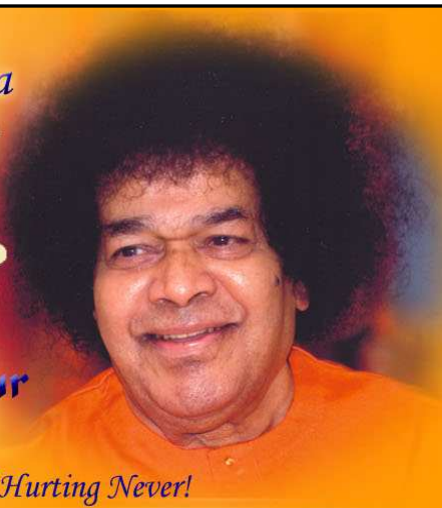


Aum Sri Sai Ram

Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Chicago Sai WATCH



Dear Swami, please help us to watch and control our Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character and Heart

So that we realize our inherent Divinity by Loving All, Serving All, Helping Ever, and Hurting Never!

Sathya Sai Baba Center of Metropolitan Chicago

February 2009

Announcements:

2009 Maha Shivarathri Devotional Program:

Monday, February 23rd. from 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM.

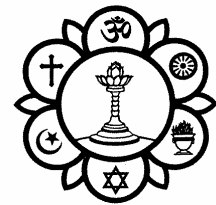
Ramada Inn. 780 North Avenue (North Ave & I-355). Glendale Heights, IL 60139

First National Youth Conference in Chicago:

From May 29th to May 31st, 2009.

YMCA Camp Duncan. 32405 North Hwy. 12. Ingleside, IL 60041

More information: www.saiusa.net



Date

Calendar of Events

02/01 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:15 am: Sunday Center Program 11:15 am – 12:00 pm: Officers Selection Process for the Term 2009 – 2011 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm: Practice session for Shivarathri
02/07 – Saturday	07:00 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at R.E.S.T Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 08:00 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at R.E.S.T Women's Shelter (on Wilson Ave.)
02/08 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program 10:00 am – 11:00 am: Service at the Woodbine Nursing Home 11:30 am – 12:30 pm: Practice session for Shivarathri
02/14 – Saturday	06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at R.E.S.T Men's Shelter by Young Adults (on Lawrence Ave.) 06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at R.E.S.T Warming Center (on Kenmore Ave.)
02/15 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program (Devotional program by SSE children) 11:30 am – 12:30 pm: Practice session for Shivarathri
02/21 – Saturday	07:00 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at R.E.S.T Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 07:15 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at R.E.S.T Warming Center (on Kenmore Ave.)
02/22 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program 10:30 am – 12:00 pm: Special Devotional Singing celebrating Shivarathri 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm: Practice session for 2/23 Shivarathri program
02/23 – Monday	07:30 pm – 09:30 pm: 2009 Maha Shivarathri Devotional Program. Ramada Inn. 780 North Avenue (North Ave & I-355). Glendale Heights, IL 60139
02/28 – Saturday	06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at R.E.S.T Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
	Sunday Center Schedule: 09:00 am – 09:30 am: Center Setup 09:30 am – 10:15 am: Study Circle 10:00 am – 11:30 am Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) classes for children 10:30 am – 11:30 am: Devotional Singing Ongoing service projects on Sundays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grocery collection for the needy families (Delivered at the end of every month) • Sandwich preparation and delivery for the residents of R.E.S.T Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)



Maha Shivarathri



Many stories are told in the scriptures, to explain the origin and significance of the Maha Shivarathri Festival. Bhaarath (India), the name for this land used from ancient times, means 'the land of those who have rathi (Love) towards Bha (Light or Bhagavaan). So, for the people of this land, all days are sacred; every moment is precious. The Ganga is holy from source to sea, but, yet there are some places on its banks, associated with some sage or temple, the confluence of a tributary, or a historical incident, which are revered more by generations. Such places are Hardwar, Vaaraanasi, Prayaag, Rishikesh. Similarly, among all the days of the year, some are marked out as holier, when a special effort is made by aspirants to contact the Source and the Sea, the Reality behind all this passing show. Some moments, as that during which the Linga (Shiva representation in egg-shaped stone) emerges from the Avathaar (divine incarnation), are held to be especially significant for the individuals witnessing it and for the world which is thereby blessed.

