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## Who targets Amrita Ashram?

By S Gurumurthy | 12th September 2012 09:09 AM

Indeed a disgusting story – a concerted, converging attempt to tarnish Mata Amritanandamayi Ashram in Kerala by demonstrable lies and falsehoods. “Amma” as Mata Amritanandamayi is affectionately known is not just a Hindu spiritual lighthouse. She is a power house of service to people that has grown to unbelievable heights. Before unfolding the despicable story, here is a helicopter view of this mighty spiritualised social service, all accomplished, believe it, in just a decade or thereabouts – and that is precisely what seems to have made Amma and the Ashram the target.

The Ashram has built and handed over more than 25,000 houses till 2002 to the poor and needy, with plans to build, and building, another 100,000 – a scale that governments will not dare. It has undertaken massive disaster relief in Bihar Kosi floods (2008), earthquake in Kashmir (2005), Katrina hurricane in New Orleans in the US (2005), Mumbai floods (2005), Tsunami in India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia (2004), Kumbakonam school fire (2004) and Gujarat earthquake (2001). It has donated \$1 million for relief and rehabilitation after Tsunami in Japan last year, apart from offering services in quake-hit Haiti. The Ashram has also set up an orphanage in Kenya.

The Ashram has built a huge university – the Amrita University – that has tie-up with 25 leading American universities, including the Yale, Harvard and Princeton universities. It is one of the seven from Asia in the 16-member consortium of European Union Educational Initiative funded by the European Commission. The Ashram runs three engineering institutes as ‘technological gurukulas’; its Coimbatore technical institute campus has installed India’s supercomputer, Param. It runs the Amrita School of Business ranked 17th among the top private B-Schools in India aligning management education with Sanatana Dharma; a school of education to train teachers; a school of media studies and communication.

Its medical institute at Kochi in Kerala – a 1,400-bed huge super speciality medical facility manned by 200 doctors qualified from the best medical institutes all over the world – is ranked as the eighth best professional medical colleges in India. It also runs an Ayurvedic college; a dental college; a college of nursing; a pharmaceutical college; four colleges of arts and sciences; a medical research institute; a nanosciences centre, with acute researches in molecular biology, bioinformatics, human genetics, immunology, hemopoiesis, stem cells, cancer, cell signalling, neurosciences; and a research lab engaged in core areas of computing and communication with the MHRD, DST, DIT, DBT and DRDO as research partners and more than 50 industry partners and ranked as one of the largest supercomputer clusters in the world. The list is still not complete. All this have happened and continue to happen because of one true spiritual soul whose magnetism has lured thousands of young men and women as monks, celebrities and volunteers, to serve the needy. See how this great institution is targeted by lies and falsehoods by hands and minds that just wield a pen or a mike.

Now it all started on August 1, 2012, around noon. When Amma was giving dharshan to her devotees, suddenly, a bearded man in dhoti,

with no shirt, ran through the dharshan hall, pushing all out of his way. Yelling “Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim”, he shockingly removed his dhoti, scaled up the stage in his underwear only and was just three feet from Amma, when the devotees surrounded to protect her. The police team stationed at the Ashram since an attempt on Amma in 2005, immediately apprehended the man and took him into custody. Even as the police led him to its van, he continued to shout “Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim”. He was a stranger, never seen in the Ashram ever.

The police video shows him walking and climbing on to the police van on his own. Since he was bare-bodied, there was not a scratch on his front or back, both visible on the video. Anyone can see the dramatic episode, captured in security cameras. The police registered the Ashram’s complaint as FIR. He was therefore in police custody from around noon on August 1, 2012. Later it became known that he was one Satnam Singh from Bihar.

A shocking news appeared that, on August 4, Satnam died of severe injuries in police custody. His cousin, Vimal Kishore, a reporter in Aaj Tak channel in Delhi, addressed a press meet on August 5. The transcript of his interview showed Vimal Kishore as saying that he had visited Satnam in Karungappally police station sub-jail cell on August 2.

Kishore said: “And at that time, as I had seen him in underwear only, there were no marks on his body. Not a single mark! And today [August 5], which I had seen, there are around 30, 35 marks on his body. He was beaten by a rod, I think-hot rod. Maybe it’s a matter of investigation, but the body speaks itself.”

