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Sathya Sai Baba

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Introduction

Ratnākaram Sathyanārāyaṇa Rāju alias Sathya Sai Baba (Telugu: Satya Sāyibābā) was born in the village of Puttaparthi (Telugu: Puṭṭaparti), in the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, on 23 November 1926. He was the fourth of the five children of Pedda Veṅkama Rāju and Meesaraganda Easwamma. From the early 1940s young Sathya established himself as a charismatic guru claiming to be the reincarnation of the popular Maharashtrian saint Sai Baba of Shirdi (d. 15 October 1918) and presenting himself as the *avatāra* of the age. He fixed his headquarters in his native village by founding the ashram of Prasanthi Nilayam, lit. “abode of highest peace,” where he eventually died of a cardiorespiratory failure on 24 April 2011, at age 84. In India and throughout the world his devotees number in the millions, predominantly from the urban upper-middle classes. Portraits of him smiling under a round mass of hair clad in an ochre robe are familiar both in public spaces and in private homes. His towering fame was and is due to his alleged miraculous and healing powers, which have always been his distinctive mark, attracting masses of people from all over the world to Prasanthi Nilayam in order to have his *darshan* (lit. “vision”), *sparśan* (lit. “physical contact”), and *sambhāṣaṇ* (lit. “conversation”). Materializations were his characteristic feat: besides the production of ashes (*vibhūti*) which he gave out daily as a token of his grace, he is credited with the creation of rings, pictures, stones, rosaries, fruits, sweets, various types of food, statues of dieties, and a myriad of other items. He himself subdivided his *avatāric* career in three phases, the first sixteen years of his life being characterized by childish play (*bālaṃlā*), the next sixteen years by miracles (*mahiman*), and starting from his thirty-second year up to the end of his life by teaching (*upadeśa*). From 1953 onward his teaching activity has been intense, both through his public discourses and through his writings: steeped in *bhakti*, his instruction follows the tenets of non-dual (*advaita*) Vedanta and insists on a spiritual regeneration of the educational system and the practice of *sevā*, service to society, as is typical of neo-Hinduism. Sathya Sai Baba’s transnational movement promotes social service and education in human values through the creation of schools, hospitals, and a variety of charitable works.

Overviews on Sathya Sai Baba and His Movement

A presentation of Sathya Sai Baba’s milieu through the founding tales of his native village of Puttaparthi and the prophecy of saint Veṅkāvadhūta, the chosen deity (*iṣṭadevatā*) of his family to whom the guru’s advent is linked to, is in Rigopoulos 2014. White 1972 has been the first work to utilize the expression “Sai Baba movement” with reference to Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba (and others that were close to the Shirdi saint, such as Upasni Maharaj and Meher Baba), and to suggest the connection of both with the integrative deity Dattātreya and the 15th-century poet-saint Kabīr. A summary of Sathya Sai Baba’s message and triune *avatāric* theology in his own words is provided by Karanjia 1994, whose author came to Puttaparthi in 1976 and was able to interview the guru at length. An insightful analysis of his expansive self-definitions that account for the guru’s uncontainability and competence as domain crosser is in Copeman and Ikegame 2012. Along these lines, Srinivas 2001 highlights Sathya Sai Baba’s “rooted universalism,” i.e., his capacity of spanning through the dichotomies by presenting himself as a universal persona who is nevertheless grounded in the Vedas and traditional Hinduism, and whose constituency is made up of both middle- and upper-class Hindus and Western devotees. An engaging essay on the dynamics of the guru’s free-floating, transnational charisma, acknowledging his self-portrait as a global savior figure, is offered in Srinivas 2013, while the same author focuses on the development of the guru’s ashram as an ideal sacred polis in Srinivas 2010: the aesthetics and architecture of Prasanthi Nilayam fuse together tradition and futuristic elements that are appealing to both Indian and international followers, mirroring the cosmopolitanism of the Sathya Sai movement. Srinivas 2018 examines how religion is spatially embedded in Bangalore city, where Sathya Sai Baba’s figure plays a major role. Steel 1997 is a valuable compendium covering a variety of topics on the life and times of the guru and offering a great deal of information on his mission, teaching, and influence. Ruhela and Robinson 1982 is an edited collection of introductory articles on the guru’s figure and his charitable and educational activities, first and foremost his education in human values program.

Copeman, Jacob, and Aya Ikegame. "The Multifarious Guru: An Introduction." In *The Guru in South Asia: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Edited by Jacob Copeman and Aya Ikegame, 1–45. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

The authors underline the significance of Sathya Sai Baba's expansive self-definitions: by pointing beyond himself through a strategy of genealogical diversification he was able to expand his appeal from local to global guru, proving his uncontainability and competence as domain crosser. In his role as *avatāra* he exemplified both accessibility and unattainability, such interplay being crucial in the maintenance of a guru's authority and charisma.

Karanjia, Rustom Khurshedji. *God Lives in India*. Puttaparthi, India: Saindra, 1994.

An interview that the guru granted in 1976 to R. K. Karanjia, owner-editor of the Bombay newsmagazine *Blitz*. It lasted more than two hours and it was the longest-ever interview that Sathya Sai Baba granted to any journalist. He presents his mission and triune *avatāra* theology based on the advent of Shirdi Sai Baba, himself, and the future Prema Sai Baba, advocating what Karanjia defines as "spiritual socialism."

Rigopoulos, Antonio. "The Construction of a Cultic Center through Narrative: The Founding Myth of the Village of Puttaparthi and Sathya Sāi Bābā." *History of Religions* 54.2 (November 2014): 117–150.

The article analyzes the founding myth of Puttaparthi and how Sathya Sai Baba appropriated it in order to justify and foster his cult. Located in the Anantapur district of the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, Puttaparthi literally means "multiplier of termite mounds" and tales centered upon termite mounds (Telugu: *puṭṭa*) are a characteristic of India's pastoral areas.

Ruhela, Satya Pal, and Duane Robinson, eds. *Sai Baba and His Message: A Challenge to Behavioural Sciences*. Delhi: Vikas, 1982.

A collection of twenty-seven introductory articles on the guru's figure and teachings, his link to Shirdi Sai Baba, and his goal of "educational reconstruction" of India through the establishment of schools and colleges in Prasanthi Nilayam and throughout the country based on the human values of truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence. It comprises four articles by the guru himself plus a final chapter of 101 sayings of his.

Srinivas, Smriti. "The Advent of the Avatar: The Urban Following of Sathya Sai Baba and Its Construction of Tradition." In *Charisma and Canon: Essays on the Religious History of the Indian Subcontinent*. Edited by Vasudha Dalmia, Angelika Malinar, and Martin Christof, 293–309. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

The guru is said to foster a "rooted universalism" by positing himself as a universal persona grounded in traditional Hinduism. Such theosophical universalism is a characteristic of the Sathya Sai movement, whose constituency is made up of two main groups: urban middle- and upper-class Indians; non-Indian devotees plus the Indians of the diaspora. Politically, the guru is seen as a moderate, having repeatedly voiced his objection to *hindutva*.

Srinivas, Tulasi. "Building Faith: Religious Pluralism, Pedagogical Urbanism, and Governance in the Sathya Sai Sacred City." *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 13.3 (2010): 301–336.

The author examines the growth of Sathya Sai Baba's ashram of Prasanthi Nilayam as an ideal polis. The architecture of the guru's sacred city is aimed at being aesthetically traditional—a living memorial—and at the same time appealing to cosmopolitan devotees through its futuristic elements. Its objective is the ethical regeneration and transformation of the guru's *bhaktas*.

Srinivas, Tulasi. "Sathya Sai Baba." In *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Vol. 5. Edited by Knut A. Jacobsen, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, and Vasudha Narayanan, 625–633. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013.

An introductory essay on the guru's figure focusing on the the dynamics of his "nomadic charisma," showing the productive interplay between Sathya Sai Baba's charismatic personhood and globalization. Having achieved the status of a global *avatāra-guru-sant*, his free-floating charisma extends to different geographies and times, enfolding both traditional and revolutionary aspects.

Srinivas, Smriti. "Highways for Healing: Contemporaneous 'Temples' and Religious Movements in an Indian City." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 86.2 (2018): 473–496.

Within the context of Bangalore city, the author analyzes "the sacrality of urban sprawl," i.e., how cities are important arenas for the recruitment of devotees and the construction of habitats to house new spiritual maps and ideas of selfhood, particularly for the old and new middle class. Herein, Sathya Sai Baba's figure plays a significant role in the spatial embedding of contemporaneous religiosity.

