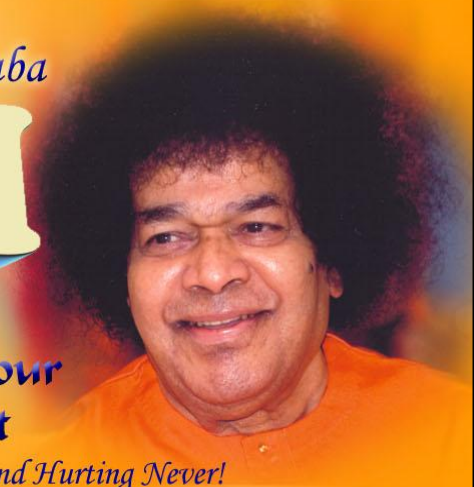


Aum Sri Sai Ram

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 Chicago Metro

March 2011

Upcoming Events!

Sri Rama Navami Devotional Programs:

April 9th, Saturday 5.00 PM – 7.00 PM

Venue: 811 St Stephens Green
Oak Brook, IL 60523

April 10th, Sunday 10.30 AM – 12.30 PM

Venue: Longfellow Center

Easter Devotional Program:

April 24th, Sunday 10.30 AM – 12.30 PM

Ramada Inn, 780 North Av.,
Glendale Heights, IL



Love All, Serve All

Date

Calendar of Events

03/05 – 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.)
03/06 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program
03/12 – Saturday	06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at R.E.S.T Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 05:30 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at Jesus People USA Men's Shelter (on Kenmore Ave.)
03/13 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program 10:00 am – 11:00 am: Service at the Woodbine Nursing Home
03/19 – Saturday	07:00 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at R.E.S.T Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 07:00 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at Jesus People USA Men's Shelter (on Kenmore Ave.)
03/20 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program 11:30 am – 12:30 pm: New Officers Transition and Thanking of Outgoing Officers
03/26 – Saturday	06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at R.E.S.T Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
03/27 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program

Sunday Center Schedule:

- 09:00 am – 09:30 am: Center Setup
- 09:30 am – 10:25 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:

- 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.)



Why Did the Divine Descend as Rama?



All objects in the world are liable to change. All living beings must pass some day. But ideals and sacred objectives established in human hearts shine forever. If one has to live up to an ideal, he/she must be prepared to face many ordeals, difficulties, calumnies, trials and tribulations.

These ideals have continued up to the present day to glow in the hearts of the people, because they have been upheld in spite of vicissitudes and ordeals. Aeons may come and go, continents may appear and disappear, people may pass away, but ideals and values remain a perennial source of inspiration to the world....

Common people can derive no benefit if the Formless Absolute remains in Kailasa or Vaikunta. It is not possible to worship the Formless Absolute. Hence, the Rama-Avatar appeared in human form to enable humanity to experience the Formless in a form which is accessible and helpful to them....

Unfortunately, even when the Formless Absolute assumes a form, there are persons, who impelled by their own attitudes, attribute their own human foibles to the Avatar. "When He has the same Form as ours, the same physical features, and eats, talks and moves about like any of us, what is the difference between the Avatar and ourselves?" they ask.

Because of this narrow-minded approach, these persons distance themselves from the Divine. An effort must be made to understand the nature of Divinity. "Daivam maanusharoopena (God in Human Form)" declares the scripture....

Why and How Avatars Work

The descent of the Avatar means the Divine coming down to the level of the human. No blemish attaches to the Divine as a result of this descent. There is no diminution in His puissance. Here is the example of a child playing on the ground. If the mother feels it is beneath her dignity to bend, and calls upon the child to leap into her arms, the child cannot do so. But out of her love for the child, the mother herself stoops and picks up the baby. By bending down to take the child, does the mother bow to the child? Likewise, the Avatar descends to the level of the human to bless and rescue those who cannot rise to the level of the Divine. The ignorant assumes that because the Divine has descended with a human form, God has lowered Himself to the human level. This is a case of bending and not kneeling down. It is an act of benediction and not of submission...

