

Chapter 3 The Avatar: Light From Above

1. What Is an Avatar?

The word avatar is derived from the Sanskrit word meaning “descent.” An avatar is a descent of spirit into form. Although all people are spiritual beings encased in mortal bodies, the word avatar describes the manifestation of God in human form. All people possess a divine inner reality, but few manifest it. The avatar expresses divinity throughout his incarnation. His earthly career is a sign of his everlasting love for all people.

Generally, the avatar is described as a “coming down” from a higher status to a lower one. But no! When the baby in the cradle weeps, wails, and clamors for help, the mother stoops and takes it in her arms. Her stoop is not to be described as a “coming down.”

Sathya Sai Speaks 10, p.229

2. When Darkness Threatens

In the Hindu tradition, the Supreme Godhead is said to incarnate from age to age when evil is rampant and righteousness is in danger of extinction. He comes to reestablish justice and spiritual order. By an act of divine will, he assumes a human form to reverse the trend of social decline.

Whenever there is a languishing of dharma (spiritual duty) or righteousness and an upheaval of unrighteousness, I create myself, for it is part of the primal resolution, or sankalpa, to protect the spiritual structure of the universe. I lay aside my formless essence and assume a name and a form suited to the purpose for which I come. Whenever evil threatens to vanquish good, I have to come and save it from decline.

Sathya Sai Speaks 5, p.324

第三章 神化身：来自天上的光

1. 神化身是什么？

Avatar（神化身）这个字源自梵文（Sanskrit），意为“下降”。一个神化身就是一个灵化成形而下降。虽然，所有人都是装在难免一死的肉身之内的灵体，然而，神化身（avatar）指的是神显现于人身之中。凡是人都拥有神圣的内在真性但极少人把它彰显出来。神化身在整个化身过程中都表现出神性。他在世间的生涯是他给世人永垂不朽的爱的一个标志。

一般上，神化身被说是一个“下降”，从一个较高的身份“下降”到一个较低的身份。但不是！当婴儿在摇篮内哭叫时，母亲就前来弯腰把他抱起来。她的弯腰没有被说是一个“下降”。

《沙迪亚赛说》第10章229面

2. 受到黑暗威胁时

在印度教的传统上，人们认为当邪恶猖獗而正义陷入危机时，至高无上的神首就下凡。他来重建公平正义的灵性秩序。借神圣意愿的一个行动，他采取一个人的形相去扭转社会堕落的倾向。

每当正义（*dharma*法）衰微而不义嚣张时，我任命我自己，因为这是力挽狂澜已既倒的主要解决之道或神的旨意（*sankalpa*）以保护宇宙的灵性结构。我把无形的本质置于一旁而采纳适于我下凡的一个名和相。当邪恶威胁和压抑善良时，我必须前来扭转乾坤。

《沙迪亚赛说》第5章324面

The Lord takes human birth to save the good and subdue evil-doers. When evil threatens to overwhelm righteousness and devotees pray for redemption, the Lord incarnates to renew the path of spiritual endeavor. The call of earnest aspirants draws the Lord to manifest himself. Their prayers and his compassion culminate in this epochal event.

The Lord comes as avatar when he is anxiously awaited by saints and sages. Sadhus prayed – and I have come.

Sathya Sai Speaks 4, p.8

The Lord takes birth to show us the means to achieve God-realization. Only by appearing as a human being can he illustrate correct paths of action. Only by living among us can he encourage aspirants to understand and love God. We require an example to demonstrate divine qualities.

This formless being comes in the form of a human being so that he may mix with the human beings and set up examples and ideals for human beings and convey to them all aspects that they should learn.

Summer Roses on the Blue Mountains, p.51

By assuming human form, the Lord sets an example of ideal human behavior. By appearing among us, he captures our love and motivates us to action. The epic tales of ancient India (the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Puranas) recount the lives of the avatars such as Rama and Krishna in past ages. These accounts are not simply histories: they are guidebooks of spiritual living. They set forth ideal examples of right conduct, compassion, and truth. They illustrate the tender and “human” side of God as well as his might.

The Avatara behaves in a human way so that mankind can feel kinship, but rises to superhuman heights so that mankind can aspire to those heights.