Steel, Brian. *The Sathya Sai Baba Compendium: A Guide to the First Seventy Years*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1997.

This compendium covers over 300 topics on Sathya Sai Baba in alphabetical order. Divided in two parts—"The Life and Times of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba" and "A Compendium of Information on the Mission, Teachings, and Influence of Sathya Sai Baba"—it also provides a concordance between the American and Indian editions of the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series and a bibliography of over 325 texts.

White, Charles Sidney John. "The Sai Baba Movement: Approaches to the Study of Indian Saints." *Journal of Asian Studies* 31.4 (1972): 863–878.

The author was the first scholar to coin the expression "Sai Baba movement," linking Shirdi Sai Baba—along with a few disciples and connections of his, such as Upasni Maharaj and Meher Baba—to Sathya Sai Baba. He visited the guru's ashram in Puttaparthi in 1970 and was the first to highlight the relevance of the god Dattātreyā and of the poet-saint Kabīr for understanding the Sai Baba movement.

Major Works on Sathya Sai Baba and His Movement

An essential primary source on Sathya Sai Baba's first twenty-five years, offering a myriad of data and first-hand testimonies, is Padmanaban 2000. Schulman 1971 is one of the very first books ever published on the saint and provides a balanced treatment of his life and teachings, with no devotional overtones, while Babb 1991 is one of the first scholarly essays written on him and focuses upon his charisma and purported powers. The author of Murthy 1983, son of the guru's official biographer Narayan Kasturi, provides an insightful collection of essays on Sathya Sai Baba's message, while Priddy 1998 is a perceptive assessment on the guru based upon its author's own experiences at his ashram. Aitken 2004 contextualizes both Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba within their Deccani milieu and offers a reliable presentation of the life and teachings of the guru of Puttaparthi, emphasizing his charitable and educational projects. Spurr 2007 is dedicated to the fundamental notion of *avatāra*hood and to Sathya Sai Baba's self-presentation as the ultimate *avatāra*, and offers a detailed portrayal of the guru's life and message within the context of neo-Hinduism. Srinivas 2008 is the first comprehensive scholarly work on Sathya Sai Baba and his movement based upon many years of field research. By presenting the guru's link to the original Sai Baba, the author provides an in-depth understanding of his life and teachings and of his ashram as ideal polis, also analyzing the global expansion of the Sai Organization in India and throughout the world, with special attention to the diffusion of the Sai movement in the urban contexts of Bangalore, Nairobi, and Atlanta. The sophisticated ethnography of Srinivas 2010, based on nine years of field research on the guru's movement, is another indispensable scholarly work. It discusses Sathya Sai Baba's biography and teachings, the growth of Prasanthi Nilayam as a cosmopolitan sacred polis, and the characteristic features of his transnational movement. Rigopoulos 2021 concentrates on the life and works of Narayan Kasturi (b. 1897–d. 1987) and the crucial roles he played in the development of the guru's organization. Focusing attention on Sathya Sai Baba's hagiographer, secretary, and right-hand man allows better comprehension of the guru's fundamental aims.

Aitken, Bill [William McKay]. *Sri Sathya Sai Baba: A Life*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2004.

A historical and theological survey that aims at contextualizing Sathya Sai Baba as well as Shirdi Sai Baba in their Deccani cultural milieu. The outcome of the author's many years of dedicated exploration of the Deccan's topography and theology, this book offers a balanced treatment of the guru of Puttaparthi and the various educational and service activities of the Sai Organization.

Babb, Lawrence A. *Redemptive Encounters: Three Modern Styles in the Hindu Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

One of the first scholarly presentations on Sathya Sai Baba centering upon his alleged supernatural powers. Babb, who never met the guru, did his research in Delhi between 1978 and 1979, interviewing several devotees. He argues that the guru's magical charisma enables his followers to discover their true self: in exchange for their devotion, the devotees who surrender to their charismatic lord receive his favors and loving grace. See pp. 159–201.

Murthy, M. Venkata Narayana. *The Greatest Adventure: Essays on the Sai Avatar and His Message*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1983.

A thoughtful collection of essays on Sathya Sai Baba, some of which were originally published in the monthly newsletter *Sanathana Sarathi*. The author, son of Narayan Kasturi, discusses the guru's *avatārahood* and the essential features of his message.

Padmanaban, Ranganathan. *Love Is My Form: A Biographical Series on Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Vol. 1, The Advent (1926–1950)*. Bangalore, India: Sai Towers, 2000.

A well-documented and thoroughly researched biography on Sathya Sai Baba's first twenty-five years. A mine of information on the guru's life and message and his growing constituency, it is based on interviews with people who knew the saint and is enriched by many old photographs. Though it figures as volume 1 in a series, no other volume has appeared so far.

Priddy, Robert. *Source of the Dream: My Way to Sathya Sai Baba*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1998.

A sympathetic, in-depth analysis of the guru's life and deeds in which the author shares his own experiences of Sathya Sai Baba. Divided in twenty-seven chapters, the book offers an objective appreciation of the guru's teachings about spirituality and modern science and includes investigations with Narayan Kasturi, his official biographer. In subsequent years, the author dismissed Sathya Sai Baba as a fraud.

Rigopoulos, Antonio. *The Hagiographer and the Avatar: The Life and Works of Narayan Kasturi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

The book explores the seminal roles played by Narayan Kasturi, the author of Sathya Sai Baba's official biography *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*, in the making of the guru's movement. A distinguished litterateur, Kasturi first met him in July 1948 and lived at his ashram more or less continuously from 1954. His role was decisive in the growth of the Sai Organization, second only to the guru's own leadership.

Schulman, Arnold. *Baba*. New York: Viking Press, 1971.

This well-researched book by an American screenwriter and playwright was the first work on the guru to be published in the West (along with Howard Murphet's *Sai Baba: Man of Miracles*). It is a fair presentation of his life and teachings, with no devotional overtones, based on the author's meetings with the saint at his ashram and on interviews he had with people of his entourage.

Spurr, Michael James. "Sathya Sai Baba as Avatar: 'His Story' and the History of an Idea." PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 2007.

A thorough study on the concept of *avatāra* and on Sathya Sai Baba's self-presentation as the ultimate divine incarnation, to be understood within the context of Swami Vivekananda's neo-Hinduism. The author offers a balanced and insightful portrayal of the guru's life and teachings, also discussing the hypothesis that his self-consciousness as the ultimate *avatāra* might have been influenced by the ideas of the Theosophical Society.

Srinivas, Smriti. *In the Presence of Sai Baba: Body, City, and Memory in a Global Religious Movement*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008.

The first scholarly monograph on Sathya Sai Baba and his movement. In eight chapters, it links the guru to the *faqīr* of Shirdi with a masterful treatment of his life and teachings, showing the unfolding of Prasanthi Nilayam as ideal polis. Based on many years of

dedicated field research, it offers a groundbreaking analysis of the expansion of the Sai movement in India and throughout the world, from Nairobi to Atlanta.

Srinivas, Tulasi. *Winged Faith: Rethinking Globalization and Religious Pluralism through the Sathya Sai Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

A theoretically sophisticated ethnography on Sathya Sai Baba and his cosmopolitan movement based on nine years of dedicated field research. In its six chapters it discusses the guru's life and teachings, the development of his ashram as the building of a moral architecture, and the main characteristics of the Sai Organization, with its practices of transnational devotion vis-à-vis an anti-Sai network of activists.

Narayan Kasturi's Official Biography *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram* and Other Biographies by Devotees and Ex-Devotees

The first text ever published on the guru is the *Sri Sayeeshuni Charitra*, a Telugu poem written by V. C. Kondappa, Sathya Sai Baba's elementary school teacher, which was released in 1944: an English translation is in Kondappa 2004. The guru's official biography is *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram* (see Kasturi 1980–1983), written in English by the saint's hagiographer and right-hand man and covering the guru's life from his birth in 1926 up to 1979. It was Sathya Sai Baba himself who gave Narayan Kasturi the assignment of writing his biography as early as 1948: its four volumes constitute the most authoritative account on the saint, from which all biographies of the guru depend. Along with Kasturi's text, Murphet 1981 was instrumental in drawing the attention of many Westerners to Sathya Sai Baba. An Australian theosophist, Murphet was among the first foreigners to come to the guru in the mid-1960s, and his book, originally published in 1971, became a classic among devotees. On the early Western followers of Sathya Sai Baba, see online. Baskin 1990 is an account of its author's own experiences with the guru between 1969 and the 1970s. Like Murphet, she was also linked to the Theosophical Society, being the stepdaughter of Desikacharya Rajagopalacharya, the editor of Jiddu Krishnamurti's teachings. Levin 1998 presents the author's experiences with the guru in the early 1970s, while Sandweiss 1975 offered a psychiatrist's approach to the saint and his miracles and soon became one of the most popular books among Western devotees. Gokak 1983 is a thoughtful biography on the guru's personality and philosophy by one of the major Kannada writers, who first met the saint in 1966. On the other hand, Brooke 1999 denounces Sathya Sai Baba as a fraud: it is one of the very first books written against the guru by one who had been an enthusiastic devotee of his. Rao 1985 is a well-researched work on Sathya Sai Baba from his birth up to his sixtieth year, while Balu 1981 is a detailed account of the guru's public life from 1976 onward.