Kishore added: “And that day was a rakhi day. I had brought rakhi from Delhi from his sister. I just asked the policeman, ‘Shall I tie the rakhi to him?’ They said, ‘No, you can’t. It is banned over here.’ And when Satnam heard this, he insisted, ‘Please, please, please, please tie the knot. Please tie the rakhi! All my Satan will go out from my body.’” According to reports, Satnam, extremely aggressive and violent, had attacked other inmates in the jail. The reports seem true because Kishore himself had told the media that Satnam, aggressive, “even challenged me: ‘You can come into the cell, and I will show you my power.’” It does not need a seer to say what the truth is. The nine irrefutable facts are: one, Satnam was a stranger to the Ashram; two, he suddenly, menacingly ran towards Amma, shouting “Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim”; three, no one harmed him in the Ashram; four, police took charge of him immediately on the noon of August 1, with not a scratch on his body; five, he was, thereafter, in police custody, with the Ashram out of the picture; six, his own cousin had seen him on August 2, safe with, in his words, “no single mark on his body”; seven, he died of extensive injuries in government custody on August 4; eight, it is the police who are answerable as to why and how he died; nine, the Ashram is explicitly innocent. Now see how, suppressing all vital facts and fabricating lies, a converging campaign to vilify Amma and the Ashram is on.

The commentators are different, but all of them wrote the same lies. They all converged to lie that the Ashramites had subjected Satnam to inhuman treatment and virtually said that they killed him. Their bluff has been called by the videos of the security and Kishore’s press meet. They conceretedly made the vicious charge that Satnam was killed because he was uttering Islamic prayer. Besides being a lie, isn’t it a clear attempt to instigate communal feelings against the Ashram? One commentator asked why the Ashram did not help Satnam in police custody. Not funny? How could the Ashram help a man in police custody? Another wrote that Amma’s “mad devotees” with “excessive devotion” were inhuman to Satnam. Inhuman? Satnam’s cousin says there was not a single (injury) mark on his body on August 2. Could any other religious group be that human and peaceful as the Ashramites? He also added that the “brahmin” lad from Bihar, “the land of Buddha”, a “seeker of truth” and “bramhajnana”, was on a “spiritual trip” to Kerala, the land of Sankara and Narayana Guru. But where does he get all this exotic information? What about the reports he had attacked the other inmates in the jail, which was implicitly corroborated by his cousin Kishore’s version that Satnam was aggressive and violent. He further wrote that Satnam “approached” Amma with the Islamic prayer that just meant ‘in the name of the most compassionate and merciful God’, for which he was done away with by the inhuman Ashramites and the government was reluctant to

order inquiry. Satnam “approached” Amma? Or was charging at her? Did the writer care to look at the video, where he runs half naked to her? Obviously he has not cared to know the facts. Is he not also convergently inciting the Muslims against the Ashram? And finally the cat is out of the bag: he wants a government inquiry to tarnish the Ashram’s image here; more abroad. The third writer wrote that Satnam’s journey to death began from the Ashram, saying that he met his fate because of the Islamic prayer that the Ashram could not digest. The same model, like the other two: suppress the truth and advance the lies, and promote communal hatred against Ashram? The fourth commentator wrote that Satnam was handed to the police after “fatal” blows implying that Ashramites had caused his death. This writer also joins and supports the others’ lies. Yet another article in a newspaper suspected to have extremist connections, goes one step further and says that Satnam’s was not an isolated case, and the Ashram has a history of murders! The intent is clear: to harm the Ashram, which is doing yeoman service to the needy and is building the nation’s spiritual brand abroad. They all converge to tell these patent lies: Satnam came to Amma; Satnam was beaten and injured by them; he was inhumanly treated because he uttered Islamic verse, which the Ashramites could not digest. They converge to incite the Muslims against the Ashram; press for government inquiry into the Ashram. Why?

It raises far-reaching questions indeed. How and why do all commentators tell the same lies? Make the same charges suppressing the truth? Write separately with convergent effect? Who or what makes them converge? Is the Ashram becoming the test for whether Hindu spiritualism could exist with honour in minority-politics dominated Kerala? Last year, it was Sai Baba; now Amma? QED: Obviously some hidden hand is operating against the Ashram.

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