Some ascribe the holiness of the Day to the fact of its being the Birthday of Shiva, as if Shiva has birth and death, like any mortal. The story that it commemorates the salvation attained by a hunter who sat on a bilva tree on the look-out for animals to kill, and without any intention to worship, unknowingly dropped some of its leaves on a Linga that lay beneath, does not make clear why this Day is specially sacred. Another story is that this is the Day on which Shiva danced the Thaandava (Cosmic dance) in the ecstasy of His Innate Nature, with all the Gods and Sages sharing and witnessing that Cosmic Consummation. When He consumed the Haalahala poison that emerged from the churning of ocean and that threatened to destroy the Universe, the heat of the fumes was well-nigh unbearable, even for Him. So, Ganga flowed uninterruptedly on His matted locks; but, that gave Him only partial relief. The Moon was placed on the head. That was of great help. Then, Shiva danced the Thaandava with all the Gods and Sages. All this they say, happened on the same day and so, Shivarathri, was held in commemoration of this occasion.

Aim of all Saadhana is to Eliminate the Mind

We have not only the Maha Shivarathri once a year, we have a Shivarathri every month, dedicated to the worship of Shiva. And, why is the Raathri (the Night), so important? The night is dominated by the Moon. The Moon has 16 kalas (fractions of divine glory), and each day or rather night, during the dark fortnight, one fraction is reduced, until the entire Moon is annihilated on New Moon night. From then on, each night, a fraction is added, until the Moon is full circle on Full Moon Night. The Chandra (Moon) is the presiding deity of the mind; the mind waxes and wanes, like the Moon. Chandramaa-manaso jaathah--Out of the manas of the Purusha (Supreme Being), the Moon was born. It must be remembered that the chief aim of all saadhana (spiritual striving) is to eliminate the mind, to become A-manaska. Then, only can maayaa (illusion) be rent asunder and the Reality revealed. During the dark fortnight of the month, saadhana has to be done to eliminate each day a fraction of the mind, for, every day, a fraction of the Moon too is being taken out of cognizance.

On the night of *Chathurdhasi*, the 14th day, the night of Shiva, only a fraction remains. If some special effort is made that night, through more intensive and vigilant *saadhana*, like *puuja* or *japam* or *dhyaana* (ritual worship, one-pointed repetition & holy names, and meditation), success is ensured. Shiva alone has to be meditated upon that night without the mind straying towards thoughts of sleep or food. This has to be done every month; once a year, on *Maha Shivarathri* a special spurt of spiritual activity is recommended, so that what is *shavam* (corpse) can become *Shivam* (God), by the perpetual awareness of its Divine Indweller.



Linga is the Form Symbol of God

This is a day dedicated to the Shiva that is in each of you. From the Himaalayan ranges down to Cape Kanyaakumari, the entire land is resounding today to the authentic Declaration "*Shivoham*" "*Shivoham*" and to the adoration, "*Om Namasshivaaya*." Since thousands pray here, and elsewhere in lakhs and crores, the *Linga* is emanating from Me, so that you may derive the Bliss that pervades the World through *Lingodhbhava* (emergence of the *Linga*).

The manifestation of the *Linga* is a part of My Nature. These *Pandiths* (scholars of spirituality) explain it as reminiscent of an epochal event in the past when Shiva challenged Brahma and Vishnu to gauge the height and depth of the *Linga* Form He assumed. They failed and had to accept defeat. But, the *Linga* emerges, as a result of prayer and Grace. You have to recognize in this event a glimpse of Divinity, a sign of infinite Grace. Just as *Om* is the sound symbol of God, the *Linga* is the Form symbol or the visible symbol of God, the most meaningful, the simplest and the least endowed with the appendages of attributes. *Lingam* means, that in which this *jagath* (world of change) attains *laya* (mergence or dissolution), *Leeyathe*. All Forms merge in the Formless at last. Shiva is the Principle of the Destruction of all Names and Forms, of all entities and individuals. So, the *Linga* is the simplest sign of emergence and mergence.

Live in the constant presence of Shiva

Every form conceived in the *Shaasthras* and scriptures has a deep significance. Shiva does not ride an animal called in human language, a bull. The bull is the symbol of Stability standing on four legs, *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shaanthi* and *Prema* (Truth, Virtue, Peace and Love). Shiva is described as having three eyes, eyes that see the Past, the Present and the Future. The elephant skin which forms His cloak is a symbol of the bestial primitive traits which His Grace destroys. In fact, He tears them to pieces, skin them, and they become totally ineffective. His Four Faces symbolize *Shantham* (Equanimity), *Roudhram* (Terror), *Mangalam* (Grace) and *Uthsaaaham* (elevating energy). While adoring the *Lingam* on this *Lingodhbhava* Day, you must contemplate on these truths of Shiva that the *Linga* represents.