Balu, Shakuntala. *Living Divinity*. London: Sawbridge Enterprises, 1981.

The author first met Sathya Sai Baba in 1976 and she and her husband soon became close devotees. Herein she presents detailed accounts of the guru's sayings and miracles, of the interviews he granted to various people, and of the main religious festivals and public ceremonies that he presided over.

Baskin, Diana. *Divine Memories of Sathya Sai Baba*. San Diego, CA: Birth Day, 1990.

The author met the guru in 1969 and was one of his earliest Western devotees. She had the privilege of spending whole days in his company and herein she offers accounts dating back to 1969 and the 1970s. Baskin was the stepdaughter of Desikacharya Rajagopalacharya, an important figure within the Theosophical Society and Jiddu Krishnamurti's entourage. She reports that Krishnamurti secretly met the guru in the early 1980s.

Brooke, Tal. *Avatar of Night*. Berkeley, CA: End Run, 1999.

One of the first books that vehemently criticized Sathya Sai Baba, originally titled *Sai Baba, Lord of the Air* (Berkhamsted, UK: Lion Publishing, 1976). In the early 1970s, Brooke had been an enthusiastic devotee of the guru of Puttaparthi, whom he regarded as the second coming of Christ, but later became disillusioned and converted to Christianity.

Gokak, Vinayak Krishna. *Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba: The Man and the Avatar (an Interpretation)*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1983.

Originally published in 1975, the book is divided in four parts dedicated to the guru's personality, philosophy, writings, and impact, plus a biographical appendix. Vinayak Krishna Gokak (b. 1909–d. 1992), one of the major Kannada writers of the Navodaya literary movement, first met Sathya Sai Baba in 1966, becoming one of his closest devotees. Between 1981 and 1985, he was the vice-chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

Kasturi, Narayan. *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram: The Life of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. 4 vols. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1980–1983.

A fundamental read, being the author's magnum opus. The four volumes cover Sathya Sai Baba's life from his birth in 1926 up to 1979 and are revered as a sacred text by millions of devotees. Kasturi's work was continued by B. N. Narasimha Murthy with volumes 5, 6, and 7, covering the guru's life from 1980 to 2001 (Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, 2005–2010).

Kondappa, V. C. *Sai's Story: As Revealed by Sathya Sai to His Teacher*. Foreword by B. Subbannachar. Bangalore, India: Sai Towers, 2004.

English translation of the Telugu *Sri Sayeeshuni Charitra*, originally published in 1944. Kondappa was Sathya Sai Baba's teacher at the Bukkapatnam Higher Elementary School. It is the first book ever published on the guru: a short poem presenting him as the reincarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba and offering information on the latter's birth and early years. It was Sathya Sai Baba himself who revealed "Sai's story" to Kondappa.

Levin, Howard. *Good Chances*. Introduction by Elsie Cowan. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sai Towers, 1998.

The author is an American devotee who first came to Sathya Sai Baba in June 1970. Levin was part of a group of young Americans who in the early 1970s had the opportunity to be very close to the guru on a daily basis, working for him at the ashram, following him in his various trips, and receiving spiritual guidance from him.

Murphet, Howard. *Sai Baba: Man of Miracles*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 1981.

An Australian theosophist, Murphet was an important figure in the guru's movement and one among the first Westerners to come to the guru in the mid-1960s. This book contributed to spread Sathya Sai Baba's fame in the West and became a classic among devotees, being translated into many languages. Originally published in London by Frederick Muller in 1971, by 1975 it was circulating in both Hindi and Bengali.

Rao, Manthripragada Narasimha. *Sathya Sai Baba: God as Man*. Tustin, CA: Sathya Sai Baba Society, 1985.

Divided into three parts—Sathya, the Man; Sai Baba, the Godman; and Sathya Sai Baba, God as Man—this well-researched book presents important details about the guru, from his birth and early life up to his sixtieth year. It also offers insights on Sathya Sai Baba's family background, theology, and mission.

Sandweiss, Samuel H. *Sai Baba: The Holy Man . . . and the Psychiatrist*. San Diego, CA: Birth Day, 1975.

A psychiatrist and prominent American devotee, the author first came to Puttaparthi in 1972. The book presents a Western psychiatrist's impressions on meeting the saint and witnessing his miracles and offers a biographical account of the guru based on his frequent interactions with him and various other testimonies. It soon became a popular text that contributed to spread the saint's renown in the West.

Other Works of Narayan Kasturi on Sathya Sai Baba

Kasturi n.d. is the English version of the *Sai Bhagavatham*, a poem on the guru and his teachings that he originally composed in Kannada in the late 1950s, while Kasturi 2012, originally published in 1963, is his presentation of Sathya Sai Baba's declaration of 6 July 1963, when the saint publicly announced that he was the *avatāra* of Śiva-Śakti. Herein, the author construes his narrative as a dialogue between himself and an initially skeptical questioner. Kasturi 1979, originally published in 1966, is the hagiographer's commentary to a collection of 108 divine names attributed to his beloved guru: the text underlines Sathya Sai Baba's universalism, encompassing all names and forms of the divine. In July 1968, the hagiographer accompanied his lord on his trip to East Africa—which was to be his only trip outside of India—and Kasturi 2014 offers an account of the guru's meetings, tours, and public discourses during his visit to Kenya and Uganda. Kasturi 1968 is viewed as a landmark by devotees, this short text summarizing the main features of the guru's mission as *avatāra* of the age. Presented as a speech that the guru delivered in Puttaparthi on 23 November 1968, day of his birthday, it is actually a synthesis of excerpts taken from no less than eighteen discourses of the saint between 1963 and 1965. Kasturi 1982 is the author's autobiography, a precious testimony on his life and its turning point in July 1948, when he first met the guru and was conquered by him. This book offers many details regarding the close relationship between the hagiographer and Sathya Sai Baba. Kasturi 1984 is a biography on Easwaramma, the guru's mother, whom the author extols as a saintly figure. In Kasturi 1985a, the hagiographer focuses on the guru's characteristics as a speaker based on his long experience as his interpreter, while in Kasturi 1985b, which was the author's last work, he offers a summary of his teachings on the paths of surrender, inquiry, service, and self-realization by commenting upon Bhagavad Gita 4.34. Shivaram 2015 is a collection of twenty-nine talks that Kasturi, a brilliant and humorous speaker, delivered in Prasanthi Nilayam to groups of foreign devotees.

Kasturi, Narayan. *Sathya Sai Baba Announces His Mission and Why the Avatar Has Come, November 23, 1968*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1968.

Basing himself on a discourse that the guru delivered on 23 November 1968, his birthday, Kasturi edited this short text on the significance of Sathya Sai Baba's mission. In fact, the hagiographer construed it by synthesizing excerpts taken from no less than eighteen discourses delivered by the saint between 1963 and 1965.

Kasturi, Narayan. *Garland of 108 Precious Gems: Ashtothara Sathanama Rathnamala*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation, 1979.

In this book, originally published in 1966, the hagiographer offers his thoughtful commentary to each of the 108 divine names attributed to Sathya Sai Baba, proving his competence as a theologian. He emphasizes that the guru embodies all names and forms of divinity. Along the decades, this text has been re-edited many times as devotees recite the names and epithets of their guru as part of their daily *sādhana*.

Kasturi, Narayan. *Loving God: Eighty Five Years under the Watchful Eye of the Lord*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1982.

Divided into fifteen chapters for a total of 390 pages, this lengthy autobiography presents Kasturi's self-understanding of his life trajectory, both prior to and after his meeting with Sathya Sai Baba in 1948. The emphasis of the book is on the years from 1948 onward and details the hagiographer's unique relationship with the guru, highlighting important aspects of the saint's personality and behavior.