Similarly, the Avatar does not forgo any of His supreme powers merely because He lives and moves among human beings as a man. Narrow-minded persons view these things differently.

This phenomenon could be noticed in several instances in the case of the Rama-Avatar. In the Ramayana, Rama is depicted as one who, like other ordinary human beings, experienced the pangs of separation from Sita. Why did Rama exhibit such feelings? It is to serve as an example to the common people how individuals should behave in similar circumstances. The Ramayana is a work which holds out ideals for every home and every family. What should be the relations between a father and a son, how should a husband and wife conduct themselves, how should brothers behave towards each other, what should be the relations between the rulers and the citizens, how should sisters-in-law conduct themselves - all these are exemplified in the story of the Rama-Avatar.

Sri Rama – An Ideal for Every Man

Rama was prepared to honour a boon given by His father to His step-mother in fulfillment of an old promise. He renounced the throne at the moment of coronation and elected to go to the forest as an exile. Eminently qualified as He was to become the ruler, nevertheless He chose to go to the forest to honour His father's plighted word. This is a glorious example of an ideal life.

Today people would set at nought promises given by the father and place their self-interest in the forefront...

Rama was prepared to face any ordeals and troubles in upholding this sacred principle. Rama was ever active in fulfilling the wishes and responding to the opinions of the people. Highly sensitive even to the remarks of a petty washerman, Rama sent away Sita to the forest out of a feeling that the washer-man's comment might be an indication of the unspoken feelings of many others among his subjects. Rama stands out as an ideal ruler intensely responsive to the wishes of the people...Rama demonstrated the ideal relations that should exist between the ruler and the ruled.

Lakshmana's Unflinching Devotion

Turning to the harmonious relations that existed between the brothers', complying with his stepmother's words, Rama might don the bark of trees, wear the mantle of an ascetic and leave for the forest, there was no such obligation on Lakshmana's part.

But as a younger brother, he felt that it was not proper for him to stay and enjoy life in Ayodhya, when his brother was leaving for the forest. He was ready to renounce his mother and wife and accompany Rama, whom he considered as his life-breath. The behaviour of brothers today in similar situations would be entirely different. They are likely to indulge in litigation over the sharing of property, and lose them all in carrying the dispute up to the Supreme Court...To such brothers, Rama should serve as an example...

The Lesson from Ramayana

The foremost lesson to be learnt from the Rama-story is how to foster unity and harmony in a family...The reign of Rama was marked by concern for justice and morality. Today the people are bedeviled by distrust and suspicion at every step. "Why should God do this?" Such questions are asked out of narrow-minded doubts. There will be no room for such doubts if the Infinite Nature of the Divine is properly understood. The petty-minded folk who cannot grasp the Omni-competence of the Divine raise such questions. Their entire life is wasted in this manner. Hence, people should get rid of such pettiness...

Strengthen Your Faith to Acquire Bliss

If the Name of the Lord is not recited in the proper spirit, of what use is all spiritual practice? Faith is the primary requisite. Chanting the Name endlessly, without faith, is utterly useless. Where there is faith, there is Love. Where there is Love, there is Peace. Where there is Peace, there is Truth. Where there is Truth, there is Bliss. Where there is Bliss, there is God. If faith is lacking how can Bliss be experienced? Therefore, strengthen your faith... Develop faith in the ideals of Rama. Rama does not mean the son of Dasharatha. The Atma (Self) is Rama, and hence Rama is referred to as Atma-Rama... Everyone must aim at becoming an ideal person... Ideals, not ostentation, should be the watchword. Develop faith in the Self, and lead a Godly life.

- *Divine Discourse, Rama Navami Day, 1991.*



Easter is a festival of Enlightenment. It is the day that Jesus rose from death. It was on a Sunday morning, the day of the Sun God. Mary Magdalene and other women had gone to look at the tomb where Jesus was buried. But to their horror and bewilderment they met an empty tomb. Beside the tomb stood two angels who said to them; "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, He has risen!" (Luke: 24:5) This was the great turning point that transformed the story of Jesus which seemed to have ended with His tragic death on the Cross on Friday evening.