First National Youth Conference (NYC) in Chicago



(Maha Shivarathri – Continues from previous page...)

It is not this night alone that you should spend in the thought of Shiva; your whole life must be lived in the constant presence of the Lord. Endeavour: that is the main thing; that is the inescapable consummation for all mortals.

Even those who deny God will have to tread the pilgrim road, melting their hearts out in tears of travail. If you make the slightest effort to move along the Path of your own liberation, the Lord will help you a hundred-fold. That is the hope that *Maha Shivarathri* conveys to you. Man is called so, because he has the skill to do *manana*; *manana* means inner meditation on the meaning and significance of what one has heard. But, you have not yet emerged out of the stage of *Shraoanam* (listening)! All the joy you crave for is in you. But, like a man who has vast riches in the iron chest, but, who has no idea where the key is, you suffer. Hear properly the instructions, dwell upon them in the silence of meditation, practice what has been made clear therein; then, you can secure the key, open the chest and be rich in Joy.

Visualise Shiva as the inner power of all

You have given up even the little *saadhana* that *Shivarathri* demands. In olden times, people will not put even a drop of water on their tongues, this day. Now, that rigour is gone. They used to keep vigil at night, the entire night, without a wink of sleep, repeating *Om Namasshivaaya* without intermission. Now, the name Shiva, is on no one's tongue. But, those who deny God are only denying themselves and their glory. All have Love in them, in some form or other, towards some one or other or their work or goal. That Love is God, a spark of the God in them. They have *Aanandha* (bliss) however small or temporary and that is another spark of the Divine. They have inner peace, detachment, discrimination, sympathy, the spirit of service. These are Divine in the mirror of their minds.

Resolve, on this Holy *Shivarathri*, in the Presence of Shiva Sai, to visualize the Shiva as the inner power of all. With each breath, you are even now, asserting "*Soham*," "I am He," not only you, but, every being that breathes, every being that lives, everything that exists. It is a fact which you have ignored so long. Believe it from now on. When you watch your breath and meditate on that magnificent Truth, slowly, the I and the He (the *Sah* and the *Aham*) will draw nearer and closer, until the feeling of separateness will fade away---and the *Soham* will be transformed into *OM*, the *Pranava*, the Primal Sound, the Fundamental Formula for God. That *OM* is the *Swaswaruupa*---the Reality behind this "relative reality."

– Divine discourse, *Shivarathri* Day, February 1969

Anger turns a man into a drunken brute. The other impulses are equally vicious. Seek only salutary karma, 'eat only saathwik food---food that will not disturb the equanimity you earn through your saadhana. Do not break the even tenor of your spiritual practice. Remember how Raamadas never gave up his Naama saadhana in spite of jeers and jail.



As some of you may already know, Chicago has been blessed to host the First National Youth Conference from May 29th to May 31st at the YMCA Camp Duncan in Ingleside, IL. The theme of the conference is "We are ONE for Sai". We are expecting around 250 YAs from across the nation and we will need the support of all the members of the Chicagoland centers to support this conference. Service opportunities will be communicated in the near future.

NYC - Pre-Conference Initiative Program

An intense and practical spiritual program has been put together to help YAs around the country prepare for the upcoming conference in Chicago. The spiritual program includes initiatives in the following areas:

- **Meditation**
- **Gayatri chanting**
- **Living Service**
- **Ceiling on Desires**

These four disciplines offer opportunities to practice spirituality in daily life – internally and externally – and all build upon one another. Meditation directs our vision inward and calms the mind, while Ceiling our Desires removes any worldly attachments that separate us from our inner divinity. By chanting Gayatri we can channel Divine energy, and put it into action through an attitude of Living Service. These practices, when undertaken together, purify our surroundings and ourselves, such that we may realize our unity as One with Sai. Let's begin our journey as One for Sai. The moment is bright, the moment is ripe, and the moment is now. We invite "ALL" the members of the Sai center to participate and benefit from the spiritual initiatives for this month:

- ☑ Focus on Swami for 11 seconds after the daily Gayatri chants and pray to Him to purify our thoughts.
- ☑ Gayatri chants 3 times a day (morning, noon, night)
- ☑ How do we incorporate "Living Service" into our lives? Try spending a few minutes each morning just being aware of the opportunities to serve, and becoming His instruments.
- ☑ Choose one desire to ceil between now and the NYC and offer it to Swami. Consider how ceiling this desire helps you save time, and what you can do with that extra time to promote your spiritual growth.