Kasturi, Narayan. *Easwaramma: The Chosen Mother*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust, 1984.

A biography on Meesaraganda Easwaramma (b. 1890–d. 1972), Sathya Sai Baba's mother. Married to Pedda Veṅkappa Rāju at the age of fourteen, her son Sathyanarayana, the future Sathya Sai Baba, was her fourth child. The hagiographer extols the saintly virtues of this simple woman—depicted as another Virgin Mary—and her motherly apprehension for her son, whom she recognized as a divine phenomenon from the 1940s.

Kasturi, Narayan. "Baba—As Speaker." In *Sai Chandana: Book of Homage*. Edited by Vinayak Krishna Gokak, 282–286. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, 1985a.

A presentation of Sathya Sai Baba's characteristics and special abilities as a speaker, based on the author's long experience as the guru's interpreter from Telugu into English. Sathya Sai Baba held hundreds of public discourses, at his ashram of Prasanthi Nilayam

and throughout India: all of them have been published in chronological order in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series.

Kasturi, Narayan. *Prasanthi: Pathway to Peace. As Learnt at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1985b.

In four parts, each introduced by a line from Bhagavad Gita 4.34, this was Kasturi's last work. The first part focuses on the path of surrender, the second on the path of inquiry, the third on the path of service, and the fourth on the path to self-realization. Thus, the hagiographer linked Sathya Sai Baba to Shirdi Sai Baba, given that the latter had offered his own ingenious commentary to this verse.

Kasturi, Narayan. *Siva Sakthi Swarupa*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, 2012.

Originally published in Bombay by Parijat Prakashan in 1963, herein the hagiographer presents the guru's momentous declaration of 6 July 1963, day of Gurupūrnimā, when he revealed to a huge gathering that he was the *avatāra* of Śiva-Śakti within the context of a triadic *avatāric* descent, the first one being Shirdi Sai Baba as Śiva and the third and final one being the future Prema Sai Baba as Śakti.

Kasturi, Narayan. *The Light of Love: An Account of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Visit to East Africa and His Divine Discourses*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, 2014.

Originally published in 1968, the text is divided in two parts: the first offers an account of the guru's day-by-day meetings and tours, while the second records the seven discourses that he delivered during his stay. This was the first and only time that Sathya Sai Baba traveled outside India.

Kasturi, Narayan. *The Annunciation Song*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, n.d.

In the late 1950s the hagiographer composed a *Sai Bhagavatham*, a poem of more than 300 lines on Sathya Sai Baba with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as its model. He wrote it in Kannada and subsequently prepared versions of it in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and English. Kasturi's son M. V. N. Murthy would sing the *Sai Bhagavatham* in Kannada or Tamil and the hagiographer would offer his commentary to it.

Shivaram, H. M., ed. *Sathya Sai Baba: God in Action. Talks by Prof. N. Kasturi*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, 2015.

A collection of twenty-nine talks on Sathya Sai Baba and his teachings that Kasturi delivered in Prasanthi Nilayam to groups of foreign devotees, usually after the saint's morning *darshan*. He was a brilliant and erudite speaker, full of humor, and delighted his listeners by narrating his personal experiences with his guru and lord, offering advice on the spiritual path.

On Sathya Sai Baba's Early Life

Bhatnagar 2011 and Sathya Sai Baba 2014 are collections of the guru's own reminiscences of his childhood and youth and comprise memories about his family, friends, and first devotees culled from the saint's discourses. Sathya Sai Baba 1946 is an anthology of his early Telugu poems and songs. The guru was fond of singing devotional songs and enacting mythological plays: from his childhood, he led his friends in chanting and even staged his own plays. Kondappa 2004 reveals the perception that the young guru had of himself and his *avatāric* mission as the reincarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba as early as 1944, while Padmanaban 2000 is the most thorough and accurate source on the first twenty-five years of his life, including many interviews with Puttaparthi villagers, schoolmates, friends, and devotees who were his contemporaries in the early days. Purnaiya 2003 is a collection of more than 140 early miracles of the guru, many of which were witnessed by the author, her association with Sathya Sai Baba dating back to 1945. Leela n.d. is an account of the guru's early days starting in the mid-1940s and of the building of the first Sathya Sai Baba temple in Guindy, Madras, which was sponsored by her father Sri M. J. Lokanatha Mudaliar and inaugurated by the guru in February 1949. The author of Vijayakumari 2000, who first met the saint in 1945, provides a narrative of her frequent visits to Puttaparthi and of her memories of the guru's words and deeds over a period of more than twenty years, from the second half of the 1940s to the 1960s. Padmamma 2009 offers a glimpse on the relations between the guru and Narayan Kasturi's daughter as well as Narayan Kasturi himself and other members of their family,

with whom Sathya Sai Baba was very close. Gokak 1985 comprises a collection of articles that shed light on the village of Puttaparthi, the guru's childhood and boyhood, his school years, and the genesis and growth of his constituency and of the so-called Old Mandir and Prasanthi Nilayam ashram.

Bhatnagar, Suresh C., ed. *Sai Speaks about His Childhood (Based on Sai's Discourses): A Humble Offering to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on His 85th Auspicious Birthday*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, 2011.

Divided in thirty-four chapters, this is the largest collection of Sathya Sai Baba's own reminiscences of his early days as disclosed by the guru himself during his public discourses as well as in other occasions such as private conversations. It also provides comments on various episodes that are reported in the books of Narayan Kasturi and other sources.

Gokak, Vinayak Krishna, ed. *Sai Chandana: Book of Homage*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, 1985.

A collection of seven articles by various authors. They concern the village of Puttaparthi, Sathya Sai Baba's school years and the places associated with his childhood and boyhood, the guru's early tours throughout India, the first circle of devotees, the genesis and growth of Prasanthi Nilayam, and the main festivals held herein. See Part 1, pp. 1–47.

Kondappa, V. C. *Sai's Story: As Revealed by Sathya Sai to His Teacher*. Foreword by B. Subbannachar. Bangalore, India: Sai Towers, 2004.

In this first book ever published on Sathya Sai Baba, originally titled *Sri Sayeeshuni Charitra*, one can appreciate what was the guru's own self-understanding as early as 1944, being based on the "revelations" that young Sathya made to his school teacher V. C. Kondappa. His link to Shirdi Sai Baba and some of the fundamental characteristics of his mission are here spelled out for the first time.

Leela, M. L. *Lokanatha Sai*. Madras: Sri Sathya Sai Mandali Trust, n.d.

Divided in two parts, each comprising twelve chapters, this is a devotional account of Sathya Sai Baba's early days starting in the mid-1940s. Part 2 focuses on the establishment of the first Sathya Sai Baba temple in Guindy, Madras, which houses a *mūrti* of Shirdi Sai Baba. Sponsored by the author's father Sri M. J. Lokanatha Mudaliar, it was inaugurated by Sathya Sai Baba on 3 February 1949.

Padmamma. *Twameva Matha*. Bangalore, India: Sadguru Screens, 2009.

This book by Narayan Kasturi's daughter offers an invaluable viewpoint on Sathya Sai Baba and Prasanthi Nilayam starting from 1948. Divided in nine chapters, it chronicles Padmamma's life-long experiences with the guru. She and her family were very close to him, to the point of considering him a relative. The book also contains a few letters that the guru wrote to her.

Padmanaban, Ranganathan. *Love Is My Form: A Biographical Series on Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Vol. 1, *The Advent (1926–1950)*. Bangalore, India: Sai Towers, 2000.

A mine of information on the first twenty-five years of Sathya Sai Baba's life. Based on interviews with people who knew the guru, this 600-page book contains many maps, illustrations, and old photos. It also includes primary sources, such as the guru's school records and certificates, various letters of his, and the sale deeds concerning the sites of the Old Mandir and of Prasanthi Nilayam.

Purnaiya, Nagamani. *The Divine Leelas of Bhagawan Sri Satya Sai Baba*. Bangalore, India: Sai Towers, 2003.

Originally published in Telugu in 1969, this book presents the saint's early days in Puttaparthi and describes more than 140 early miracles of his. Nagamani Purnaiya, wife of the chief commercial manager of the South Indian Railways, first met Sathya Sai Baba in Bangalore in 1945. The first English edition was released in 1976 (Bangalore, India: House of Seva).

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *Songs by Baba*. Compiled by Velugoti Sarvagna Kumar Krishna Yachendra Bahadur. Venkatagiri, India: n.p., 1946.

