the test of time. I was told by somebody recently that after the passing away of Shirdi Sai Baba, his close servitor Abdul Baba tried to play the role of Shirdi Sai Baba for some time. But that did not seem to have worked/gone down well with the community over time, and so Abdul Baba was forced to discontinue that practice.

Mediums may be connecting to the spiritual force within themselves (and within each of us) and may be viewing that force as a form of a particular master. Due to their own spiritual ability these mediums may be providing great spiritual (and even material) advice to people who go to them. The mediums may attribute it to communications from the spiritual master. But, at least in the case of the great masters & avatars mentioned above, I think the mediums are imagining that those communications come from that spiritual master.

The fraud problem comes when the medium uses the name of the spiritual master to boost his/her following. The honourable and authentic approach, IMHO, would be for the medium to use his/her own name and may even attribute his/her spiritual powers to the Grace of the spiritual master, but not say that the spiritual master is communicating with him/her. And if the medium goes to the extent of claiming to be a special and only communicator to a special subtle body/form of a master based in a particular place, and points out to others where the subtle body is walking, is seated etc. so that others can reverentially bow down to the invisible-to-them subtle body/form of their master, then I think that it either gets into the territory of spiritual fraud OR it is something unique and unheard of in the history of all spiritual masters/messengers/prophets/founders of all the major religions & religious sects in the world! I am very skeptical of the latter possibility and so view such mediums as spiritual frauds. Of course, I may be wrong - I do not have any paranormal powers to know inner stuff about such mediums. So do take my words with a few pinches of salt :-).

#### **Between spiritual fraud and material fraud, in an ashram system, which is the lesser evil for a spiritual aspirant?**

In my considered view, for a spiritual aspirant, material fraud is the lesser evil. Spiritual fraud may deliver a shattering blow to the spiritual progress that an aspirant has made from which he/she may take years to recover. Material fraud, especially in India, is, very unfortunately, all too common, and so not a big problem to recover from, from a spiritual perspective for people familiar with India. [Though if one personally loses a lot of money in such material fraud it may leave a lot of psychological scars. I am talking about material fraud in the ashram system which does not directly involve/impact the spiritual aspirant.]

***In my considered view, spiritual aspirants should stay away from spiritual frauds and ashram systems that promote spiritual frauds to gain a larger following.***

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\_ 19th March 2015 Update:

An (international) online spiritual daily which seems to be an Internet blog content aggregator, [http://paper.li/SpiritualBlog1/1337878098?edition\\_id=cb7a8220-cdd1-11e4-9626-0cc47a0d164b](http://paper.li/SpiritualBlog1/1337878098?edition_id=cb7a8220-cdd1-11e4-9626-0cc47a0d164b), has put up this blog post (link) as an article under POLITICS :-), in today's issue.

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Ravi S. Iyer (2015-03-19 23:09:38)

A correspondent who was privileged to have served and experienced physical form Bhagavan for many years, wrote me over email in response to the above blog post contents, "Sairam, Iyer sir !! Very well written !! Agree with you totally on your answer to the question."

**MIT Alumnus Jeff Lieberman TEDx 2011 talk on Science and Spirituality - somewhat similar to Hindu scriptural view of existential reality (2015-03-22 15:04)**

*Last updated on 23rd March 2015*

I came across this TEDx video from a Jeff Lieberman (holds two M.S. degrees from MIT), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff\\_Lieberman\\_\(roboticist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Lieberman_(roboticist)): "Science and spirituality: Jeff Lieberman at TEDx-Cambridge 2011", [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0-\\_R6xThs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0-_R6xThs), 14 min. 24 secs. This TEDx talk says something somewhat similar to what the Chandogya upanishad verses studied in my document says but in the language of modern science. [You may want to see my blog post, Some Shlokas from Chandogya Upanishad VI chapter including Tat tvam asi (You are That) Mahavakya, and comments on it.]

Here is a transcript of the above talk: <http://bea.st/inevolution/?p=264>.

Some extract from and comments on it [I have taken the liberty of copying large extracts of the transcript as I have presumed that the author would not mind extracts of this spiritual talk of his being shared on this not-for-profit and not-monetised spiritual blog]:

So who am I? I'm a human being, and I am 33 years old. But if you take a microscope and you look at any part of me, you see cells. I am a community of fifty trillion cells doing a magic dance, but if you look at any one of those cells with an even closer microscope, you see twenty trillion atoms. So I am also a community of a thousand trillion trillion atoms, but when you look at those atoms really up close they fade away, and all you see is energy. And 13.7 billion years ago, at the Big Bang, everything that we've ever found in the universe was was one infinitesimal, undifferentiated, pure energy.

All of us are energy. A human being is a very complex pattern of energy.

[Ravi: Quite interesting example even if the conclusion drawn that all of us are a very complex pattern of energy may not be accepted by leading scientists as a proper scientific one. I mean, there is the easily measured and objective reality of our bodies and the material world which cannot be wished away by scientists as just a projection of energy. Perhaps a more acceptable view would be a dual nature of our bodies (and the world) being both (easily measured) matter and (difficult to measure, I guess) energy.]

Take five seconds, and think about something that you are going to do tomorrow. What you just did is something that as far as we understand, no other organism in the entire universe can do. You just built an alternate reality inside your head. You just made a prediction about the future that has never happened in reality. This power for prediction, when you can compare alternate realities, allows you to plan for the future. From agriculture to your retirement, this has changed the face of the planet. It's probably the most significant evolutionary step forward since walking upright.

[Ravi: Capacity of human being to plan for the future, which no other organism has (at least to significant extent) has

*"changed the face of the planet"! I think that is a great statement, and seems to have the ring of truth to it.]*

I want to look at this tool in your head, because your mind is a thought generating machine, to make, proliferate predictions about the future, to guide and goal-orient your behavior. What does this machine look like in all of our heads in 2011?

Another experiment: take 10 seconds and stop thinking...

...Did anyone make it 10 seconds? I make it about two and then I start strategizing about how I'm going to stop thinking and then I think about that the whole time. What this means is you have such an evolutionarily advantageous tool that it's become completely compulsive, but you've got to remember, no other organism does this at all. And the side effect of having the most evolutionarily advantageous tool in the entire universe sitting in your head is that you have no control over it, and when you have no control and you compulsively generate all these possible realities, you always compare them to where you are, to try and goal orient your behavior. This creates an entirely new class of human suffering. Things like jealousy, and regret about something that happened in the past, and anxiety about your future, no other organism can feel.

*[Ravi: Great analysis, IMHO. Though I am not sure about jealousy being limited to human beings. Regret about the past and anxiety about the longer-term future may be confined to human beings. Immediate future issues like threats from other animals may be common to all animals.]*

I want to understand if it's possible to totally eliminate those sources of suffering from humanity.

This is just a brief list of all those possible sources of suffering. [A figure shows regret, longing, jealousy, worry, anxiety, tension, stress and guilt.]

In order to find out if it is possible to remove those sources, we have to take a kind of scientific experimental objective look at ourselves. We have to look at all the layers of our own experience and try to be as objective as possible about them. This is amazingly difficult because we're so emotionally involved in our own lives. As any of you know, if you go to a movie and you are emotionally involved, two minutes into it you totally forget that you are at a movie, and the lights turn on at the end and you are shocked back into reality. So this is even more difficult because we have to look at our own movie, the movie inside our consciousness.

*[Ravi: Hindu scripture typically uses the example of a dream instead of the movie mentioned above, and I think the effect is similar.]*

...

Read this sentence twice, silently to yourself... [A figure has a title, "The Voice in your Head" and a sentence, "I can hear the voice in my head reading this sentence."]

...It's weird, right? But you can get this very weird, subtle perspective that you can look at your own thought process objectively. You are actually listening to the soundtrack of thoughts inside your head; in your movie of consciousness. Now imagine that I do this process for thousands of hours, and I just try to look as objectively as possible at my thoughts, my emotions, my perceptions, and even the way that my brain has modeled space and time. The more I pull the attention away from the thoughts and perceptions, the more I seem to notice myself noticing these things inside my consciousness. Eventually maybe I can pull all of the attention away from all of those layers of thoughts, perceptions, my body, my sensations - and there's nothing left to perceive. There's nothing left that I can consider myself because I have seen it all in front as not me. Yet the one thing that remains is this feeling of existence. I am remains. This feeling of I am. What I find when I sit in that state is that what my identity is, is beyond perception. It cannot be perceived, but it is still experienced. This I am is the root of our entire existence. I am is latent in every single aspect of our existence, but just like a fish might never notice the water that it swims in, we might never notice the I am, because it's covered.

*[Ravi: One Hindu word for this "I am" feeling of existence is Chaitanya. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaitanya\\_\(consciousness\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaitanya_(consciousness)), "The Sanskrit word, Chaitanya, means 'consciousness' or 'spirit' or 'intelligence' or 'sensation'". Chaitanya is also roughly translated by some as awareness.]*

I am is a completely empty experience. It's devoid of any content, and when I experience it directly, on its own, there's the possibility for a realization.

*[Ravi: That may be the author's experience. But Hindu spiritual masters say that a deeper I am experience cannot be described as empty as in that experience one experiences oneself in all and all in oneself. So 'universal fullness' may be somewhat closer to describing that experience rather than emptiness.]*



Maybe I'm not a human being that has consciousness. Maybe I'm consciousness that is shaped into a human being.  
*[Ravi: Well expressed!]*

Einstein said that thoughts suffer from an optical illusion of consciousness. This illusion that there is a separate person inside an environment, when in reality there's just energy in motion, everywhere. Just like an ocean is water in motion - we can call a certain part of that ocean a wave but that gives us the illusion that the wave is a separate entity in the ocean. A wave is not in the ocean, a wave is the ocean. Similarly we might not be waves, maybe we're the ocean. Maybe all of us are energy and we can realize that directly.

This experience could never be reduced to words - because it makes words, but it could be experienced. I think that is such an important experience that people have been trying to name it for thousands of years. They call it spiritual enlightenment.

*[Ravi: Hindu scripture quite often uses the wave and ocean/sea example to illustrate the relationship between individual (consciousness) and cosmic/universal consciousness.]*

All of them say the same thing - it is the complete ending of human suffering. Of course it's the end of human suffering! All suffering is based on the illusory separation that there's an individual in the environment, that there's a person that has to survive, that this specific collection of a thousand trillion trillion atoms has to hold itself together. However, if I realize directly that I am energy, and I realize that the body and the mind are a temporary manifestation of that energy, then I can fully accept that the death of the body and the mind was never something that happened to me, because I was always energy and I always will be.

*[Ravi: Antah Maya! All is illusion. The only reality is the changeless self/Atma which projects this whole illusive existence.]*

If I were to experience that directly, this voice in my head that tells me I have to do certain things in order to be fulfilled loses all of its power. At this very moment I never have to listen to that voice again. Everything in life becomes a game, for fun; a play. We've all experienced that, but it's very hard to remember, because we were so young. Maybe we were at the beach building a sand castle and the entire world faded away because we were only building it to build it - and we weren't trying to get somewhere else. We hadn't even learned how to plan, so the only moment that mattered to us was right now. I think that this experience is so important and powerful that every religious tradition at its core has been trying to convince us of its importance, and if it's true. - if the true end of all human psychological suffering is actually possible - it is the most important thing science could be studying.

*[Ravi: Well, I am not so sure that the above is a well balanced view. For a detached spiritual aspirant such an attitude may be fine. But what about a person with family responsibilities, which is what the bulk of adult humanity falls into? What if such a person claims he/she is now self-realized and abdicates all responsibility towards his/her family? That will be a disaster for the family. Even after self-realization, IMHO, a person who has family responsibilities should fulfil those responsibilities by doing work in this illusory world. How to be engaged in such activity (karma) thereby fulfilling one's responsibilities but in a spiritually fulfilling manner is what the Hindu Nishkama karma (detached action) path teaches.]*

When we look at monks and nuns who have meditated or prayed for thousands of hours we see remarkable shifts on their brain scans. Trillions of neural connections have changed configuration. Along with this quantifiable, objective change in the operating system of the brain, they describe a feeling of undifferentiated, infinite, oneness. To me that sounds like they are having the direct experience of being energy. Enlightenment science and enlightenment engineering would study these ancient technologies of prayer and meditation as data sets to understand what has to change in the structure of a human brain for a human being to understand that they are energy directly. We still have no idea how much modern technology could completely change our ability to understand that. Maybe it's possible that within our lifetimes we could eradicate human suffering.

*[Ravi: Interesting, especially the term, "enlightenment science and enlightenment engineering". However, "eradication of human suffering" within our lifetimes seems to me to be a case of wishful thinking taken to the extreme! Of course, I would be very happy to be proved wrong :-).]*

When you let go of individual survival, all of your priorities change because you actually see the entire world as your body. You see the suffering of others as your own suffering and you want to help. What is the actual power of a human being to really benefit the world, when they are able to put the priorities of the whole system in front of themselves, even if that means they have to die in the process? How many of us can do that right now?

What if seven billion of us did that?

Maybe the one thing that keeps us from actually solving all of the other problems in the world is this persistent, flawed thought that we are separate from the world. Maybe it's time we change our minds.

*[Ravi: Well, I think such an attitude of letting go of individual survival and seeing the entire world as your body (or the body/family/brotherhood of God, Christ, Vasudeva, Allah ...) cannot easily be self-imposed and sustained over time, by simply accepting this attitude (or belief) as truth. Further, one may fail in fulfilling one's family responsibilities if one focuses on the entire world without paying importance to oneself and one's family. I think the attitude of seeing the entire world as oneself can be a well entrenched and sustained attitude in a person only if he/she has tasted that mystical experience, and is able to easily relive/stay in that experience. That is why mystics become a magnet which attracts devotees/followers. But such genuine mystics are very, very rare persons in the world, at any point of time. The highly accomplished mystics among them tend to become founders (intentionally or unintentionally) of religions, religious sects and/or spiritual movements.*

*\_ Many of us (including me) may fall into the belief-but-no-experience group in this matter. For such people, an attitude of helping others whenever feasible viewing (believing) them as our own selves (you and I are one type of attitude), but without failing in family and other responsibilities, may be the right and safe way to go. Practice of such an attitude as well as activity over time may lead to some experience of oneness with others which may reinforce the attitude and activity, without disrupting the family and other responsibilities bit. One inescapable feature of this behaviour, IMHO, will be a self-imposed ceiling on material desires by the person and his/her family.*

*\_ Perhaps if even 0.1 percent of seven billion of us do the above, it may be enough to inspire a good part of the rest of us to try to adopt such an attitude themselves, thereby bringing a lot of community happiness, peace and joy in the world.]*

*\_ -----*

*\_ Jeff Lieberman responded on March 23rd 2015, to the above post contents, over email as follows (and was OK with it being shared publicly here):*

*Thanks for watching and the feedback Ravi. I don't necessarily agree with many of the things I said 4 years ago, but I do think that if we get into it there's overlap, and disagreement. Much of it is semantic, as someone might use 'emptiness' to describe another's 'fullness', while someone else uses 'God' and another uses 'communion with nature.' Are any right or wrong?*

*The argument about energy and matter is a whole other rabbit hole. I would argue that you can't prove any existence of matter, or energy - as they are both descriptions of experience, and anything I label as 'matter' is actually only a label on a perceptual experience; I can never prove that this 'thing' exists without it being perceived, which is one place where many of the QM and other physics arguments clash with consciousness ones.*

*Also, I don't think family responsibilities are at conflict with what I'm saying at the end (though honestly I do not agree with what I said at the end!). Responsibilities are fine, activity to support a family can happen quite well without there being a perceived feeling of being a separate individual that needs to accomplish such tasks - that is all a mental manifestation. Does a dog need to know it's a caretaker to give care to its pups, or is that a natural intuitive action of love? I think a lot of 'spiritually fulfilling' ideas are often just that, and I've yet to be convinced that many of those paths truly lead practitioners to liberation. I think mystics may appear rare at this moment but I think most of that is because of so many traditions not looking beyond their walls at the many ways toward liberation - there are so many useful pointers to share between traditions that I am hopeful that with more communication and openness between traditions, that many more people will be exposed to the mystical experience (which needn't be a jarring unity-with-god experience but can present itself much more subtly), and will enable them to live lives in whatever way they currently are, while free from the psychological suffering that often accompanies these lives. Everything else feels like a conceptual understanding of liberation and leads to more mental attempts to achieve the freedom that is already present.*

*— end Jeff Lieberman response —*

I wrote back on the same day (slightly edited):

Thanks a ton for your valuable response, Jeff...

I think there is a tremendous amount of overlap between what you are ultimately aiming at (more people getting self-realized) and whatever little I write about on the little bit I have understood and tasted of the Hindu Upanishadic path of enquiry (Who am I) to self-realization.

And when you bring stuff like prayer and loving attitude to rest of humanity/rest of life, into it then it fits in very well with a lot of the activities that our Sathya Sai movement is all about. What I have understood from my decades long exposure to the Sathya Sai movement is that most people in a deeply devout country like India can relate quite easily to prayer and selfless love, though it does not necessarily translate to people immediately making selfless love a key part of their lives (prayer to God is almost a given in deeply devout India even if the view of God varies slightly depending on the religion followed). Relating to Hindu Upanishadic stuff like self-enquiry (Who am I) appeals to only a few but usually these few are well educated and quite influential as well.

I wish you all the very best in your efforts to spread self-realization and selfless love in the world, with a scientific basis to your arguments for it. Today's materially rather unequal world both in the West and the East or in the North and the South, needs it pretty badly, IMHO.

— end my response —

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### **Some Nature photos of Puttaparthi from Nov. 2014 to Jan. 2015 (2015-03-27 08:38)**

Here are a few Google+ Puttaparthi Nature photo albums (pics taken between Nov. 2014 and Jan. 2015), along with a sample pic from each album:



**Orange Blaze Sunset in Puttaparthi**, 4 pics, 

**Manual Harvesting in Puttaparthi**, 4 pics, 

**White Birds in Puttaparthi field**, 3 pics, 

**Cloudy Sunset in Puttaparthi**, 4 pics, 

**Risen Moon - Puttaparthi**, 7 pics, 

**View of fields from Karnataka Nagapalli Road**, 4 pics, <https://plus.google.com/u/0/photos/10960-5005465092301005/albums/6130143087725471153>

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### **My comment in favour of religious education in schools on Hindu article quite critical of it (2015-03-30 10:17)**

Today's The Hindu carries this article quite critical of religious education in schools, Indoctrination in the guise of education, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indoctrination-in-the-guise-of-education/article7045761.ece>. I added the following comment to the article web page above:

I am for religious education in schools but it should emphasize the common moral values along with the power of prayer to God/Divine power, that all religions mentioned by the author: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, etc., must be having. [I say, must be having, as I have not studied all these religions.] I think it should also include ethical values followed by humanist atheist and agnostic groups in India, however small their number may be.

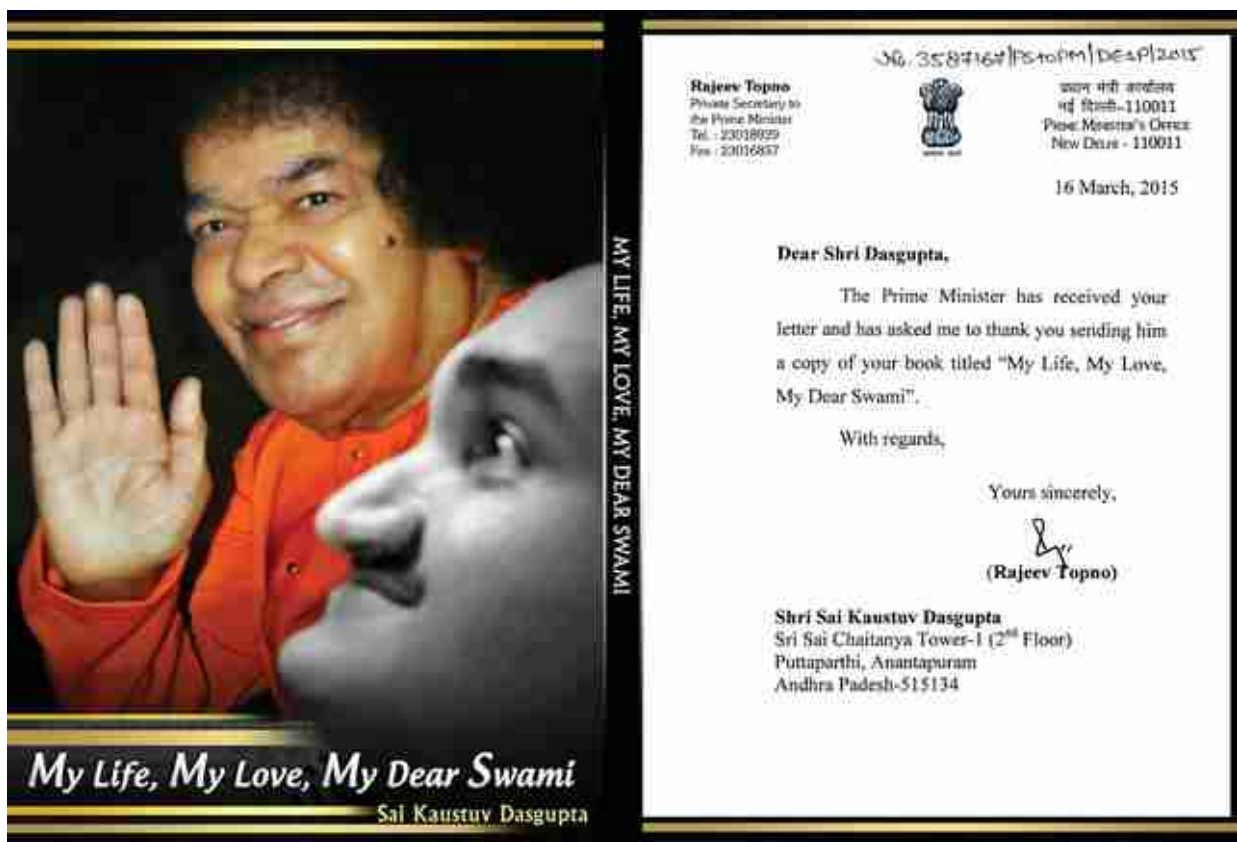
Any divisive aspects of scripture of various religions should not be included in the school education syllabus.

— end comment —

The above comment has been accepted i.e. put up on the above mentioned webpage of The Hindu article.

### PM Narendra Modi conveys thanks for book sent by differently-abled & spiritually-abled Puttaparthi Sai devotee author (2015-03-30 20:05)

I was very happy to see that Indian Prime Minister Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi conveyed his thanks via a letter sent by his Private Secretary to Shri Sai Kaustav Dasgupta for sending him his book on his Swami experiences. The cover of the book and the letter is shown in pic below (note that Sai Kaustav was OK with this pic being shared on the blog). [You may click on the pic to see it in high-resolution and click outside the high-resolution pic to get back to the blog post].



Sai Kaustuv is a differently-abled and spiritually-abled Sai devotee based in Puttaparthi whose Sai journey is a very inspiring experience, especially for people who are beset by difficulties. I think difficulties of most people, including mine, pale to almost nothingness in comparison to the challenges faced by Sai Kaustuv. And if Sai Kaustuv can overcome such challenges and be a great contributor to the Sathya Sai movement, why can't you and I with our typically much smaller challenges, take inspiration from him and try to contribute whatever little bit we can to the Sathya Sai movement or any other beneficial work for society?

Heartiest congratulations to Sai Kaustuv as well his parents and younger brother for this touching gesture from hon'ble PM. The support provided by Sai Kaustuv's family for his activities is vital, IMHO.

Given below is a slightly modified extract from a mail from him on his book and how to procure it:

**MY LIFE, MY LOVE, MY DEAR SWAMI:** The book contains my journey towards Bhagawan and my experiences, miracles and insightful thoughts on Bhagawan and His saga of selfless love towards me. The book carries His chosen Divine Droplets and my journey from Kaustuv to Sai's Kaustuv. The book is His Miracle and I'm just an instrument to pen

down this eternal journey. I have tried to spread His message of Love around the world through this book. The book is available in my house at Puttaparthi and with my dad in his two wheeler. I have no intention to get profit from this book as it is a way to spread Bhagawan's message of love to more people. So I am taking only the printing charges for the book, so that we could reprint it again.

Each copy of MY LIFE, MY LOVE, MY DEAR SWAMI costs only Rs. 20.

There are three ways you could grab your own copy of "MY LIFE, MY LOVE, MY DEAR SWAMI":

1. During your Puttaparthi Visit, just drop in to my house and get it directly from me. Just contact before coming and get the book from my house.
2. If someone is visiting Puttaparthi from your place or from your nearby Sai Samithis/Centres, I could send your copies through them. In that case, pls tell them to contact me and visit my place to get your desired copy.
3. Third option is to courier the book to your postal address. Pls contact here for more details: 91 9490056253. dasguptasaikaustuv@gmail.com

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### 3.4 April

#### **Anita Moorjani's overwhelming & unconditional love Near Death Experience: Oct. 2011 mail exchanges (2015-04-03 16:14)**

Yesterday (April 2nd, 2015), I was forwarded a mail about about the extraordinary Near Death Experience (NDE) that a Hong Kong based lady, Anita Moorjani, experienced. That reminded me of a mail I had received in Oct. 2011 on the same topic. The contents provided in that Oct. 2011 mail seem to be similar to what is available now at the following two links:

<http://www.anitamoorjani.com/about-anita/near-death-experience-description/>

<http://www.anitamoorjani.com/about-anita/nderf-question-answer/>

A few quotes from above links about her experience of overwhelming love, unconditional love, while in her NDE (and, to some extent, later on as well):

"I realized what a gift life was, and that I was surrounded by loving spiritual beings, who were always around me even when I did not know it. The amount of love I felt was overwhelming, and from this perspective, ..."

"After what I have seen, I realize that absolutely anything is possible, and that we did not come here to suffer. Life is supposed to be great, and we are very, very loved. The way I look at life has changed dramatically, and I am so glad to have been given a second chance to experience "heaven on earth"."

"What emotions did you feel during the experience? Felt tremendous love, more than anything I have experienced on earth. I felt very loved, like no matter what I did, I would still be loved. I did not have to do anything to deserve it or prove myself."

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Ravi: Around Oct. 2011 itself, I had rather extensive comment exchanges on Anita Moorjani's NDE and have given below an edited version of that comment exchange. Note that the correspondents mentioned in it have okayed sharing their responses on this blog.

Ravi: Utterly Fascinating sir. Thank you so much for this delightful spiritual experience mail.

I dug up a little on Anita Moorjani.

Here's a fantastic interview of around 45 minutes where Anita speaks ever so simply and clearly about her experience: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjLouLHH-\\_I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjLouLHH-_I). She is very articulate but without getting into any fancy words and phrases. I felt that she is a very genuine person sharing her experiences in a "heart to heart" way.

Some interesting points, to me at least, from the video:

- 1) Her father was an "orthodox" Hindu. But Anita rebelled against some aspects of orthodox Hinduism ["arranged

marriage" :-)].

2) From her name, her family seems to be Sindhi. Interesting!!! Of course, she was brought up & lives in Hong Kong and comes across like a British born NRI (Hong Kong has strong Brit. influence).

3) Her religious and scriptural background seems to be minimal. At least, her interview did not reflect strong religious or scriptural background.

4) Fascinatingly she says that during her NDE she could, by focusing her awareness on somebody, feel the emotions of that person. And goes on to say that the body is not real but that the emotions are real. [Hindu scripture tells us that there are higher levels where emotions are also unreal - reality is changeless truth - all else is Illusion - Maya.]

5) She talks about feeling that the only reality is Unconditional Love.

6) She also says that we are all connected and one. She says that when she would focus her awareness on somebody (during her NDE) she would have immense compassion for that person and feel everything he/she feels.

7) So simply she says that she was pretty confused when she came back to her body and could not understand her NDE and her INTUITIVELY KNOWING so many things!

Utterly Fascinating!!! She comes across as a simple, genuine & loving person. I think God truly loves such persons as against high-brow intellectuals/scriptural pandits, and therefore showers His Grace on these genuine & loving people giving the high-brow fellows a wide berth :-).

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Correspondent A responded: Hi Ravi, this was very interesting! She said that she came back from her NDE to her (ailing) body at her father's wish/asking/suggestion! Does it mean that her father's soul was still in the ETHER somewhere, and had not taken rebirth for last 10 years! It would be very thrilling to "meet" someone from the past after one passes away!

Any thoughts?

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Ravi: Zero experience :) But little hearsay on it.

Some "souls", better description perhaps would be soul+samskaras-ethereal-body, do stay in the "ether" after death. Some advanced spiritual adepts while being alive itself are able to "see" and communicate with such ethereal-bodies. Don't know how long these ethereal-bodies stay in the "ether" before they take on a new physical body. Don't know which scripture covers these topics.