Sathya Sai Speaks 4, p.41

The reasons for God to incarnate in each age vary in detail. The manifestation must suit the time and circumstance. Some incarnations appear for a specific and limited purpose. Other avatars come for more general reasons, such as reestablishing truth and spiritual direction.

主以人身下凡来拯救善者和抑制恶者。当正义受到邪恶征服之威胁而信徒们祈求救赎时，主于是下凡来修复这条灵修的道路。求道者热烈的呼唤引起主的显灵。他们的祈祷和他的慈悲终究达成此意义深重的事件。

当圣贤们正焦急地等待的时候，主以神化身降临。应真诚的求道者的祈祷，我来了。

《沙迪亚赛说》第4章8面

主化身降世来指示我们明心见性的法门。只有以人身出现他才能说明行动的正确途径。只有借跟我们一起生活，他才能鼓舞求道者去了解神和爱神。我们需要展示神圣素质的一个榜样。

这无相的存有借一个人身下凡以便与人类生活在一起，并为人类树立好榜样而传达人类该学的各方面的知识。

《蓝山的夏季玫瑰》第51面

借人身，主树立人类理想行为的好榜样。借出现于我们之中，他抓住我们的爱和激发我们去行动。古印度叙事诗的故事（摩诃婆罗多Mahabharata，罗摩衍那Ramayana和往世书Puranas）记述过去时代神化身的生活，如罗摩和基士拿。这些记述不仅仅是历史而已：它们是灵性生活的指南。它们记述正确行为，仁慈和真理的理想典范。它们说明神的温柔和“人性”的一面也说明他的威权。

神化身的行为举止之所以一若常人，目的就在于让人类能有一种亲切感，但又要耸立于超凡的高度以便人类能渴望攀登那些高度。

《沙迪亚赛说》第4章41面

每一个时代神化身下凡的原因都各有不同，而其彰显也必须适宜于时间和情况的需求。一些神化身只为了一个特别而有限定的目的而出现。另一些化身则有更多的原因，如重建真理和灵性的方向。

Of the avatars, some are for a definite limited purpose, like Vamana or Narasimha. They are just manifestations to counter some particular evils. They are not full-fledged, long-lasting, expansive, like Rama and Krishna.

Sathya Sai Speaks 4, p.154

For this reason, some incarnations are born with only the powers requisite for the task at hand. Others, such as Sathya Sai, are endowed with powers beyond the immediate need. The Rama avatar manifested part of his power through his brothers. However, Krishna was a poorna (full) avatar, an incarnation manifesting complete divine powers.

That is to say, the avatar might manifest only such part of the Divine Glory as was essential for the task which brought the form or it might exceed the limited purpose for which it came and shine in full grandeur. Rama is a good example of the first and Krishna of the second.

Sathya Sai Speaks 4, p.132

The goal of the avatar suits the requirements of the age. During the four spiritual ages of humanity, the message is taught according to human capacity to learn. In the Kritha Yuga, the spiritual “Golden Age,” meditation was emphasized. In the Treta Yuga, the following era, ritual acts and sacrifices held primary importance. In the declining Dwapara Yuga, ritual worship dominated spiritual endeavor. In the current age, the Kali Yuga, which is characterized by spiritual decline, the principal lesson is simply remembrance of the name of the Lord. The Kali Yuga commenced at the time of Krishna’s death, February 20, 3102 B.C. It will have a duration of 11,000 years.

It is not possible for human beings to fully understand the nature of the avatar. Although he appears as a human being, his power and capacity soar beyond our understanding. He sees the past, present, and future of all. By his unique powers, he guides individuals and society toward spiritual regeneration.