A collection of the guru's early Telugu poems and songs. Sathya Sai Baba was always fond of writing and singing devotional hymns (*bhajan*) and enacting mythological plays. By the time he was sixteen, he had written hundreds of songs which he taught to his friends and devotees: the singing of *bhajans* twice a day, in the morning and afternoon, characterized and still characterizes the ashram's daily routine.

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *His Story as Told by Himself: A Compilation from the Divine Discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, 2014.

Divided in eighteen chapters, this is a collection of episodes in the guru's early life as he himself described them in his public discourses. It comprises Sathya Sai Baba's memories of his grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters, friends, and first devotees.

Vijayakumari. *Anyathā Saranam Nasthi: Other Than You Refuge There Is None*. Chennai: Sai Shri Ram Printers, 2000.

The author first met the saint in 1945. Herein she offers an account of her visits to Puttaparthi and of her interactions with the guru in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, focusing on the festivals celebrated at the ashram's Old Mandir and on Sathya Sai Baba's miracles, first discourses and tours across India, up to the first World Conference and the guru's trip to East Africa.

On Sathya Sai Baba's Connection with Shirdi Sai Baba

Rigopoulos 2021 examines the tales relative to Shirdi Sai Baba's origins later appropriated by Sathya Sai Baba and the correspondences between the narratives of the Shirdi saint and the founding myth of Puttaparthi, in which sacrifice is the quintessential action that triggers the atonement of a community's sin through devotion and leads to the advent of a divine savior. Chapters 7 and 15 in Padmanaban 2000 are dedicated to the guru's declaration of being Sai Baba and to the purported connection between the two based on the existing literature and the testimonies of various individuals. Peddabottu 2013, originally published in Telugu in 1984, is the testimony of an old devotee of the Shirdi saint: she reports that in 1917 he told her that he would be reborn in Andhra Pradesh. The author, whose real name is Gali Sharada Devi, met the guru of Puttaparthi in 1940 and settled at his ashram in 1958. Chapter 6 in Murphet 1981 relates the experience of M. S. Dixit, whose uncle Hari Sitaram Dixit had been a close devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba. Apparently, the latter told H. S. Dixit that he would manifest himself as a child of eight, as Kṛṣṇa had done. Sathya Sai Baba, however, said that what Shirdi Sai Baba had actually told him was that he would be reborn in eight years, i.e., in 1926, not as a boy of eight years. Kasturi 1980–1981 dedicates two chapters to support the claim of the guru being the reincarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba, reporting testimonies from Shirdi and highlighting the similarities in their miracles, teaching, and mission. Sahukar 1983 is a biography on the Shirdi saint that provides a portrayal of Sathya Sai Baba as one of his successors, while Sholapurkar 1989 discusses their similarities and differences. Bharvani and Malhotra 1983 and Kakade and Veerabhadra Rao 1990 are typical devotional accounts emphasizing the oneness of the two holy men, while Ruhela 2015 is an overview of Shirdi Sai Baba's hints of a future birth of his along with Sathya Sai Baba's claims of being his reincarnation coupled with the latter's statements of his next manifestation as Prema Sai Baba.

Bharvani, Arjan D., and Vinod Malhotra. *Shirdi Sai and Sathya Sai Are One and the Same*. Bombay: Sai Sahitya Samithi, 1983.

The authors articulate the oneness of Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba by presenting the various "proofs" offered by the guru of Puttaparthi and by examining the two saints' sayings and teachings, which are understood to be essentially the same.

Kakade, R. T., and A. Veerabhadra Rao. *Shirdi to Puttaparthi*. Hyderabad, India: Ira Publications, 1990.

A spiritual journey from the fold of Shirdi to the fold of Puttaparthi. Divided in two parts, the first deals with the early phase of Dr. Kakade's life detailing how he became a devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba, while the second deals with later incidents in his life that drew him to Sathya Sai Baba and brought him to the conclusion of the oneness of the two saints.

Kasturi, Narayan. *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*. 2 vols. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1980–1981.

The hagiographer dedicates the tenth chapter of Part 1 (pp. 177–218) and the eighth chapter of Part 2 (pp. 125–156) to support the guru's claim of being the reincarnation of the Shirdi saint. He emphasizes their similarities—such as their habit of handing out ash—and stresses the identity of their mission, Sathya Sai Baba having come to expand the Hindu-Islamic brotherhood of his predecessor.

Murphet, Howard. *Sai Baba: Man of Miracles*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 1981.

In chapter 6, titled “The Two Sais” (pp. 58–67), the author offers an overview of the guru's “proofs” of being Sai Baba. In particular, he relates the experiences of M. S. Dixit, whose uncle Hari Sitaram Dixit had been a close devotee of the Shirdi saint. At first skeptical with regard to Sathya Sai Baba's claim, in time M. S. Dixit became convinced of the oneness of the two Sais.

Padmanaban, Ranganathan. *Love Is My Form: A Biographical Series on Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Vol. 1, *The Advent (1926–1950)*. Bangalore, India: Sai Towers, 2000.

Two chapters—chapter 7, “I am . . .” (pp. 105–121), dedicated to Sathya's declaration of being Sai Baba, and chapter 15, “The Shirdi Connection” (pp. 455–491), dedicated to the link between the two saints—offer a chronology of the events that brought the young guru to appropriate Sai Baba's figure claiming to be his reincarnation, along with the testimonies of various people who report the striking “proofs” he gave them of being Sai Baba.

Peddabottu [Gali Sharada Devi]. *Autobiography*. Translated by Sathya Sai Shree Lakshmi. Hyderabad, India: Visual Graphix & Printing, 2013.

Originally published in Telugu in 1984 with the title *Sweeya Charithra*. Known as “Shirdi Ma,” the author first met Sathya Sai Baba in 1940 and settled permanently at his ashram in 1958. A devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba, she reports that during her last visit to Shirdi in 1917 the saint told her that he would be reborn in Andhra Pradesh and that she would live with him forever.

Rigopoulos, Antonio. “Connections and Correspondences in the Hagiographies of Shirdi Sai Baba's and Sathya Sai Baba's Origins.” *East and West* 61.2 (December 2021): 125–157.

The narratives of Shirdi Sai Baba's origins, later appropriated by Sathya Sai Baba, show the power of motifs and find their exemplars in the integrative traditions of the 15th century poet-saint Kabīr and the god Dattātreya. The correspondences between the tales of the Shirdi saint and the founding myth of Puttaparthi are noteworthy. Theologically, what is central to these stories is sacrifice.

Ruhela, Satya Pal. *The Triple Incarnations of Sai Baba: Sri Shirdi Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and Future Prema Sai Baba*. Gurgaon: Partridge India, 2015.

The author offers an overview of Shirdi Sai Baba's hints of a future incarnation of his along with Sathya Sai Baba's claims of being his reincarnation coupled with the latter's statements of his future manifestation as Prema Sai Baba. Ruhela had published a book on these issues already in 1993: *Sai Trinity: Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai, Prema Sai Incarnations* (Faridabad, India: Sai Age Publications).

Sahukar, Mani. *Sai Baba: The Saint of Shirdi*. Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1983.

The book is divided in two parts: in the first the author presents Shirdi Sai Baba's life and teachings, while in the second she deals with his successors: Shri Upasani Baba, Sati Godavari Mataji, and Shri Sathya Sai Baba. The author had the opportunity of meeting Sathya Sai Baba on several occasions and herein she relates two tokens of the guru's grace toward her.

Sholapurkar, G. R. *Foot-Prints at Shirdi and Puttaparthi*. Foreword by Vinayak Krishna Gokak. Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1989.

Defined by Vinayak Krishna Gokak as a study in comparative mysticism, the book is divided in two parts, the first being a presentation of Shirdi Sai Baba and the second and longest one being a presentation of Sathya Sai Baba. In the last chapter the author discusses the points of similarity and difference by comparing their lives, teachings, and miracles.