But I certainly believe that ethereal-bodies do stay around. Whether each person on passing away stays some time in the "ether" and meets up with dear departed relatives & friends - I really have no reading info. on it.

In public discourses Sathya Sai Baba has referred to visits by his dear departed mother, Easwamma, at least a couple of times. She was so attached to Him that even after her giving up the physical body the ethereal-body wanted to stay close to Him.

Sathya Sai Baba also said that there was a gap of eight years after He gave up His Shirdi Sai body before he took on the Sathya Sai body. So even Shirdi Sai Baba must have been around in the "ether" for eight years. I wonder whether Sathya Sai body is now in the "ether" or has already taken up the Prema Sai Baba body!!! Billion Dollar Question for Sai devotees!!!

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Correspondent B:

During my childhood I did hear stories like people coming back to life while others were busy preparing for cremation. About bhut (ghost) (good natured). And goddesses entering bodies etc. Never rejected the stories but did not ever care to investigate them either.

One thing that I noticed is that people claiming to have had NDE as well as known spiritual figures is that they are just a handful number of people in a seven-billion human population. So clearly the chances that I will have the pleasure of realizing / experiencing what they do, is slim to none. But they all tell two things (if not more) - a) we are (or have) egos, which comes in the way to our growth, and b) accept that as a fact and try to keep your mind open to let things come to you and then things will come to you. Resist to accept the ego, and you have a problem. Struggle to find the truth, and it will recede to infinity.

Sometime back dear Ravi had sent some ppt that talked about what you see from a distance of 10 million light-years or 1 picometer is one and the same thing - void. Looking at that ppt, dear Rj said, "Anant Koti Brahmand Nayaka !".

An obvious conclusion one can draw is that that very void is what connects us all from here to infinity. But do we feel it? No amount of knowledge can help us feel it. Feeling just comes to us. There are times that we can feel this connectedness. But such times are essentially momentary and the next moment we are back in the world where we exist as individuals and simply unaware of the omnipresent void within and without. Our minds are peaceful when we feel the void or connectedness and then it is restless again. It is like I keep receiving emails peacefully and then my mind becomes restless and my fingers start typing to add to your chores.

So my question to you guys is, have you experienced moments of connectedness? What were the moments like when your mind you think was very peaceful? Did some answers "come" to you about the questions that you either were trying to get answers to at some time in the past or to a question that just "popped" to your mind? While the void has given me peace, I hope it does not take it away from you just because you realize that you are connected to me!

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Ravi:

*[About NDE experience and well known spiritual figures being only a handful in a seven-billion human population:]*

Interesting observation! Many years ago in Dombivli (a town close to Mumbai, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dombivli>), as I was exploring the Bhakti (devotion) path more seriously (earlier it was just vaad-vivaad (argument-counter-argument) philosophy stuff) but still relatively new to Bhakti & spiritual practise & spiritual life, a tailor told me that he loved going to "holy places" like Pandharpur (IFIRC). He said that if one is lucky one may come across and have Darshan of "great persons".

I did not really understand him then. Later I realized how rare these spiritual great persons are. Especially those that mingle with common humanity as against those who live in seclusion in remote places like the Himalayas. My wild guess is that the number of spiritually realized people who mingle with common humanity must be less than a thousand, or at most ten thousand. Ten thousand in seven billion. 10,000 in 7,000,000,000. i.e. 1 in 700,000. Let me round it (rather expansively) to 1 in a million. That's how rare they are. That's how tough it is to come out of the Lord's Maya maze of confusion. No wonder the Dombivli tailor said what he said.

*[About void connecting us all and times when we feel this connectedness:]*

I think that is the key to our existential reality. Feeling & not thinking. And feeling from the very depth of our being. About the void I think Sathya Sai Baba put it very well. I don't recall the exact words but He said something like, the ultimate reality (your/our reality) is a nothingness. But not a nothingness that signifies the absence of something. Instead a nothingness which has the power to project this whole universe.

Another very important teaching from Sathya Sai Baba is that we are all forms of Pure Love. So I conclude that the nothingness/void that is our existential reality not only has the power to project this entire universe but is also a power of Love which loves its projection like a mother loves a child born out of her womb.

...

My belief is that we are all caught up in our Karma, some which we inherited from actions of previous births and some that were of our doing in this birth. And we have to do karma to progress spiritually too. Even to discuss these topics we need to do the karma of reading mails and responding to mails.

*[About "So my question to you guys is, have you experienced moments of connectedness? What were the moments like when your mind you think was very peaceful?"]*

Peaceful, very peaceful - yes. Connectedness - more of imagination and nice feeling that came with the imagination rather than direct experience.

*[About "Did some answers "come" to you about the questions that you either were trying to get answers to at some time in the past or to a question that just "popped" to your mind?":]*

My experience is that if the mind is mostly single-tasking it is easier for me to "feel" what is the "right" thing to do when I am caught up in a dilemma. The challenge is to act on what I felt was "right" even if some unpleasant consequences have to be faced. Doing the "right" thing (as I felt it) has helped me enormously in staying centered and at peace with myself. But I have not had any "material answers" coming to me from the void.

*[About "While the void has given me peace, I hope it does not take it away from you just because you realize that you are connected to me!":]*

Truly realizing/experiencing that we are connected to each other is, IMHO, a spiritual experience of a very, very high



order. Perhaps only the great Mahatmas (not merely the first stage self-realized chaps) reach that level. They can feel the other guy's feelings like the lady described about her NDE!!! That's truly awesome. In moments of deep love between a mother and child or between lovers and, of course, between intense devotee & God, people claim to have had such connectedness experience. But to have it on a sustained basis is, IMHO, the realm of the rarest of the rare of spiritual adepts.

I am nowhere close to that level and so, you need not worry about you taking away my peace :-).

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Correspondent A: This is getting to be an interesting discussion! I also don't know which scripture covers this topic. I first thought, it could be Garbhopanishad, but looks like it covers Jiva's journey after it is conceived, and not before that.

Here is my recollection of what I heard during one of the Ishopanishad pravachans (discourses) by Dadaji (Late Sri Pandurang Shastri Athavale) regarding how long these ethereal-bodies may take before taking on a new body. During one of his pravachans, he had made a flying reference to this topic (I am not sure if this is actually in Ishopanishad mantra, or not, as he tends to quote various scriptures and Eastern and Western texts, when the context presents itself). He had said that it depends on a number of factors like - the weight of "karma" (self-less, for higher-self, selfish,...), imprints (samsakars) that mun (mind) and buddhi (intellect) had taken, unfulfilled worldly desires, if the death was premature/accidental-due-to-collective-fate etc. to name a few.

Ravi response: The last sentence roughly corresponds to what I have read, heard and believe.

It may take anywhere between one year to a hundred. Again, I am not sure if this is mentioned in the Ishopanishad, or he mentioned it based on his reading/understanding of various scripture. So, don't take my word for it. I am just sharing my recollection.

Ravi response: No idea on this one. I don't recollect reading about a period like this in my reasonable breadth reading/browse-reading of Veda - Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas & Upanishads. But I may have missed out something or not read/browse-read a particular vedic branch text.

I am given to understand that the Puranas cover a lot of ground, though some of it can be very hard to believe. Maybe some Puranas do cover this period in the "ether".

He also briefly mentioned about the normal process/path a soul takes to come back to a new body. A soul after leaving the previous body, rises above earth, stays in "ether" for a few years -> embeds itself to the megha-mandal (megha means rain-clouds) -> comes down via rain-water -> makes its way to plant/food crop -> to man's body -> to his semen -> to woman's womb -> connects with ovum -> develops itself for about 9 months before being born.

Ravi response: I think I recall reading this somewhere. Don't know whether it was the Veda.

However, I feel this is an attempt to simplistically explain a complex "inner-level" process. I do not believe this explanation to be true. My understanding of the "ether" now is not "outer ether" like outer space ether (above the earth). I am quite convinced that it is an "inner ether" which gets revealed as we journey within ourselves and our inner reality.

There are exceptions to this normal path. For example, Karna (and some of other Pandavs) being born to Kunti. However, all along, the samskaras (imprints that mind/intellect took) and "past karma" remains with it. And precisely that is the reason everyone is born "unequal" - contradictory to western conventional understanding (however, they say this in a different context though)!

Ravi response: I agree broadly. I think Past Karma is the key thing which determines a lot of the "differences" amongst people's lives. But Past Karma does not decide everything - some part is left to the individual's effort (Present Karma).

What a journey!

Ravi response: An utterly fascinating journey!!! The Jnanis (spiritually realized & knowledgeable ones) say that once a person reaches the highest levels of REALIZATION then everything that happens in the Universe seems perfect - even the suffering and death that all life on earth goes through along with the joys.

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### **I am just a beggar at your door, Swami (Sathya Sai Baba) (2015-04-05 18:08)**

The entire year of 2010 and the first three months of 2011 were a period of heightened spiritual awareness and sadhana (spiritual effort), and also some facial gesture type interaction, for me with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba at physical form level. [Note that the last public darshan of Swami, alive in physical form, in Kulwant Hall was towards end-March 2011, after which He was moved to the hospital.]

As I was a teacher then in the Sai university, PrashantiNilayam (Puttaparthi) campus, I would have regular darshans of Swami in Kulwant Hall from quite close quarters (10 to 20 feet typically) where eye contact between Swami and me was easily and unmistakably possible. Due to my IBS health problem I would sit in the garage side (old students block) as that allowed me to leave whenever required (except while Swami was doing his darshan round) without causing significant distraction to others.

The Upanishads as well as Swami in some discourses (in the past) were driving in the message that we are all God. That is, I too am God. Swami would clarify that we, or most of us, rather, have not realize our truth and imagined or rather deluded ourselves that we were only limited to our body and mind. And Swami would exhort us to rise higher spiritually.

As I tried to go deeper spiritually via meditation and a loving attitude towards all, I was hungry for the experience that I was in all and that all was in me. That led me to do some foolish things which landed me in really serious trouble, and taught me some unforgettable lessons about how a spiritual aspirant, especially a meditator, should be when he/she is interacting with others in society, especially those that are not into meditation.

Try what I could, including some foolish things, I did not get that experience. I was made keenly aware of my limited spiritual evolution. Further, as I also faced some health challenges, perhaps made worse by some inappropriate spiritual efforts, I was made keenly aware of my physical body limitations too!

I also planned to do something which seemed to me to be quite trivial then, which I now realize was exceedingly foolish. Swami's fury towards me due to that stupid plan of mine in 2010 (I am not entirely sure that it was in 2010; if not it would have been in early part of 2011) when He was bound to a wheelchair, was expressed in a truly extraordinary and miraculous way, in Sai Kulwant Hall, at darshan time. I am afraid I am not in a position to give more details about the miraculous (paranormal) way He showed His fury to me. I was utterly awe-struck by that demonstration of miraculous/paranormal power by Swami. After that incident, Swami became Lord Shiva for me. Earlier I had developed deep faith that Swami had come as Rama and Krishna in earlier ages. But now Swami was the even older Deva, Shiva (Siva), for me. [BTW, being an Iyer, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iyer>, my family is traditionally Shaivite/Saivite. But I do not recall special devotion to Shiva particularly, in comparison to devotion to Rama & Krishna, as well as the other Vedic and Puranic gods and goddesses. My family environment led me to belief in Adi Shankara's Advaita, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advaita\\_Vedanta#Adi\\_Shankara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advaita_Vedanta#Adi_Shankara), at quite an early age, where all these gods are treated as generally equal. One God with various forms and names, was the accepted view. I must also mention here that

college life (I graduated in Physics) and my extensive reading habit of books & media in English language, led me, during my young adult days, to become an agnostic with lots of doubt about the truthfulness of accounts of miracles in Hindu scripture like the Puranas and the Itihasas (Ramayana and Mahabharata).]

Of course, I learned my lesson very well. I completely dropped the idea of doing the seemingly small thing that I had planned to do. Later I realized that it was spiritual immaturity and misunderstanding that led me to think of doing that seemingly small thing. The seemingly small thing may have led to creation of spiritual doubt in the mind of somebody. And, after a particular stage at least, doubt, IMHO, is the biggest enemy of the committed spiritual aspirant. Even accomplished spiritual leaders can get devastated by spiritual doubt.

Over the past few years, especially after Swami's Mahasamadhi, I have felt very bad that I had planned to do something seemingly small, which infuriated Swami to that extent in 2010. At that time, I did not really know the extent of His physical body challenges, and fully believed that He had just taken them on Himself and could shake them off (like He shook off His paralysis some decades earlier) in a moment. I was absolutely sure that He would live in his physical body till 96 years (solar calendar). Later, after His Mahasamadhi, when I learned details about how fragile his body had been, I felt extremely anguished that I had caused Him to become so angry at me. I have since prayed to Him and apologized fervently, many, many times, for having infuriated Him then. Even now, via this blog post, I earnestly pray to Him and seek His forgiveness for having infuriated Him with the seemingly small thing I had planned to do then. And, I guess, I will be continuing to apologize and seek His forgiveness on this matter, in the future too.

Perhaps it was destiny that led to this incident/experience between Swami and me. This experience deepened my faith in Swami's miraculous powers quite dramatically. Now the incidents mentioned about the fury of Narasimha Avatar or of Shiva himself, and even Krishna's fury at Bhishma during the Mahabharata war, as related in Hindu scripture, became real for me. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that previous avatars would have had such powers.

As I went through such experiences in this period of heightened spiritual awareness and sadhana (spiritual effort) it became crystal clear to me, that at least for my level of spiritual evolution then, I was just a beggar at Swami's door. I recall that in this period I had sent such thoughts (I am just a beggar at your door, Swami) to Swami as he was doing his darshan round in Sai Kulwant Hall or after his darshan round when he would be stationed at the centre of the Darshan platform giving darshan to all around. I don't recall any gesture response from him for this thought of mine being sent to him. Perhaps he did not like me referring to myself as a beggar at his door. But I think that was my reality then and now. Whenever I faced any problem I would do my bit to tackle it and if it still did not get resolved I would turn to and pray to Swami for help. And that continues to this day.

So, even today, while I believe in the truth of the Upanishads and Swami's statements on the matter that at the core inner being of each of us, our existential reality, we are all one, and that one entity is what we refer to as God, I have not spiritually evolved to the level where I have had any such experience, let alone being established in that experience. So, even today, my spiritual level is that, for many, many matters beyond my control, I am just a beggar at Swami's (Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's) door.

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### **My comment on today's The Hindu article, "The Christian Ethic..." (2015-04-08 17:51)**

Today's (8th April 2015) The Hindu carried this article, "The Christian Ethic...", <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-christian-ethic/article7078257.ece>, by a skeptical Hindu professor who benefited a lot from Christian missionary service activities. My comment on it is as follows:

From a professor, I expected a more balanced article. While I certainly do appreciate the benefits of the Christian mission for many middle-class educated Hindu Indians, without any direct attempts to convert these middle-class educated Hindus to Christianity, this article gives the impression that no Christian mission tried to convert Hindus. I think in rural India, in the past, it seems to be an accepted fact that fair bit of conversion of Hindus to Christianity was done via the Christian mission's service activities. In fact, a Christian writer wrote in The Hindu some days ago about 'rice Christians'. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rice\\_Christian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rice_Christian), "Rice Christian is a term used, usually pejoratively, to describe someone who has formally declared himself/herself a Christian for material benefits rather than

for religious reasons.”

However, I think in today’s early 21st century India, all religions should go beyond such means of attracting people to their religion. Let the sustained practise of the noblest tenets of a religion by its practitioners be the silent magnet that will draw others to that religion, instead of any ‘conversion campaigns’.

It is also quite disappointing to me that the professor did not make attempts to go beyond the “ritualistic Hindu” practices of her father to discover and get enlightened by Hindu paths like that of selfless work (Nishkama Karma), or of unconditional love towards an ishta devata (Bhakti), or the deep philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. Instead she became skeptical of her own family’s Hindu religion! That’s quite a pity. A few questions arise in my mind: a) Did her education in Christian missionary institutions make her skeptical of her parents’ religion of Hinduism? b) Did this education involve exposure to only positive aspects of Christian religion? c) Did this education involve any exposure to positive aspects of Hinduism?

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The initial part of the above comment has been accepted by the moderator of The Hindu web page of the article. The second part of the comment (as the above comment was too big for The Hindu comment size) has not yet got accepted.

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### Sathya Sai Baba on examining the Guru before accepting him (or her) (2015-04-10 10:43)

*Last updated on 12th April 2015*

Two short extracts from Swami’s (Sathya Sai Baba’s) discourses about examining the Guru before accepting him (or her) are quite appropriate for this blog post, and so are given below.

So, examine the Guru and his credentials, his ideals and practice before accepting him. Even in My case, do not be attracted simply by stories of what I “create” by a wave of the hand. Do not jump to conclusions with closed eyes; watch, study and weigh. Never yield to any one unless you feel the inner satisfaction that you are on the right path. [From: <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume01/sss01-09.pdf>, 25-3-1958 discourse]

... do not run after Gurus who are themselves suffering from faulty vision and householder’s troubles: do not beg from people who are themselves beggars. [From <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume01/sss01-30.pdf>, 29-9-1960 discourse]

*[Ravi: I think the ‘inner satisfaction’ part mentioned above is crucial. Something deep inside one goes positive/feels right when one is with the right guru for one’s spiritual journey, in my considered opinion, based on my spiritual journey including the quest for the right guru for me. This going positive/feeling right may not necessarily mean feeling good as the right guru may prescribe and administer a lot of bitter medicine to ensure that the spiritual aspirant’s faulty ways are corrected. But even when being given the bitter medicine and not understanding why it is being administered at a superficial/logical/worldly level, something deep inside, at the intuitive level, prompts and is convinced that it is for our own good! Strange (or rather, seemingly strange to the worldly minded) are the ways of the **real** guru.]*

A couple of further extracts from the 25-3-1958 discourse mentioned above, which are also very interesting:

The Guru should not force the disciple to grow with a bent in the direction that he prefers; the disciple has the right to develop on his own lines, according to his samskaaras (tendencies) and bent of mind. The old relationship of Guru and sishyas (disciples) has today become topsy-turvy; rich and influential sishyas now rule the Guru and dictate how he should behave; and the Gurus also, keen on accumulating fame and wealth, stoop to the tactics recommended by the sishyas and thus lower their status.

...

My suggestion to you today is this: just as you attend to the needs of the body, feeding it three times a day, in order

to keep it in good running condition, so too, spend some time regularly everyday to keep your Inner Consciousness also in good trim. Spend one hour in the morning, another at night and a third in the early hours of dawn, the Brahmanuhurtha as it is called, for japam (silently/audibly chanting a holy name or mantra) and meditation on the Lord. You will find great peace descending on you and great new sources of strength welling up within you as you progress in this saadhana (spiritual effort). After some time, the mind will dwell on the Name (holy Name/Lord's Name) (wherever) you are and (whatever) you are engaged in; and then, peace and joy will be your inseparable companions.

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### **2010 Govt. of India documentary on Jesus in Kashmir! (2015-04-10 18:29)**

Fascinating 2010 documentary from Govt. of India, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9w-xJfSOyc>. However, it has an important disclaimer at the beginning, "This documentary explores one of the theories which connect Jesus to India and places several strong evidences based on research work by individuals mentioned in this film. This film does not conclude that this theory is final."

Whatever be the truth, the blend of Jewish, Vedic (Hindu) religion, Buddhism and Islam that is highlighted by this documentary on Kashmir's history is fascinating.

Another point for me is that whether Jesus did get resurrected after crucifixion on the cross at Calvary or got resuscitated and then travelled to India, does not really alter the great and divine saga of the life and teachings of Jesus as mentioned in the gospels. It is his teaching that has to be followed and his divinity that has to be looked up to as a source of inspiration. But then I realize that that's just my humble take :-). Many Christian theologians and perhaps many devout Christians may not accept such a view.

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### **Fascinating Data about Religion populations world over, current and future, from Pew Research Center (2015-04-13 00:07)**

*Last updated on 15th April 2015*

The data in this blog post is from the report (to be cited as) 'Pew Research Center, April 2, 2015, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050"', which is available at [\[link\]](#)

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From <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2010/number/all/> and <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2010/percent/all/>

India in 2010 has the following figures:

973,750,000 Hindus (79.5 %)

176,200,000 Muslims (14.4 %)

031,130,000 Christians (2.5 %)  
027,560,000 Other (2.3 %)  
009,250,000 Buddhists (0.8 %)  
005,850,000 Folk Religions (0.5 %)  
000,870,000 Unaffiliated (< 0.1 %)  
000,010,000 Jews (< 0.1 %)

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1,224,620,000 All

Note that Other includes Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism and Baha'i (and Shintoism, Taosim, Tenrikyo, Wicca etc.)

I also have given below the list of countries (in alphabetical order) with unaffiliated being < 0.1 % of their population (Clicking on Unaffiliated in the percentages link given above sorts the table in descending order. Clicking again sorts it in ascending order.) These then are the most religiously affiliated countries of the world. Note that the intensity with which the religiously affiliated believe in and practise their faith is not reflected in this list.

1. Afghanistan
2. Azerbaijan
3. Bangladesh
4. Bhutan
5. Burundi
6. Egypt
7. Ethiopia
8. Gambia
9. India
10. Indonesia
11. Jordan
12. Kuwait
13. Maldives
14. Morocco
15. Pakistan
16. Palestinian Territories
17. Papua New Guinea
18. Senegal
19. Somalia
20. Sri Lanka
21. Timor-Leste

22. Tokelau

23. Tonga

24. Vatican City

Not surprisingly India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka figure in the above list besides Bhutan. Nepal (0.3 % unaffiliated) is the only country from the Indian sub-continent/South Asia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_subcontinent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_subcontinent), that is not in the above list.

One can then conclude that the Indian sub-continent/South Asia is one of the most religious parts of the world.

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Some additional thoughts of mine on this Pew report:

I think only devoutly religious people believe in a God who intervenes on (intense) prayer. But, for the Pew report, I think what people consider themselves to be, and have declared themselves to be, would be the vital factor. Many of such declared Christians, Muslims, Hindus etc. may not be visiting their churches, mosques, temples etc. regularly, may not believe that intense prayer to their deities/God will help them etc. But they may also not go to the extent of declaring, at least publicly, that they have no faith in divine power associated with their religion/religious figures, and so dissociating themselves from the Christian, Muslim, Hindu etc. community.

Prior to me becoming a devout Hindu with faith in supernatural powers of divine figures like Rama and Krishna, I had stopped going to temples (though that is not obligatory for a Hindu), and removed my Hindu Brahmin sacred thread (wearing which is obligatory for a Hindu Brahmin after his thread ceremony which, from a proper religious point of view, is considered to be his second-birth (spiritual birth)). While I then did doubt the claimed supernatural powers of Hindu divine figures like Rama and Krishna, as mentioned in Hindu scripture, I would not then go to the extent of denying that they were divine. I guess, on that aspect, I was a fence-sitter. But I certainly considered and declared myself to be a Hindu even then. I think it may be similar for many Christians, Muslims, Hindus etc. worldwide, and that is what is reflected in the numbers of this Pew report.

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### **BBC article on Jesus in Hinduism by Shaunaka Rishi Das (2015-04-14 19:17)**

I am bowled over by the sincerity as well as the scholarship of this article on Jesus from a Hindu viewpoint, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/beliefs/jesus\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/beliefs/jesus_1.shtml), by a former Irish Catholic who now has the name, Shaunaka Rishi Das, and has been Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies since its inception in 1997. A couple of paragraphs from his article:

"Jesus shows this struggle of surrender during his evening in the garden of Gethsemane. His sincere appeal to the Lord to let the cup pass from him, although He was willing to go through with His Father's command. I have always found myself in this kind of dilemma, although without the same willingness to do the needful that Christ had. All of us who struggle with spirituality wonder if we are capable of making the effort, or if we are doomed to failure and hypocrisy. Can we meet the challenge? Christ's example is so relevant for all of us who want to practise a spiritual life, and even for those who just want to be good. But how many of us are willing to sacrifice our desires in favour of the will of God, even in small ways?

When we look at his experience during his traumatic arrest, trial and crucifixion we see a man at peace within Himself and with the world. He was condemned for his zeal and for his perceived threat to society, because he was misunderstood. I have experienced that to a lesser degree in my life - being condemned for being a Hare Krishna, for being different and incomprehensible. I have been spat at and derided, but not crucified. I have no idea what Jesus had to give up, in His early thirties, so that I, in my early forties, could be inspired to follow the Godly path."

Ravi: What an awesome inspiring figure Jesus Christ is for all who want to spread the love of God, whatever be their religion! What are the troubles missionaries of today face in comparison to the supreme sacrifice of Christ, no matter what the religion or inter-faith practice the missionaries of today try to spread!

The article ends with this sentence, "It would be a great shame if we allowed our Hinduism, our Islam, our Judaism or indeed our Christianity to stand in the way of being able to follow the teachings and example of such a great soul as Lord Jesus Christ."

Ravi: Amen to that, I say!

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## **Krishna/Sai Baba on silent witnesses to injustice, and on Yadavas claiming Krishna as theirs; My interpretation in after Sai Mahasamadhi context (2015-04-16 20:53)**

*Last updated on 24th April 2015*

From Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's discourse on 11-10-1986, <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume19/sss19-23.pdf>:

Here is an example from the Mahabharata: Considering that war should be a great universal calamity, Dharmaja (the eldest of the Pandavas) appealed to Krishna to go as an ambassador of peace to the Kauravas. Entering the audience hall of Duryodhana, Krishna described at length the disastrous consequences of war. The great Acharyas—Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Aswathama— who were present in the court, were intently listening to Krishna's words. But Krishna's appeal was of no use to them. Because of their long association with the wicked Kauravas, they became abettors in the crimes of Duryodhana and others.

Vidura, who was a witness to the evil that was being committed, resolved to oppose it. He pleaded with the Kauravas in many ways to listen to the wise words of Krishna. His appeal fell on deaf ears. Rather than stay amongst such evil-minded persons, Vidura felt that it was better to go on a pilgrimage, and left the country immediately.

Bhishma, Drona and others, having been beneficiaries of the sustenance provided by the wicked Kauravas, chose to be loyal to them and stayed on. All of them were great preceptors. They knew well the distinction between righteousness and evil. They had enquired into the nature of the eternal and the permanent. Of what avail was all that knowledge? When it came to practising what they knew, all their knowledge was of no use. In the final outcome, all of them met with the same end in the great war as the evil-minded Kauravas.

**Krishna looked upon those who, even if they were good in themselves, did not oppose unrighteousness and injustice committed in their presence when they had the capacity to do so, as actual participants in the crimes.** When evil and injustice and violence are being perpetrated, if individuals look on unconcerned, they must be regarded as accomplices in the crimes. In the end they also suffer as much as the criminals. By their passive association, they provide encouragement to the evildoers.

[Ravi: I would like to interpret this in the context of certain unfortunate incidents in the Sathya Sai community/fraternity after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi, but without getting into too many details. As most people following happenings in the Sathya Sai fraternity after Mahasamadhi would know, some people have associated with a splinter group. That itself is fine, in my considered view. But some of these people, in the traumatic and chaotic period after the Mahasamadhi, continued to be in positions in the official organization but were associating with the splinter group, and sometimes have even been taking instructions/advise from there! That was being unfaithful to the organization that had given them the posts, in my considered opinion.

Now, in the case of one such Sathya Sai official institution which I was associated with then and so know about, there were some who opposed such matters, when they came to know of it, and even had to face consequences of being forced to leave the institution. That was spiritually good for them, I think, as their conscience was clean and they did not associate with Adharma (unrighteousness/unethical behaviour).



But what about those people in positions of influence who were silent witnesses to, or perhaps even supported, what was going on in this institution? They could have chosen to speak up for Dharma (righteousness/ethical behaviour) and opposed the top man who was opposing or ignoring the main organization that had given him the post, and was instead taking instructions/advise from an unauthorized person who claimed to be receiving messages from Swami. That some did not, and instead quietly looked away from the Adharma that was going on, is something that I think, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba who was/is Krishna come again, will NOT approve (would NOT have approved).]

[Earlier extract from discourse]

Take, for instance, the example of Krishna. He was not the titular deity of Brahmins. Nor did he belong to the Kshatriyas. He was not the Lord of the Vaisyas. He was an incarnation, who appeared for the protection of the world.

**To claim that Krishna belonged to one or other group is only an index of petty possessiveness. Because the Yadavas boasted that Krishna belonged to their community, they ultimately destroyed themselves.**

The Divine belongs to every one and is not the sole preserve of any one. There is only one God, but He manifests Himself in many forms to please different people. Sadhana alone is not enough to enable one to understand this truth. The spirit of enquiry is also necessary.