就神化身而言，有的是为了一个一定而有限定的目的，如耆摩那（Vamana）或那罗新哈（Narasimha）。他们的现身只是为了对付某些特别的恶魔。他们不是全面的，持久的，范围广大的，如罗摩和基士拿。

《沙迪亚赛说》第4章154面

基于此原因，一些化身只带着当时任务所需的力量诞生。其他的化身，如沙迪亚赛则赋有超过目前需要的力量而来。神化身罗摩通过其兄弟来显现部分力量。而基士拿则是圆满的神化身（poorna avatar），彰显完全的神圣力量。

换句话说，神化身或只展现任务所需的部分力量，抑或，超越一定的目的而展现其圆满的光辉。罗摩属于第一类而基士拿则是第二类。

《沙迪亚赛说》第4章132面

神化身的目标适合于那个时代的要求。在人类的四大灵性时代，信息的传授完全依据人类的学习能力来制定。在黄金期（Kritha Yuga），即灵性的黄金期，强调的是坐禅。接下来的三分期（Treta Yuga），祭祀的活动与供品处于重要地位。在逐渐衰败的二分期（Dwapara Yuga），膜拜驾凌一切。我们现在所处的伽利期（Kali Yuga），是灵性式微时期，主要的灵修课业只在于持名。伽利期始于基士拿圆寂之后，即公元前3102年2月20日，为期一万一千年。

人类是不可能完全了解神化身的本质的。虽然他以人身出现，但是他的力量和能力却远在我们所能理解之上。他洞悉我们的过去，现在和未来。他用他独特的力量引导个人和社会迈向灵性重生。

The avatara-purusha, however, has come solely to save mankind, and so he is aware of the pilgrim, the path, and the goal. He is the Master of Creation and he is fully conscious of his power. He knows the past, the present, and the future of all. He leads and liberates.

Sathya Sai Speaks 7, p.473

3. The Nature of the Avatar

Although the avatar wields power beyond imagination, he relates to each of us as our closest friend. He reads the heart and mind of each. To each man, woman, or child, he appears not as a powerful sovereign, but as our dearest companion. His power manifests to us as love and wisdom, not as force or dominion.

The avatar is a child to the children, boy to the boys, a man among men, a woman among women, so that the avatar's message might reach each heart and receive enthusiastic response as ananda (bliss). It is the compassion of the avatar that prompts his every activity.

Sathya Sai Speaks 7, p.275

The history of India is resonant with the traditions of the avatars and of great saints. In India, spiritual realization is considered to be the pinnacle of human achievement. It is a testimony to the spiritual greatness of India that poorna avatars are incarnated only in that land. It is a land replete with the language and the teachings of divinity. However, even in India it is not easy for human beings to recognize an avatar. Rama and Krishna were recognized as divine by very few people in their times. Despite the transcendental greatness of those days, even family and kin did not recognize the divinity of these incarnations.

The incarnations of the Lord were not accepted as such by many. Even their parents, kinsmen, and comrades hesitated to adore them. Only a few sages who had cultivated the inner vision through study and sadhana knew their reality.

Sathya Sai Speaks 6, p.333

然而神化身来了，他唯一的目的是拯救世人故而他洞悉朝拜者，灵道及目标。他是万物主宰而他完全意识到他的力量。他知道众生的过去，现在和未来。他带领众生和解放众生。

《沙迪亚赛说》第7章473面

3. 神化身的本质

虽然神化身行使其力量于我们想象之上，然而他却以密友身份来对待我们每一个人。他知悉我们每一个人的心和念。对每一个男人，女人或小孩，他不以一个威权者而是以一个亲切的伙伴出现。他以爱和智慧给我们展现他的力量而不是威力或支配。

在一个婴儿面前，神化身是一个婴儿，一个孩子面前，是一个孩子，一个人男人面前，是一个男人，一个女人面前，是一个女人，是故，神化身的信息得以抵达每一颗心之内并收到福乐的热切反应。他慈悲为怀，促使他每一个行动的就是他的慈悲。

《沙迪亚赛说》第7章275面

印度的历史与神化身和伟大圣者的传说是起共鸣的。在印度，灵性的觉知被视为人类成就的顶峰。全面或圆满的神化身只诞生于印度这块地方就是印度灵性之伟大的一个明证。这是一块充满着圣灵的语言和教导的土地。然而即便在印度，要认识一个神化身也不是容易的事。认识罗摩和基士拿的神性的人，在他们的那个时代，亦属寥寥无几。尽管那些日子有着超凡的伟大，连家人和亲戚也不认识这些神化身的神性。

主的化身仍不为众人所接受。甚至连神化身的生父母，亲戚和同志也感到犹疑而不崇拜神化身。只有几个借研讨和修行培育起内在视力的圣者知道他们的真实本质。

《沙迪亚赛说》第6章333面

Lack of recognition resulted partly because Rama and Krishna were born into royal families. They were not available to the public, nor did they announce their missions. The avatars of old were only recognized by the masses after they dropped their physical forms.