Sathya Sai Baba's Discourses and Writings

Rama Raju 1985 focuses on the guru's use of his native Telugu, in both his discourses and writings. Sathya Sai Baba 2008–2015 is the collection of the guru's public discourses from 1953 to 1979, subdivided in eleven volumes translated into English from their original Telugu by Narayan Kasturi: these speeches document his fundamental teachings, centered upon *bhakti* and non-dual Vedanta. Gries and Gries 1993 is a valuable index to the American edition of these eleven volumes. All of the saint's discourses are collected in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series, which to date comprises forty-two volumes, from 1953 to 2009. Sathya Sai Baba 1982 is the first of the guru's collection of fifteen *Vahinis*, which like the following ones originally came out as a series of Telugu articles for the monthly newsletter *Sanathana Sarathi*, later translated into English by Narayan Kasturi. *Prema Vahini* is dedicated to the subject of pure love (*preman*): the guru points out how *preman* knows no rules and regulations, "no reason and no season." Sathya Sai Baba 1975 is the saint's commentary to the ten principal *Upaniṣads* (*Īśā*, *Kaṭha*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Praśna*, *Kena*, *Chāndogya*, *Aitareya*, *Taittirīya*) plus the *Brahmānubhāva Upaniṣad*. Sathya Sai Baba 1983 is his commentary to the Bhagavad Gita, while Sathya Sai Baba 1979 is his paraphrase and commentary to the Bhāgavata Purāna. Sathya Sai Baba 1978 is a collection of his teachings on *sādhana*, i.e., the various disciplines a spiritual aspirant should follow, including the three paths of devotion, action, and knowledge. Sathya Sai Baba 2000 offers an appreciation of the fundamental role of gurus, while Gita, et al. 2000 is a useful list of Sanskrit words with their corresponding English meanings as they appear in the English editions of the guru's discourses and writings.

Gita, Sai, A. Balaji, and V. Mrunalini. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary: A Compilation of Sanskrit Words (in English) as Appearing in the Sai Literature*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 2000.

A compilation in alphabetical order of Sanskrit words and their corresponding English meanings as appearing in the English editions of the guru's *Vahinis*, the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series, the *Summer Showers* series, and Narayan Kasturi's *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram* (Kasturi 1980–1983, cited under Narayan Kasturi's Official Biography *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram* and Other Biographies by Devotees and Ex-Devotees).

Gries, David, and Elaine Gries, eds. *An Index of Sathya Sai Speaks, Vols. I–XI: Covering Discourses by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba 1953–1982*. Tustin, CA: Sathya Sai Book Center of America, 1993.

A detailed index to the American edition of the first eleven volumes of Sathya Sai Baba's discourses compiled by Narayan Kasturi. The text is enriched by three other sections: the first deals with the analogies utilized by the guru, the second with his stories and parables, and the third with statements that Sathya Sai Baba said about himself.

Rama Raju, B. "Sathya Sai as a Master of the Telugu Language and as a Writer." In *Sai Chandana: Book of Homage*. Edited by Vinayak Krishna Gokak, 287–294. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, 1985.

The author notes that the guru spoke the Rayalaseema dialect of Telugu, sometimes with verbal endings of modern standard Telugu. He underlines his dexterity in handling his native language and his mastery in the selection of the choicest words.

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *Upanishad Vahini*. Bangalore, India: Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation, 1975.

After a general introduction, the guru offers his own commentary to eleven *Upaniṣads*: the *Īśā*, the *Kaṭha*, the *Muṇḍaka*, the *Māṇḍūkya*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, the *Praśna*, the *Kena*, the *Chāndogya*, the *Aitareya*, the *Taittirīya*, and the *Brahmānubhāva*. As is typical with all *Vahinis*, these commentaries were originally published in Telugu in the *Sanathana Sarathi* newsletter and later translated into English by Narayan Kasturi.

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *Sadhana: The Inward Path. Quotations from the Divine Discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Bangalore, India: Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation, 1978.

A compilation of the guru's teachings on the spiritual discipline dealing with the three main *sādhānās* or paths—of devotion, action, and knowledge—meditation, asceticism, the guru's role, diet, the three *guṇas*, and the significance of Hindu festivals. In his foreword, Narayan Kasturi writes that this work is an effort to assemble together important facets of Sathya Sai Baba's message and present them for deeper study, contemplation, and practice.

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *Bhagavatha Vahini*. Translated by Narayan Kasturi. Bangalore, India: Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation, 1979.

The guru's paraphrase and commentary to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, a seminal text for all devotees, especially its tenth book, which tells the story of the *avatāra* Kṛṣṇa. Already in 1943, while he was still studying in Uravakonda, Sathya Sai Baba is reported to have explained to a local pundit the most complex passages of the *Uddhavagītā*, which is part of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *Prema Vahini: Discourses by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1982.

The first of the guru's collection of fifteen *Vahinis*, lit. "stream," originally written as a series of articles for the monthly newsletter *Sanathana Sarathi*. He discusses the subject of pure love underlining how the three paths of knowledge (*jñāna*), action (*karman*), and devotion (*bhakti*) are in fact one indivisible whole. All *Vahinis* can be found online.

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *Geetha Vahini: Discourses by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1983.

The guru's commentary to the Bhagavad Gita. He attributed the greatest importance to this text and dedicated the last summer course of the 1970s to it. References to the Bhagavad Gita are numerous in his discourses: he noted that the gist of the poem is dharma and that dharma is duty with love. In 1959, he materialized a copy of the Bhagavad Gita in Telugu script for Suri Bhagavantham, a renowned physicist.

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *Sree Gurucharanam: A Compilation of Divine Discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba during Guru Poornima (1956–1998)*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books & Publications, 2000.

From the time of his solemn declaration of being Sai Baba, when in October 1940 (or 1943) he sang the *bhajan Mānasa bhajare gurucaraṇam/Dustara-bhava-sāgara-taraṇam*—"Worship in thy mind the guru's feet: [these alone] carry over the ocean of existence, hard to overcome"—Sathya Sai Baba emphasized the relevance of the guru's role, presenting himself as none other than Dattātreya, the supreme guru-god and eternal *avatāra*.

Sathya Sai Baba, Shri. *Sathya Sai Speaks. Vols. 1–11, Discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Delivered during 1953–1972)*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, 2008–2015.

Sathya Sai Baba started delivering public speeches in 1953 and continued to do so up to his last years. His first discourses are especially revealing of his essential teachings. The guru's biographer Narayan Kasturi was the editor and English translator of the first eleven volumes of the guru's Telugu speeches. All his discourses are collected in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series, which comprises forty-two volumes, from 1953 to 2009; available online.

On Sathya Sai Baba's Teachings

Rigopoulos 2021 is an exegesis of Sathya Sai Baba's first public discourse, which he delivered in 1953 in Prasanthi Nilayam on the final day of the Dasara festival. Hislop 1978 is a collection of more than fifty conversations spanning the decade 1968–1978 between the guru and John S. Hislop, an influential devotee who was chairman of the American branch of the Sathya Sai Organization since 1975. Hislop first came to know about the guru through the wife of Desikacharya Rajagopalacharya of the Theosophical Society. Bilimoria 1993 highlights Sathya Sai Baba's ambivalence in relation to the Vedas, showing his capacity of spanning through the dichotomies of traditionalism and modernity. Devi 1975 explains the kind of "Sai Yoga" taught by the guru along with the yoga that she herself taught at his ashram in the late 1960s and early 1970s, while Srinivas 2014 examines Sathya Sai Baba's ideas on yoga with

special focus on *bhaktiyoga* and service (*sevā*), along with his conceptualization of the human body. The author shows how the guru's ideas and recommended practices intersect with those of other movements and teachers, including the Theosophical Society and Buddhism. Penn 1981 provides a collection of thoughtful articles on Sathya Sai Baba's teachings by a person who was close to the guru from the mid-1960s, while Mazzoleni 1994 testifies to the author's initial crisis and inner struggle to accommodate Christianity and Hinduism: it argues that devotion to Sathya Sai Baba is compatible with Christian faith, since the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and those of the guru are basically the same. Roof 1991 presents the theory and practice of study circles in Sathya Sai Baba centers. The guru's words are revered as inherently powerful: a tool for bringing about the transformation of the individual and of the whole society. Romano 1999 is a study of the educational system of Sathya Sai Baba's schools, in India as well as in other parts of the world, based upon the implementation of the guru's education in human values (EHV) program. Raghavan 1990 provides a summary of Sathya Sai Baba's message, being organized as a catechism of sorts with more than 300 questions and answers. It highlights the purported unity of the major world religions and offers alphabetical and numerical representations of the guru's teachings.

Bilimoria, Purushottama. "Sri Aurobindo and Sri Sathya Sai Baba on *Sruti (Vedas)*." *Darshana International* 33.4.132 (1993): 1–6.

In this short comparative article, the author offers insightful remarks on Sathya Sai Baba's ambivalence, in particular his capacity of spanning through the dichotomies of traditionalism and modernity: on the one hand appearing to be the most traditionalist of traditionalists and on the other the most modern among moderns.