[Ravi: I would like to interpret the bold sentences in the extract above, in the context of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. After the Mahasamadhi especially, some of those who have had physical proximity with Bhagavan, are projecting that to indicate that they are special people as compared to others, and using it to boost their popularity and get support for some of their own activities. Unfortunately, some Sai students too have done this. I interpret Swami's statements above to clearly mean that Swami did not belong to Sai students alone or to only those who were physically close to him. Swami took the form of Sathya Sai for the re-establishment of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema all over this world (and perhaps other subtle worlds too). All who want to and sincerely try to follow Swami's teachings (even if they fail sometimes) and have deep faith in Swami, will become spiritually near and dear to Swami. Being a Sai student or having been physically close to Swami but moving away from Swami's teachings and instead running after worldly matters like making more-than-needed money (and the things such money can buy like fancy & flashy houses, fancy & flashy cars, fancy & flashy motorbikes etc. - remember ceiling on desires?), power/control and fame, would be like the behaviour of the Yadavas who boasted that Krishna was theirs but did not pay heed to the teachings and advise of Krishna.

For those persons, including some Sai students, who do not know about or have forgotten Swami's teaching on ceiling on desires, here is an extract having Swami's words on it from Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam (Puttaparthi) website, [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/his\\_teachings/practical\\_spirituality.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/pages/his_teachings/practical_spirituality.htm):

“What is the meaning of Ceiling on Desires?

Man is deluded by his unlimited desires. He is living in a dream world. He is forgetting the Supreme Consciousness (Para-tattwa). That is why it is important to keep our desires under control, to place a ceiling on them. We are spending too much money. Instead of inordinately spending for our own pleasure, we should be spending for the relief of the poor and needy. This is the real meaning of 'Ceiling on Desires'. However, do not make the mistake of thinking that giving money is all that is needed while allowing your own desires to continue to multiply. Curtail your desires, as materialistic desires lead to a restless and disastrous life. Desires are a prison. Man can be freed only by limiting his wants. You should have desire only for life's bare necessities,” Baba says.

— end extract from Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust website — ]

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Aarathi (2015-04-18 22:19:07)

Very well-written Sir! I agree with your views. I totally believe in the line "All who want to and sincerely try to follow Swami's teachings (even if they fail sometimes) and have deep faith in Swami, will become spiritually near and dear to Swami." Mere physical closeness does not confer anything special on anyone, if the person does not practise Swami's teachings.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-04-18 22:53:00)

Thanks for your comment, Aarathi.

### **Understanding Mark 6:5 - Jesus could do no miracle at Nazareth except few healings (2015-04-17 15:03)**

Gospel of Mark Chapter 6, Verses 4 to 6, from: <http://biblehub.com/mark/6-5.htm>

Verse 4: Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." [Note hometown is Nazareth in Galilee]

Verse 5: And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.

Verse 6: And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

— end Gospel verses extract —

Many, especially, devout Christians, would interpret verse 5 as Jesus chose not to do miracles at Nazareth (except the few healings) because of their unbelief. [The people of Nazareth probably found it very difficult to accept that the person who they had known for many years prior to him becoming a prophet who could do miracles, had indeed acquired such miraculous powers.]

However, I humbly prefer to interpret it literally that Jesus could not do miracles at Nazareth (except the few healings) due to the unbelief (in Jesus' miraculous powers) of the people there. [I seek the kind indulgence of those people, especially Christians, who do not agree with and may be shocked by my view.] BTW I presume that the English translation provided in the Biblical scripture verse given in the above link (and copy-pasted in this post) from the original language in which the Gospel was written, is accurate in this regard.

Faith is a two-way street between the devotee and the god-person/divine power. Intense faith and prayer from a devotee for something from a god-person/formless divine power creates the atmosphere where miracles/paranormal events take place.

I have heard Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Swami) say it very simply in a public discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall that if you say Yes, I will also say Yes. He implied that if you have (deep) faith in Swami's miraculous powers then Swami will/can perform miracles for you.

Here is an old discourse of Swami, 23rd Nov. 1968, <http://www.sathyasai.org/discour/1968/d681123.htm>, which has a similar Yes, Yes statement by Swami:

'If you will accept me and say "Yes," I too will respond and say, "Yes, yes, yes." If you deny and say "No," I also echo "No." Come, examine, experience, have faith. This is the method of utilizing me.'

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Chandu Patel (2015-04-17 19:15:24)

I agree with the statement, "Faith is a two-way street between the devotee and the god-person/divine power..."

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-04-17 21:55:03)

Thanks Chandu for your comment.

## **Meet The (Indian) Muslim Girl Who Won The Bhagavad Gita Competition in Mumbai (2015-04-18 22:29)**

Meet The Muslim Girl Who Won The Bhagavad Gita Competition, [http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2015/04/10/bhagavad-gita\\_n\\_7022500.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2015/04/10/bhagavad-gita_n_7022500.html), posted 10th April 2015

Small extracts from the article are given below:

Asif Naseem Siddiqui, her 34-year-old father, told HuffPost India that he encouraged his daughter to enter the competition on one condition. "I told her that she should take part to learn about Hinduism, not to cram for a competition," he said.

...

... Asif (the girl's father) said he was trying to make a difference in the one place where seeds of intolerance are first sown: Home.

"I can't control what is happening in Mumbai, Maharashtra, or India, but I can make all the difference in my own home. If everyone does the same then there is real chance for peace," he said. "Mariyam's education is very important because she has to set an example for her younger siblings."

When this reporter asked Siddiqui (the girl) whether she had a message for children in India, the 12-year-old said she was too young to dole out advice, but she encouraged them to think for themselves. "Most Indians respect all religions but some say damaging things. I would just say 'you must listen to your parents, but if your parents and teacher tell you to discriminate against others, then don't listen to them,'" she said.

— end extracts —

Ravi: Really great to read about such stuff. BTW some top political leaders of India took notice and have lavished praise on the 12-year-old.

I think Indian (and other countries too, I guess) school students should be actively encouraged to learn about scripture of all/important for their area, religions using interpretations and selections provided by mainstream & moderate leaders of various religions. It would be really great to have Hindu school students win a competition on knowledge of such selected parts of the Koran and Bible!

P.S. A small clarification about Radha and Krishna mentioned in the article. Actually, as far as I know, there is no mention of Radha in the Bhagavad Gita. But ISKCON, the group that held this competition, may have introduced some material on Radha in the Bhagavad Gita book they distributed to the school children

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## **Two paragraphs about atheists in Early North India from historian Romila Thapar's book (2015-04-20 11:13)**

I came across the paragraphs mentioned below yesterday as I was reading the referenced book. BTW I have great respect for both Jainism and Buddhism. And I am a Hindu and a Brahmin though I do not perform Brahmin rituals anymore. As most, if not all, readers would agree, we need to have a religious environment of peaceful & tolerant co-existence where we can appreciate and promote the good parts of every faith and also those who are of no faith but follow humanist values. Studying the past of religions including some unfortunate parts where religious leaders have misused and abused their power, people of one religion/sect have battled violently with people of another religion/sect etc. helps us get a better understanding of the dangers and threats to peaceful and tolerant co-existence posed by some historical aspects of various religions (including Hinduism) and no-faith groups.

From pre-eminent historian of early north India, Romila Thapar's ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romila\\_Thapar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romila_Thapar)), book, "The Past Before Us; Historical Traditions of Early North India", 2013.

An extract related to nastikas (atheists) in early North India from Chapter 17, the Prabandha-cintamani (page 657 of paperback book) is given below. As contextual info., this chapter deals with the historical tradition of Jainas. Mahavira (key figure of Jainism) and Buddha, lived and preached between the sixth and fourth century B.C., and the

religions they revived/founded were key challengers to Hindu Brahminical tradition in North India (and later, other parts of India too). As these religions got better established in early North India through formation of monasteries with powerful patrons like kings and feudal chiefs, they felt the need to maintain some historical records. While doing so, they also recorded other traditions besides theirs including atheism then. The dates associated with the two paragraphs below are not explicitly specified in the book, but I guess it would apply to the first millennium A.D. and maybe even the first millennium B.C., as that is when Buddhism got founded by Buddha and Jainism was revived by Mahavira. Perhaps Mahavira and Buddha were able to preach their religions in this perhaps conducive atmosphere of some opposition to Hindu Brahminical views, including from atheist groups.

—start short extract —

The need to maintain records also arose from the broader ideological background of those sects and communities that were opposed to brahmanical views, of which there were quite a few. The opposition took various forms: the denial of deity and sacrificial rites; the non-acceptance of an immortal soul, atman, and its rebirth, different from the continuity of consciousness or the self; and a refusal to concede that society was governed by immutable rules deriving from divine sanction, such as those of varnasramadharma [*Ravi: caste based Hindu society*].

The category of nastikas [*Ravi: atheists*], among which such groups were included, ranged across a spectrum of non-orthodox thought, some at one extreme in pursuing a life of hedonism, others insisting on virtually altruistic social ethics. The concern with the centrality of the human condition, and of the origin of the institutions of society lying in human needs, was common to all such sects. This tended to encourage turning to the past to understand the reason for the existence of institutions and to view them as continuous from previous time to now.

—end short extract —

As an aside, as I googled for hedonism I came across this great Calvin & Hobbes cartoon related to hedonism.

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### **Michel Danino rebuts Prof. Irfan Habib's scathing article on search for Saraswati river (2015-04-21 17:20)**

Today's Hindu has this article by Michel Danino, "Misinterpretations in 'Searching for Saraswati'", <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/misinterpretations-in-searching-for-saraswati/article7123050.ece>, which rebuts Prof. Irfan Habib's scathing article on the search for Saraswati river. [From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irfan\\_Habib](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irfan_Habib): "Irfan Habib (born 1931) is an Indian historian of ancient and medieval India, following the approach of Marxist historiography. He is well known for his strong stance against Hindu and Islamic fundamentalism."]

I submitted the following comment to the article web page:

Thanks to Michel Danino for this rebuttal of Prof. Habib's scathing article. I do not know much about the topic to comment on the details. However, I do believe that there are kernels of truth in Hindu scripture like the Vedas, itihisas and puranas, and efforts to find scientific evidence in such matters should be encouraged, within reasonable financial limits of taxpayer money. Let the truth be revealed about India's ancient past even if such truths are way beyond the current mindset of some veteran and distinguished Indian historians. Once evidence is found they will have to accept the reality. But so long as reasonable evidence is not found one must view such beliefs as beliefs and not try to impose it upon people at large as established facts.

— end comment —

[The above comment got accepted/published.]

I would like to add that my belief in many of the matters related to Hindu scripture like Rama & Krishna being real figures, and even Prahlada, Hiranyakashipu and Narasimha Avatar being real figures, stems from my belief in Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's words on these matters which, I believe, came from his mystical knowledge about these matters.

## **Are passionate activists, including spiritual org. activists, inherently undemocratic? (2015-04-22 17:30)**

*Last updated on 23rd April 2015*

A correspondent who is a low income community venture capital fund co-founder wrote in a mail response which she agreed to share publicly, as follows (slightly edited): "Whether it is (some well known activists), when you are very passionate about something and give it all, you see only one way of doing things to the exclusion of every other perspective. It then becomes my way or the highway. I am not sure if this is an issue of ego or just passion for their perspective. When I meet activists in my career, while I admire their devotion, I find it very difficult to have a two way conversation. They immediately put you on my side or my enemy. It is very difficult to build a large functioning organization with just activists. I have nothing against activists. I think they are the pillars of free society. But you cannot expect them to create functioning democratic organizations."

I responded as follows (slightly edited):

Super response.

Based on my exposure to one such organization I think I can say that charitable and spiritual service organization leaders (as against general followers & workers) are typically passionate activists. They have great energy and passion for their work in the organization. BUT, for many of these leaders (I repeat, as against general followers & workers), it is my way or the highway! If you dare to strongly argue with them for different approaches then as (you) put it, "They immediately put you on my side or my enemy."

However, what I have learned over time, is that even in a charitable & spiritual organization, success in the organization activities matters. So, if a passionate and energetic leader is convinced that his (or perhaps her too, but I have not interacted much with women leaders of such organizations) way is the right way and is dismissive of opposition/dissent, then one should bide one's time. Eventually the flaws of the leader's approach lead to some failures which makes the leader humble. That's the time to drive home the opposing arguments and force the leader to change course.

— end my response —

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23rd April 2015 Update

This blog post got featured in an online spiritual daily (blog post aggregator type) here: [http://paper.li/GoodBlogPosts2/1309693268?edition\\_id=e6e62590-e8fd-11e4-ad60-002590a5ba2d](http://paper.li/GoodBlogPosts2/1309693268?edition_id=e6e62590-e8fd-11e4-ad60-002590a5ba2d), for the date 22nd April 2015, under the World category.

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## **Expression of Thanks to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (2015-04-23 17:16)**

This facebook post (and photo) of Ms. Terry Reis Kennedy is a wonderful expression of thanks to our beloved Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Thanks for sharing.

A small humble addition from me: We thank Him for being a Jagadguru (a world spiritual teacher) who has re-energized and clarified the various spiritual paths to experience the spiritual truth of each of us and all of us, and, very importantly, to have FAITH not only that God is there but that God is now here, in the depths of our own (spiritual) hearts, and ever ready to come to the aid of the sincere and earnest devotee of God, no matter what the religious/religious sect tradition he/she follows.

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## **My response to Ms. Terry Reis Kennedy's Facebook post on Muddenahalli subtle body communicator (2015-04-25 22:10)**

*Last updated on 1st May 2015*

Here is Ms. Terry Reis Kennedy's Facebook post, dated today (25th April 2015), which raises some questions about the Muddenahalli communicator who claims to communicate with subtle body of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Given below is the text of a comment I made on the above Facebook page:

I felt it necessary to weigh in on this sensitive matter as I am concerned about the degree of confusion among Sai devotees on this, including some friends and acquaintances of mine.

My view is that Bhagavan would first and foremost be concerned about His devotees, whether they believe in the Muddenahalli light body/subtle body communicator (referred to as M from now on) or not. In the quest for knowing the truth about M's claims one should bear in mind that devotees' sensitive feelings do not get hurt much as that, I think, would hurt Swami too.

Narasimha Murthy sir, from what I have read and viewed about his dream-instructions from Swami, comes across to me as an honest person in this dream-instructions regard. He got the dream-instructions from Swami and he is sharing it. Whether third-parties should believe in it or not is upto the third-parties. [I choose not to believe in it based on (physical form) Swami's instructions on such dream instructions given by others (as against dream instructions received directly by oneself from Swami).] BTW even when Swami was in physical form, in Puttaparthi itself there have been cases of people talking about Swami dream instructions for others, which were typically politely ignored by experienced Puttaparthi people.

However, M's claims are truly extraordinary! In mainstream science they say, "extraordinary claims need extraordinary evidence" (quote attributed to famous American astrophysicist, Carl Sagan, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Sagan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Sagan)). But then spirituality deals typically with subjective faith and so is not acceptable to mainstream science ...

I would not be surprised if M truly believes that he is communicating with subtle body of Bhagavan. But is that the truth or is that M's delusion? That's the vital question. The question becomes vital as this claim is impacting many Sai devotees around the world. If it was a local kind-of thing then one need not have bothered about it much.

What if M's belief that he is communicating with Bhagavan is false, even if M's intentions are noble? Will that lead to many Sai devotees getting misled? I think, at the spiritual level, there certainly is a danger of Sai devotees getting misled if M's belief turns out to be false. At the level of creating educational institutions and medicare institutions using donations from noble Sai devotees, perhaps there may not be any great issues, if the financial management part is decent. But at the spiritual core of these institutions, which may be the vital factor for ensuring vibrancy and longevity of these institutions, I think it is very important whether M's belief that he is communicating with Bhagavan is true or false.

Sathyannaasti Paro Dharmaha! There is no Dharma (ethical living/righteous living) higher than Sathyam (truth), is the teaching from the Vedas and from Bhagavan as well! If the close companions of M, who are all Sai devotees, truly believe that M is communicating with Bhagavan, fine. But if they do not, and are supporting/endorsing M as communicator with Bhagavan, only because the "business model" is working great, then I think they have swerved from Dharma, and Bhagavan would be unhappy with that.

That then is my humble take on the matter. And, of course, there may be some flaws in my analysis above.

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Ur Nandakumar responded on the above Facebook post as follows:

Does madhu have a fb account operational.. I feel that He should express himself in the matter. Ravi S. Iyer has shared a common followers thought. It should be answered word to word by the leaders and not the following

— end response —

I responded as follows (slightly edited to fix typos/grammar errors):

Noted your response, Ur Nandakumar. Thanks. I agree that it will be wonderful if brother M shares his view on what I wrote. BTW while I have not interacted with brother M in the past, I know his younger brother very well as I have taught him software lab. courses in the Prashanti Nilayam (Puttaparthi) campus of SSSIHL, and later he was a teacher colleague in the department. So I view brother M as the elder brother of my former student and former teacher-colleague. I am quite sure that brother M, like his younger brother, has noble intentions, and is doing this communicator activity in a committed spirit of service to our beloved Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

However, could brother M have been over-enthusiastic? (Is) a deep longing for feeling Bhagavan's presence making him imagine some things? Or no, really it is Bhagavan's subtle body that is communicating with him and is visible to him (and him only, I presume, as I get the impression that others at Muddenahalli including Narasimhamurthy sir

cannot see the subtle body)? And if the latter is really true, then it is a great boon to Sathya Sai devotees (at least those that believe in the M subtle body matter).

Besides the above being very vital questions in the quest for truth about the claims of brother M, the division this is bringing in the Sathya Sai fraternity worldwide is very troublesome and quite scary. The history of religions teaches us that such divisions, e.g. Sunni and Shia, Catholic and Protestant, Saivite and Vaishnavite, can be very damaging for the missions associated with these religions. I pray earnestly to Bhagavan to resolve this division among the Sathya Sai fraternity. I must also say that I have rather limited hopes about it being resolved given that almost with every passing day, the two groups are drifting further and further apart. Maybe the best we can hope for is a peaceful and harmonious co-existence between the two groups.

I would also like to add that whatever happens, I pray that Bhagavan showers His grace on our Sai brothers and sisters associated with the Muddenahalli group worldwide. The institutions they have founded serve humanity in spheres of sustaining and spreading devotion to God, educational service and medical service, and it is this service that, in my considered opinion based on what I have directly experienced in the close to a decade of service in Puttaparthi in the physical presence of Swami, would melt the heart of our beloved Lord Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Seva, Seva, Seva - that is what Bhagavan has exhorted us to do so many times in His discourses in Sai Kulwant Hall. For Bhagavan, my view is that, Seva with Prema is the vital thing - the organizational part, ego issues within the organizations, money issues, power/control issues etc. are secondary. 'Padi Mandiki sahayamu cheeyi' Help some (ten) people (in whatever way one can, organization or no organization) - that's the bottom line message for me, from our beloved Lord Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

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Ur Nandakumar wrote:

Thanks Ravi S. Iyer sir, nice to know about you as a faculty of sssihl ... I was also the asst. Librarian of brindavan campus till Nov 23 of last year..

Hope we'll get a light on the matter soon... Your agony is a reflection of a common man's mind.. I appreciate it

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I wrote back:

Thanks brother Ur Nandakumar. Nice to know that you too were with SSSIHL.

To prevent any possible confusion, I would like to clarify that I am not an academic. I am a retired-from-commercial-work international software consultant, i.e. software industry guy, who served (free service) in DMACS, SSSIHL, Prashanti Nilayam campus from Jan. 2003 to Mar. 2012 with official designations of Honorary Staff, Honorary Faculty and Visiting Faculty. The primary part of my service activity in DMACS, SSSIHL was teaching software lab. courses and being a technical consultant for student project work. So technically speaking, I was a faculty in SSSIHL but not a proper academic with a regular academic designation. I think teacher is the safe and appropriate term for my stint in SSSIHL.

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Ur Nandakumar wrote:

Sir because of the most acclaimed merits of many lives we get associated with sssihl... It is the fulfillment of the desires of great personalities and the result of the penance of saptarishis.... And also a meeting place and training ground of celestial souls from other planets to teach them how to live in this planet. Ravi S. Iyer

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I wrote back:

I agree brother Ur Nandakumar. Swami was very, very particular about who was allowed to be associated with SSSIHL. I am deeply grateful to Swami for giving me the opportunity to associate with the many noble souls in SSSIHL in my service activity as a teacher there, and thereby progress spiritually.

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Sai Keshav wrote:

Ravi S. Iyer. Dear Sir, we never forced anybody to believe in MDH. All we requested them with all our hearts is to have an open mind LIKE YOU. I was really happy to read your comment. All we requested was to not criticize in somebody's faith. If everyone in the comment section start to have an open heart and mind like you, The sai world would live in peace and harmony. Jai Sai Ram

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I wrote back:

Dear brother Sai Keshav, Thanks for the kind words. But let me clarify my stand. Yes, I do have an open mind in the sense that I do not rule out the possibility, based on whatever reliable info. I have received so far, that brother M may be really interacting with subtle body of Bhagavan. However, to me the probability of something like that being true is very low, as it has been unheard of in the history of Hindu scripture as well as scripture of other religions, as far as I know. In the case of Rama, Krishna as well as Shirdi Sai Baba we do not know of any such communicator to subtle body of theirs in mainstream scripture/literature associated with them. But, yes, there can always be something new and unheard of - one cannot discount the possibility.

Now I tend to think it may be brother M's imagination based on his deep devotion to Swami, and brother M may be motivated by the noble purpose of furthering Swami's mission.

If others believe in M's communicator role and are happy, who am I to judge?

However, I also have a duty towards the Sai fraternity from which I gained a lot. And that duty prompts me to raise the concerns I have about the possibility of devotees getting (unintentionally) misled by brother M. I have directly experienced Bhagavan's spiritual master role as He demonstrated very early on in my SSSIHL teacher role, that he could read my mind, and later that he knew everything that I did. Further, as a spiritual master, he would clearly indicate (via facial and other gestures) his approval or disapproval. That played a very vital role in my spiritual progress, and I am very, very deeply grateful to Bhagawan for that. Now I should also say that I still have some flaws and am not perfect. But I do try very hard to follow the spirit of Swami's teachings, even if my interpretation of some of his teachings may be a little modern.

Whether brother M intends it or not, many people coming to him will start viewing him as Bhagavan/Swami. Over time they will ask advise from him for all sorts of things, material and spiritual. If it is M's imagination that he is interacting with Swami, then M's advise in such matters may actually be M's though M may think it is coming from Swami. And, in this case, Sai devotees taking advise from M may get misled. That is the big, big issue in my view.

If brother M were to give advise in his name then there would be no confusion. But the advise and instructions are, I am informed, being given in Bhagavan's name!

I must also mention that it is really strange that only M can see this subtle body of Bhagavan. Given what I have experienced of Bhagavan in Puttaparthi during my years of service stint in SSSIHL, this does not jell with what I saw of and heard about physical form Bhagavan. Yes, private matters would be dealt with privately. But public matters would be shared openly with the public and Bhagavan would, in a way, give Himself to the public. My view is that surely such subtle body of Bhagavan, if present in Muddenahalli, would be visible to the veteran and deeply trusted servitor of Bhagavan in Muddenahalli, i.e. Narasimhamurthy sir, and not brother M alone.

So, given all this background, I feel it is my duty to raise my concerns about brother M's communicator role, with the Sai fraternity publicly (mainly via my spiritual blog, but now with these Facebook comments too). After that, if some Sai devotees would still like to see for themselves what brother M and others are doing, my view is that it is their life and so it is their choice. Further, if they are happy with brother M and company, maybe that's the spiritual path for them. Who am I to judge?

And then, as I mentioned earlier, there is the difficult part of the distinct possibility of the fraternity worldwide getting divided on this. That really bothers me given the history of how religious communities have split due to such differences (we are not exactly a religious community but similar). The Sunni and Shia split in Islam was about succession - the Shias believed that Ali, cousin & son-in-law of the prophet, and his descendants were divinely ordained as the leaders (caliph) whereas the Sunnis believed that the community should elect the leader (caliph). See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia\\_%E2%80%93\\_Sunni\\_relations#Successors\\_of\\_Muhammad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_%E2%80%93_Sunni_relations#Successors_of_Muhammad).

Hope the above gives some clarity about my current views on this matter. Of course, you and others may have some differences with me. That's fine, we can always politely agree to disagree. Jai Sairam!

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Ur Nandakumar wrote:

Appreciations Ravi S. Iyer sir, you've put genuine insights that too non partially. *[remaining part of message deals with some other matter]*



Sai Keshav wrote:

Ravi S. Iyer..Sir..The points you mention is surely something that raised in all our minds. The best way is to experience explore and decide Thank you for the above comments. Even Murthy sir stresses this point that that this has never happened in any avathar before...This is all his leela [*remaining part of message deals with some other matter*]

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I wrote back:

Thanks for yr comments, Ur Nandakumar, Sai Keshav, Gautham Narendran. [snipped this part of the message as it deals with a minor aside not related to this discussion.]

Regarding the personal issues related to spiritual leaders being aired, I think it is an inescapable part of the life of spiritual leaders as well as political leaders. The issue is that the impact of both spiritual and political leaders is that some people get drawn to them, and this puts off some friends of theirs who are convinced that they are getting misled. The USA political process for top government posts is horrifying! I think only very committed individuals would be willing to go through the torturous media glare and opposition verbal attacks. But it does have the benefit that a person gets thoroughly vetted before taking up top government posts which have incredible power associated with them and which affects millions of people. Perhaps there may be some similar benefit in the vetting by the public & media of spiritual leaders too. That may reduce the possibility of people getting easily misled by spiritual leaders who do not have a strong record of honesty. I mean, if one wants to become a spiritual leader today, one must be willing to face this kind of glare and opposition - it is part of the deal .

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Gautham Narendran wrote:

So well said sir. Hats off to your thinking.

But on another note, probably when Swami said "Your life would now become my message", "I should be known because of my devotees", "One fine day you all should turn into Sai Babas" - I think this is what HE meant!

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I wrote back:

Gautham Narendran "Your life would now become my message" and "I should be known because of my devotees" are very important directives of Swami to the Sai fraternity, especially after His Mahasamadhi. Even if we slip here and there at times (I do), we should strive in whatever way we can to lead our lives in conformance with Swami's teachings, at least in spirit. That said, we also should lead relatively free lives within the Lakshman Rekha of Dharma, and not be subjected to control by Sai fraternity elders for every small thing we do or don't, by quoting Swami on this or that. I personally prefer to try hard to follow the spirit of Swami's teachings and not bother about the other trappings like white-and-white dress, vibhuti on the forehead etc. Sometimes people focus more on appearances like the dress code without paying much attention to the actions code which is the vital code.

Regarding the "One fine day you all should turn into Sai Babas", I was not aware that (physical form) Swami said this. I tried to look it up in Google to get the discourse or other literature where Swami is recorded as having said this, but did not get it. If you have the reference could you please provide it to me so that I can look up the context in which this is said?

It will be great if people can truly become like Sathya Sai Baba. But that can be a very, very, very difficult, if not impossible proposition, in my considered opinion. On a personal note, an immature understanding of Upanishad Mahavakyas like Tat Twam Asi (You are God, or to be more precise using the context of the Mahavakya verse in Chandogya Upanishad, your essence is God) which was reinforced by Swami's discourses on the same lines, led me to do some foolish things in 2010, which I have captured in this blog post, "I am just a beggar at your door, Swami (Sathya Sai Baba)", <http://ravisier.blogspot.in/2015/04/i-am-just-beggar-at-your-door-swami.html> . Now that's my view of the matter based on my experience and my limited spiritual evolution. Others may have a different view, as they could be highly spiritually evolved, may have intense faith in God/Swami etc. - they are fully entitled to their view.

But one can surely be inspired by Swami and try to emulate Him in some activities in part, especially in His awesome service activities in the educational and medicare sectors. Even at a spiritual level, perhaps some Sai devotees may acquire some powers that Swami had like materialization and healing, besides mind-reading.

As an aside, the apostles of Jesus Christ also performed miracles (inspired by Jesus Christ, I presume). From <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1197-miracles-in-the-book-of-acts>, (Book of Acts) "Many miracles were

performed by the apostles (2:43). Peter healed the lame man at the Temple (3:7-11). God answered Peter in a miraculous earthquake (4:31). Ananias and Sapphira were slain by the Lord (5:5-10). Signs and wonders continued to be done by the apostles (5:12). Peter healed many from various cities (5:12-16). The prison doors were opened by an angel (5:19). Stephen wrought great wonders and signs (6:8). In Samaria, Philip did great miracles and signs (8:6,7,13). The Lord appeared to Saul, but Saul is unsaved until he responds to the preaching of the gospel by Ananias (9:3-9). Ananias healed Saul's blindness (9:17-18). Peter healed Aeneas (9:32-35). In Joppa, Peter raised Dorcus from the dead (9:39-42)."