On previous occasions when God incarnated on earth, the bliss of recognizing him in the incarnation was vouchsafed only after the physical embodiment had left the world, in spite of plenty of patent evidences of his grace. And the loyalty and devotion they commanded from men arose through fear and awe at their superhuman powers and skills, or at their imperial and penal authority.

Sathya Sai Speaks 6, p.212

4. How to Recognize the Divine Being

To recognize an avatar, we must have some enlightened perception. How much more difficult the task has become in this age of spiritual decline! People believe that God will manifest in a form suitable to their preconceptions, if they even consider the possibility of divine incarnations. Today, people's images of divinity are drawn from history books whose information is not appropriate to this age. So when the Lord arrives, we must look to the example, the signs, and the teaching.

Many are drawn away by the outer signs of sainthood: the long gown, the beard, the rosaries, the matted hair. They keep track of many such who move about in this land and follow them into the wilderness. It is very difficult to demarcate clearly the manifestation of the Lord, and so I am announcing myself, and am myself describing my mission, the task, the characteristics, the qualities which mark out the avatar from the rest.

Sathya Sai Speaks 4, p.21

The ancient teachings of India offer some hints on how to discern an avatar. They say that an avatar is recognized by certain attributes. The more attributes possessed, the greater the scope of the incarnation. The greatest avatars possess power over the sixteen "activities." The first fifteen attributes

不能体认神化身的部分原因在于罗摩和基士拿诞生于帝王之家。他们身份不同，一般老百姓不能接近，而他们也没有宣布他们的使命。以前的神化身只有在圆寂之后才为后人所知晓。

从前，当神化身下凡时，认识他是神化身的这种福乐，只有在他离开肉身之后才得到他的恩赐，即使他恩典的明显证据为数不少。而世人对他们的忠心与虔诚则因畏惧他们超凡的法力或帝王的权势而产生。

《沙迪亚赛说》第6章212面

4. 如何认识神化身

要认识神化身，某种启发性的感知能力在所必需。处此灵性式微的时期，这可就难上加难了！人们相信神会以他们事先构成之想法的一个形相现身，如果他们甚至考虑到神圣化身的可能性。今天，人们依据史书的记载来推想圣灵的影像，但在这个时代，史书的记载已不适宜了。所以，当主降临时，我们必须注意的是实例，标志和教导。

很多人被圣贤身份的外在标志所吸引：长袍，胡须，念珠，乱蓬蓬的头发。他们乐于接触在这块土地上到处走动的这样的人，甚至追随他们进入山林。要分清神的彰显实非易事，所以我才表明我的身份并公布我的使命，任务，特性，素质以突显与常人有所不同的神化身。

《沙迪亚赛说》第4章21面

古印度教导提供一些如何辨识神化身的暗示。它们认为可以利用某些特质或属性去辨识神化身。拥有的特质越多，神化身的活动范围越大。最高的神化身拥有超过十六种“行动”的威力。首十五个特质或属性包括操控身体机能，操控感官和操控元素在内。人们以各种方式

involve mastery over physical functions, the senses, and the elements. They are described in various ways to illustrate the avatar's power over the physical elements. The sixteenth attribute is universal omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. This power is held only by poorna (full) avatars. Poorna avatars incarnate very rarely; the last historical poorna avatar was Krishna, who lived approximately five thousand years ago.

Certain physical signs also point to the appearance of an avatar. These appear as marks on the left side of the body. The eagle-shaped birthmark on the chest, the garuda, is such a sign. Another is the wheel-shaped mark on the sole of the foot. Additional signs may be foretold in prophecy.