Devi, Indra [Eugenie V. Peterson]. *Sai Baba and Sai Yoga*. New Delhi: MacMillan India, 1975.

The Russian-born American Indra Devi, a renowned yoga teacher, first met Sathya Sai Baba in 1966 having learned about him from Howard Murphet and his wife. Herein she reports her experiences with the guru and the kind of yoga that he taught and that she herself taught at his ashram with his explicit encouragement. Indra Devi had studied with the "father of modern yoga" Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya.

Hislop, John S. *Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Bangalore, India: Sri Sathya Sai Baba Society of America, 1978.

These conversations with the guru by the influential devotee John S. Hislop date from January 1968 through February 1978. The book comprises more than fifty conversations: the first two are reproduced in full while the following ones are taken from notes made from memory. Sathya Sai Baba considered Hislop his best foreign devotee.

Mazzoleni, Mario. *A Catholic Priest Meets Sai Baba*. Faber, VA: Leela Press, 1994.

Written by an Italian Catholic priest, the book aims at showing how devotion to Sathya Sai Baba is compatible with Christian faith, underlining the similarities and essential oneness of Jesus' and the guru's teachings. Soon after the publication of the Italian edition in 1991, Mazzoleni was excommunicated *latae sententiae* by the Catholic Church.

Penn, Charles. *My Beloved: The Love and Teaching of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Baba Books and Publications, 1981.

A prominent Australian-American devotee, the author first heard of Sathya Sai Baba in 1964 and subsequently had the privilege of becoming close to him. The book comprises a collection of articles on the guru and his teachings as well as correspondence from Sathya Sai Baba and Narayan Kasturi.

Raghavan, Kausalyarani. *Guide to Indian Culture and Spirituality: Based on the Divine Teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sri Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications, 1990.

Arranged in seven chapters with more than 300 questions and answers, the book offers a summary of Sathya Sai Baba's message being a catechism of sorts. It ends with a series of 108 moral maxims of the guru to be practiced in daily life.

Rigopoulos, Antonio. “*Mānasa Bhajare: A Commentary on Sathya Sai Baba’s First Public Discourse.*” In *Itineraries of an Anthropologist: Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri*. Edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi, 199–235. Venice: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2021.

An examination of the guru’s first public discourse, which he delivered in his ashram of Prasanthi Nilayam on 17 October 1953, on the evening of Vijayādaśamī, final day of the Dasara festival. Sathya Sai Baba was twenty-six years old. Scholarly attention has focused on his charisma and purported powers but very little on his teachings, which the guru viewed as the most important aspect of his avatāric mission.

Romano, Claudia. “Teoria e pratica del ‘Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Program.’” BA thesis, Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia, 1999.

A thorough presentation and discussion of the educational system of Sathya Sai Baba’s schools. The thesis is divided in four parts: Sathya Sai Baba and his message; the educational theory; Indian schools and colleges; and applications of the Sathya Sai EHV program in other parts of the world: Zambia, Thailand, Nepal, Australia, Sweden, and Italy.

Roof, Jonathan. *Pathways to God: A Study Guide to the Teachings of Sathya Sai Baba*. Faber, VA: Leela Press, 1991.

An introduction to the theory and practice of study circles in Sathya Sai Baba centers, detailing the ways in which the guru’s teachings are meditated upon in view of their practical implementation through *sādhana*, service activities, and the EHV program.

Srinivas, Smriti. “Sathya Sai Baba and the Repertoire of Yoga.” In *Gurus of Modern Yoga*. Edited by Mark Singleton and Ellen Goldberg, 261–279. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

A perceptive exploration of the ideas on yoga in the guru’s life and message. In particular, the author focuses on Sathya Sai Baba’s teaching of *bhaktiyoga* and his conceptualization of the body and its virtuous utilization through *sevā*, service to society.

On Sathya Sai Baba’s Powers

The display of a vast array of purported supernatural powers, ranging from the materialization of ash (*vibhūti*), rings, fruits, sweets, etc., to omniscience (*antarajñāna*) and the curing of all sorts of diseases has been the guru’s distinctive mark. The miraculous was his “visiting card” throughout his life, though the guru and his hagiographer Narayan Kasturi took pains to argue that his was not to be understood as a mere exhibition of *siddhis* but rather as a natural, inborn characteristic of his full *avatāra*hood. His fame as a miracle worker was the main reason that attracted masses of people from across the world to the remote village of Puttaparthi. Steel 1999 and Haraldsson 2013 present comprehensive classifications and analyses of his miracles, which their respective authors view as genuine (subsequently, however, Steel became disillusioned with the guru). On the other hand, the authors of Kooroor 1976 and Premanand 1982 have been among the staunchest critics of Sathya Sai Baba, denouncing him as a fraud. Ruhela 1997 offers a collection of press articles that appeared between 1972 and 1996 documenting the various attacks launched against the guru and the ongoing opposition between his followers and anti-guru activists. Rigopoulos 2016 looks at the saint’s connection to sacred trees and in particular to a local tamarind tree from which the guru in his youth prodigiously collected all sorts of different fruits, to the point that it came to be renowned as the wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpavṛkṣa*). The testimony on Sathya Sai Baba’s alleged powers in Roumanoff 1990, whose author visited his ashram as early as February 1960, is noteworthy and shows his ambivalent reactions to the guru’s *siddhis*. Bhatnagar 2011 presents the significance of the guru’s materialization of ash from an insider’s point of view, offering insights with regard to its symbolism and therapeutic value, while Swallow 1982 connects the guru’s materialization of *vibhūti* to his characterization as Śiva, linking it to his declaration of being an *avatāra* of Śiva-Śakti. Srinivas 2017 discusses the peculiar role and function of magic in the guru’s transnational movement and its implicit critique of scientism.

Bhatnagar, Suresh C., ed. *Sai Vibhuti Prasadam and Its Significance (Based on Sai’s Teachings): A Humble Offering to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, 2011.

Divided in sixteen chapters, this is an insider’s perspective on Sathya Sai Baba’s daily materialization of ash, its symbolism and religious meaning, and its alleged curative and protective powers. The book also discusses the miraculous appearance of *vibhūti* on pictures and idols of the guru and various other deities in shrines and private homes.

Haraldsson, Erlendur. *Modern Miracles: Sathya Sai Baba: The Story of a Modern Day Prophet*. Guildford, UK: White Crow Books, 2013.

Revised edition of an investigative report on psychic phenomena associated with Sathya Sai Baba originally published in 1997. A psychology professor, Haraldsson conducted researches on the guru's alleged miracles for decades, paying regular visits to Sathya Sai Baba starting in 1972. The guru, however, did not allow him to conduct clinical tests on him. In spite of his longlasting efforts, Haraldsson could find no evidence of fraud.

Kovoor, Abraham. *Bygone Godmen! Encounters with Spiritual Frauds*. Bombay: Jaico, 1976.

The author, a retired Indian professor and rationalist, exposes as frauds a number of Indian and Sri Lankan god-men including Sathya Sai Baba. Kovoor's contention is that the guru's purported materializations of ash and various other items were performed through sleight of hand. His trenchant criticism of paranormal phenomena played a noticeable role in the development of the Indian rationalist movement.

Premanand, Basava. *The Lure of Miracles*. Podanur: Indian CSICOP, 1982.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Sathya Sai Baba's vast array of miracles were debunked by a number of rationalists and skeptics, among whom Premanand, the founder of the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations, had a pivotal role. He argues that Sathya Sai Baba's so-called miracles are nothing but conjuring tricks, though it should be noted that he himself never met the guru.

Rigopoulos, Antonio. "A Modern *Kalpavṛkṣa*: Sathya Sāi Bābā and the Wish-Fulfilling Tree." In *Roots of Wisdom, Branches of Devotion: Plant Life in South Asian Traditions*. Edited by Fabrizio M. Ferrari and Thomas Dähnhardt, 3–28. Sheffield, UK, and Bristol, UK: Equinox, 2016.

The article explores the significance of divine trees in the construction of the guru's charisma. Attention is paid to the saint's appropriation of the myths relative to the *pārijāta*, *kalpavṛkṣa*, and *bodhi* trees, which are related to his advent, powers, and prescribed meditative practices.

Roumanoff, Daniel. "Satya Sai Baba et les siddhi." In *Candide au pays des Gourous: Journal d'un explorateur de l'Inde spirituelle*. Preface of Michel Hulin, 129–147. Croissy-Beaubourg, France: DervyLivres, 1990.