So the story of Easter is not just the story of Jesus' resurrection from death but also the story of how He was unjustly arrested by the Jews, tried, condemned and crucified on the cross on account of His stand for Truth and Righteousness. From a spiritual perspective, Easter is the story of humanity's ascent to Divinity.

It is the dramatic spiritual journey that everyone must undertake to emancipate oneself from the bondage of death and ignorance and enter into the glorious light of Immortality and Self Knowledge. In this way, Easter is not just a past event but the day we are born again into Enlightenment

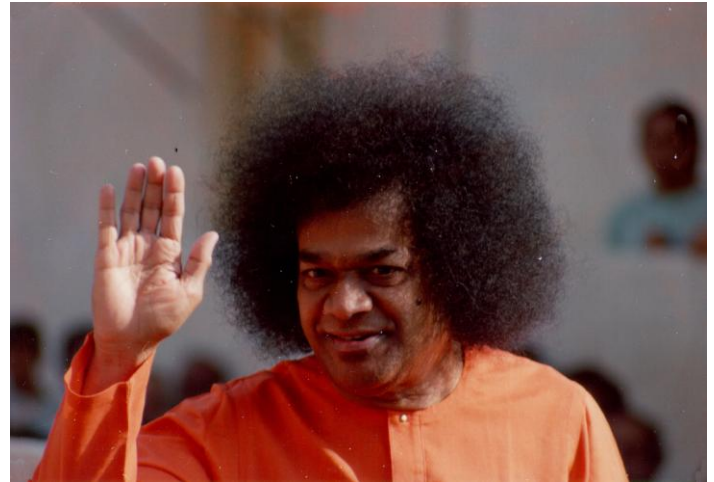
The Spiritual Glory of Easter

Easter is more than a festival of Enlightenment. Easter is also a prayer of Light. We pray to the risen Christ to lead us from the unreal to the real, from darkness to the Light and from death to Immortality. On this spiritual journey Jesus makes an invitation to all of us.

"If anyone wants to be my disciple, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23, Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:27) **On the path of spiritual emancipation, everyone has his cross to carry. It is the cross of karmic debt and worldly tendencies that lie deep at different levels of our conscious, subconscious and unconscious states.** This debt has to be balanced and the tendencies cleared. Jesus tells us the best way to do this: "Take up your cross and follow the Master". Then and only then can you be sure of winning the battle of life. Beloved Sathya Sai Baba gives us the same recipe: "Follow the Master, Face the devil, Fight to the end, Finish the game!"

The devil here is body identification. It is the root of all sorrows and sufferings. It is the Original sin of Christian theology! We have to face this devil and make the first giant step in our spiritual ascendance. We have to declare the truth with courage: 'I am not the body, I am not the mind. Therefore I remain unaffected by the dualities of the body - mind complex. In this state of equanimity, I must follow the Master.'

The master is the inner conscience, the Sound of Silence or the inner voice of Krishna (= Krist-na) seated on the Chariot of Arjuna (= the heart of the devotee) on the battle field of Dharmakshetra (= the way of the cross). When we listen and follow the Divine instructions (= the Gita) of the Master (= Krist or Krishna) then victory is sure. That victory is the Resurrection of the Immortal Self in the incarnated life



Without the Cross, this dissolution of the ego, there is no resurrection. When we choose to follow Jesus on the way of the cross, the spiritual path of the death of the ego, we must be ready to crucify the old little self that lives on anger, jealousy, greed, hate and body attachment and rise to our glorious immortal Self of Truth, Love, Peace and Right Conduct.

Our celebration of Christ's Victory at Easter is an act of faith that one early morning we shall rise with Him to the Glory and Light of the Immortal Absolute Divine Consciousness.