5. How to Benefit from the Incarnation

For aspirants whose intuitive vision is open, this is time of great opportunity. The poorna avatar of the Kali Yuga is now incarnate as Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He has come possessed of the sixteen attributes and the physical signs foretold in past ages. He manifests the energy and powers of a superhuman being, yet some observers are still unsure of his stature. On occasion, he pretends not to know the visitor or where the visitor comes from, but that is his play. The devotee must overcome the illusion which blinds him to the magnificent reality.

Since I move about with you, eat like you, and talk with you, you are deluded into the belief that this is but an instance of common humanity. Be warned against this mistake. I am also deluding you by my singing with you, talking with you, and engaging myself in activities with you. But any moment my divinity may be revealed to you; you have to be ready, prepared for that moment. Since divinity is enveloped by humanness, you must endeavor to overcome the maya (delusion) that hides it from your eyes.

Sathya Sai Speaks 6, p.211

In his age, the avatar has come to reestablish righteousness and the sacred teachings. There is now no single great enemy of humanity; there is both good and evil in all. And so he comes to educate and uplift all of humanity.

来描述神化身以说明他们操控物理元素的力量。第十六个特质是全知，全能和全在。这力量只有全面或圆满的神化身才具备。圆满的神化身很少下凡；上一次的圆满神化身是基士拿，他大约在五千年前降临世间。

某些身体标记归属于神化身所有，如身体左侧的记号，胸前的大鹏胎记，还有一种是位于脚底的轮状记号。其他附加的标记或在预言中已有所预告。

5. 如何从神化身中获益

就敞开直觉视力的求道者而言，这是一个大好机会。伽利期（Kali Yuga）的圆满神化身现在正以斯里沙迪亚赛巴巴这个形相现身。他带着十六种特质及过去时代所预告的身体标记而来。他彰显超凡的能量和威力，但仍有人怀疑他的崇高地位。偶尔，他装着不认识访者或不知访者来自何处，那仅是他的游戏。信徒务必克服这种令他看不见宏伟真实的虚幻。

由于我在你们之间走动，跟你们一样地吃，和跟你们谈话，你们于是相信那仅是一个普通人的行为举止。千万不要犯此错误。我和你们一起歌唱，和你们说话，以及，和你们一起从事活动，这一切都会给你们造成迷惑。然而，任何时刻我都可能揭露我的神性给你们；你们必须为那一刻做好准备。由于神性被包裹在人性之中，你们必须致力于克服蒙蔽你们眼睛的虚幻（*maya*）。

《沙迪亚赛说》第6章211面

在这时代神化身已来恢复和重建正义和神圣教导。现在人类没有单一的大敌；善恶全在大家之内。所以他来教育和提升所有人类。

In past ages, avatars rid the world of evil by destroying the few fanatics and ogres who wrought it. But now fanaticism and felony reign in every heart... Therefore everyone needs correction; everyone has to be educated and guided in the right path.

Sathya Sai Speaks 4, p.3

Even now the mission moves forward. The message is clear for all to see. Aspirants need only examine the teachings to benefit from the lesson. Sathya Sai Baba is the guide and example for the Kali Age. It is up to each of us to walk the path. Only thus will humanity be saved from the precipice of disaster.

The way in which the avatar has to be used for one's liberation and uplift is: watch his every step, observe his actions and activities, follow the guiding principle of which his life is an elaboration. Mark his love, his compassion, his wisdom; try to bring them into your own life.

Sathya Sai Speaks 6, pp.166-167

By observing the Lord and capturing his grace, we can win the goal of liberation. The Lord himself will guide us. His task is the deliverance of those who are ready for liberation from the cycle of birth and death. If this opportunity is lost, when will another chance come?

The airplane has to land at certain places in order to take in those who have won the right to fly by the tickets they have purchased. So, too, the Lord has to come down so that those who have won the right to be liberated may be saved; incidentally, others too will know of the Lord, of his grace, of ways of winning it, of the joy of liberation.

Sathya Sai Speaks 4, p.24

The avatar has come to light the lamp of love. His words illumine the heart and soul. But first one small task is required: we must open the door so that the light and the joy may enter.

The incarnation comes to warn, to guide, to awaken, to lay down the path and shed the light of love on it. But man has to listen, learn, and obey with hope and faith.