So perhaps some inspired Sai devotees may acquire powers like the apostles acquired. But the apostles were not considered to have become Jesus Christ. They did their miracles based on their faith in God & Jesus Christ. Similarly I think some inspired devotees who acquire miraculous powers cannot be considered to have become Sathya Sai Baba. They may perform miracles based on their faith in Sathya Sai Baba.

Being enthusiastic, even a little overenthusiastic, in Swami's mission, in my considered opinion, is wonderful. It is only such enthusiastic people who can act as leaders of Swami's mission to spread Sathya, Dharma, Shanti & Prema in the world. Further, I think the Sai mission (whatever be the organization including no organization) is very much in need of such enthusiastic and committed leaders in the spiritual as well as service fronts.

But if somebody does interpret Swami's statement (if He did say that), "One fine day you all should turn into Sai Babas", to mean that some Sai devotees should imagine themselves to be Sathya Sai Baba (or to imagine and force oneself to believe that they are seeing and communicating with his subtle body), I don't think that is the correct interpretation. Spiritual powers are not easy to come by for ordinary human beings like you and me and most Sai devotees, IMHO. A lot of sadhana has to be done and/or one has to have intense faith in God (like the apostles of Jesus who are said to have performed miracles) to acquire even small spiritual siddhis let alone the awesome spiritual powers that Swami demonstrated to us while in His physical form.

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Gautham Narendran wrote:  
Sairam,

The statement "You all should turn into Sai Babas yourself" - I am not sure which discourse. But definitely I know of two of our alumni brothers, who btw, have never been to muddenahalli till date, had similar dream wherein everyone in the Kulwanth hall turns into Sai Baba! The Sevadals, the students, the teachers, the guests, the devotees - everyone! And the narrative of the dream itself is so beautiful that one can only imagine and visualize the kind of impact Bhagawan has had on our lives that we ourselves turn into a Sai Baba ourselves.

This statement shouldn't be misunderstood in the context of someone replacing Sathya Sai Baba. But it clearly indicates HIS expectations from us all. And that's what HE did long back when HE created a Gold Medallion with India Map on it. Swami declared that HIS mission would have 18 centres and these 18 centres were marked out in the medallion. Each of these 18 centres would be taken care by 18 alumni of HIS institute. That epic discourse is available on YouTube as well. Hence, my point is HE is exactly doing that now. HE is creating those remaining centres of HIS mission and keeping one alumnus in-charge.

How else can one explain 6 schools in different states of Karnataka (as big as Brindavan) and 1 super speciality hospital in Raipur come up in a matter of 3 years? If that's NOT Swami, I don't know what else is?

Plus more in pipeline - including an international level Indoor Stadium, a public Darshan hall, water projects, a heart hospital in Delhi, super speciality hospitals in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Kolkata each! If this isn't Swami, what else is?

Building is one thing - sustaining them is altogether a different ballgame!

Thousands of children getting free education, thousands of people getting free medical care, thousands of devotees getting their solace, succour and bliss! If that isn't Swami, what else is?

However expert we are in Swami's discourses and literature, one thing which NOT even one Sai devotee can succeed is - Predicting HIM! Why HE did this? Why did HE not do that? Why should HE do it now when HE did not do that before?

Most important question I found people are raising - why him alone? Why not me? Why not us? Why only some can see and some cannot? - Would love to narrate an experience for answering this:

Brother V Kumar (Alumnus), in his very first interview with the subtle form, raised this question "Bhagawan, I don't

understand all these. Why are you doing this? Why don't you speak to me directly. If you want to do it, you can. Then why not? I don't understand why this boy in between? Why should he come in between you and me? Why are you visible and audible only to him?" To which Swami lovingly replied "Bangaru, even you can see me, even you can hear me. But, for that you need two things - Purity of mind and Calmness of mind. Then Swami gave an example of a lake. If you want to see the bottom of a lake, the water should be both pure and calm. Its not enough if the water is pure, but its unstable - you won't be able to see below. Same way, its not enough if the water is stable, but its dirty - you still won't be able to see the bottom of the lake. For that the water should be both pure and stable. Similarly, keep your mind pure and stable, devoid of bodily attachments and full of sacred thoughts. Then even you can see me and you can hear me."

What a profundity? Who else can say that? Yet, I haven't followed it.. No wonder why it would take us all time to reach that level wherein even we can see HIM and listen to HIM internally.

Well, one important thing to clarify - its not just brother M who has seen Swami, there are other alumni/devotee brothers and sisters who have seen Swami there. Of course, I am not here to convince or defend, but since that point came up I mentioned this. If you would want to genuinely know who these people are, you could send me a personal message. I don't mind sharing their contact details.

Stopping for now! Since I felt there were some genuinely doubts to be clarified, I thought of writing in this length. Sairam!

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I wrote back:

Very well expressed brother Gautham Narendran.

Undoubtedly the Muddenahalli group has accomplished jaw-dropping advances in Bhagavan's mission via the free and (relatively) new hospital in Chattisgarh and the free and (relatively) new educational institutions. I personally am very happy to see such achievements and the service rendered to humanity and Bhagavan's mission.

Very interesting that others too claim to have seen Bhagavan's subtle body besides brother M. I was not aware of it. Thanks for your offer to share their contact details privately with me but I prefer to wait till they go public with their having viewed the subtle body of Bhagavan. I think the more public information we have on the claimed subtle body of Bhagavan in Muddenahalli matter, the more quickly the confusion about it will get resolved, one way or the other. Had read earlier about the statement that only those whose minds are pure & calm, or something like that, can see subtle form of Swami. Thanks for confirming it.

Agree with Bhagavan's unpredictability part. Completely unpredictable, at least from our limited human perspective. My view is that the achievements of the Muddenahalli group may be due to the deep devotion and missionary zeal of the group. I think it is a common experience of Sathya Sai samithi people (who do not have so much interaction with physical form including me earlier as prior to shifting to Puttaparthi in late 2002, I was actively associated with Sathya Sai samithi of Dombivli, Thane district, Maharashtra for nearly a decade), that even while Swami was in physical form, deep devotion and missionary zeal among some Sathya Sai samithi members resulted in tremendous service activities. And some members felt the presence of Swami, had dreams of Swami, saw intractable problems get solved mysteriously and so attributed it to Swami (all this was while Swami was in physical form but in Puttaparthi or Brindavan/Bangalore etc. away from the samithis referred to above).

Brother M's claims may have increased the zeal even further, and also attracted noble and service minded Sai devotees. I have seen the videos of brother M & (claimed) subtle Swami darshan and have been struck by the reverential and devotional atmosphere there.

That then is my view.

However, I respect your faith in brother M's claims, and I accept the possibility that I could be wrong and you could be right.

Interesting info. about the link to Swami's well known declaration of many centres in India which would be managed by alumni.

I am moved by the transparent genuineness in your detailed response, and wish you and your colleagues in the Muddenahalli group all the very best in your service and spiritual endeavours. Thanks again for spelling it out for me.

Yes, we still are on two different sides on this matter :-). But I think these exchanges have given me a better perspective of the Muddenahalli group. Even if we are on different sides on this matter as of now, we certainly can interact

in a friendly and harmonious way, even helping each other wherever there is no disagreement.

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I wrote additionally:

So far I think my comments have been intellectually analyzing the claimed subtle Swami matter in an effort to arrive at the truth of the matter. I have tried my level best to be impartial in this quest for the truth and I think that allowed me to get some useful responses from believers of MDH subtle Swami.

But now I felt it appropriate to comment on the banning from mother organization reference in a comment, which I view as a political/organizational aspect of this matter. Well, let's understand clearly that the mother organization leaders and its supporters (including me - a supporter) do not accept the claimed MDH subtle Swami. Another set of people believes in MDH subtle Swami but some from this set would also like to associate with the mother organization. That is a serious problem, isn't it? I mean, how can the mother organization people trust persons who believe in MDH subtle Swami to be loyal to the mother organization? There is a clear case of conflict of interest. Naturally the mother organization will consider such people to be persons who are drawing people away from the mother organization and into the other organization. Naturally the mother organization will not want such persons to be holding any office bearer or responsible positions in it. They may permit them to come as visitors and stop it at that.

Whether one likes it or not, it has become a choice of this organization or that organization. I simply cannot see any possibility whatsoever of the mother organization leaders ever acknowledging the claimed MDH subtle Swami. It has not happened in these four years after Mahasamadhi and I don't think it will happen in forty years after Mahasamadhi. Please excuse my strong words but I felt it appropriate to let this community know my considered view of the ground reality on this sensitive and troublesome matter.

And if the MDH subtle Swami believers try to put themselves in the shoes of the mother organization they will understand the tough stand that they are taking in this matter. I agree with their tough stand as the mother organization is taking quite a hit due to some devotees and donors who were earlier associated with it now being drawn by the other organization. These are the plain and inescapable political/organizational facts of life in this matter and there is no escaping them, IMHO.

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Sai Keshav wrote:

Ravi S. Iyer. Sir. we are not banned from being office bearers. we are being banned from participating in any service activities too. The music group is banned from participating in albums by parthi too Not just that. We should not forget the fact that MDH is guided by the same lord and the mother organization before making comments should atleast try to go and resolve the issue by visiting the place and talking to the elders of MDH as to what exactly is going on and then pass comments All the notices etc were passed without even visiting the place For a while..i will jump into your side of not believing in Subtle Form but not ruling out the possibility too. Let us think now..If the subtle form is really true..are they not misleading devotees?? Secondly. When they really believe that it is swami who is going to take care of everything..why do they want to tell devotees where to go and where not to go what to believe and what not to believe?? Are they not the same people who stress the point that swamis connection is Heart to Heart? Then y to guide?

Now most of us are just thinking about the pressure the mother organization is going thru. Did you ever think about the MDH organization and what they are going through? When those people who sacrificed their whole life for swami are being criticized for what they believe and pray is true?

I read an article in one of the sai darshan pages where swami said "No Organization can define me". Why are they only stressing on one point and not the others?

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I wrote back (while I was responding to the above, Sai Keshav put up additional comments on the same lines):

Dear Sai Keshav, this is really a heart-wrenching thing to discuss. But as I have taken the lead in commenting on the organizational/political aspect I guess I have to follow through with my views, even if it is not really a pleasant thing to discuss.

Before I give my view, I request your (and other MDH subtle Swami believers) kind indulgence. BTW these are my views as a supporter of the mother organization but who is not associated in any capacity with the mother organization over the past three years or so.

The mother organization leaders simply cannot be expected to visit another place/person who claims to have contact with subtle Swami. Perhaps if Swami appears in a vision or dream to all the leaders asking them to visit MDH, they may consider it. It has to be a direct heart-to-heart message from Swami to them. That is what all supporters of the mother organization, including me, will expect the leaders to do.

BTW there are many, many people who claim to be able to interact with Swami, after Mahasamadhi, all over the world, I am told.

And this is a common phenomenon that happens after the passing away of great spiritual masters. Here is a partial, I repeat, partial list of maybe forty to fifty people who have claimed or are considered by their followers to be Jesus or reincarnation of Jesus, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_people\\_claimed\\_to\\_be\\_Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_claimed_to_be_Jesus). One cannot expect that leaders of the Vatican (Roman Catholic Church HQ) would have gone and met all these people to verify the claim! That's just not done, brother.

Now you and others who believe in claimed MDH subtle Swami are convinced of its truth, and are deeply inspired by it. In particular your statement, "We should not forget the fact that MDH is guided by the same lord" is something that the mother organization people, and me, do not accept! I respect your and others' (like brother Gautham's) faith but I do not subscribe to the same faith. We have to learn to harmoniously live with each other given these disturbing but inescapable realities, at least as of now.

Perhaps this is like some Shirdi Sai devotees not believing in Sathya Sai - sometime in the 90s in Bombay/Mumbai, if I recall correctly, I was introduced to a relative of Kakasaheb Dixit (famous devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba) who told me bluntly and quite aggressively that she does not believe in Sathya Sai Baba (but was an ardent believer in Shirdi Sai Baba). I was taken aback a little then but I kept quiet and our discussion turned to other more peaceful topics .

I am pained to know that well known MDH subtle Swami believers and supporters are not allowed to participate in mother organization service activities and Parthi music albums. And, of course, the MDH organization would have gone through huge difficulties in the past close to four years or so of its existence. That is inescapable for a set that breaks away in its beliefs, from the main organization. These are the horrible pains of division in a spiritual fraternity. And that is why I am so troubled by the confusion and would like it to get resolved, one way or the other. Otherwise this pain will go on. I mean, the mother organization will get more and more strict on these matters as the MDH subtle Swami believers visit more and more countries, and draw some of the mother organization members to its fold. I believe USA is one of the countries to be visited in the near future by claimed subtle Swami. That, in all probability, will be one big tremor resulting in real hardening of position by the mother organization. I simply can't see any other possibility.

I earnestly pray to Bhagavan to do something to bring back unity in the Sathya Sai fraternity, and prevent this pain of division and ostracization.

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Terry Reis Kennedy wrote:

I am reading these comments with attention and interest. All of you know my position. Please, remember that we are a Sai Family and not only a Sai Fraternity. And I thank you brother Ravi S. Iyer for calming down the roaring flames of emotion and bringing the discussion to the level of a discussion rather than what it was at first...a lashing out at me. [snipped remaining part as it is related to some other aspects of the discussion.]

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Sai Keshav wrote:

In the month of March Swami in HIS subtle form visited Tokyo. Along with his divine discourse, Swami encouraged the devotees to ask questions and graciously answered all of them in HIS usual ways. [snipped the long MDH subtle Swami Tokyo Q & A session which is most of the remaining part of this comment]. [Towards the end, the comment mentions my name, along with others, i.e. I am one of the persons the comment is specifically addressed to.]

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I wrote (slightly edited to fix typo):

Thank you sister Terry Reis Kennedy for your kind words. Brother Sai Keshav, I had read (claimed) subtle Swami's Tokyo Q & A earlier but I re-read it in your comment. I prefer not to comment on the Q & A as I don't think my comments will help in our current discussion, and may get us into an argumentative mode.

Also I request the kind indulgence of readers to tolerate my longish comments . I have got direct knowledge/exposure

in 2011-12 itself, sometime after July 2011, of the confusion & trauma (yes, trauma is the word) caused among some people in Parthi by the impact of Swami dream instructions of an MDH leader. That led me to part ways in March 2012 with the institution that I was serving then in Parthi. Now I see it as my duty to Swami to do my bit in reducing confusion and trauma caused to some parts of the Sai fraternity by the claimed subtle Swami activities. So my comments can be longish.

One thing that is slowly dawning on me from these exchanges is that the MDH subtle Swami believers seem to think that eventually Puttaparthi leaders & supporters will also start believing in claimed MDH subtle Swami! If that is the case, I think they are surely entitled to their view & belief.

However, I would like to share my Puttaparthi based view of the Puttaparthi ashram political/organizational ground realities on this matter. This is just my view which could have mistakes, so do take it with a few pinches of salt . From what I have gathered from reliable sources, Puttaparthi ashram leaders have no belief whatsoever in the claimed MDH subtle Swami. In fact, some of these leaders have very strongly critical words about the matter. Therefore, I think the probability of Puttaparthi ashram leaders ever accepting MDH subtle Swami is virtually ZERO. I mean, it will take a mega-mega miracle for all the Puttaparthi ashram leaders to do a sudden turn-around and start believing in MDH subtle Swami.

So, while some MDH subtle Swami believers may not want to view MDH subtle Swami foreign tour activities as divisive to Sai fraternity activities, from the Puttaparthi ashram system leaders' and supporters' viewpoint it is certainly viewed as divisive. Devotees and donors are the lifeblood of a spiritual-cum-charitable organization. As MDH subtle Swami makes more and more foreign trips and draws more and more Sai devotees and donors to them, I think the mother organization leaders' will have no choice but to take stricter and stricter measures to prevent or reduce this loss of devotees and donors. I am really worried about the fallout of the planned USA trip of claimed MDH subtle Swami, in this regard. Note that after India, I think that USA was and continues to be the most influential country for the Sathya Sai movement.

In this scenario, what do we Sai devotees, both believers in MDH subtle Swami and non-believers in MDH subtle Swami, do? From the mother organization side perspective, I think that leaders and office-bearers may introduce tough measures, which will have to be followed. But mother organization devotees can ensure that there is a heart-to-heart compassionate relationship with sympathizers/supporters of MDH subtle Swami.

I clearly recall sitting in Sai Kulwant Hall listening to Bhagavan, in a discourse (sometime after 2003), stressing on Sahanamu (tolerance) as a great treasure of Bharatiyas (Indians). I had not appreciated it well then but still paid importance to it as I felt that my lack of appreciation came out of my spiritual immaturity. Today I have a far better appreciation of Swami's teaching about the tolerance of Bharatiyas being a great treasure, from a spiritual as well as general happiness point of view. I browsed the net to get the actual quotation and came across this Telugu line which Bhagavan is said to have sung many times: "Parama Paavanamainatti Bharataavaniyandu Sahanamu Annadhe Manaku Chakkadhanamu". My Telugu is not great but here is my possibly flawed translation of it - Tolerance is the great treasure of the pure/holy Bharatiyas (land of Bharatiyas).

I think the confusion that claims of MDH subtle Swami is creating not only in some parts of Indian Sai fraternity but in the fraternity in some other countries of the world too, is a great test for all Sai devotees. I think we should all try to imbibe deeply the teaching of Sahanamu/tolerance that Bhagavan has taught us, and somehow manage to focus on our journey with Sai despite this confusion, without getting caught up too much in an emotionally damaging war of words or war of banning type of actions.

Jai Sairam!

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Sai Keshav wrote:

Sir i know 90 % of the parthi teachers who visited MDH in front of my own eyes and then told me to please not tell anyone as they wud like to keep it personal. This also includes a few wardens and ex-Wardens too. so the fact is that the Organization members do not believe it At the ground level most of them do. I will not be surprised if you disagree with me.I have seen them with my own eyes This is surely the most controversial aspect in any avatar. it will finallt drag everyone or not, Only time can tell

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I wrote back:

Very interesting Sai Keshav, and I am not surprised. When I first heard of brother M in May 2014 I too was greatly interested to know what it was all about. So most of the 90 % Parthi teachers you mentioned would have come between May 2014 and Swami birthday 2014, out of a spirit of seeing for themselves what it was all about. I do not know how many of the 90 % you mentioned still believe in subtle MDH Swami. From my personal inquiries with some Parthi teachers as well as student-staff and other staff, my view is that initially a lot were keenly interested and had a view that it may be true. Later I think many changed their view.

However, some may still be having that belief but are not openly saying it, as they are paid staff and have to follow the instructions of the Parthi organization.

And, yes, I agree with the only time can (will) tell, part of your comment. Meanwhile, some people like me can wait and watch :-).

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I wrote:

Gautham Narendran Sai Keshav [Snipped part of comment related to some comments getting deleted.] Anyway, wish you guys well. Take care and may Bhagavan bless us all and lead us to living harmoniously with each other, irrespective of some aspects of our beliefs. I am sure Bhagavan will eventually judge us by and be happy/unhappy with us based on our actions and their inner motivations irrespective of whether we believe in MDH subtle Swami or not.

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Gautham Narendran wrote:

Sairam sir,

[Snipped part of comment about deletion of comments.]

As you said, Bhagawan would never mind whether we believe in this or not. All HE cares is a heart full of love and how we translate that heart full of love into selfless service :-)

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I wrote back:

Sairam brother Gautham Narendran "All HE cares is a heart full of love and how we translate that heart full of love into selfless service" - I entirely agree and I have personally seen on so many occasions how He would melt and be so overjoyed when somebody did that. I will never ever forget that aspect of our dear Lord.

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Gautham Narendran BTW those were HIS own words from a recent discourse. HE emphasised that LOVE is something which cannot be contained. LOVE is something which cannot be hidden. It has to come out some way or the other. And the best way to express love is through selfless service. HE said its not enough to have love in heart. But it should reflect as selfless service.

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I wrote back:

Gautham Narendran Well .... I think most Sai devotees who have some familiarity with physical Swami's discourses could say that. Anyway, I don't want to get into arguments about this aspect as I think that will not lead us to harmony & unity. You folks can follow physical Swami discourses & MDH subtle Swami discourses. We folks are happy with going by only physical Swami discourses :-).

And the big problem is not so much knowing about what physical Swami said; the core of those teachings must be known to millions of people across the globe today, I think. The big problem is translating that into action.

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Sai Keshav wrote (slightly edited):

It would be best not to differentiate following between swami in physical or subtle body discourses. Anything good should be followed. No matter who says it. Jai Sai Ram.

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I wrote back (slightly edited):

Sai Keshav. Hope you don't mind a frank comment from me on what you wrote. It is not a simple matter of anything good anybody says being followed. Spiritual masters speak from deep knowledge of ultimate existential reality. At a worldly level one may not be able to judge whether what the master is saying is good or bad. Physical Swami's discourses are extremely valuable because of generations of knowledgeable people in spiritual matters like say, in-

terpretations of Upanishads & Bhagavad Gita, having acknowledged Swami to be a master in interpretation of these scriptures. So even if we don't understand easily whether some, usually mystical, words of physical Swami are good or not from our limited spiritual knowledge & wisdom, we value those words as trust Swami's higher spiritual knowledge.

There is also a danger of a sentence like "It would be best not to differentiate following between swami in physical or subtle body discourses" getting into the territory of bigotry, when mentioned in this neutral platform. From <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/bigotry> "stubborn and complete intolerance of any creed, belief, or opinion that differs from one's own". You and other believers in MDH subtle Swami do not differentiate between physical Swami discourses and (claimed) MDH subtle Swami discourses. Fine. But people like me who do not believe in MDH subtle Swami will certainly differentiate between physical Swami discourses and (claimed) MDH subtle Swami discourses. I don't think you should use this Facebook page of Ms. Kennedy (a disbeliever in MDH subtle Swami) to declare your view as a certified truth (fact) and try to impose it on disbelievers of MDH subtle Swami. That sort of attitude borders on fanaticism.

Hope you don't mind the words I have used above. They are common in debates on religions today, as can be seen on youtube. I have seen many such debates (mainly hosted in Western countries) and feel that the above words quite accurately express my views. It is not meant to hurt you in any way.

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote (slightly edited to fix a typo type error):

While Swami was in physical form, the most important topics for anyone were Swami's whereabouts, His Leelas, talks, interactions, teachings, and most of all one's own Sadhana. Everyone bothered strictly about whether one is able to please Swami or not, rather than wondering if someone else believes in Swami or not. When Swami was in physical Form itself, the focus was never on the Form/Name of God. Why now? Swami Himself embraced people who did not believe in Him. Whether someone believes in a subtle form or not, can't we focus on the teachings alone? How does it matter whether someone believes or does not believe in subtle form of Swami in MDH, if one is not striving every moment to implement His teachings?

I do not accept the "exclusivity" of "Formless God" of my Muslim friend and my Muslim friend does not accept my belief in the physical Form of God. But with very few, did I have such enlightening, inspiring Satsangs that I had with this Muslim friend, since we both are enchanted by love of God, though our beliefs about His manifestation varied. Vaadhamu valana vairamu perugunu. Vaadhana Saadhanaku paniki raadhu (Arguments lead to animosity. Arguments are no way conducive for a spiritual Sadhaka) - Words uttered by the physical Form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

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I wrote (slightly edited to fix few typos and inaccuracies):

Pardha Saradhi Uppala: I tend to broadly agree with your comment. Some disagreement though. You wrote, "When Swami was in physical Form itself, the focus was never on the Form/Name of God." I don't think that holds for many Sai devotees, especially those people serving in Swami's institutions which were directly monitored by Swami as the topmost administrator. Swami was even referred to, in a lighter vein, as CEO of Puttaparthi ashram institutions.

After the divine shock of the Mahasamadhi subsided over time I have, many times, looked back on my years of being in the presence of physical form Swami usually in Sai Kulwant hall, and quite carefully observing the goings-on there, as a teacher in the Puttaparthi campus of the Sai university. I then realized that a good description of Swami in physical form, from a Puttaparthi ashram systems point of view, was as Maharaja/King of Puttaparthi ashram systems (including those institutions that were away from Puttaparthi but were operating under Parthi trust). The Maharaja's darbar (king's court) would meet everyday in Sai Kulwant Hall. And at the darbar, any person serving in the institutions, no matter how big or small, could try to offer a letter to Swami or try to speak to Swami, sometimes related to work problems (i.e. escalating the matter to the CEO :-)) or personal problems. Swami would many times accept the letter graciously and/or speak to the person about the matter. But, of course, there were many times when he would not take the letter and/or ignore the person's attempts to draw his attention :-).

I understood this aspect of Swami better as I read about the history of religions, (doing the reading) mostly after Mahasamadhi, including Karen Armstrong's excellent though rather inappropriately titled 'A History of God' (it is more a history of western (European/North American) and Western Asian religions and religious sects), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_History\\_of\\_God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_History_of_God). In particular, Prophet Muhammed was not only a religious/spiritual



head/leader but he was also a head of state. Whereas Jesus Christ was a religious/spiritual head/leader but not a head of state - Jerusalem, Galilee etc. were then under Roman rule. Jesus was sentenced to be crucified (quite unwillingly, they say) by Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, due to sedition charges made against Jesus by his religious opponents. Swami was both a religious head/leader and a head of Puttaparthi-trust managed institutions, and in that sense a 'head of state' too.

And, in this environment, who Swami preferred to interact with more was a major, major factor in life in this 'kingdom of Swami'. (Usually male) students with whom Swami chose to interact more were, as everybody knows, the "form boys", who carried immense clout in the system. Even teachers had to be careful in interactions with "form boys" even if they were students in their class! In this environment those people that Swami trusted and interacted heavily with, including some top administrators, were very, very powerful people in the system. Very few people dared to oppose such powerful people as such actions would lead to unpleasant consequences (related to position/influence in ashram institution(s) and/or even seating in mandir/Kulwant Hall).

The divine shock of the Mahasamadhi completely changed the power equations! Some of those who Swami had interacted with heavily in the past, quite suddenly found that they were being made unimportant people in the system! And some of such people, especially the top people, simply could not digest this big shot to almost-nobody change, and decided to go their own way in furthering Swami's mission. That I think led to the current state of affairs. Further, this is not unusual in the history of religions. Paul (formerly Saul) is regarded as one of the most important founding figures of the Christian religion as it is known today. But not only was Paul not one of the companions of Jesus - he got transformed from a persecutor to a staunch believer by miraculous incident(s) which is quite famously depicted by Michelangelo, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Conversion\\_of\\_Saul\\_\(Michelangelo\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Conversion_of_Saul_(Michelangelo)) - but Paul broke away from the other apostles like Peter, by deciding to preach to the Gentiles (non Jews), a major advance that seems to have been pivotal to the Roman empire, a few centuries later, after some horrible persecutions, making Christianity the empire's religion (or something like that)! And, fascinatingly, the early Christians had serious problems with these moves of Paul. There was a meeting in Jerusalem in 50 AD (roughly twenty years after crucifixion of Christ) to sort out the issues between the leaders, including Peter & Paul & the brother of Jesus, James the Just (if I recall correctly), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council\\_of\\_Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Jerusalem).

The reason I mentioned the above, is to show that whatever divisive kind of friction is happening in the Sai fraternity now, is not unique in the history of religions, though some particular aspects of it (like claimed subtle body of Bhagavan) may be. Essentially I view the MDH folks & institutions as an alternative platform that some former leaders of the fraternity have created and which is attracting some Sai devotees from the main platform/mother organization. And that's very, very common in the history of religions.

But I tend to agree with most of your comment. The part about your interactions with your Muslim friend not accepting your belief in physical form of God, but you two still being friendly and benefiting from your common love of God, was very interesting. And I think both believers in MDH subtle Swami and disbelievers in MDH subtle Swami, should try to focus on the commonality of belief in physical form Swami, to ensure that the divisive aspects do not go out of control and create more & more pain to the Sai fraternity as a whole.

About avoiding arguments, my view is that we should avoid abusive and emotionally damaging arguments as much of the Vaad-vivaad (argument-counter-argument) in Indian religious history (Jains, Buddhists, various schools of Hindu belief & philosophy etc.) led to such not only emotionally damaging results but lots of violence & social upheaval, including palace coups. But polite discussions on this matter including polite expression of different views should be fine, as we then understand each other's viewpoint better and so can find better ways to peacefully and harmoniously co-exist.

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote (slightly edited):

Ravi S. Iyer, I like your posts for the sheer depth of knowledge that you share along with your honest insights. I definitely agree that constructive debate is necessary. I see the point in the revered Professor Anil Kumar Sir's views - Bhagavan's life is replete with instances which time and again show that his relationship with a devotee is heart-to-heart.