Jesus Demonstrates Acceptance of God's Will

Acceptance ushers in a process of transformation and purification. This is the level where we accept with joy everything that happens to us as the Will of God and therefore ultimately bound to work out for our highest good. Jesus went through this stage when He prayed: "I want your Will to be done, not mine" (Mark 14:36).

While Jesus was praying He invited his disciples to keep watch and pray with Him. But the fatigue and weariness of the body did not allow them to fulfill this. They were heavy with sleep. Jesus chided them for this behaviour (Matthew 26:40).

Meanwhile, the leading priests and leaders were meeting at the residence of Caiphas the high priest to discuss how to capture Jesus and secretly put Him to death. They tempted Judas, one of Jesus' loved disciples with 30 silver pieces to betray Him into their hands. Judas succumbed to this temptation and betrayed His Master. Greed for money is a monster that gets hold of man and makes him lose all sense of discrimination and accept without compunction wrongful ways of satisfying it. Whenever we opt for falsehood in place of Truth, we betray Jesus again and again.

When we accept our lives as an expression of God's Will, sufferings begin to have a refining effect on our souls. The external push and buffeting of Karma now pulls us inwards and draws us closer to the warmth and love of our inner Christ -Consciousness.



Duty is God



THOSE were the days when the supply of electric power for lighting streets was available only to a few big cities in India. In one of the big towns every street had three or four oil lamps each with a glass chimney set on a pole. The municipal authorities employed some laborers to light the lamps at about 6:00 p.m. in the evening. The expenses incurred towards oil, wick and chimney were met by the municipalities.

There was one lamplighter who did his job cheerfully and scrupulously. He had great faith in God and always recited the name of his dear God, Rama. He was very punctual and systematic in his work. He used to come to his ward exactly at 5:00 p.m., clean the chimneys, pour oil into the container, set the wick right and light the lamp. While doing all these he would be singing, "Janaki Jeevana Ram, Karoonga Tumhara Kam," meaning thereby, "Oh Lord of Janaki, I am doing only your work. I am only serving you."

Reports reached the municipal authorities that the lamps lit by this devotee shone brighter all through the night while the lamps lit by others in the town were dim and many of them burnt only for a part of the night. The matter was taken for investigation. The reporting officer submitted to the authorities the fact that all the lamplighters in the town were given the same oil and other material and were also paid the same remuneration. As for the street where the lamps shone brightly all through the night unlike those in other streets, it was a unique case where the lamplighter was known to be a very pious man doing his duty as service to God. **Any work done sincerely as service to God is bound to reflect His love and glory. - BABA**

Devotional Activities in Chicago and Suburbs

Activity	Time	Venue	Contact
Every Monday – Bhajans	07:00 pm to 08:00 pm	Aurora (Shirdi Mandir)	630-854-2004
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
Wednesday, March 23 - Bhajans	07:30 pm to 08:30 pm	Deerfield	847-236-9945
Saturday, March 26 – Padhuka Puja	03:30 pm to 05:00 pm	Bolingbrook	630-819-9081

For more information, please contact any of the Center Officers

Role	Name	Phone	e-mail
President:	Ganesh Jayaraman	847-863-5299	ganesh.jayaraman@credit-suisse.com
Vice-President:	Shankar Uppala	708-642-1400	uppalarao@yahoo.com
Devotion Coordinator:	Srividhya Ganesh	847-452-2505	srividhyaganesh@yahoo.com
Education Coordinator:	Vasanth Govindarajan	847-537-7574	sainara9@gmail.com
Service Coordinator:	Veera Kovelakuntla	847-924-6971	k_veera@yahoo.com
Bookstore & Library Coordinator:	Leenger Vargas	815-274-2162	Leenger108@gmail.com
Study Circle Coordinator:	Nalini Bidani	773-643-4191	n.bidani@att.net
YA Male Representative:	Sagar Varanasi	812-219-1124	svaranasi@yahoo.com
YA Female Representative:	Michelle Advaney	847-852-6125	michelle915@gmail.com