Sathya Sai Speaks 8, p.143

在过去的时代里，神化身只要消灭几个引起邪恶的狂热者和食人魔即可除去世上的邪恶。但现在，狂热与罪孽称帝于每一颗心。。。因此，人人都需要修正；人人都必须接受教育步入正轨。

《沙迪亚赛说》第4章3面

直至今日使命还在进行中。信息非常清楚，人人都能看到。求道者只须检查教导，从中学习和获益。沙迪亚赛巴巴是伽利期的指导和典范。要步上康庄大道，就看我们每一个人了。只有如此，人类才得以从灾难的危机中被救出来。

为了你的解脱和提升，采用神化身的方法是：注意他的每一个步伐，观察他的行动和活动，遵照其生命所阐述的指导原则。要注意他的爱，他的仁慈，他的智慧；要尝试把它们带入你自己的生命中来。

《沙迪亚赛说》第6章166-167面

凭借遵从主的诫命和获取他的恩典，我们能赢得达致超脱的目标。主本身会亲自来引导我们。他的任务就是救度那些做好了脱生死的准备的人。若失此机会，何时再有另一次机会呢？

飞机必须在某些地方降落以便那些购有机票者登机。主亦然，他必须下凡以便拯救那些赢得超脱的权利者；偶然，其他的人也会知道有主，有他的恩典，有赢取恩典的方法，有超脱所带的喜悦。

《沙迪亚赛说》第4章24面

神化身来了，来点亮爱之灯。他的言辞照亮心和灵。但首先必须做到一件小事：我们必须把门打开，让光和喜悦可以进来。

神化身下凡来警告，来引导，来叫醒，来铺路，及散发爱之光。但人必须抱着希望和信心去聆听，学习和遵从。

《沙迪亚赛说》第8章143面

Questions for Study Circle:

1. Why does God take a physical form?
2. How do we recognize an avatar?
3. Why are some avatars endowed with full divine powers while others are not?
4. Do avatars incarnate often enough?
5. Why do avatars not change dire situations immediately by use of their powers?
6. How much of the avatar's mission can we understand?
7. Why are poorna avatars born only in India?
8. What gifts does the avatar offer us in this era?
9. If you were the avatar, what would you do?

References for Further Study

1. Conversations, pp. 116-117 (Recognizing an avatar).
2. Gita Vahini, pp. 65-66.
3. My Baba and I, pp. 17-18 (Signs of an avatar).
4. Sathya Sai Speaks 1, p. 191 (Seven characteristics).
5. Sathya Sai Speaks 2, p. 131.
6. Sathya Sai Speaks 4, Chapter 12.
7. Sathya Sai Speaks 4, pp. 187-188 (Why the Lord himself comes to save humanity).
8. Sathya Sai Speaks 6, p. 66.
9. Sathya Sai Speaks 7, p. 182 (Dates of Kali Yuga).
10. Sathya Sai Speaks 8, p. 109 (Mission of avatar in each age).
11. Sathya Sai Speaks 8, p. 144 (Relationship between Sai Baba and Jesus).
12. Sathya Sai Speaks 9, p. 107 (Krishna avatar fostered love).
13. Sathya Sai Speaks 10, p. 230 (Jesus was a Karana-Janma).
14. Summer Showers 1974, pp. 276-290 (Who Sai is).
15. Summer Showers 1977, p. 5 (God comes to set ideal examples).
16. Summer Showers 1977, p. 27 (Reasons for Rama avatar).
17. Summer Showers 1979, pp. 48-49.
18. Vidya Vahini, p. 27 (Avatars can confer spiritual strength).
19. Vision of the Divine, pp. 12-13 (The signs and powers of avatars).

学习圈的问题:

1. 神为什么化身降世?
2. 如何辨识神化身?
3. 为什么有的神化身拥有圆满的神圣力量而有的就没有?
4. 神常常化身降世吗?
5. 为什么神化身不用其灵力立即改变悲惨的情境?
6. 我们到底能了解多少神化身的使命?
7. 为什么圆满神化身只诞生于印度?
8. 在这个时代, 神化身提供什么礼物给我们?
9. 如果你是个神化身, 你要做些什么?