Among people who go to MDH, some might end up believing in the subtle form, some might not. Just going to MDH in itself will not sanction total and exclusive authority for someone to comment on the situation - one's path to en-

lightenment does no way end up with going to a certain place or even interacting with a holy person. People who went to MDH cannot say those who do not go to MDH have no right to comment on it.

Source of true wisdom is always within, not outside. And if one has experienced Swami sincerely and practised his words, one can understand the truth from within.

The actual purpose of Avatar undoubtedly is to make us realize we are one with Him and it is no easy target. Whether there is a subtle form of Swami in MDH or not, unless one travels the arduous path of self-inquiry, one cannot reach the goal. Commenting in a silly tone, personal attacks, (even if A does a personal attack, that will NOT give the right to B to do a personal attack back), are plain signs of lack of seriousness and commitment to spiritual path. And when that commitment and one-pointed attention is lacking, whether X believes in PTP or MDH, it is of little consequence and benefit.

Going tit for tat and arguing endlessly with personal attacks may befit the regular theologians on Youtube who argue based on the books they crammed, quoting page numbers - definitely not us who have basked in the direct physical presence of God.

If we are attacking anyone personally, even when the other has done it, I must say we MUST BE ASHAMED of our life spent with Bhagavan. I cannot say more. It really pains me to see all this. I sincerely hope we do not turn ourselves into street dogs before the world. But who can control the fate except the Lord! The Yadavas who were regular recipients of His Love have fought with each other and died after He left His physical Form. The first few chapters of Bhagavatha Vaahini which describe the aftermath of Krishna's return to Vaikuntha are a mystery to me.

I wonder what the purpose of the entire bloodshed of Mahabharata (was), when the Pandavas could only rule the kingdom for 50 years or so (not sure of the exact number). Kunti died immediately after hearing of Krishna's departure - I wonder why I could not! She was the luckiest of all. All the Pandavas including Draupadi simply went without food and water and travelled north until their bodies dropped off. The rest of the world went into chaos as Kali yuga dawned and atrocities increased beyond measure.

I wish we who had this greatest luck of being with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, meet with a destiny like that of Pandavas, who merged themselves in Krishna in word and deed, unable to live separately from Him, than face a destiny of that of Yadavas who killed each other forgetting all the compassion and Grace they received from Krishna.

May we sanctify our life immersed in the glory and beauty of Lord Sai Krishna that we have no time to see the differences between ourselves.

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I wrote back:

Wonderful words of wisdom and heart-felt devotion & emotion, Pardha Saradhi Uppala. "I sincerely hope we do not turn ourselves into street dogs before the world." That is a very important statement for all Sai devotees, whether believers in MDH subtle Swami or non-believers in MDH subtle Swami, to seriously bear in mind.

I came to know of a recent response of Narasimhamurthy sir, an extract of which I will share below. I hope Narasimhamurthy sir will not mind me sharing these non-controversial words.

"We don't want to react to negativity and create more negativity. We are always positive doing Swami's work silently and selflessly. That is what we have learnt and learning from Swami. We have not spoken a single word against anyone. That's Swami's way."

Even though I do not share his belief in MDH subtle Swami or Swami dream-instructions for third-parties, and do have some pretty strong feelings about what I see as the negative impact of claimed MDH subtle Swami and Swami dream-instructions for third-parties, on Puttaparthi in particular, and the mother organization in general, in terms of the confusion and even trauma that it created for some (including me), I admire the sentiments he has expressed in the above extract.

However, as you said, "I definitely agree that constructive debate is necessary. I see the point in the revered Professor Anil Kumar Sir's views - Bhagavan's life is replete with instances which time and again show that his relationship with a devotee is heart-to-heart." I entirely agree with you. In particular, I feel expressing disagreements in a polite way on this matter is fine. And I consider it my duty to raise my concerns about claimed MDH subtle Swami publicly (mainly on my spiritual blog) so that those Sai devotees who want to know about such concerns can find it easily using Google (or other) search.

And thanks for the very kind words about my comments. I am just sharing the little that I have come to know through

my experiences with Swami, readings of Swami discourses & utterances and readings on Swami & other spiritual masters as well as religions.

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## **My frank mail exchanges about Sathya Sai Baba Mahasamadhi (April 24th 2011) at that time (2015-04-25 23:08)**

*Last updated on 1st May 2015*

I came across this very touching article with lots of details including many photos on the Mahasamadhi (April 24th 2011), by Prof. G. Venkataraman of Radio Sai, ✖

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So the possibility that I had mentioned of Swami coming back to his body before his burial/samadhi did NOT happen. A lot of people here thought that it will happen. Digesting the fact that it did not happen is quite difficult for many (though I think I am able to take it in my stride perhaps because I felt it was a possibility and not a sure outcome).

So what about Sathya Sai Baba's prediction that he would live till 96 years!! I see two possibilities:

a) First I need to say that you are absolutely free to think that I am really, really crazy :-). I believe Sathya Sai has incredible power. I have full faith that he has the power to come back to life from the samadhi too!!! Even after being buried!! And that too in his physical body (like the resurrection of Jesus Christ, though Jesus Christ's resurrection was for 40 days says the Bible and then Jesus ascended to heaven - or something like that). How exactly that will happen, I don't have a clue. But if it happens I will not be very surprised.

But he may choose not to come back to life from his samadhi and that leads us to next possibility.

b) Sathya Sai body does not come back to life. That will falsify his prophecy of living upto 96. Yes, we could say that the prophecy had a rider of leaving early if his devotees do not change. But, for me at least, I had read/heard about multiple times where he had prophesied living upto 96 and also made some prophetic statements about the last ten or so years of his life. So, to me at least, it will then seem that this part of his prophecy was unfulfilled.

However he still has done a massive amount of good in his life upto 85 years and for devotees and struggling spiritual aspirants like me, he has left behind a fantastic setup at Puttaparthi where we can try to evolve spiritually by practising his teachings to the best of our ability. So life will go on and pleasantly and happily too.

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The last few days have been very memorable for me from a devotional experience point of view. Puttaparthi became a sea of devotees, policemen, media and some VVIPs. In spite of some sections of the media expecting a 'collapse' kind of picture, a few lakhs of people had darshan of Sathya Sai Baba's body in a very controlled, peaceful and disciplined way. There was no stampede, no wailing near the samadhi, no suicides (as far as I know) and no ocean of tears. Of course a lot of people were very moved, many women and even some men had tears in their eyes but it was controlled grief and NOT a 'How can I live without Sai Baba; Death is better' kind of wailing torment.

Bhajans or Veda chanting was on during darshan. Samadhi was done by veda pandits from, what I believe is, a renowned centre of vedic learning in Andhra Pradesh (Rajamundry). Spiritual leaders from other faiths also participated.

The powers of the country were here at some point during the last 3 days: Prime Minister [2015Ravi: Dr. Manmohan Singh], Sonia Gandhi, Chief Minister, Governor of A.P., top Police officials from A.P., several other top state and central ministers. Sathya Sai's body was draped in the national flag and accorded 'state funeral' status.

I felt it was a perfect kind of 'samadhi' ceremony of a great spiritual man. Grief certainly but controlled grief, Love, Peace, Harmony and a determination to carry on with his message and work. And a clear understanding that it is only his body that has passed away but that his spirit is everlasting and present for all of us to pray to and seek strength to carry on his work with the motto of 'Manav Seva is Madhav Seva' and through it achieve our spiritual uplift.

Never before in my life had I attended a 'samadhi' ceremony of a spiritual man. This has been a truly unforgettable, once in a lifetime kind of experience.

If you would like to see some photographs and videos about the last few days in Sai Kulwant Hall in Puttaparthi, please see: ❌

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[2015Ravi: The above picture has only the "During Media TakeOver" part.]





During Media TakeOver



After Media Left



During Media TakeOver



After Media Left

— end my mail (main) content dated 28th April 2011 —

[Have snipped draft content having mail content from a friend on 10th May 2011 as I have yet to receive his approval for sharing it publicly.]

I responded on 11th May 2011 as follows:

Thank you for your kind words :-).

I agree with your view that "that many things happen for a reason, and that reason is revealed to us over a period of time." Perhaps somewhere down the line I will have some understanding of why Sathya Sai Baba left his body at 85 instead of his repeated declarations of leaving at 96 (with a rider of leaving early if he is fed up of his devotees). As of now, I have to confess that I am completely clueless. I plan to read the Bhagavatha Purana to read about how the Gopikas must have felt when Krishna suddenly left them [or maybe the right phrase is ditched them :-)] to go to Mathura and never return (except for a Maha Raas Leela once, if I recall Krishna's story correctly) to Brindavan again. That perhaps will match how many Sathya Sai devotees feel now.

You said, "he may have meant that his legacy as it exists today will live for 96 years". Well, I believe very strongly

that like Shirdi Sai Baba, Sathya Sai Baba's legacy in terms of his teachings, his life story and his miracles (leela), his institutions etc. will live on for centuries and perhaps millennia. Though I completely understand that many people will have serious doubt about this belief of mine :-).

Maybe his body in the samadhi will retain its Divine power for eleven more years. Of course, it is my strong belief that even after his body mixes with the elements (say in eleven years), his Divine vibrations will endure in Puttaparthi for centuries, and attract and give spiritual succour to millions of people in the world.

You said, "Maybe you were guided to this little town for a reason."

Well, I have spent the happiest years of my life in this little town. I thank God from the depth of my heart for having blessed me with these happy years in Puttaparthi in the presence of Sathya Sai Baba, who, to me, still remains part of the Kali Yuga-Avatar (triple Sai Avatar: Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai, Prema Sai).

As you seem to be quite interested in Sachin Tendulkar, I thought you may want to read this short article on Sachin drawing strength from Sathya Sai Baba: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/off-the-field/I-just-could-not-cont-rol-myself-Sachin/articleshow/8221226.cms>

— end my response —

Slightly edited mail content from a Sai-devotee friend on 11th May 2011 was as follows:

Sairam Sir,

I have read this email and the other exchange that you forwarded.

Yes, I too was asked that question many times here (by family and friends) - I had just one answer - the rider that you mention below. [2015Ravi: *rider of leaving early if his devotees do not change.*]

Please don't mistake me to be condescending - I am most definitely not - I don't think I have anything to be condescending about.

Personally, He is God to me. No doubts there; but He taught me (among other things) this one thing and I think I learnt it well (I can say this based on observing my mental status and reactions to the Samadhi news) - that I should have no expectations and should not try to explain Him/His actions, but simply experience Him. Not that I should not analyze Him/His actions - I should most definitely do that for my personal growth, but never use that analysis to explain Him - not that it is wrong - its just useless. Meaning that I will most definitely observe/see contradictions if I attempt to do so and that would only baffle and confuse me and hence useless.

I only enjoyed my stay there; accepting all that I got.

I did miss being there to see and experience the glory and grandeur that He is - but I suppose there must have been a reason for that. The fact that He sent me packing just 4 days before He chose to be hospitalized is not something I can explain or understand at this point in time. All I have come to tell myself over time is this: 'He has a plan' or that 'This too shall pass'. Fortunately for me, I have learnt not to lapse into inaction - I still do what I think I should and believe that His plan will prevail.

Forgive me if I sound very philosophical, but I think it has been quite practical to me - I have lived quite a few years consciously practising to the feasible extent all that I have stated above.

PS: I am quite certain that you must have heard the 'This too shall pass' story from Swami. If not, you should try to watch the Convocation Drama (iirc) that actually portrayed this concept. Swami had written this part of the storyline, iirc. It was about the time that the Pandavas were in exile, and Krishna had given Yudishtra something that he should open only in times of real real need...

— end Sai-devotee friend's mail content — — — —

My response to the above mail was as follows (on 12th May 2011):

Happy to hear your frank views. And I certainly do not consider them to be condescending in any way. I have a lot of respect for your character and your intelligence and so value your opinion, and am therefore happy to read your opinion on the Divine Shock that Bhagavan gave most, if not all, of us.

I think I understand very well your faith that Swami is God and further your view that you should not try to explain Him/His actions (analyze His actions is fine but not explain Him/His actions). I think Bhagavan Himself has advised this to devotees. I think your approach is a wonderful one, in keeping with Bhagavan's directions on how to live with the Divine phenomenon that He is.

Also noted your pithy statements, "... but never use that analysis to explain Him - not that it is wrong - its just useless. Meaning that I will most definitely observe/see contradictions if I attempt to do so and that would only baffle and confuse me and hence useless." I think this is quite a wise way to handle the great experience of having enjoyed some physical proximity to and being a devotee of the Yuga Avatar.

He has a plan/This too shall pass - Superb approach. Accepting everything that happens as part of His Divine plan is, IMHO, a very wise way of dealing with life. Sachin Tendulkar is a great devotee of Swami (and we could see how Swami was so pleased with him), but Sachin is very rarely in Puttaparthi. Physical proximity to Swami sometimes clouds our vision - mentally and 'heartily' close devotees though physically distant in India or America or wherever may experience His Love and His Grace far more !!!

Happy to hear your philosophy. I encourage you to share your philosophy of life with suitably interested persons.

About 'This too shall pass', I had read about it many years before coming to the Sai fold. I did not see the convocation Drama. As Swami had written part of the storyline I will try to locate the storyline (Swami part) and read it.

It was nice for me to know your perspective on this Divine Shock. I have a different view. While I fully appreciate the philosophical view as I too had such views in my earlier years and still appreciate their validity, now I desire to get fully into the 'mad devotee' experience. Further, one of the 'time-passes' in my retired life is to analyze the Avatar and try to 'understand' Him!!! Very dangerous business :-). But then I have the support of some spiritual practice and a fair amount of scriptural knowledge including the life stories of the previous Avatars. So I think I am able to handle the "baffling contradictions" without losing my balance too much, and, in fact, am enjoying His Leela. But then, I repeat that it is very dangerous business and so I am fully aware that I run the risk of running into serious trouble in my spiritual journey. However I have always been a risk-taker right from my young age when I dropped out of my M.Sc. to jump into the 'university of life'. So far, overall, the risky decisions have paid off handsomely. Let us see what the future holds with these spiritual risks that I am taking on :-).

— end my response —

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## 3.5 May

### Sathya Sai Baba: My Glory lies not in millions who flock to me but in stopping ... (2015-05-04 14:59)

A Sai university alumnus who I know very well, shared with me an utterance of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Swami) in Kodaikanal in 1999. He is not sure whether he heard it directly but can distinctly remember his colleague (another Sai university alumnus who was with him in that Kodaikanal trip, and who is also known to me) confirming the utterance.

I decided to share the utterance on my blog (actually I feel it is my duty to do so), as I fully trust the Sai university alumnus who conveyed this to me, to be as accurate as he can. Note that around 16 years have passed since 1999. Here's what he wrote me in the context of a mail conversation (which he was OK with publicly sharing, and which he confirmed as an utterance of Swami as given above):

... a statement that Swami had remarked, almost in passing, during our stay in Kodai came rushing to my mind. Swami had said, "**My glory does not lie in the millions that flock to Me, but in My Will (or some such equivalent word in Telugu) in stopping the billions from coming here!!!**"

— end extract of Sai university alumnus mail —

Whether one believes that Swami made the above statement or not, or whether one believes in the statement or not, I think the one thing most, if not all, Sathya Sai devotees will agree is that all who were able to enjoy darshan (sight), sparshan (touch) and sambhashan (spoken interaction/discourse) of/with Shiva-Shakti Swarupa, Kali Yuga Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, are extremely fortunate people. And that it was a great good fortune has become very, very clear to people like me, in the years after He gave up His physical form.

I mean, if, by some great miracle, Swami in physical form is back with us, I would drop everything and rush like a crazy guy to have His darshan. Many of us (including me) took His darshan for granted in the years He was with us



in physical form. It took His Mahasamadhi for many of us, especially those living in Puttaparthi like me, to know how much He, in physical form, meant to us.

I tend to believe the above statement of Swami. I think He only allowed those who, for some reason or the other, deserved or were destined to have His darshan, sparshan and sambhashan, to do so. I mean, you had to earn it in some way, whether the earning was something one had done in this lifetime, or in many lifetimes earlier. [Of course, senior devotees state that it is the good deeds (*punya*) of many, many births that led us to Swami. I tried Google search to see whether Swami Himself had said that in a public discourse but did not get suitable results.]

What one did with that great and splendid opportunity of darshan, sparshan and sambhashan of/with Bhagavan varied amongst people. Some, it seemed to me, were focused on spiritual benefit, some on a mix of spiritual and material benefit, and some seemed to focus mainly on the material benefit. But what I have noted is that many of those who focused on the material benefit were also very, very grateful to Swami for the material benefits provided and loved Him for that. Perhaps their love for and gratitude to Swami was more than some who claimed to be above material gain but had some spiritual pride about their association with Bhagavan not involving material gain. The latter may have lost out somewhat on the loving heart-to-heart relationship with Bhagavan.

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### **How some talented people, including some spiritual leaders, can psyche themselves into false belief (2015-05-05 10:35)**

I put up a Facebook post on this where I took some extracts from Oprah Winfrey's interview of Lance Armstrong in Jan. 2013, where Armstrong confessed to the public about his doping, and made some comments on it. Here's the post, <https://www.facebook.com/ravi.s.iyer.7/posts/1615279345355303>

I have given below only my comments, with some context info. in some cases, from the above Facebook post:

I think the outstanding case in recent times of a superstar who psyched himself into false belief and made a fool of a large part of the sporting world as well as a significant part of the world in general, is Lance Armstrong. He came clean with the public (perhaps having been forced to do so due to the hard work of anti doping staff of concerned sporting agency) in an interview with Oprah Winfrey in January 2013.

...

[Ravi: The guy took the world for one merry ride! He called people who suspected that he was doping, liars! And got away with it! He overcame cancer that he was diagnosed with, and went on to win Tour de France seven times from 1999 to 2005! He was not just a sporting hero, he was a cancer survivor sporting SUPERHERO!

And then came the fall ... From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lance\\_Armstrong](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lance_Armstrong), "In 2012, a United States Anti-Doping Agency investigation concluded that Armstrong had used performance-enhancing drugs over the course of his career and named him as the ringleader of "the most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program that sport has ever seen."

An interesting point is Armstrong saying that he lost himself in the momentum of his sporting activity/achievement, (and so lost sight of the truth that he was cheating by using banned drugs). I think spiritual leaders who fall into some delusion would also be getting lost in the momentum if they get a large following. They would then believe their delusion to be true. In other words, if so many people believe it to be true, the spiritual leader may think his own imagination to be true! That's the power of group psychology, I think.]

...

[Ravi: What I appreciate about Lance Armstrong is that he came clean on TV. He had been taking (psychological/mental health) therapy and I think that helped him come out of the fantasy world that he had locked himself into. But still to come on TV and accept his faults the way he did, does deserve some praise, IMHO. However, I must also say that people were so furious with him that many may not accept my sympathetic view at all.

Another point here is how his desperation (after being diagnosed with cancer) made him a 'win at all costs' guy. I think people who face desperate situations in life like very bad financial problems may become willing to try anything to get out of it, including becoming a spiritual leader.]

...

Lance Armstrong: "I see the anger in people, betrayal, it's all there. People who believed in me and supported me and they have every right to feel betrayed and it's my fault and I'll spend the rest of my life trying to earn back trust and apologise to people."

[Ravi: My God! What an awful position to be in! Nothing in the world is worth this sort of eventual outcome. The means have to be pure and good to achieve pure and good ends.

One wrong does not get righted by another wrong. Some people in one spiritual group indulging in some wrong activities does not get righted by some people of another competitor spiritual group also indulging in wrong activities.]

...

[Ravi (about Armstrong 'running over/bullying' people who dared to challenge him & his group/sporting business): Was he a monster or what! And with the money power the Lance Armstrong brand & business had he could financially wreck people who threatened to expose his being on banned drugs, by taking them to court (in the USA). What a monster he had become! Will these people ever forgive him? I sincerely doubt, unless they have divine level of forgiveness in their hearts. But at least the guy seems to be asking for their forgiveness.]

— end comments related to extracts of Oprah Winfrey interview of Lance Armstrong —

Ravi overall comment: I think even in spirituality there is a danger of some leaders becoming like Lance Armstrong. They psychologically go off-balance but are in a position of such power and influence that they believe their fantasies to be true with a Lance Armstrong kind-of fierce deluded belief. And the fierceness and depth of the deluded belief can attract a large following, which in turn reinforces their deluded belief!

Lance Armstrong's delusion essentially got undone by USA anti doping agency (and maybe some other agencies too). For those spiritual leaders who get deluded, sometimes fiercely deluded, about some supernatural matters, we do not have any equivalent powerful anti spiritual delusion agency. And the big, big issue is that such deluded spiritual leaders can mislead their followers not even realizing that they are misleading them, as the deluded spiritual leader thinks he is right and all the doubters and critics are wrong.

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### **Sathya Sai Baba wanted people to be happy and not show/have 'castor oil' (sad/downcast) faces (2015-05-05 14:11)**

From Bhagavan Sri sathya Sai Baba divine discourse on May 21st 2000, <http://www.sssbpt.info/summershowers/ss2-000/ss2000-08.pdf>:

Prahlada saw unity in diversity. He clearly perceived Narayana to be the substratum of everything in creation and happily surrendered to Him. He realised that God is Omnipresent. His father Hiranyakasipu was just the opposite. He saw diversity in unity and became deluded by the multiplicity of forms in Creation, each with its own name. These forms are all transient whereas God represents the Eternal Truth.

...

Everyone wants to be happy. Such a desire is natural and it springs from the fact that man's true nature is Bliss. Bliss is God but man does not understand that. He does not understand that he originated from God, that life's undercurrent is God, and that his final destination also is God. Man is born of ananda, the basis of his life is ananda, and his goal also is ananda. Truly speaking, it is not difficult to know what the basis of life is, and what should be the goal of life. Bliss should be the goal, and one must seek it in all earnestness.

— end divine discourse extracts —

Ravi: I think such messages are a very important aspect of the teachings of Bhagavan. It is my personal experience during my years in serving His mission in His divine presence in Puttaparthi that a very important thing for Bhagavan was that He wanted people to be happy. Yes, service activity was important but a balance was necessary. People getting completely caught up in service and other mission activities but losing the balance between work & devotion/love, and so ending up with "castor oil" (sad/downcast) faces, was something that would put Bhagavan off. He is reported to have asked people including students in Kulwant Hall, many times, why they are having "castor oil" faces.

Some relevant "castor oil" quotations from Bhagavan's discourses:

From <http://www.sathyasai.org/discour/2008/d081122.pdf>:

"People wonder how Swami is so divinely peaceful and is able to interact with so many people day in and day out. In fact, peace is natural to Me. I always smile and put up a serene countenance. I can never put up a castor oil face. I am always happy and smiling. I exhort you also to be so. When you all are happy, I am happy. Your happiness is My happiness."

From <http://www.sathyasai.org/discour/2008/d080101.pdf>:

"All are brothers and sisters! But, differences arise even amongst the brothers and sisters. Hence, cultivate love for one another. Always maintain a cheerful disposition, with a sweet smile on your face. You should never put up a 'castor-oil face'. Then only will your life become noble and ideal. You must always be happy and cheerful. What do you lack? you have everything, with Swami's love and grace."

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### **Comment exchanges on Shri Indulal Shah sir's letter supportive of Muddenahalli organization (2015-05-06 17:31)**

Yesterday (5th May 2015) I saw Shri Indulal Shah sir's letter on Muddenahalli on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/saikeshav.personal/posts/966435720066471>.

I had a comment exchange on this facebook page and have given a slightly edited version of it below (Note MDH is a short form of Muddenahalli):

I wrote:

It is four years after the Mahasamadhi of our beloved Lord Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba but the confusion along with divisive threat to the organization due to claimed Muddenahalli subtle body communicator who claims to see and converse with Swami, has not abated, but seems to increase with every passing month. Perhaps the leaders of the organizations (official Sai org. and Muddenahalli based/affiliated org.) have had many discussions behind closed doors but the devotees at large are still very confused, as the views of the two organizations are conflicting. In my considered view, only a public discussion on this matter using the very convenient forum of the Internet, can help to resolve this confusion and enlighten Sai devotees worldwide about the matter.

It is wonderful that Shri Indulal Shah sir, the veteran leader of the Sathya Sai fraternity has expressed his view on a public forum. [As it is from Sai Keshav I consider it to be an authentic communication from Shri Indulal Shah sir.]

Swami being felt in subtle form all over the world is not unusual today and, IMHO, was not unusual when Swami was in physical form. I can say that from my experience in Maharashtra Sathya Sai Samithi (Dombivli) for nearly a decade (around 1993 to 2002).

The main issue is the very extraordinary claim of a brother M, former Sai university student, who claims to be able to see subtle form of Swami (and subtle forms of Lord Jesus, Lord Shiva, Mother Parvathi etc.) and communicate with Swami. It will be truly wonderful if Shri Indulal Shah sir also conveys whether he fully believes in brother M's ability to act as a special/unique communicator to subtle form of our beloved Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I say special/unique communicator as that is what is the impression conveyed by the Muddenahalli organization. I mean, people even have interviews with (claimed) Swami through communicator, brother M (but not through other communicators there, as far as I know from publicly available reports about these matters).

If Shri Indulal Shah sir conveys his view on the above matter then Sai devotees would know his clear stand on this very controversial and very divisive matter.

I don't think most Sai devotees associated with the official organization (or its supporters like me) have any issues with the service activities done by Muddenahalli organization and its affiliates. In fact, most (including me) are very appreciative of the wonderful service they are rendering, as per reports provided by them.

Jai Sairam!

-- end my comment --

Gautham Narendran wrote:

Sairam sir, I am sure he is a person who doesn't believe in involving himself in any kind of controversy. And that's why he chose to speak whatever is necessary. Regarding doubts and confusion, simple solution for the entire devotee community is to go and experience it for ourselves, instead of complaining again and again about the apparent

confusion. Don't you feel that's a wiser option? I feel that's the mistake all are committing here. Simply sit at home and complain about confusion, instead of packing their luggage and take a short trip to MDH for a first hand experience. It may not be fair to ask others to opine when thousands of devotees who have been there have already told the same thing in active/pasive, direct and reported speech. When we have not taken the first step, how can HE take those 100 steps?

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I responded:

Thanks brother Gautham Narendran for your response. You wrote, "Regarding doubts and confusion, simple solution for the entire devotee community is to go and experience it for ourselves, instead of complaining again and again about the apparent confusion. Don't you feel that's a wiser option? I feel that's the mistake all are committing here. Simply sit at home and complain about confusion, instead of packing their luggage and take a short trip to MDH for a first hand experience."

In our previous Facebook post exchanges I did not want to broach this matter but as you have explicitly raised it in response to my explicit request to Shri Indulal Shah sir about the matter, I think I must respond.

What can me going to MDH do? At the most it can convey that brother M either by himself or through claimed subtle body of Bhagavan, can read my mind and its memories. Such capability is not uncommon in this great and holy land of Bharat which has had many Siddha Purushas in the past & present and will continue to do so in the future.

More on it is given in this extract from my blog post, <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/2015/03/mediums-who-tell-you-some-private.html> (what I have said below for medium(s) applies to communicator(s) too):

What if some medium told you about some private incident/interaction between you and physical form Swami - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba?

Will you then believe that the medium is really interacting with subtle form (sukshma sharira) of Bhagavan? Will you then start following advice/instructions given by this medium who says they are from subtle form/body of Bhagavan? What if all the above happened with me? What would I do?

Well, firstly I may have some doubt about whether information about the private incident/interaction between (physical form) Swami and me, may have been passed on to the medium by somebody else in physical form. In other words, the medium found out this info. through normal means (and not paranormal means). For example, physical form Swami used pet-names, quite funny pet-names many times, to refer to Sai university students. This pet-name would become common knowledge among student peers during that batch's stint at the university. Now, if a medium refers to a former student by using the pet-name, I, for one, would seriously consider the possibility of this information having been passed on to the medium by other former Sai university students, who know about this pet-name. I would not immediately get convinced that the medium has demonstrated knowledge about a private matter between me and (physical form) Swami.

But what if the matter is really a private one between me and Swami, not known to anybody else, and the medium tells me that matter? Then I would accept that the medium has demonstrated some paranormal power. This power could be due to the medium himself having acquired spiritual powers to read the mind and memories of others. But it could also be that this knowledge is revealed to the medium by subtle form/body of Swami or some other spiritual power masquerading as subtle form of Swami. So I will then certainly be somewhat open to the possibility that the medium's claim of interacting with subtle form of Swami is really true. But I would still not be one hundred percent certain that the medium is really interacting with subtle form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, as it could be explained by other possibilities like the two other possibilities I mentioned above.