The author paid a visit to Sathya Sai Baba in February 1960 and was one of the very first Westerners to find his way to the guru's ashram of Prasanthi Nilayam. Coming from a non-devotee, his early observations on the guru of "Patupathi" and his purported powers and charisma, coupled with his impressions of the place and the people he met, are of special interest.

Ruhela, Satya Pal. *Sri Sathya Sai Baba and the Press (1972–1996)*. New Delhi: Umang Paperbacks, 1997.

A collection of press articles documenting the attacks that the guru had to face over the years and the opposition between devotees and anti-guru activists. The Indian press has been replete with injunctions against Sathya Sai Baba. Besides the ongoing controversy over his alleged supernatural powers, over the years the guru has been accused of sexual and financial misconduct.

Srinivas, Tulasi. "Doubtful Illusions: Magic, Wonder, and the Politics of Virtue in the Sathya Sai Movement." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52.4 (2017): 381–411.

The guru's devotees live in an atmosphere saturated with magic: an enchanted world that coexists with modernity and carries with itself an implicit critique of rationality. Given Sathya Sai Baba's constant display of powers, the role of magic has been paramount in his movement. In this article the guru's magic is accounted for vis-à-vis the rationalist critique of it.

Steel, Brian. *The Powers of Sathya Sai Baba*. Delhi: BR Publishing, 1999.

Through the six chapters of this book the author attempts a classification and analysis of the wide range of powers attributed to Sathya Sai Baba, including the resurrection of dead bodies. In the epilogue, Steel also considers some of the main academic investigations of the guru's powers and the way Indian media have covered them. The book comprises a glossary and a thorough bibliography.

Swallow, Deborah A. "Ashes and Powers: Myth, Rite, and Miracle in an Indian Godman's Cult." *Modern Asian Studies* 16.1 (1982): 123–158.

The author concentrates on Sathya Sai Baba's Śiva aspects, which are linked to the guru's production of ash. She presents his claim of being an *avatāra* of Śiva by analyzing a public discourse he delivered in July 1963, on the occasion of Gurupūrṇimā, in which he referred the Sai Baba avatāric lineage to a boon that Śiva and Śakti had once granted to seer Bharadvāja.

On Sathya Sai Baba's Transnational Movement

Urban 2003 understands the guru and his movement to be conservative on fundamentals, simultaneously representing a paradigmatic example of the cultural contradictions of global capitalism. Kent 2005 provides a detailed picture of the noticeable growth of the Sathya Sai Baba movement in Malaysia, while Klass 1991 explores its religious, political, and economic impact in Trinidad. Meier 2014 is a case study of its ritual adaptability in a European context. Both Palmer 2005 and Bauman 2012 show how the Sathya Sai Organization has adapted itself to the American milieu by minimizing its Hindu ritual component and maximizing its call to service to society, in an effort to promote the guru's universalism and global appeal. Srinivas 2012 analyzes the sacred objects materialized by the guru, arguing that these items shape a politics of visual materiality: as iconic magical devices, as desirable objects creating a devotional aesthetic, and as symbols of devotional status. Hawkins 1999 is a penetrating essay on the role played by visual and digital media in the guru's inclusivist strategy and the expansion of his globalized organization. Sahoo and Kelly 2013 shows how the Indians of the diaspora have come to reshape their religious identity via the Sathya Sai movement, emphasizing the transformations brought about by the Internet and communication technology in their reappropriation of tradition. Das 2015 concentrates on how Indian televisions covered Sathya Sai Baba's funeral in April 2011 as an example of how religion is effectively communicated in our globalized world.

Bauman, Chad. "Sathya Sai Baba: At Home Abroad in Midwestern America." In *Public Hinduisms*. Edited by John Zavos, Pralay Kanungo, Deepa S. Reddy, Maya Warrior, and Raymond Brady Williams, 141–159. New Delhi: SAGE, 2012.

The author documents the adaptation of the guru's movement to the needs and expectations of its American devotees, evidencing the semiotic flexibility of Sathya Sai Baba's charisma. Bauman highlights the movement's emphasis on the cultivation of selfless service (*sevā*) in which the bond of love with the "other," especially the needy and the sick—identified with the guru himself, proving his universal relationality—is essential.

Das, Manoj Kumar. "Televising Religion: A Study of Sathya Sai Baba's Funeral Broadcast in Gangtok, India." *Anthropological Notebooks* 21.3 (2015): 83–104.

The guru's funeral in April 2011 was fully covered by Indian televisions and millions of people throughout the country watched it. The author focuses attention on the way the solemn ceremony was broadcasted in an effort to maximize the emotional involvement of the grieving viewers glued to their TV screens.

Hawkins, Sophie. "Bordering Realism: The Aesthetics of Sai Baba's Mediated Universe." In *Image Journeys: Audio-Visual Media and Cultural Change in India*. Edited by Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher, 139–162. New Delhi: SAGE, 1999.

An analysis of the use of visual and digital media in the Sathya Sai Baba globalized organization. The author points out that through his inclusivist strategy as world teacher, the guru has been able to assert himself as the uncontainable god of gods, above and beyond particularized faiths. Along these lines, she argues that Sathya Sai Baba and his movement mimic to great success the globalizing strategies of multinationals.

Kent, Alexandra. *Divinity and Diversity: A Hindu Revitalization Movement in Malaysia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005.

The book discusses the presence of the Sathya Sai Baba movement in Malaysia, where the guru has an important following. The author argues that the movement, given its global spread across religions and cultures, calls into question the sovereignty of the nation-state itself. Sathya Sai Baba's cosmopolitan organization is seen as an exemplary case of the role that faith and devotion play in our globalized world.

Klass, Morton. *Singing with Sai Baba: The Politics of Revitalization in Trinidad*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991.

The author investigates the emergence in Trinidad of a new, universalistic religion centered upon Sathya Sai Baba and explores its political and economic implications. Klass argues that the guru's movement has been transformed into an elite revitalization movement among Trinidadians of South Asian descent.

Meier, Vanessa. "Song Choices of Swiss Sathya Sai Baba Devotees." *Diskus: The Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions* 16.1 (2014): 68–81.

The article evidences the ritual adaptability of the Sathya Sai Baba movement in the West by focusing on the singing of devotional hymns by Swiss devotees. Their peculiar mixture of Sanskrit *bhajans* and Swiss songs evidences what the author calls the movement's strategies of de-territorialization and re-territorialization. In order to promote his religious universalism, Sathya Sai Baba encouraged all Western followers to sing in their own language.

Palmer, Norris W. "Baba's World: A Global Guru and His Movement." In *Gurus in America*. Edited by Thomas A. Forsthoefel and Cynthia A. Humes, 97–122. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.

The author documents how over the years the Sathya Sai Organization has succeeded in adapting itself to the different needs and sensibilities of its American followers so as to demonstrate the universality of the guru's persona and message. Its adoption of a nonsectarian devotionism that minimizes the Hindu ritual element and its focus on projects of service to society have proven to be its strength.

Sahoo, Ajaya Kumar, and Melissa Kelly. "Social Movements in the Diasporic Context: The Sathya Sai Baba Movement." In *The Political Economy of South Asian Diaspora: Patterns of Socio-Economic Influence*. Edited by Gopinath Pillai, 143–166. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

The authors examine how diasporic Indians have reconstructed their religious identity through participation in the Sathya Sai Baba movement and highlight the impact and transformations brought about by the Internet and communication technology. Sahoo's PhD dissertation, titled "Religion, Diaspora, and Transnational Networks: The Case of Sri Sathya Sai Baba Movement" (Shodhganga University of Hyderabad, 2006) focuses on these same issues.

Srinivas, Tulasi. "Articles of Faith: Material Piety, Devotional Aesthetics, and the Construction of a Moral Economy in the Transnational Sathya Sai Movement." *Visual Anthropology* 25.4 (2012): 270–302.

An examination of the meanings and patterns of circulation of sacred objects materialized by the guru or linked with him, showing how ideas of transcendence and transformation are embedded in them and contribute to the construction of a moral economy.

Urban, Hugh B. "Avatar for Our Age: Sathya Sai Baba and the Cultural Contradictions of Late Capitalism." *Religion* 33 (2003): 73–93.

The author argues that if on the one hand Sathya Sai Baba upholds the preservation of the traditional religious values of India in the face of the relentless expansion of Western-dominated capitalism, on the other he and his movement can be seen as the embodiment of some of the deepest cultural contradictions of global capitalism.

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