Logging-on to Sai Baba: the poetics of sacred globalization

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Abstract
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the leader of a progressive religious movement steeped in the Hindu tradition. The Sathya Sai Baba Organization claims to have over thirty million members in approximately 170 countries. The dedicated followers of the movement believe Sai Baba to be an avatar or incarnation of God in human form. Sai Baba utilizes the Internet to transmit his universalistic philosophies around the world. With this digital universe, devotees can log-on to a multitude of official Sai websites that act as training ground for achieving liberation of the mind and soul. This path of devotion that Sai Baba teaches his followers has its foundation in Hinduism's sacred scriptures. The Sathya Sai Baba Organization is attempting to restructure the Hindu tradition, marketing a new hegemony fit for global consumption. The organization is one of many spiritual movements that have embraced globalization and become part of the religious landscapes of the World Wide Web. Using websites as field sites, I conducted an in-depth case study on the cyberspace activities of this organization. This anointment of cyberspace as sacred space illustrates how the Internet can be a powerful source in cultural production. The religious subculture that links a global network of Sai Centers and dedicated participants utilizes information technology to spread the ideology of the movement. The Internet has the potential to change how social scientists engage in data collection and cultural documentation. The fieldwork that I conducted in cyberspace and during interviews with my consultant reveals the Internet as both a vessel for sacred space and a venue for a 'cyberperformance' that is shaped by the poetics of sacred globalization.

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uninterrupted spiritual practice. You can make the place where you are a citadel of silence; shut off the senses, let them not run after objects. Your home becomes a hermitage; your spiritual practices will then move on, without any obstacle. Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume II, Chapter 6: Steps in Sadhana. Stay Away from Bad Company. I know that you are finding time, in spite of the hard work throughout the day, to attend ci