What will it take for me to get convinced that a medium is really interacting with subtle body of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba?

Well, I don't have a crisp answer for this. But let me just share my current thoughts on it. I would expect that the way Swami's subtle body runs the mission will be similar to how physical form Swami ran the Puttaparthi based mission. I would have a lot of doubts if a claimed subtle body based mission gets involved in activities which were unheard of in the physical form mission at Puttaparthi, like:

- a) The claimed subtle body along with the medium going abroad to well off countries
- b) Approaching devotees and donors with messages communicated mainly through a medium instead of the subtle body, at least sometimes, directly interacting with devotees and donors

c) Having chairs in public functions for subtle bodies of Jesus, Shiva (Shirdi Sai) and Parvathi

I will not accept such a mission to be a mission that is being run by subtle body of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, OR I will say that the subtle body mission is very different from the physical body run mission, and that I would prefer to associate with the latter rather than the former.

Another key test for me would be the deep scriptural and spiritual messages that the medium conveys as Swami's messages. If a medium states that Swami is saying that when I came as Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Allah ... I did ..., then it fails the scriptural/religious test for me. Allah is the formless God in Islamic theology. How can a spiritual master conversant with Islam, which Shirdi Sai Baba certainly was and Sathya Sai seemed to have full knowledge of Shirdi Sai form, say that Allah took a form? I don't think physical form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has ever said something like: when I came as Allah. As Rama and Krishna are avatars and physical form Swami has told us that He was Rama and Krishna earlier, Swami saying, when I came as Rama and Krishna, is fine.

A medium providing discourses of Swami which are similar to what physical form Swami has given on countless occasions on spiritual/human values like Sathya, Dharma, Shanti & Prema, can be simply attributed to an intense study by the medium of physical form Swami's discourses.

If a medium claims to "see" subtle body of Swami and points followers to where the subtle body is seated, and the medium claims to "hear" words of this subtle body seated physically separate from the medium, then when the medium gives discourses of subtle body of Swami I would expect the medium to "listen" for a few minutes to subtle body Swami, then convey what he heard to the audience, get back to "listening" to Swami and so on. This would be like how physical form Swami when giving discourses in Telugu would pause every few minutes (or less) for the English translator to say the English translation of what Swami said. If instead, such a medium who "sees" and "hears" subtle body of Swami which is physically separate from him, gives a continuous discourse as if it is Swami within the medium's body who is speaking now, then I would be confused and have some doubts about the medium.

— end extracts —

Therefore, in my considered opinion, the line of 'come and experience' to validate claims of communicator brother M, is not good enough in this vital matter for the Sathya Sai mission. A public and thorough debate on the matter, with leaders like Shri Indulal Shah sir, Mr. Issac Tigrett sir and Shri B.N. Narasimhamurthy sir, where they transparently and honestly share their experiences with communicator brother M, is what is needed. I started having some level of belief in physical form Swami's divine powers by experiences written by, what I considered to be reliable and honest accounts from people of standing, like Prof. Kasturi, Dr. John Hislop, Mr. Howard Murphet and even the parapsychologist investigator from the university of Iceland, Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson. I have great respect for leaders like Shri Indulal Shah sir, Shri B.N. Narasimhamurthy sir and Mr. Isaac Tigrett sir, and would treat detailed accounts by them of their experiences with communicator brother M's communications, with a lot of seriousness. But, as far as I know, we do not have such information available publicly.

Jai Sairam!

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Gautham Narendran wrote:

Sir, hats off to you for explaining in such detail. In fact, I have exactly that thing you are asking for - their personal experiences with the subtle form. Its a book published by MDH. Its publicly available btw. Will share with you personally. Hope that clarifies. And regarding your other points, in my very first meeting, HE revealed a thing which was known only to me. No one else. There are two devotees who were prompted by Swami to come to MDH in a dream. I don't mind sharing their contact details. There was another devotee in Hyd who was cured of cancer with just a Vibhuti which was sent by Swami. Cancer cancelled! I am in no way trying to convince. But I am saying that there are hell lot of such stories which don't surface, since people are afraid they would be treated as untouchables. Anyways will share with you the doc :-).

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Sai Keshav wrote:

Ravi S. Iyer..Sir a medium may tell you things you dont know Even astrologers do that these days..The point is can you feel the positive vibration and swami's love in that place and time? Thats where the difference comes. Everybody who goes there are not going to hear personal things but to feel the love. If swami and his love is felt in that particular place..Then it is swami itself What you see and believe is fact..what you dont see and believe is faith..We all saw

swami in his physical form..we all accepted the facts because we saw everything with our naked eye. Here the question is not about fact but about faith To feel that love really exists or not it is needed to go personally and then decide Most of us came to puttaparathi after reading swamis books or maybe hearing his experiences from others. If we had questioned ourself saying "What if he is just another swami" or "what if he is fake" We would have missed out on the biggest time of the incarnation Hence..Explore..experience..decide

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I wrote back:

@Brother Gautham Narendran: I have been reading a lot of the 'discourses' of brother M which are available on the net. If there is some book having experiences of Shri Indulal Shah sir, Shri Narasimhamurthy sir and Mr. Isaac Tigrett sir about communications of communicator brother M, I will certainly buy the book and read it. If you have a soft copy and can pass it on that's fine too. [Update I just saw your message and have downloaded the pdf. Will read it and get back to you.]

@Brother Sai Keshav: About feeling positive vibration and Swami's love, I feel it in Puttaparathi itself. I am very, very happy living in Puttaparathi (btw I rarely visit Sai Kulwanth Hall nowadays) and am deeply grateful to Bhagavan for creating a wonderful town for genuine spiritual practitioners to peacefully and happily give and take, love, peace and joy. So I don't feel the need to go to MDH specifically to experience positive vibration and Swami's love. However, if you and others are experiencing positive vibration and Swami's love, I am happy for you'll and wish you'll even more spiritual fulfilment in MDH.

The crux of the MDH matter for me is the truly extraordinary and unheard of (as far as I know) in any religious scripture of any major religion like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism etc. claims of brother M that he can see and communicate with subtle body of what I view as the most powerful god-person of Hindu scriptural history, Shiva-Shakti Swarupa, Kali Yuga Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. But even veteran leaders like Shri Indulal Shah sir, Shri Narasimhamurthy sir and Mr. Isaac Tigrett sir cannot see this subtle body! I mean, honestly, I find it difficult to buy the view that brother M is so pure and so advanced spiritually that only he can see it, and that MDH subtle body Swami does not want to show Himself (MDH subtle body 'form') to Shri Indulal Shah sir, Shri Narasimhamurthy sir and Mr. Isaac Tigrett sir. Jai Sairam!

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Sai Keshav wrote:

Ravi S. Iyer..It is surely something unheard of And we cannot question what god does too..to whom he shows his form and to whom he doesnt Let us wait and pray

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I wrote (pdf document referred to below is preface to Sathya Sai Uvacha having MDH 'discourses'):

@Gautham Narendran: From the pdf document you sent me, I carefully studied Shri Indulal Shah sir's (and Smt. Sarla Shah madam's) article dated 1st Nov. 2014 titled, "IT IS THE SAME LOVE AND COMPASSION". He writes that he felt the same love and compassion in (claimed) Swami subtle body as he experienced in 40 years of association with physical form of Bhagavan. He also said that he was able to see the subtle form on one occasion.

My view of the above is that barring the one time he saw subtle form of Swami, the remaining part deals with spiritual ambience of love and compassion. This ambience of love and compassion can be due to the depth of devotion of the entire MDH community and communicator brother M in particular. However, Shri Indulal Shah sir seeing subtle form of Swami certainly falls into the area of divine vision or something like that. I wonder whether communicator brother M had a role in Indulal Shah sir being able to see this divine vision.

I then studied Shri Narasimhamurthy sir's article titled "INTRODUCTION" and dated 5th November 2014. BTW Narasimhamurthy sir refers to brother M as "the chosen 'communicator'". So even if some others too claim to have seen MDH subtle body, it seems to me that in the MDH community only the words of the chosen 'communicator', brother M, will be treated as divine discourse and perhaps as divine instructions/commands as well.

Shri Narasimhamurthy sir has provided extracts of discourses by (claimed) subtle Swami through brother M but has not mentioned any paranormal matters like him seeing subtle form Swami (like Shri Indulal Shah sir). He says, "I have been very fortunate that I have listened to everyone of these discourses and have been overwhelmed by the infinite love, compassion, and perfect wisdom that exudes from His nectarine words. It was the same then, and it is the same now!" So Shri Narasimhamurthy sir seems to have been convinced of communicator brother M's claims mainly

by the discourses.

Mr. Isaac Tigrett's foreword was mentioned in Shri Narasimhamurthy sir's article but was not part of the pdf forwarded to me.

Thanks for the input as it has given me a more informed picture. I think that may be of help to Sai devotees who are looking into MDH (different from settled MDH devotees and settled non MDH Parthi devotees) and enable them to take a more informed decision about the matter.

@Sai Keshav: I agree on the "Let us wait and pray" part :-). And thanks for entertaining my comments on this post. I have noted that most of the comments on your Facebook page (other than mine) are from MDH believers. I hope my comments did not upset too many of them (it did upset some I think). All I can say is that my intent is to know more about the matter, so that I can provide an informed view of the matter to visitors on my blog and other social media sites. All the best to you folks and to communicator brother M too :-).

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### **The 'come and experience' Muddenahalli line of argument; Need for unconvinced devotees to write about their experiences (2015-05-07 00:34)**

*Last updated May 7th 2015*

In a recent facebook exchange, <https://www.facebook.com/saikeshav.personal/posts/966435720066471>, as well as previous facebook exchanges I had with some Muddenahalli Swami subtle body & chosen communicator believers (MDH believers) I was quite repeatedly told to 'come and experience' claimed Swami subtle body (and communicator) in Muddenahalli. I gave my multiple reasons for not wanting to visit Muddenahalli.

But as I think about it, I think their argument is a good one. They have put out on the Internet good experiences of MDH believers. But I don't think there are many well publicized accounts of people who went to MDH but came back unconvinced. Now a few months ago I was told by one lady that she had gone to MDH and at 'Darshan' time there she prayed for a sign from Swami to confirm that He was there (i.e. confirm the claim of Swami subtle body being there) or something like that. She did not receive any such sign and so came back unconvinced. However, some of her friends seem to have got convinced and became regular visitors to MDH. BTW the lady told me that with physical form Swami at Darshan time, she would get a response to her prayer for a sign. So that is why she tried the same when she went to MDH.

I also know of a Sai university alumnus who met brother M, the chosen communicator with MDH (claimed) Swami subtle body, and was unconvinced about brother M's claims.

However, these accounts do not seem to be easily available on the Internet. I think, for the truth to be known about MDH (whether genuine or not), those devotees including Sai university students & teachers who went to MDH but were not convinced about claimed MDH Swami subtle body phenomenon, should share their accounts publicly. Of course, they should do so only if they genuinely went there but did not get convinced.

Now I am not against MDH but want the truth to be known about this very controversial and very divisive matter affecting UNITY in the Sai fraternity.

Maybe it is the destiny of some people to get associated with MDH and the destiny of others (like me) to not get associated with MDH. But, in any case, the more truthful and detailed data we have, in favour of MDH belief and against MDH belief, the easier it will become to ascertain the truth of the extraordinary and very controversial claim of Swami subtle body in Muddenahalli, which can be seen and interacted with only, with few rare exceptions, by a chosen communicator.

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On the Facebook page associated with this post there was the following comment exchange:

Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote:

If you have 3 friends A, B and C, and trust all of them with all your heart, and you go to a wedding and B says, "I haven't seen A in the wedding" and C says, "I have seen A in the wedding.", what would you conclude? The conclusion has to be that both are right but B might have missed 'A' because of several reasons, but 'A' is there. In other words, if you

trust/respect any of the people who believe in MDH, there is more chance that it is true. Just like Swami chose who could connect to Him in His physical Form, He might be doing the same now.

I wrote back:

@Pardha Saradhi Uppala: What you have said is certainly a possibility, though given what physical form Swami has said about intermediaries, I consider that possibility to be very, very low. I mean, Swami would have had to change his mind after Mahasamadhi on the matter, and on deep spiritual matters as well as on Dharma, my direct experience of Swami is that He would stick to 'His guns' i.e. be a Dharmadhikaari and lay down the law of Dharma in Kali Yuga context, whether His devotees liked it or not. And I admired Him then for it (even though I felt He was being just too strict then), and admire Him even more now as I have an improved understanding of Dharma. I simply cannot envisage Swami changing his approach after Mahasamadhi and opt to have a "chosen communicator". I just, just cannot digest it!

And I think I must say here that most long-time servitors of Swami with extensive interactions with Him at Puttaparthi (Prasathi Nilayam) like Chakravarthi sir, S.V. Giri sir, Anilkumar Kamaraju sir, G. Venkataraman sir (Radio Sai head and former VC of Sai university), as well as noted "form boy" servitors like brother Satyajit Salian would have a similar stand to mine about disbelief in "chosen communicator" and some have publicly said words to similar effect. The names I have mentioned are of people whom physical Swami would interact with very closely almost on a daily basis during at least the last decade of Swami's physical stay among us (I was in Parthi for most of this period and so speak from direct observation), and they (barring brother Satyajit Salian being a youngster) were entrusted heavy responsibilities of the Puttaparthi mission by physical form Swami. So their words regarding "chosen communicator" and Swami-dream-instructions for third-parties must be taken very, very seriously.

But then, to be fair, maybe my unwillingness to accept the "chosen communicator" is my mindset issue. I certainly do not have paranormal siddhis/powers to know from divine insight whether the "chosen communicator" is really seeing and interacting with real subtle body of Bhagavan based at Muddenahalli.

Perhaps the bottom line is the inner feeling/inner calling of devotees who go to MDH. One thing that I have understood well about spirituality is that it is a calling, quite literally. I mean, something within goes almost crazy when one hears about and goes to a spiritual master that is meant for one. The call/pull towards that particular spiritual master is irresistible. That's what happened to me with (physical form) Bhagavan. Maybe for some MDH believers it is similar. I certainly respect their faith and their calling.

Nevertheless, me putting up posts on my blog & on facebook about the concerns I have about MDH belief, are also required, IMHO. History is replete with instances of misguided spiritual masters who have damaged the lives of their flock. And so providing more accurate information on the very extraordinary and very controversial MDH claims will help in reducing damage if it eventually turns out to be a case of misguided belief.

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### **Sathya Sai Baba in Trayee Brindavan in 90s: I never need anybody else to approach you (2015-05-08 10:37)**

Yesterday a Sai university alumnus and good friend of mine came to see me in my apartment flat. We had a very long conversation about many matters including a current and very controversial matter in the Sai fraternity. He shared with me and was OK with me sharing it publicly, the following words of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Swami), as he recalled it. These words were spoken by Swami in Trayee Brindavan sometime between 1994 to 97 (as that's the time he was a student in Brindavan). He had rushed in and secured the great privilege of being seated next to the Jhoola. Swami sat in the Jhoola and placed his feet on this student's lap (for around two hours that Swami was there). At this time Swami gave a discourse which was translated by Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju sir. Shri Narasimhamurthy sir was also present then.

The important words Swami spoke in the discourse relevant to current controversial matter in the Sai fraternity, (as the former student recalls it) were:

"The Lord of Puttaparthi will personally hold your hand and take you to the goal. There is nobody between you and me. It is heart-to-heart. I never need anybody else to approach you. And even if I don't approach you, I am the



creator of situations which is conducive for you.” The former student also shared a recent (dream) experience where Swami appeared to him and looked at him very lovingly. This experience touched him quite deeply. I mention this as an illustration showing that it is a FALSE BELIEF and a WEAKNESS IN DEVOTION to think that one can communicate with Swami only through a ”chosen communicator”. The Lord of Puttaparthi, even after Mahasamadhi, can certainly find ways & means to communicate directly to sincere and earnest devotees of His, and does **NOT** need any ”chosen communicator” to do so. If your earnest prayers have not yet given you a communication, vision or dream of Bhagavan, don’t give up and go to ”chosen communicators”. Simply pray harder and He will respond DIRECTLY to you in a way that is unmistakable to you and that will give you great joy as well as deeply strengthen your faith in the Lord of Puttaparthi.

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Aarthi (2015-05-08 19:38:39)

I second this, Sir. I absolutely believe and experience that we don't need another person to communicate our feelings and prayers to Swami and/receive blessings or guidance from Him. He has no choice but to answer when we pray with intensity and sincerity. He may not respond every moment but He does respond most often.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-05-08 20:22:46)

Thanks for sharing your belief and experience regarding this matter, Aarthi.

### **Should we simply ignore Sathya Sai Baba Subtle Body claims, and just focus on our spiritual journey?** (2015-05-09 22:40)

Well, the truth of the matter is that India does have many people who have some tantric type of powers which enable them to materialize things, read people's minds & memories. Further, there is also the invoking of spirits. That this happens in some parts of India is indisputable for those who have read up and/or have some experience about these matters. A famous tantrik in India (famous in the past actually) is Chandraswami, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandraswami>, who had a lot of influence on some top political leaders of India. Their powers are real - otherwise they will not be able to attract such a following including some top leaders from political, business, film/movie industry etc. areas.

The question that then pops up is whether somebody has acquired some tantric powers or has invoked some spirit, which is allowing him to reveal private matters of individuals (including private matters involving physical form Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba)? And is that power being falsely (knowingly or unknowingly) portrayed as communications from subtle form of Bhagavan? If the answer to the two questions is yes then the persons following the so-called communicator may be following a FALSE prophet. And FALSE prophets can be devastating for the spiritual journey of their followers as one day or the other the truth will come to light, with the followers of the FALSE prophet feeling completely betrayed.

Another big, big issue is the bad name that such movements, if they are being led by a FALSE prophet, bring to the HOLY NAME of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Swami has said that the name (nama) is more powerful than the form (rupa)! So the name of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba should be protected, as far as we can (in our capacity as instruments of the Lord Sai), from any blemish as that will hurt the Sathya Sai movement and Sai devotees.

If the group is a small one then one can ignore it as the impact is not much. But if the group is travelling worldwide and preaching what seems to be a FALSEHOOD related to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (subtle form) then it is a serious matter for the future of the Sathya Sai movement, IMHO.

So NO. We Sathya Sai devotees should not simply ignore Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba subtle body claims (with significant size following) and just focus on our spiritual journey. We must do our best to force the truth to be revealed about such claims.

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The Spirituality Daily (an online spiritual blog post aggregator) has put up this blog post under World category for

the daily dated May 9th 2015, [http://paper.li/GoodBlogPosts4/1310134784?edition\\_id=75f8de30-f678-11e4-ab66-002590a5ba2d](http://paper.li/GoodBlogPosts4/1310134784?edition_id=75f8de30-f678-11e4-ab66-002590a5ba2d).

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anonymous (2015-05-10 08:13:36)

yes ...As time progresses it surely would be having an impact on Sathya sai babas name and fame as well as the future of the Sathya sai movement as the subtle body claimers are going places like overseas.

. Also Like you have said the name (nama) is more powerful and hence there is an urgent real need to see that it is not being spoilt by false claims..

The final sentence in this article says^^^We must do our best to force the truth to be revealed about such claims.^^^

This says it all and that is what some of the devotees are asking or requesting them that .Kindly show us the authority / support evidence from swamis own words and in his own physical form for claims like this .when sathya sais own words when he was physically alive are all against all such claims..

The Old Manvantara (2015-05-11 20:24:27)

It would be nice if it were otherwise, but it seems that many devotees are being very reserved about voicing any opinion on this subject (Ravi, as always, your blog is very thought provoking). When I try to take the long look at things, I consider the following: At the end of the day, is it not Bhagavan Himself who is pulling the strings? - is the presence of the organization His will or not? Is its fate in His hands or not? For me, I am not worried much about false prophets - it has never been our job to 'root them out' and 'reveal them for what they are' (nobody ever seemed to mention, let alone worry, about figures like Bala Sai - after all these years, I still wonder what that is about!). Likewise, it is not our job to 'find true prophets' - if they are true, it becomes known. Swami's mission was about service, spirituality and education. Another point for me is this: Historically, after a great leader has left the physical, their followers divide, and those divisions in turn split again; though the Sai movement is not a new faith, per se, it follows human nature that without the direct presence of the master, folks are going to take His words to suit their own need and start doing their own thing. Where has it been otherwise? I'm still neutral on Muddenahalli because I have not experienced the phenomenon for myself - and though we have strong proponents for and against it, I have to rely on my own judgement, just as I did when I first found Swami, for back then, many tried to dissuade me. If the connection with the divine is 'heart to heart' - then what person can tell me to go north or south? Swami used to say, 'expect the unexpected' - whoever guessed it meant he would leave the Form so early? When he did that, we got perhaps the biggest 'unexpected' event of our lives - still, there may be more to come. We may be equally surprised, or even more surprised in the future.

The name of God cannot actually be tarnished, so I don't feel it needs to be defend. Why do people worry about the name of Sai? In his own life there were various allegations, murder at the ashram, metal detectors in the home of God as a result, anti-Baba websites - do we worry about 'fighting' these and 'defending' the Name? If you google His name, you get various results - any damage, real or perceived, was already done years ago. Can we control that? It was ever in His hands. If I'm a warrior, my character is my shield and love my preferred weapon. We all must become Sai by connecting with the God within.

Lastly, I will concede this to Muddenahalli: they may in fact be affording everyone a crucial avenue for dialogue; a chance to look in the mirror and re-evaluate. And even though at the end of the day it may turn out that I disagree with them, the upside will hopefully be a better sense of where I am going and where I want to go. I don't as yet know about the veracity of any claims to mediumship, but they appear to be active and to carry the banner of Sai. I will continue to ponder this scenario with my eyes as wide open as they can be.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-05-11 22:17:50)

Thanks for your comment, anonymous. I tend to agree with you. But as of now I think their "business model" is working great with lots of big donors & donations getting attracted to them. I think many people are getting carried away with the service activities and other activities that are made possible by such big donations, and are not questioning the "chosen communicator" belief. Trying to argue with them on logical grounds is completely rejected by them. They refuse to accept criticism of any kind and label it as "character assassination" or bad-mouthing.

I guess there is no point in trying to talk to them. They are rather fanatical in their belief in "chosen communicator". However, Sai devotees who do not know much about them and want more info. may benefit by reading conversations like ours, and be prevented from getting led astray into belief in "chosen communicator" by some possible mind-reading and by the momentum

of their service and other activities.

Ravi S. Iyer (2015-05-12 17:24:54)

Thanks for your response, @The Old Manvantara. I presume you don't live in Puttaparthi, and perhaps don't live in India and not deeply involved in the Sai organization. If I were living far away from Puttaparthi and not-so-involved in the Sai organization, perhaps I too would have taken a philosophical kind-of view, a witness approach, watching the post-Mahasamadhi drama unfold.

But for some people like me who are based in Puttaparthi and were quite actively involved in Swami's Puttaparthi mission (in my case from Jan. 2003 as 'staff' in the Sai university; till Mar. 2012 at which time I parted ways with the Sai university), our conscience and our gratitude to Swami, does not allow us to take that witness approach. I got a decent understanding of Swami's expectations from those involved in His mission (as against inactive in mission but devoted to Swami persons) even while He was in physical form. You had to take responsibility for the part of the mission you were involved in and deliver. REALLY. It was like what the Vanara Sena had to do as part of Rama's army fighting Ravana and his army. No witness approach, fight the rakshashas with as much might as you can. Of course, in Swami's mission there was no need to physically fight but one had to do the work allotted to one properly. So, as a teacher in the Sai university, I was expected to teach well. If I was a great devotee of Swami but did a poor job of teaching students I would not be doing my part in the mission properly. That was as clear as daylight to anybody who spent reasonable time in Swami's mission in Puttaparthi.

In the post-Mahasamadhi phase, my view is that the responsibility of the missionary workers in Swami's mission has gone up even more. It is one thing for an outsider to claim to be somebody like Sai Baba (e.g. Bala Sai Baba) as that does not impact the core devotee following so much. But it is completely another when a very respected leader and a former Sai student together launch an audacious divisive threat to the official Sathya Sai mission by making claims which were unheard of in physical form Swami days, and in direct contradiction to what physical form Swami had said Himself in public discourses! My view is that sincere and committed workers of Swami's mission must challenge this divisive threat and force the truth to be revealed about their truly extraordinary claims, due to the big negative impact it is having on the official Sathya Sai mission.

About protecting the name of Swami. Well, I said that one should do it within one's limitations. One can't control everything. But at least one can condemn blatant misuse of the name of Swami for doing things which Swami Himself in His physical form discourses condemned. So other devotees also hear the stand of committed workers of the official Sathya Sai mission. Then one would have done one's duty, IMHO, in this post-Mahasamadhi phase of the mission.

About Swami doing the unexpected: Well, I don't think the unexpected can go to the extent of Swami in subtle body doing things very contrary to what he preached while in physical form. I think that is taking the 'unexpected' part just too far to justify just about anything one wants to do using Swami's name.

BTW you may want to read my facebook post (but do first read the warning note at the beginning), A debate related to Prof. Shashidhar Prasad and Muddenahalli subtle body believers.

### **Col. Bose's article authoritatively debunking Muddenahalli chosen communicator claims (2015-05-16 21:54)**

This post has a large extract and selected comment exchanges (mainly mine) from a Facebook post having Col. Bose's article authoritatively debunking Muddenahalli chosen communicator claims, [https://www.facebook.com/saimemories/photos/a.422242711155641.89985.402496529\\_7969-26/900735073306400](https://www.facebook.com/saimemories/photos/a.422242711155641.89985.402496529_7969-26/900735073306400)

First I felt it appropriate to put up a large extract from Col. Bose's article where he has quoted respected Swamis of Ramakrishan mission as well as Swami Rama. I hope Col. Bose does not mind me putting up this extract on my facebook post, as it is for a good & noble cause with no financial profit motive whatsoever :-).

The sad fact is that even long time devotees are not able to tell the difference between real divine powers and siddhi powers obtained for selfish ends. These psychic or occult powers can be attained by practice, but there is nothing divine about them. Swami Vivekanand tells about such powers of the mind. In Volume 2 of his Complete Works (copy of his article "Power of the Mind" is enclosed for ready reference). He once heard of a man who, if any one went to him with questions in his mind, would answer them immediately and that he could foretell events. Swami

Vivekananda tested this man's powers and found them to be true. However, nobody considered this man divine. As Swami Vivekananda admits, there have been charlatans, there have been cheats and more here than in any other field, because the more profitable the business, the greater the number of charlatans and cheats. Swami Vivekananda had a very powerful mind, but he never displayed any occult or psychic powers. His Guru Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa forbade such display of powers as they would pull the aspirant down and away from the spiritual path. One of the commonest tricks is to read a man's mind and tell him about events, which had taken place many years ago and which no one else knew about. Unfortunately devotees mistake these powers as signs of divinity and are impressed and influenced by them.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has cautioned people against trying to attain the ashtasiddhis as they will bind the sadhak (aspirant). Thought reading is also fraught with dangers. In his book 'Life in Indian Monasteries'. Swami Bhaskarananda of the Ramakrishna Order says, "Some other things also need to be explained here. Contrary to expectations of many, God-realized souls do not try to read others peoples thoughts unless they feel divinely inspired to do so. These great souls have a natural tendency to remain immersed in God. To try to know others people's thoughts is usually against their nature. Staunchly established as they are in moral and ethical values, entering into other people's private minds is considered highly unethical by them" [ see page14].

In his book 'Living with Himalayan Masters', Swami Rama narrates how he once met a Swami who could produce fire from his mouth. The flame would shoot out several feet, so he concluded that this man must definitely be more advanced than his master. He went to his master and told him that he had found someone more advanced than him and had decided to become his disciple. His master just smiled and said that he was delighted and asked to be taken to him. To Swami Rama's surprise the Swami bowed before his master. It transpired that he was from the same monastery, but had left many years earlier. On questioning further the Swami said that he had practised for twenty years to master this power Swami Rama's master said to him that a match will produce this fire in a second so to spend twenty years for this was foolishness. Swami Rama realized that mostly such phenomena are tricks and spirituality has nothing to do with such powers. The third chapter of Yoga Sutra explains many methods of attaining siddhis, but these create stumbling blocks in the path of enlightenment, which is entirely different from the intentional cultivation of powers. Misuse of siddhis is the downfall for a sadhak (aspirant) and established Swamijis. Sometimes psychic powers develop; you start telling the fortunes of others and you start knowing things. These are all distractions. Too many people, including Swamijis, have wasted time and energy on such distractions.

Anyone who wants to develop siddhis, can do so and can demonstrate certain supernatural feats, but enlightenment is an entirely different matter.( Pages 102 to 106) of 'Living With Himalayan Masters".