For more details please visit: www.saiyousa.net



The Two Wolves Within



A young lad, Robby, felt injustice was meted out to him by a person he thought was his friend. Visibly livid, he narrated the day's incident to his grandfather, Bob. Just like most grandpas in this world, Bob was a well of wisdom. He let his grandson vent his anger till such time Robby had nothing else to say. The old man then placed his hand on Robby's shoulder and began: "Let me tell you a story. I admit that I have felt hate in my time for those inconsiderate people who never seem to have remorse or repentance for what they do," continued the wise grandfather. "As time passed by, I realized that the hate and anger I carried in my heart actually wore me down. It had little effect on people who evoked these emotions. I began to see that I was giving myself ales of poison with the hope that the other person should die. It hasn't been easy at all, boy.

I introspected further to understand where these negative feelings stemmed from. I knew I was a good man, but why was I carrying hate and anger in me? Well, I called it the case of having two wolves inside of me!" Robby listened with rapt attention as Bob went on with his rather interesting story. The first wolf is absolutely harmless, and what's even better is that it seeks peace and harmony around it. It sees only the good in people, never the bad. It doesn't take offense even if someone is nasty to it. Instead, it has a good word for anyone and everyone who crosses his path. But this is the bit you need to know now."



"Go on, Grandpa," begged Robby. Grandpa continued, "This other wolf is a monster. It is under the dangerous delusion that it is the only perfect thing on the planet and constantly finds fault with everything and everyone around it. It has a shallow ego and gets piqued easily. This wolf is always filled with anger and hate. It doesn't realize that hate and anger get it nowhere. When you hear me talk of the second wolf, don't you think it is utterly foolish? Don't you approve of the first wolf and wish the second one never existed? Do you want to know more?" Rob replied immediately, "Oh, yes, Grandpa, please tell me more."

"These two wolves inside me scream for attention. Each one struggles to push the other to take centre stage. When wolf #1 is the winner for the day, everyone loves me and thinks I'm an angel! But hell breaks loose when wolf #2 decides to be the bully. Wolf #1 is pushed away and all that the world sees of me is a cruel, angry, unreasonable, difficult person to deal with. There is a constant tug of war over my spirit, and sometimes it leaves me rather tired and hopeless!" The boy looked intently into his grandfather's eyes and asked, "Which one wins, Grandpa?" The grandfather smiled and quietly said, "The one I feed."

Robby was speechless. He learnt so much that day. He thanked his friend in his heart for being the reason for this lesson that he would keep for life. Have anger and hated done any good to us ever? History is full of lessons for us. The world today has enough proof as well. Let us be intelligent, and become less judgmental. Let us urge the goodness in us to manifest. For, that's who we are - Good.

– Taken from Radiosai.org

Devotional Activities in Chicago and Suburbs

Activity	Time	Venue	Contact
Every Monday – Bhajans	07:00 pm to 08:00 pm	Aurora (Shirdi Mandir)	847-722-5477
Every Wednesday – Bhajans	07:30 pm to 08:30 pm	Hoffman Estates	847-519-1631
Every Thursday – Bhajans	08:00 pm to 09:00 pm	Aurora	630-761-2968
Every Friday – Bhajans	08:00 pm to 09:00 pm	Oak Brook	630-655-1718
1st Thursday of the Month – Bhajans	07:30 pm to 08:30 pm	Hoffman Estates	847-695-7110
1st Saturday of the Month – Bhajans	03:30 pm to 04:30 pm	Glenview	847-729-2779 / 773-510-5936
Saturday, February 14 – Bhajans	06:30 pm to 07:30 pm	Streamwood	847-508-9786
Saturday, February 21 – Padhuka Puja	02:30 pm to 04:00 pm	Bolingbrook	630-819-9081
Monday, February 23 – Maha Shivarathri	07:30 pm to 09:30 pm	Glendale Heights	847-863-5299
Friday, February 27 – Bhajans	07:30 pm to 08:30 pm	Streamwood	630-497-8657
Saturday, February 28 – 84 Bhajans	01:30 pm to 08:30 pm	Aurora	630-340-0943

For more information, please contact any of the Center Officers

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