Swami Rama narrates another experience of how fake sadhus make their living. On his way to Rishikesh in 1973, Swami Rama met one Dr Rudolph Ballentine in New Delhi. This man was psychiatrist from USA and was going round Connaught place in New Delhi when a stranger called him by name and then abruptly told him the name of his girlfriend in England. The doctor asked him how could he know these things. Instead of answering he continued and told the doctor his date of birth and his grandfather's name. Then the man told him something very personal, which no one except Dr Ballentine knew (sounds familiar). The doctor was impressed and thought, " This is the person for whom I have come to India". The man asked for five dollars and said he would be back soon. Needless to say, he never came back. The following conversation then took place between Dr Ballentine and Swami Rama.

Dr Ballentine : Swamiji, he was a great man

Swami Rama : What did he do?

Dr Ballentine : He told me all those personal things about myself although I was a complete stranger.

Swami Rama : Didn't you already know these things

Dr Ballentine : Yes.

Swami Rama : Then what big thing did he do? If somebody knows what you are thinking, then obviously you know it too. This knowledge does not improve you [spiritually] in any way.

This ability may amaze you for some time, but it cannot help anyone in self growth.

Fakes like the one Dr Ballentine encountered are often disguised as sadhus and go about telling someone's past and predicting the future. Naive people mistake them for great sages. These pretenders give a bad name to spirituality and to real spiritual people. ( 'Living With Himalayan Masters' by Swami Rama, pages 355 and 356).

It must be made clear the such people are found not only in New Delhi, but throughout the length and breadth of the country.

— end large extract from Col. Bose's article —

Given below are some comment exchanges, mostly related to my comments on the Facebook post mentioned at the beginning of this post:

Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

This is an excellent article written by Col. Bose which, in my considered view, authoritatively debunks the MDH claims of chosen communicator with claimed subtle body of Bhagavan based in MDH, with powerful quotes from the very respected Swamis of Ramakrishna mission as well as Swami Rama. It will be wonderful if leaders and followers of MDH belief including brother M (chosen communicator) study and ponder over this article by Col. Bose. .... I earnestly pray to Bhagavan to ensure UNITY in the Sathya Sai movement by bringing back all the veteran leaders together as ONE in the same mother organization.

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Eve Gardener wrote:

I don't think this boy Madhu has siddhis, he is just good at imitating Sai. I mean when Elvis Presley died, many jumped on the band-wagon and imitated him, and successfully so. The original Elvis fans gave their full attention to those Elvis imitators, even throwing hankies etc. at them and acting out.. Perhaps there is something in the human psyche that allows for the transfer of strong emotion to another - a need perhaps to re-live the past again and again.

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Ravi S. Iyer responded to above:

Very well said Eve Gardener. I had seen a movie of Elvis Presley impersonators which included a competition of best Elvis Presley impersonation, if I recall correctly. When I first heard and saw (on video) brother M, I could not but get reminded of Elvis Presley impersonators. Your last sentence, "Perhaps there is something in the human psyche that allows for the transfer of strong emotion to another - a need perhaps to re-live the past again and again." seems to have got it spot-on. Your profile lists that you live in France. I know very little French (from my days in Brussels in the 80s) but I think I should say: Voila Madame! Ca c'est bon!

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Eve Gardener responded to above:

Ca c'est bien to you.. Those Elvis Presley impersonators are as strong today as ever. (You can find them in google search). They also make tons of money, and have a huge following, The Elvis impersonators are really a tribute to the original, and fun for the people i suppose, in an odd sort of way, we cannot say the same for Madhu who is impersonating a Wisdom Master, whose words and actions were not suppose to be in the entertainment area. (Well, Swami could entertain as we know, but his underneath message was seriously meant.)

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Ravi S. Iyer responded to above:

Eve Gardener: Yes, of course, the chosen communicator, brother M, claiming to communicate Swami's words is a very serious problem and so is not exactly like the Elvis Presley impersonators. The main issue with brother M is that his words may end up MISGUIDING people who think they are Bhagavan's words and not M's words. That is one of the reasons why I am openly writing about this matter.

Noted your other comment about certain vibration at the time of (physical form) Swami darshan. Let me share with you what I experienced with (physical form) Swami as a teacher in his university at Prasanthi (Puttaparthi), who could sit in the teachers block or verandah or Old students block and so was gifted with rather close darshan of Swami on regular basis for over 8 years. Of course, the spiritual ambience at the time of Swami's darshan was extraordinary. But additionally, Swami would show that He knows what I am thinking at darshan time, and what I had done (outside his physical eyesight) elsewhere prior to darshan. He JUST WOULD KNOW - don't ask me how. It completely beats me - it was not any kind of intense face reading..... One seemingly casual look and that's it. Not only would He show that He knows what you are thinking and what you did, but He would also convey sometimes whether He liked it (smile typically) or not (stern look, sometimes even turning His face away). The first time I experienced it I was shocked - I mean, yes I had read about many people having experienced it but when it happened to me DIRECTLY, it was a big shock. For the first time in my life I experienced that somebody else can read my mind through & through.

So it was clear to me that if I wanted to be in His good books, get some smiles and happy looks from Him, then I have to keep my mind clean and that I should not do things that He does not like His teachers/other staff of the ashram doing. Talk about mind-control. But then that's what one wants from a Guru - mind-control leading to one's spiritual growth.

The other thing that I experienced with Swami was that He could be a tough Father-figure but He desired only REAL good for staff like me (and, I am quite sure, for all other devotees, students and visitors too). His instructions for staff & students could be TOUGH, REAL TOUGH, at times, and I would feel pretty constrained by them. But one thing I knew then, and know even better now after His Mahasamadhi, is that His motive was SOLELY the REAL GOOD of the staff & students. So I grew to TRUST Him as one would trust a father-figure in regular worldly life. I think that was the case with most staff & students as well as other devotees. So devotees would treat instructions from Him as divine instructions which should be followed even if one felt uncomfortable with any such instruction. I mean, one would think & say that it is divine insight of Swami, and so I should not analyze it with my human insight.

What an awesome God he was (in physical form)! What an incredible Guru he was! Oh! How priceless were those days of darshan of the Lord, who would show that He knows everything about one, and indicate whether he is happy with what we did or unhappy, by just a glance or a gesture, and all He cared about DEEPLY was our spiritual good & our spiritual growth!

How, on earth, can brother M ever replicate these aspects of Swami? Does he realize that some persons may REALLY BELIEVE that he is conveying Swami's instructions, and that they will treat it as DIVINE instructions? What if these instructions lead somebody to trouble? Who will be responsible for the trouble, both from a material world point of view, and, perhaps more importantly, from a KARMIC point of view?

I feel that brother M, the chosen communicator, has got carried away with some visions, and perhaps some siddhis. Our attempt is to get brother M & others back to the SAFE and STEADY path shown by Puttaparthi Sai Baba and not go astray in some strange spiritual path which could lead to trouble.

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Eve Gardener wrote in response to somebody asking about whether people have gone to Muddenahalli:

I visited once, and sure was glad to leave. Nothing up there worth much of a mention.. Just a Sunday bhajan with a happy clappy crowd, and a few speeches from the Medium. I did not stay for long, I felt very uncomfortable there.

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Ravi S. Iyer responded to above:

Thanks Eve Gardener for frankly sharing your uncomfortable MDH experience. It lets people know that it is not as if anybody & everybody who goes to MDH experiences GREAT BLISS. Some may like it and some may not. My neighbour in Puttaparthi (an American lady) went to MDH and, like you, did not feel great about it.

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

[name-snipped]: Noted your many comments requesting others to openly state their disbelief in MDH chosen communicator. Appreciate it. However, I think the reality is that many either are sitting on the fence OR prefer not to state their disbelief openly. [And some seem to be MDH believers.]

I would like to repeat what I have said elsewhere on Facebook that those Sai university alumni who do not believe in MDH chosen communicator's very extraordinary claims should now openly say so. If they prefer to do it in some other Facebook post rather than SaiBliss, fine. Maybe they can do it on a Facebook page of one of the Sai university alumni.

I think this action is the urgent need of the hour as many Sathya Sai devotees worldwide are being misled, in this MDH case, by former Sai university students & Sai university leaders!!! Silence on part of other Sai university alumni may be seen (actually I think it is already seen by many) as some sort of endorsement of belief in MDH chosen communicator!

Now those who do believe in MDH chosen communicator or are unsure about the matter, and are silent about it, can continue to be silent. But those who clearly disbelieve in MDH chosen communicator should publicly say so, stating also that they are Sai university alumni. I must also say that a very few Sai university alumni have already said so publicly. I thank them for this courageous service to the mother Sai organization. But these very few are not enough. We need more and more alumni to come forward and courageously state their disbelief in MDH chosen

communicator publicly.

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## **BONES IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM, SPIRIT IN MUDDENAHALLI? - A heart-to-heart & thought provoking article by Sai university alumnus (2015-05-16 22:14)**

I have copy-pasted below a message by Chiran Basnet, former student of Alike, Brindavan and Puttaparthi also a former employee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust for many years, which was put up by SaiBliss on Facebook here: [https://www.facebook.com/saimemories/photos/a.422242711155641.89985.402496529\\_7969-26/899676170078957](https://www.facebook.com/saimemories/photos/a.422242711155641.89985.402496529_7969-26/899676170078957).

### **BONES IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM, SPIRIT IN MUDDENAHALLI?**

An interesting article By Chiran Basnet, former student of Alike, Muddenahalli, Brindavan and Puttaparthi also a former employee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust for 10 years: Here is what he said:

At the outset I simply refuse to believe that He left His Bones to us and installed His Spirit in MDH. I am Swami's student from SSS Loka Seva Trust Alike / Muddenahalli, Brindavan and Puttaparthi. I have also served in Central Trust office for over a decade. I have pretty much seen and been in most of Swami's institutions. Well, I refuse to accept that our dedication to The Lotus Feet has been lesser than that of Sri Narasimha Murthy or Sri Indulal Shah even if they have held higher profiles. When we student staff asked Swami to guide us spiritually He curtly said 'you all are Serving Me that is enough Sadhana'. I don't remember Him telling us 'Bangaru , you all r whiling your time now with the Physical Form of Avatar, Only later when my Spirit is in MDH that u may come and be elevated spiritually'. I refuse to believe anything has changed now.

However, one of these days the staff entering offices in Parthy and devotees going to Mandir will be mocked from overloaded buses speeding to MDH 'Hey Fools why u wasting time, Baba is in MDH, nothing will come out of breaking your heads in the Granite here'. I say this because I remember a MDH devotee saying 'where else can Baba be than with the Great devotee like Sri Narasimha Murthy'. Perhaps the subtle spirit should have stationed itself in Alike near Mangalore, the head institute of Mudenaahalli amidst the finest of the Devotees I have seen, my teachers and Gurus at Alike. I can understand that it is not strategically positioned en route Puttaparthi / Bangalore. I definitely would also like to give some people a tour of Puttaparthi Ashram and Puttaparthi by lanes n show some nameless and faceless humble devotees. Sadly they cannot be bracketed amongst the super achievers such as Mr.Tigrett and Sri Sashidhar Prasad.

There perhaps can be no meeting point between MDH and Puttaparthi. Simply because we here believe that we have His Bones as well as His all pervasive Sprit not only the Bones as the MDH people will like us to concede. They who believe that one day we must resurrect the lifeless Bones here by appealing to the Spirit at MDH are sadly mistaken. My brothers here will defend MDH undoubtedly because they Believe and want others to be part of the Bliss they are experiencing. We on the other side will vehemently oppose it simply because we don't believe we have been short-changed by Swami. You try to bring joys to some as we attempt to help retain sanity to some. So why don't I visit MDH and see for myself? Well if Swami tells me 'Don't Smoke' there is no point telling me the bliss of Havana cigars or Marlborough. You may pity me for missing out but no thank you 'I don't Smoke'.

What a tragedy life's come to! Today I refer to Samadhi as bones and granites, call my beloved institute just MDH, ignore the name of Madhu, a brother who had love and respect for me from over a decade, and dare to compare my dedication to Sri Narasimha Murthy Sir, my warden, Idol, and without whose inspiration in life I would definitely be listening to some hard rock in a bar with that strong Havana cigar in one hand and drinks in other rather than tired hands on a keyboard typing this painful post.

Sorry for offence caused if any.

Sairam

Chiran

--- end Chiran Basnet article/message ---

Ravi: My comment response on another Facebook page to the above message was: That's a direct from the heart and

brutally frank message from the one and only brother Chiran Basnet. It is a message worth pondering over, IMHO.

— end Ravi comment —

Some comments (slightly edited), mostly mine but a few from others too, from the above mentioned SaiBliss facebook post, is given below:

Vr Ganti wrote:

OM SRI SAI RAM

Very True Sri Chiran and you don't have to feel sorry. I only wish many Ex-students who BHAGWAN was calling them as His Assets, realize and help in bringing the leaders in Muddenhalli realize their mistakes and join the main stream. SWAMI said that He will have Direct Contact with His Devotees. Is the inverse of this statement that His Devotees should also have Direct Contact with HIM a correct and desirable approach.

Is this not the way life goes – Quid Pro Quo as it is called. When SWAMI, the creator of this Universe can declare so, why not we all, SAI DEVOTEES also take a vow that we will have Direct Contact with him. Will SWAMI be not happy with this approach?

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Ravi S. Iyer responded to above:

I entirely agree with Vr Ganti sir's comments. I think it the urgent and dire need of the hour for those of Swami's former students who agree with brother Chiran Basnet's views or have similar views, is to openly express them on the vital social media platform of Facebook. Please don't feel scared to openly support brother Chiran, if you agree with his views, as what he has said falls in line with what we have heard from and experienced with physical form Swami. Let the Sathya Sai fraternity worldwide know that there are many, many former Sai students who have similar views to that of brother Chiran on this very controversial and very divisive matter. Silence on part of such former Sai students may be viewed as support for MDH claims, or not being sure about it.

The vital point to note is that it is a former Sai student who is claiming to be a "chosen communicator" and is endorsed by a former Warden and a former vice-chancellor of the Sai university. So the Sathya Sai fraternity worldwide think that as it involves former Sai students and former Sai university leaders, it must certainly be true. I urge those former Sai students including those who are Sai university teachers, who disagree with the "chosen communicator" claims to at least balance such claims with publicly expressed refusal to accept such claims/disbelief in such claims. Please listen to your conscience and do your duty towards Swami in this regard. Jai Sairam!

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Vr Ganti wrote:

Om Sri Sai Ram - To be very honest, I am now reaching to as many Ex-students as possible because Bhagwan in my dram directed me to use His Assets (students). I am also reaching out to Students Alumini. Unfortunately most of them say, SWAMI knows what to do when and so on. Yes they are right. However, we the children of SAI cannot sit tight waiting for Bhagwan to take action but we should do our part. Let us realize and remember that our actions being taken in writing Social Media and writing mails to various people is just 1 step and what SWAMI will do is 99 steps. Did SWAMI not say that earlier - "take one step and I will take 99 steps" So fellow Sai Devotees, especially Students (the assets of Bhagwan), do not feel discouraged, do not be scared (Bhagwan is surely will be with you and guide you) but take positive action. Express yourself and join the path of DHARMA

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Ravi S. Iyer responded to Vr Ganti above:

I entirely agree with you sir. When it is a time to act for DHARMA, my view is that Sai alumni should not sit back, taking a witness approach, and leave the task for Bhagavan to do. They must do their duty towards Bhagavan and not shirk that duty, IMHO.

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[Name-snipped] wrote:

Dear Sai Brother being with Swami for decades how it happened ? Really its very painful to hear all these , why should we think where is Swami's Bones and Soul ? He is Undoubtedly Omnipresent Everywhere not only in Puttaparthi or MDH he is everywhere in the nook and corner of the whole Universe.Is it not True Brother. Being a Messenger of Swami ( Students ) pls dont take any sides for or against. After all we are all Swami's Children nothing more nothing less. Its very sad here in our SSS orgn we never had any problems so far by Swami's Grace everything was sorted out .



So my Prayer to Swami is "Bhagwan pls keep All of us United as Sai Devotees, rather than PTP or MDH Group. Let us Remain Only As Swami's Children. Sairam !!! Sairam !!!

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote (response to above):

@[Name-snipped]: Madam, I am sorry that you feel disturbed and hurt by what brother Chiran has written. But madam, is it dharmic/right to keep quiet when Adharma is being done? Is it dharmic/right when a former Sai student, former Sai university warden and former Sai university vice-chancellor propagate a belief in "chosen communicator" communicating with Swami, when (physical form) Swami told us so many times in public discourses that his communications with us is always heart-to-heart?

In the face of this Adharma which is misleading so many brothers & sisters of the Sathya Sai fraternity, my considered view, is that Bhagavan will expect us to speak up, even if it means some disturbance and some hurt. As if we don't speak up now to avoid disturbance and hurt, the Adharma will grow bigger and bigger, and eventually hurt more and more brothers and sisters of the Sai fraternity worldwide.

Therefore, madam, I think Sai students who prefer to follow Swami's instructions instead of following misguided people believing in "chosen communicator" should play their role by speaking up and alerting Sai devotees worldwide to the wrong belief/false belief in "chosen communicator" which is against Swami's instructions, propagated by MDH people in the name of Swami.

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Vr Ganti wrote:

[Name-snipped] - Ah Ah what to say. You don't seem to be knowing what is happening. Your comment is so naïve. Are you ok to see SAI Teachings being flouted left right and center. When my wife and I went to Muddenhalli to see for myself the campus (which incidentally has been financed mostly by Singapore I was told by someone from Muddenhalli and I am from Singapore) that we need not go to Parthi but go to Muddenhalli only. When I gave stern look at that person who told me so, he immediately told me that we can go 6 months there and 6 months to M and so on. Then when we were introduced to one lady who was a visiting faculty from outstation that we are from Singapore, at one she said that all these buildings are your donations only.. Further, these leaders from M keep visiting various affluent countries (they visited Singapore at least 4 times) obviously for money right - where as Bhagwan never asked anybody for even a single cent, how do you ask people to keep quiet and watch whatever is happening Sir. I am prepared for a debate with BNNM, Vijay Sai, etc etc on this subject sir.

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote (response to above):

Vr Ganti: Very well said sir. Some of the MDH supporters seem to be like fanatics who expect that all of us will follow everything they say, and that we have no right to criticize them. Further, I have experienced one particular MDH supporter to even write comments which have to be viewed as BULLYING comments. Please don't allow them to BULLY you sir. We will support you in your questioning them and in opposing their fanatic tactics to impose their belief on us.

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote

[Name-snipped]: You have quite unfairly tarred all Sai students by the same brush. In my view, like in the Sai organization, even among Sai students, there are some who invest more time & effort in the Sai mission, and some who don't. The reason I made a specific request to former Sai students who don't believe in MDH "chosen communicator" to openly state their views is because the leaders of the MDH "chosen communicator" belief are Sai university people, which is what seems to give them a much wider acceptance among some Sai devotees worldwide. Let the Sathya Sai fraternity know that it is not as if that all Sai students believe in MDH "chosen communicator". A large number of Sai students don't. But they have not openly stated these views. As a former teacher in the Sai university, I felt it my duty to make the request, given the HUGE problem it is creating for UNITY in the Sathya Sai fraternity. I have done my duty and my conscience is at rest.

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

Brother [Name-snipped]: Noted your comment. However, I think we need to be careful not to generalize in these

comment exchanges, as that can unfairly hurt people. Let us not forget that Sai students are also human and many of them too have desires and want to lead the 'good life', like most of us.

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Taruni Tarun wrote:

yes I do agree there are many gems of students who are upholding sais mission following his words very sincerely and making sathya sai very proud .Swami bless them all...However personally feel that just like a few rotten apples might spoil a whole lot of good apples too as time progresses....few students who choose to go against swamis words might spoil all students good name too .Agree that we should be careful of generalising it ...however personally wish to say that the outside world always tends to generalise it easily and we cant stop them....Swami has always said \* care more for remarks than for marks\* ..Praying that .Those few who are acting against swamis words ..need to seriously read swamis msg again and again and get clear of their confusions and stop bringin bad name to whole sai student community..most of whom are wonderful students .

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Ravi S. Iyer responded to above:

I tend to agree with your words, Taruni Tarun. However, let us not become harsh in our public dialogue. We should not succumb to any BULLYING or such type of pressure from any fanatical supporters of MDH belief. We must use truthful discussions (without harshness or personal 'character assassination' type attacks) in this public forum to force the truth of what I am convinced is the FALSE BELIEF of MDH people involving the HOLY NAME of SAI, even if some of the service projects they do with donor money is laudable. Yes, Sai students should do their duty in this revelation of truth of MDH FALSE BELIEF but let us not get into any harsh criticism of the entire Sai student brotherhood and sisterhood. .... As a former teacher of the Sai university in Puttaparthi (Prasanthi Nilayam campus) I KNOW how bad Swami would feel (at his human level in the human+god Avatar) if all such students are criticized. Bearing in mind the boundless love Swami had for His students, let us, for Swami's sake, be extra cautious in any criticism of Sai students. I am NOT saying we should NOT criticize Sai students at all. NO, we should criticize those that have not only strayed from Swami's instructions but who are leading Sathya Sai devotees from the world over, astray. But we should not jump to criticize any and every Sai student who was seen with MDH subtle body believers. Who knows the reason for which they met them? Maybe they wanted to find out the truth, and even counsel "chosen communicator" to stop this Adharmic activity and get back to the SAFE and GOOD path by following (physical form) Swami's instructions in such matters.

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Taruni Tarun wrote:

yes @Ravi.s.Iyer noted that we should not become harsh in our public dialogue..and not succumb to any bullying or pressure from mdh and hold truthful discussions ...personally shall bear in mind this point..

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote

[Name-snipped]: I understand your feeling of disturbance and hurt. But is it not the duty of Sai students to speak up against "chosen communicator" which is clearly against Swami's instructions, and which is attracting a lot of devotees in the Sathya Sai fraternity the world over? Keeping quiet in the face of such Adharma is the easy option. But I don't think Bhagavan would approve of being a witness to such Adharma which is misguiding Sai devotees the world over, and is in direct opposition to Swami's instructions. I think it is the duty of those Sai students who choose to follow Swami's instructions to alert the Sathya Sai devotee fraternity worldwide, via social media and other outlets, about "chosen communicator" belief being completely against Swami's teachings and instructions.

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

One gentleman writes, "The whole world knows that Madhusudhan is communicating with Swami's Subtle body." This is the typical sign of fanaticism and false propaganda. It is a complete untruth to say something like this. Do Shri K. Chakravarthi sir, Shri S.V. Giri sir, Prof. G. Venkataraman sir and Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju sir, all of whom were and are very important persons in Swami's mission, some for decades (even while Swami was in physical form), and which was clear to anybody who has been in Puttaparthi for some time, believe in the above quoted sentence? Does brother Satyajit Salian who served Swami with so much dedication, and whose service was publicly acknowledged by Swami,

believe in it? What is this gentleman talking about! I request readers not to get taken in by FALSE PROPAGANDA from such MDH belief promoters.

Then the same gentleman writes, "Swami has communicated his message to us using many communicators in the past." Which Swami is he talking about? I don't know of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi ever saying that he has communicated his message through a communicator. Can the gentleman please provide references for this statement of his so that readers can judge for themselves whether he is saying the truth or not?

Regarding my usage of the word, Adharma: When Swami has so many times told us in public discourses that his connection is a heart-to-heart connection between Him and his devotee, and that he does not need any medium (communicator) to communicate to us, is it not Adharma when a former Sai student, a former Sai university warden who had spent close to five decades serving Swami, and a former Sai university vice-chancellor, choose to ignore such publicly given instructions of Swami, and become "chosen communicator" or promote "chosen communicator" belief to some innocent Sathya Sai devotees worldwide? Of course, it is ADHARMA. Further, such people should FEAR the negative KARMA that comes from such actions. I am sorry if the words are harsh, but I have no option but to use such words, in the face of such atrocious FALSE PROPAGANDA in the name of our beloved Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. If it hurts some MDH believers I am sorry. But dear MDH believers you are being MISGUIDED. Please give up the WRONG PATH and come back to the SAFE & STEADY path given by (physical form) Swami, and go for direct communication between you and Swami, without any medium/communicator/dream-instruction persons in between, in this post-Mahasamadhi phase of the Sathya Sai mission.

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

Well, Mr. [Name-snipped], perhaps some of my comments have hurt you. I do acknowledge that my comments have been harsh, and I apologize to you if it has caused you hurt. But I had to do what I did, as after a great deal of examination and discussion I have come to the conclusion that MDH belief is a FALSE BELIEF. But then I do not have any special paranormal powers and further, I do have my fair share of human flaws too. So, even if I am convinced that MDH belief is FALSE, to be completely honest, there is, what I view as, a very small probability that I am wrong and that you are right in the MDH belief aspect.

I do not know how much experience you have had with physical form Bhagavan. Many of us (but I concede not all of us) at Puttaparthi/Prasanthi Nilayam completely disbelieve MDH "chosen communicator" claims as we have had DIRECT experience of the awesome mystical/miraculous powers as well as spiritual genius of Shiva-Shakti Swarupa, Kali Yuga Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

As you have made some allegations about Prasanthi/Puttaparthi supporters, one of which I certainly am, I would like to say that I personally am writing my comments, some of them quite harsh, out of a sense of duty to Swami and the Sathya Sai fraternity, in the face of the very controversial and very divisive "chosen communicator" of MDH claims.

You wrote, "You ain't seen nothing. The real show is yet to begin. Amen". Well, I wish you and co. the very best in your service activities, some of which are truly laudable and I have publicly acknowledged that multiple times on Facebook. But I do hope and pray that you get proper guidance directly in your hearts from our beloved Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Love, peace and joy to you, brother. I repeat my apologies for any hurt you have felt.

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Ravi S. Iyer

OK Mr. [name-snipped], you seem to want to have a debate on it. I am ready for it.

You wrote, "You all know, Buddha was born near Lumbini, but he travelled all around the world to spread Buddhism." I believe something similar was conveyed by the "chosen communicator" in a recent 'discourse'. Well here's what wikipedia says, under 'Travels and Teaching', "For the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha is said to have traveled in the Gangetic Plain, in what is now Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and southern Nepal, teaching a diverse range of people: from nobles to servants, murderers such as Angulimala, and cannibals such as Alavaka.", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama\\_Buddha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama_Buddha). Perhaps you may want to pass this info. on to appropriate MDH folks so that they can be more accurate about Buddha's life in future 'discourses'.

Tell me which great spiritual figure/avator in any major religion of the world, had a subtle body and "chosen communicator"? Did Jesus Christ have it? Did Rama and Krishna have it?

In one of the 'discourses' the "chosen communicator" has said something like when I came as Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Allah ... Do you think Sathya Sai Baba who was completely conversant with Shirdi Sai avatar's life where Shirdi Sai outwardly lead a Muslim fakir's life, saying "Allah Malik" and encouraged chanting of the Holy Koran, would ever commit such a HUGE BLUNDER like saying that he came as Allah? Allah is the formless God in Islamic theology. It is utterly inconceivable that any Muslim pir/maula of some standard would ever commit the HUGE BLUNDER of attributing a form to Allah.

Have you seen how respectful Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba would be towards visiting spiritual leaders (in public)? He would almost treat them as equals. It is UTTERLY UNTHINKABLE to me that Bhagavan in supposed subtle form would change so much that He would allow supposed subtle form of Jesus Christ to take His Padnamaskar, as one of the MDH write-ups claimed happened during a Christmas event, if I recall correctly. Come On! Jesus taking Padnamaksar of Swami! What's going on!

I could go on and on. But I think what I have given above will suffice for now.

Please bear in mind that the history of spiritual movements is full of charismatic and very capable leaders, full of energy and vitality, who lost their way and created havoc in the lives of their followers. If you do not know of Jim Jones, I suggest you read up on him or view videos on him. Here's his wiki page, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim\\_Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Jones). Jim Jones was not an ordinary person. He was truly charismatic and very energetic, and had lots of noble intentions for the poor in USA society (including African-Americans), but eventually it ended up very badly for him and his followers. From his wiki page, here's what he told his followers: Jones also began preaching that he was the reincarnation of Mahatma Gandhi and Father Divine, as well as Jesus of Nazareth, Gautama Buddha and Vladimir Lenin. Former Temple member Hue Fortson, Jr. quoted Jones as saying, "What you need to believe in is what you can see ... If you see me as your friend, I'll be your friend. As you see me as your father, I'll be your father, for those of you that don't have a father ... If you see me as your savior, I'll be your savior. If you see me as your God, I'll be your God." [end-wiki-page-extract]

So Mr. [name-snipped], the history of religious and spiritual movements has seen a lot of such claimed communicators to and reincarnations of major spiritual figures. So far, as far as I know, all such claimants have been proved to be FALSE by the test of time. So yes, even with MDH belief, the test of time will tell us whether it is TRUE or FALSE, with me convinced that it will be proved FALSE.

I could choose to take a witness like back-seat and watch the drama unfold. That is the easy way - no need to face tough, and sometimes nasty, comments on Facebook. But when I see that my friends and even some former students of mine have got caught up in MDH belief, which I am convinced is FALSE, my love for them and my duty to Swami and the Sai fraternity from which I have gained immensely, does not permit me to take a witness view and watch the 'entertainment' of the trauma of people caught up in FALSE BELIEF, when they really come to know of it/realize it. Jai Sairam!

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[name-snipped] wrote in response to above:  
Too much mind is not good for spirituality.

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Ravi S. Iyer responded to above:  
@[name-snipped]: But mind is required for discrimination between TRUTH and FALSEHOOD :-). Too much heart with little mind can easily lead somebody astray.

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## **Is Muddenahalli chosen communicator belief similar to Kurnool Bala Sai Baba belief? (2015-05-17 20:58)**

*Last updated on 18th May 2015*

Some comment exchanges from facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10206829857243798&set=a.1627496606106.2082337.1197289954>

*[Note I have presumed brother Pardha Saradhi Uppala would not mind me sharing his comments on my post as the*

*intention is noble and there is no financial profit motive involved whatsoever. This blog is not monetized.]*

Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote (slightly edited to fix a grammar error):

"Truth can never be contained. By any organization. Nor any representative", but only one single person in the entire universe can see and hear God? If tomorrow another person comes and announces that he saw a dream where Swami told him that He changed His plans again, shifted His operational base to another town, and starts building even more free hospitals and schools at a much faster rate, starts conducting "Swami's Darshan" saying it is "Subtler Form" (We cannot contain Swami - He can do anything right?) and starts giving interviews and rings, would that be reason enough for us to believe that it is a genuine change of plans of Swami again? How many times can this act repeat and by how many people without losing its genuineness?

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote:

If we can negate everything that physical Swami said about mediums and His future plans, and believe Swami is residing in Muddenahalli in a subtle Form communicating through one person, because Swami can always change His plans at His Will, it should also be possible that He can negate the words He is now supposedly saying through Muddenahalli Madhusudhan, and change to another town and pick another medium right? So, if tomorrow someone comes up and says He came to His dream and starts building hospitals, neither Puttaparthi nor Muddenahalli nor anyone else on earth should question them as long as they do service activities. They can conduct "Swami's Darshans and interviews" parallely as Swami can have any number of forms simultaneously right?

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote:

So, if 10 of the people whom you see now at Muddenahalli, start going to another 10 different mediums at 10 different places, saying they experience "unnamed, unseen and a bliss known to their spiritual hearts alone", and start obtaining "Discourses, Darshans, Interviews and Rings" at the 10 places, that should be perfectly fine isn't it? Because we cannot explain or interpret Swami, He can be present at 10 different places at the same time? May be 100 or 1000 Darshans and interviews through 1000 communicators, all claiming Swami's operational base is now in their edifice. All people will vouch for the bliss part. That should be fine. BTW, no Christian who declares Jesus alone is God and the rest are demons, no Muslim who kills in the name of Allah, will ever say, his God is awful and he does not experience any bliss in his heart.

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote:

If they say Swami is giving Darshans in Subtle form so that devotees can rise up to formlessness of God, why give rings and attach them to things? And if giving rings on behalf of Swami is fine, Madhu brother can also give Padanamaskars and Padapujas on behalf of Him right? Will anyone accept a physical communicator between one's husband or wife or mother and oneself? How then can one dare accept communicator between oneself and God? If one may disregard Swami's teaching about mediums saying it is incorrect to interpret His teaching in our own way, one may use the same logic to disregard everything else He taught as well, saying it is heartfelt, inner prompting, inexplicable, beyond logic etc. etc.

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

Very well said brother Pardha Saradhi Uppala. What really bothers me is the MDH disinformation campaign style words to justify their actions which go against physical form Swami's instructions & teachings. They use lines like (physical form) Swami has said expect the unexpected, or words to that effect, to justify anything and everything! MDH believers may feel offended but I am now convinced that MDH following is similar to followings of Kurnool Bala Sai Baba, <http://www.sribalasai.com/>, and Nepali Sai Baba, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Shree-Sanjay-Sai-Sewa-OrganisationNepal/182969168461045>, (two gentlemen who even imitate the physical look and attire of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba). Sure, the broad teachings of MDH "chosen communicator" is the same as physical form Swami. But I think the same applies to Kurnool Bala Sai Baba (I have seen some videos of his) and perhaps Nepali Sai Baba as well.

I do not have anything against the service activities of the followings of Kurnool Bala Sai Baba and Nepali Sai Baba, and similarly I do not have anything against the service activities of the following of Muddenahalli "chosen communicator".

But I certainly do wonder whether the spiritual guidance that these persons provide can come anywhere close to that of our beloved Lord, Shiva-Shakti Swarupa, Kali Yuga Avatar, (physical form) Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote:

[Name-snipped], the Bala Sai Baba imitated Swami's dress and words and all actions of Swami - taking out Shiva Lingams, giving rings, Vibhuti etc. Except for the dress part, is it not exactly what Madhu is doing? Is he not "imitating" Swami's voice and diction? How can you it is totally different?

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

[Name-snipped] madam: Sorry that the pic of Bala Sai Baba offended you. Removed it. BTW the pic got automatically picked up by Facebook as preview from the Bala Sai Baba Internet link in my comment, and was not inserted deliberately by me. I had the option of removing the preview which I did now as you have taken offense.

However, what I wrote is that MDH following is similar to followings of Bala Sai Baba and Nepali Sai Baba. I did not say that it is the same. Let me try to substantiate why I say that MDH following is similar to theirs (but not the same):

1) Well known teachings of (physical form) Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba are repeated through the leaders/"chosen communicator" of these followings.

2) All of them have organizations (and associated trusts, I am sure) which do service activities as per these teachings.

3) The leaders/"chosen communicator" try, while in public darshans and 'discourses', to stick to the style of discourse delivery of Bhagavan. [I think I have seen a few Nepali Sai Baba videos but I don't recall them clearly so I could be a little wrong in the case of Nepali Sai Baba. But Bala Sai Baba of Kurnool does an outstanding job of speaking in the very same style of Puttaparthi Sai Baba. I mean, Bala Sai Baba starting his discourse with the word, Premaswarupulara (embodiments of love), seemed to me to be as full of love as when Puttaparthi Sai Baba would say the same word. REALLY! It is no wonder to me that Bala Sai Baba does have some significant following in his region.]

4) Bala Sai Baba also does Lingdobhavam on Shivarathri. About "chosen communicator" there are conflicting reports. Some say that he just passes on materialized rings, necklaces etc. which he says are placed by Bhagavan in his pocket (which is what you said in one comment of yours). Some say NO, he actually materializes it in private interviews. Some say he acknowledges that the rings, necklaces etc. are bought from elsewhere (like Bangalore) and he only gives those non-materialized rings, necklaces, etc. to persons that Swami directs him to. So this is not a well defined similarity. But, if one goes by belief of many devotees of "chosen communicator" then they do believe that he materializes rings, necklaces etc. even though they may add that this power is given to him by Swami.

What are the differences?

1) "Chosen communicator" does not dress like Swami and claims to be only a communicator of Swami, who is visible to him in a subtle body/light body. Further this subtle body/light body walks giving darshan via people seeing the "chosen communicator" closely following him and/or by his side, and then takes a seat in a special chair/throne with the "chosen communicator" sitting humbly by his side.

I can't honestly think of any other important difference. Maybe others can add more differences.

And BTW I think lots of good work are being done by Bala Sai Baba and Nepali Sai Baba, for which I appreciate them. The Nepali Sai Baba facebook page link that I provided in an earlier comment gives many examples of laudable service done by his following in the recent Nepal earthquake(s).

Sorry if this free and frank discussion upsets you [name-snipped]. But I think the truth must be revealed in this matter for the benefit of the Sathya Sai movement worldwide. And the truth can be revealed only by asking these searching and uncomfortable questions. If "chosen communicator" is so sure of himself he can himself start responding to these on Facebook. I am told he was on Facebook a few years ago (maybe just a year or two ago). He is just a student from the Sai university where I was a teacher (but I did not teach him). I REFUSE to BELIEVE that he is so extraordinarily PURE a person that Swami chose to communicate to all Sathya Sai devotees worldwide through him and him alone. SORRY, but I have seen a lot more PURER souls in the Sathya Sai student community as well as devotee community overall.

[And, BTW I don't claim to be a pure person. I do have my fair share of human flaws. But then I don't claim to be a chosen communicator of Swami :-).]

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

Sister [name-snipped]: A few minutes ago I read your earlier comment about St. Theresa of Avila of Germany who, as you wrote, saw visions and referred to it as the great Light, and was a famous mystic. You also wrote, "Secondly, many have seen Swami's Light form during his physical avatarhood in many places in the world, including Bosnia during war, London an all over the globe. It's nothing new."

Now I do not deny such matters and in fact, believe that most of the well researched and well documented ones are true. In other words, I certainly believe that divine visions to various people are certainly possible. I will go further and say that I think it is possible that brother M, the "chosen communicator", may have seen visions of Swami. I know a fair number of people who claim to have such visions of Swami and other divine figures, and I will not say that they are saying something FALSE.

HOWEVER, when it comes to (physical form) Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, he categorically told & instructed his devotees that He will not pass His instructions to us via another person through a dream or vision. CATEGORICALLY and on multiple occasions!

Note that even while Bhagavan was in physical form, in the Sai university Prasanthi Nilayam campus, where I was serving as a teacher, there was one gentleman who claimed that Swami was giving instructions to him, meant for others, in dreams. We politely ignored these dream instructions of his, meant for any third parties. NOTE Swami dream-instruction for that particular individual who got the dream is a different matter, altogether.

I see "chosen communicator" conveying such instructions of supposed subtle body of Swami to others as similar to the gentleman I mentioned above who used to talk about such Swami dream instructions for others, while Swami was in physical form itself!

So, for the purpose of discussion, let us presume that brother M, the "chosen communicator" really is seeing some visions and getting communications from some form which he thinks is Swami's subtle form. NOW what should Sathya Sai devotees do? Should they believe in instructions of "chosen communicator" or not? Well, in my considered opinion, Sathya Sai devotees (including me) should see Swami's instructions as given in public discourses on many occasions on these matters. As Swami has clearly said that He will never use a third-party to convey instructions to us, and that He can surely find a way to communicate to sincere and earnest devotees DIRECTLY, for people like me, we are convinced that the wise thing to do is to follow Swami's instructions and so ignore third-party instructions from people like the "chosen communicator".

Note that I am not saying that "chosen communicator" is lying. I am only saying that what he thinks is subtle body of Swami interacting with him and giving instructions for others and the Sathya Sai mission, is a FALSE BELIEF as physical form Sathya Sai Baba has HIMSELF told us on many occasions to NOT follow such people.

All the above words of mine do not mean that St. Theresa of Avila was false, or that so many people who have got visions of the divine, including instructions for others, are false and wrong. NO. I don't know enough about them to comment. But about Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi, what I have said above holds good, in my considered opinion.

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote:

[name-snipped], does or does not Mr. Madhusudhan Naidu imitate Baba's Voice, diction and Baba's way of talking to devotees (the quips, the witty phrases and the all-knowing look and talk - of course totally mixed up with "No, I am still just an instrument")? He does, this is the truth. I saw it. I have no need to lie about him - I do not gain anything. No Divine personality or a devotee has ever imitated any other Divine Form except impostors. Krishna did not imitate Rama, Sathya Sai did not imitate Shirdi Sai. No devotees ever imitated the voice and style of their God. They remained in their own humble way of talking and walking. When someone tries to imitate the inimitable voice of the Lord, it takes away all the goodness that may otherwise be apparent in their words. If Madhusudhan is only an instrument, why should he mimic Baba? If you say Baba is speaking through him, Baba has categorically said he will never enter into anyone's body. You may tell me a 1000 reasons without bothering a bit ignoring Baba's clear teachings in this context. Even when people take Swami's photographs photoshopped in the Form of Rama or Krishna to Him, He dismissed them as falsities. Haven't you heard Him saying, "Imitation is human and creation is Divine?" You may call me shameful but I know I am speaking truth from the authenticity of my experience that is enough for me, sister. If you want to call mine logic, and yours an inner experience, please do.

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[The background to the comment below is that there were some heated exchanges between the post author and sister [name-snipped].]

Ravi S. Iyer wrote:

Oh Lord! Sister [name-snipped] seems have to got really upset as I don't see her comments any more including the long comment that I very much wanted to read now. So, in all probability, she must have deleted all her comments from this post. Anyway, I benefited from knowing [name-snipped]'s views on this matter, even if I don't agree with some of her views, and I thank her for taking the time to engage with me & brother Pardha on it. Wish her all the best for her spiritual journey to Godhood. Hope somebody from the MDH belief following passes on this message to [name-snipped]. Jai Sairam!

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote (slightly edited to fix typos):

I would have thought about believing in brother M, if he actually claimed he is re-incarnation of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and maintains his natural walk and talk, (direct English and not his currently "practised" Telugu - which is a hard try to deviate from his natural accent) and conducts his own Darshans, interviews in his own style, than replicating everything same to same. Like Bhagavan said, imitation is human, creation is Divine. If one contemplates on this one single sentence of Bhagavan itself, with a pure heart, one would know that it is all human drama, and can never be anywhere near Divine. Whatever the service, compassion, foretelling that might be happening.

Swami's MISSION, as He Himself said, is not to build schools and hospitals. If it were, why would He do only 2 hospitals and few institutes in 85 years? He would have built a 1000 or million - He can in all probability. These institutions are only incidental to His real Mission of teaching man his Divine reality. And He said He came in human form so we can relate to him and realise our own Divinity. We learn from Him as we see Him having the same body as us and undergoing the same things as us. What do you learn from imagining someone walking beside brother M whom only brother M can see and talk to? Imagination? Hallucination? Talking to air and hearing from air? Which one of these actions is a natural thing that we humans can emulate like the way physical Swami spoke, ate and sang that we can emulate?

Bhagavan refused to take any action that breaks the natural laws and sat in a wheel chair for years and finally, left the body in its natural course. By doing that, He actually set an example to us that we should not be bothered too, when our body naturally withers and falls down, but boldly live in the awareness of our inner Divinity, like He did. If He had returned in a subtle body, it is totally throwing away everything He ever taught about body and its temporal nature. "Dehamu Paanchabhothukamu. Dehamu koolaka thappadheppudun." If He returned in subtle form, is He telling us, we can return in subtle form too after death, and continue what we left? No. Once left the body, left.

I will actually show you a discourse (will upload it on youtube and share it) from around 2008, where He clearly said, "ONCE AVATAR LEAVES THE BODY, HE WILL NOT HAVE ANY CONNECTION WHATSOEVER WITH THE THINGS HAPPENED IN HIS EARTHLY CAREER. HE WILL ANSWER DEVOTEES FROM WITHIN THEIR OWN HEARTS AND GIVE THEM THE RESULTS OF THEIR ACTIONS AND PRAYERS FROM THERE". Expect the upload in a bit.

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Ravi S. Iyer wrote: Terrific message brother Pardha Saradhi Uppala full of wisdom and understanding of the great Sathya Sai Avatar. Congratulations! And thanks for expressing it so well.

Two extracts from your message that I appreciate very, very much:

"And He said He came in human form so we can relate to him and realise our own Divinity. We learn from Him as we see Him having the same body as us and undergoing the same things as us. What do you learn from imagining someone walking beside brother M whom only brother M can see and talk to? Imagination? Hallucination? Talking to air and hearing from air? Which one of these actions is a natural thing that we humans can emulate like the way physical Swami spoke, ate and sang that we can emulate?"

*[Ravi: I tend to agree with the above words. But I also recognize that some MDH believer brothers & sisters may feel offended by it. If they do feel offended I offer my apologies. But I think these words have to be said to ensure that at least those who are not committed MDH believers but are considering it, and happen to read these words, will*



*seriously think about the matter before believing in MDH chosen communicator.]*

And then the extract from a 2008 discourse which you plan to upload to youtube - I am just waiting for it as I had not come across these words earlier, if I recall correctly. So the words you mentioned from Swami's discourse are: "ONCE AVATAR LEAVES THE BODY, HE WILL NOT HAVE ANY CONNECTION WHATSOEVER WITH THE THINGS (THAT) HAPPENED IN HIS EARTHLY CAREER. HE WILL ANSWER DEVOTEES FROM WITHIN THEIR OWN HEARTS AND GIVE THEM THE RESULTS OF THEIR ACTIONS AND PRAYERS FROM THERE".

Ravi: My God! If we can really get a proper reference to these words of Swami that becomes a tremendous statement from Swami Himself specifically against any subtle body claims after Mahasamadhi.

Great work brother Pardha in getting closer to the truth about claimed subtle body of Swami in MDH and claimed chosen communicator.

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Pardha Saradhi Uppala wrote:

Ravi S. Iyer Sir. I will upload the Discourse in a bit. But I am not sure if that will bring about any "enlightenment" as such in anyone. There are Discourses in which Swami clearly and strongly denied speaking through mediums. When people can ignore those, what will stop them from ignoring any other words of Swami? Even if Jesus or Mohammed PBUH come down in flesh and blood, and tell Christians and Muslims that God is one, there may probably be only a handful who change. You already heard from brother Satyajit about the senior devotee who was rebuked by the physical Form of Lord Himself, when he brought the topic of a medium boy in His presence. But the senior continued to talk about it even after severe rebuke from Swami in person. How can an audio or video or for that matter anything change people? All the learning must happen the hard way of self experience.

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Ravi S. Iyer responded (slightly edited):

Well brother Pardha Saradhi Uppala, I think our discussions on these matters and the discourse quote that you refer to will help some Sathya Sai devotees who have not made up their minds on this matter, and are reading such social media posts, to come to a more informed decision about whether to believe in MDH chosen communicator & claimed MDH subtle body or not. Given that MDH chosen communicator is increasing the spread of his worldwide visits, including one planned visit to USA in June, I am informed, I think these discussions are doing an important bit of service to the Sathya Sai fraternity worldwide. BTW I have also put up a blog post on these exchanges including some of your comments here: [link to this blog post] (I hope you don't mind me doing that. The intent is to simply make it easier for those searching the Internet for such material to find it.)

About the Satyajit talk, well it was Satyajit sharing his memories. While it certainly has significant value, a VERIFIABLE Swami discourse where he clearly said that the avatar (i.e. He) will not have any connection with things associated with His earthly career after He leaves the body (but will respond to devotees from their hearts), is of IMMENSE value. Most Sathya Sai devotees give HUGE importance to such declarations by Swami.

The MDH belief following has quite artfully dodged the declarations of Swami that He never communicates through mediums, by some disingenuous explanations which has taken in some people. But I don't think they can easily dodge the above declaration of Swami (needs to be confirmed with actual discourse).

However, they may simply ignore it, and ask people to go by their hearts or say that Swami has changed his instructions & declarations after taking subtle form. And so it may not impact many committed MDH belief followers. But, at least, it will be helpful in convincing more unsure people to not believe in MDH chosen communicator and claimed subtle body.

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**Muddenahalli light body Sai Baba is NOT related to Puttaparthi Sathya Sai Baba - Conclusion drawn from 1st Jan 2009 Swami discourse (2015-05-19 22:42)**

*Last updated on 20th May 2015*

*\_ [At the outset, if some MDH belief folks are hurt with this post, I am very sorry about it. However, I have no option but to pursue the truth of MDH belief in the light of (physical form) Bhagavan's discourses, as MDH belief has become*

*a MAJOR threat to the mother Sathya Sai organization that Bhagavan PERSONALLY created and nurtured with so much time, effort, emotion, love ... etc. for the benefit of Sathya Sai devotees, or to be more accurate, for mankind as a whole in the decades & centuries to come.]*

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (physical form) said in a discourse on 1st Jan. 2009, the following (rough English translation & Telugu transcript with detailed Telugu transcript, English translation and references given later on in this post):

"Krishna also (after) showing many miracles/divine sport, attracting many people, at the end, gave up the body. So, this Avatar (phenomenon), for some limited amount of time, (engages in the divine activity/sport), then He does not have any connection with anything."

[Telugu transcript: "Krishnadu kudanu aneeka leelanu chuupinchi, aneeka mandini aakarshinchi, kattakattupudiki dehanni vadalyaadu. Ayite, ee Avataramu aneettuvanti matramu eppadiki edo konni unnantha varaku anni (..puga) meghaale, tarvatha edaaniki sambandhamu undadhu."]

In my view/interpretation of the above, as late as 2009 when Bhagavan's physical health was failing and He, in all probability, knew that He will be giving up the body in a few years time (actually He gave up the body less than two and a half years later), Bhagavan told us that after the Avatar gives up the body, the Avatar does not have anything to do with the activities He was engaged in as the Avatar. This may be difficult for us Sai devotees to accept. But that's what He said! It is my experience with Bhagavan that on such deep spiritual/religious matters He simply said the truth, whether people could accept it/digest it or not.

He also said later on in the discourse, the following:

"But God (Bhagavan) is always in your heart. (He) is listening to all your prayers. (He) is giving suitable/appropriate results for them (prayers)."

So, Swami also said that Bhagavan in the formless absolute aspect of God will listen to our prayers and respond to our prayers. So praying to Hridayanivaasi (heart-dwelling) Sai for directions for the running of His mission will, as per Swami's words, get a response from within.

In other words, we Sathya Sai devotees have to now turn to the Sathya Sai within our hearts/formless aspect of God within our hearts, to get "communications" from Swami/God.

The other aspect of this analysis is that clearly Swami's words in Jan. 2009 rule out any possibility of Puttaparthi Sathya Sai Baba appearing as "light body" or "subtle body" somewhere which can be seen almost exclusively by a "chosen communicator" (and not by others barring very, very few exceptions). I mean, Swami has said that once the Avatar gives up the body - FINISH, OVER. He does not get involved again with those activities. [It is up to others to take the mission forward, taking inspiration from the Sai within and from the memories of interactions and experiences with, and the discourses & teachings of the Avatar.]

Therefore the Muddenahalli "light body" and "subtle body" phenomenon/claim is NOT the Puttaparthi Sathya Sai Baba that we Sathya Sai devotees were privileged and BLESSED to see and hear and, for some, even touch and interact with. It is some other Sai Baba. Like we have Kurnool Bala Sai Baba for many years now, there is an addition to those ranks with the Muddenahalli light body Sai Baba/subtle body Sai Baba. These Sai Babas have no relation to the Puttaparthi Sathya Sai Baba.

Of course, both Kurnool Bala Sai Baba and Muddenahalli light body Sai Baba may be doing good work and preaching good things. I have no objection to such aspects of their work at all. I wish devotees of these Sai Babas all the very best in their spiritual journey. But Sathya Sai devotees should know that their teachings & instructions may be common, in part, to Sathya Sai Baba, but they are NOT from the lips/mouth of Puttaparthi Sathya Sai Baba.

Now here are the details about the 1st Jan. 2009 Swami discourse extracts, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1Z9YZRC5D0>. I thank brother Pardha Saradhi Uppala for this significant contribution. [See note at the bottom for corresponding Radio Sai audio download and related info.]

[Note that I have transcribed the first nearly three minutes of the video in Telugu. However, as my Telugu is not great, there may be some mistakes. Those who are knowledgeable about Telugu who find mistakes in both my Telugu transcription and English translation, may please let me know of the corrections.]

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (physical form) says:

A) From 0:00 to around 1:00,

In Telugu (with a few English words):

Rajuduga puttyaadu. Sri Ramachandraduga puttyaadu. Ramachandraduga (...aadu). Krishuduga puttyaadu. Anni leelanu anni chuupinchaadu. Ramalu anni vidhimulaga kudanu kashtamulu anubhavinchaadu. Krishnadu kudanu aneeka leelanu chuupinchi, aneeka mandini aakarshinchi, kattakattupudiki dehanni vadalyaadu. Ayite, ee Avataramu aneettuvanti matramu eppadiki edo konni unnantha varaku anni (..puga) meghaale, tarvatha edaaniki sambandhamu undadhu.

[Rather literal English translation mainly from my limited understanding of Telugu but also borrowing from Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju's on-the-spot English translation, at times. The literal translation may help non-Telugu people to better interpret Swami's words.]

(He was) born as a king. (He was) born as Sri Ramachandra (Lord Rama). (He) lived as Ramachandra. (He was) born as Krishna. He showed/displayed/demonstrated all miracles/divine sport. Rama suffered all kinds of difficulties. Krishna also (after) showing many miracles/divine sport, attracting many people, at the end, gave up the body. So, this Avatar (phenomenon), for some limited amount of time, (engages in the divine sport/activity), then He does not have any connection with anything.

[Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju on-the-spot English translation:]

Born as a king. Born as king Rama. Lived as Ramachandra. Born as Krishna later. And he has shown all everything around. Rama passed through various troubles and problems. Krishna also exhibited the divine sport, he attracted everybody, ultimately he has withdrawn from the body. However, Avatar will be showing the divine sport so long the Avatar is in the physical body which is not possible when He withdraws from the body.

B) [Around 1:00 to around 2:08]

In Telugu (with a few English words):

Bhagavantuda naaku sakshaatga (kanipinchi) ani praarthisthuntaadu. Emi adi icchinaakuda taathkalikinga, minchi minchi nattuga vachhestundi, ante. Tarvaatha pothundi. Kaani Bhagavantudu nirantaramu nee hridayamulo(nunde) unnaadu. Nee sarva prarthanakuda vintunnaadu. Daani tagilina resultsu istunnaadu. Kaabatti nee dehamu poinakudanu aatma unnadi. Aa self kuda eppatiki poodu. Ante ponnattivanti danini manamu prarthinchaali. Changeless That. Aa changeless daanni manam nirantaramu kudanu manam chintinchaali.

[Rather literal English translation ....]

O God (Bhagavan) appear before me directly, (we) pray. Even if some appearance/vision is given/granted temporarily, it is like a flash of lightning, that's all. Then it goes. But God (Bhagavan) is always in your heart. (He) is listening to all your prayers. (He) is giving suitable/appropriate results for them (prayers). So, even if your body goes, the aatma (self/soul) is (remains). That self will never go (anywhere). ... We must pray for that which never goes. Changeless That (Swami's words in English). We should always focus on (think about) the changeless (that).

[Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju on-the-spot English translation:]

We pray, O God, manifest, give me your formless appearance [Ravi: I think that should be read as We pray, O God, show me your appearance in a form/physical manifestation]. Even the physical manifestation is like a flash, is like lightning, which will pass. God has installed Himself (within) continuously. He listens to all sorts of your prayers. And He will also give you results appropriately. So the body may be lost but the self remains. The self will never vanish. That which is deathless self - we have to pray to that. That self is changeless. Therefore we have to constantly think of that changeless self.

C)[Around 2:08 to around 2:49]

In Telugu:

Eppadukuda Bhagavantuduki ee rupamu ledu. Ade oka oka samayamulo oka rupanni matramu chuupistaadu. Andariki telese nimattimayi aa rupanni matramu pettukuntaadu. Tarvaata aa rupamu kuudanu kanipin(chadu). Kanuka meeru e ... ee matramu aadharamu ... pettuko kudadu.

[Rather literal English translation ...]

Never ever does God (Bhagavan) have a form. However, (He) shows a form at appropriate times. (He) takes on that form so that everybody can know (about Him). Then that form will also not be seen. Therefore you should not pay any attention to these (artificial prints/photos).

[Prof. Anilkumar Kamaraju on-the-spot English translation:]

God is formless. However, at times, He will demonstrate to you a specific form. To make everyone know He takes it upon Himself, that form. Later, even that form also leaves. Don't go by these artificial prints - computer mixing

photos - No.

—end snippet transcripts & translations —

Note: Radio Sai has the audio of the discourse for download. You may access it using <http://www.radiosai.org/program/SearchProgramme.php> and searching for 2009 discourses. Note that the entry for it in the result list states that it was first broadcast on 2012-05-08. The filename for the download of the full discourse is DD\_2009\_01\_01\_NEW\_YEAR.mp3.

A) The audio snippet in the above youtube video from 0:00 to 1:00 is from around 30:15 in the full discourse audio.

B) The next snippet in the youtube video from around 1:00 to 2:08 is from around 33:44 in the full discourse audio.

C) The last snippet in the youtube video from around 2:08 to 2:49 is from around 59:55 in the full discourse audio.

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*gads*

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