

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!

Upcoming Events!

February 20th Monday Maha Shivarathri: 7:30 PM to 10:30 PM
Venue: Ramada Inn, 780 North Ave., Glendale Heights, IL 60139

March 25th Sunday Ugadi: 9:30 AM to 1 PM
Venue: Longfellow Center, 610 S Ridgeland Av, Oak Park, IL 60304

April 1st Sunday Ram Navami: 9:30 AM to 1 PM
Venue: Longfellow Center, 610 S Ridgeland Av, Oak Park, IL 60304

April 8th Sunday Easter: 9:30 AM to 1 PM
Venue: Ramada Inn, 780 North Ave., Glendale Heights, IL 60139

April 24th Tuesday Mahasamadhi Anniversary: 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM
Venue: Manav Seva Mandir, 101 S Church St, Bensenville IL 60103



Love All, Serve All

Date	Calendar of Events
02/04 – Saturday	06:30 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 06:30 pm – 08:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at Sarah’s Circle Women’s Shelter (on N. Sheridan Rd.)
02/05 – Sunday	09:30 am – 01:00 pm: Sunday Center Program followed by Membership meeting
02/11 – Saturday	06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
02/12 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program
02/18 – Saturday	06:30 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 06:30 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at Jesus People USA Men’s Shelter (on Kenmore Ave.)
02/19 – Sunday	09:30 am – 01:00 pm: Sunday Center Program
02/20 – Monday	07:30 pm – 10:30 pm: Maha Shivarathri Program at Ramada Inn, Glendale Heights (on North Ave.)
02/25 – Saturday	06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
02/26 – Sunday	09:30 am – 01:00 pm: Sunday Center Program
03/03 – Saturday	06:30 pm – 10:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 06:30 pm – 08:00 pm: Dinner Service Project at Sarah’s Circle Women’s Shelter (on N. Sheridan Rd.)
03/04 – 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 10:30 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 & delivery for residents of Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (Lawrence Ave.)



Siva Consciousness Is All-Pervading



The Lord of Kailasa has manifested his Divine form with the crescent moon adorning his head, the cool water of the Ganga flowing between the matted locks, with his radiant eye in the middle of the forehead and the purple neck gleaming like the sheen of a blackberry. He wears serpent bracelets and a snake belt, his entire body is smeared with Vibhuti, his forehead is adorned with a Kumkum dot, his ruddy lips glow with the juice of the betel, diamondstudded gold earrings dangle from his ears and his whole swarthy body glows with divine effulgence.
(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

O ONE SEEMS TO HAVE MADE AN effort to know the inner meaning and significance of Sivarathri. In fact, the meaning is contained in the word Sivarathri itself. "Siva" means auspicious and "rathri" means night. Thus, Sivarathri means auspicious night. This auspiciousness is present everywhere. Then the question arises, "Who is Siva?" Siva is the divine consciousness which pervades all living beings. This Sivatwa (divine consciousness) permeates not only human beings, but birds, beasts and animals as well. In fact, every moment in our life can be considered as Sivarathri. We need not wait for Sivarathri on a particular day in a year.

Divinity is Indescribable and Immeasurable Embodiments of Love!

Siva consciousness is all-pervading. It is unbounded and unlimited. Sarvatah Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvatah Sruthimalloke Sarvamavrutya Tishthati (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything, Divinity permeates the entire universe). If we analyse carefully, it will be obvious that all that we witness around is Siva consciousness, and nothing else. Siva does not mean a particular form with matted hair, donning a tiger skin. Wherever we look and whichever form we come across, it is resplendent with Siva consciousness, whether it is the form of a child, an elderly person, a woman or a man. How can you describe this all-pervading Siva consciousness or limit it to a particular time and place? Some children perform a particular dance to portray Siva Tandava (cosmic dance of Siva) symbolically. But, how can one describe the transcendental Siva principle which words fail to describe and the mind cannot comprehend? Siva is described as Muktanti (the Lord with three eyes). All of us have only two eyes. But Siva has a third eye as well. We are aware of only the past and the present. We cannot visualise the future. Siva, who can visualise the future with his third eye, is therefore referred to as Muktanti.

People attribute different forms to God and describe Him in many different ways. Each one describes Him according to his imagination, ascribing a particular name and form to Him. But no description can fully reveal Divinity. Nameless, formless God is omnipresent and all-pervading. He is Avangmanasagochara (neither words can describe nor the mind can comprehend Him) and Aprameya (immeasurable). Who can describe such Divinity? Divinity signifies only one thing, that is, consciousness. This consciousness assumes the form that it enters it may be the form of a dog, a crow, a crane or a human being. Easwaratwa (Divinity), therefore, connotes consciousness. This consciousness is present in all human beings, nay, even in insects, birds, beasts and animals. One of its names is Sivatwa (Siva consciousness).

God Assumes all Names and Forms

Some people limit Sivatawa to the form of Siva but it is not correct. Sivatawa is present in the entire People today are creating differences among human beings by attributing different names

and forms to nameless, formless and attributeless God. This is a serious mistake.

Divinity is being divided by devotees. Devotees who divide God are evil-minded. God is one. Never create divisions in the name of God. When we do not realise the oneness of God, we engage ourselves in futile arguments and counter arguments. Whether it is Rama, Krishna, Siva or Vishnu, all these are only different names ascribed by devotees to God. cosmos. In fact, all the devotees sitting in this Hall are embodiments of Siva. Sarvam Sivamayam (all that you witness in this objective world is the manifestation of Siva). It pervades all the three worlds. It exists in all the three periods of time the past, present and future. It is indescribable. Any length of time is insufficient to describe it. Sivatawa therefore cannot be described as this or that. No one can say that it is present here and not there. It is present everywhere. People worship it by attributing different names and forms to it.

Just as consciousness is the same in all, divine love does not observe any difference between living beings. Your love for your father, mother, brother, sister, etc., is based on your earthly relationships with them. But divine love is the same for all. In fact, every living being is the embodiment of divinity. God assumes all names and forms. Hence, you are also the form of God. Once Parvati asked Siva, "Oh Lord! You are present everywhere. But how can people recognise your omnipresence?" Easwara replied, "The consciousness that is immanent in me pervades all living beings. It permeates every cell of their body. One cannot explain it; one has only to experience it." The principle of consciousness pervades all living beings. People worship Siva and sing his glories. Sivatawa is the divine consciousness that is present everywhere and permeates every object of the universe.

Siva does not care to tend his hair. He keeps his hair in its natural state as matted locks. He keeps his body also in a natural state without any refinements whatsoever. His ash-smeared body appears in different colours to different people. Who can describe the colour and effulgence of Siva's body? Once there started an argument between Lakshmi and Parvati about the physical appearance of Siva and Vishnu. Lakshmi asked Parvati, "Parvati! What made you choose Siva as your husband who always keeps his body smeared with ash?" Parvati then asked Lakshmi, "Amm! The colour of your husband's body is blue. Why don't you change it?" When they were arguing thus, Saraswati entered the scene. She is the embodiment of equanimity. She said to both of them, "There may be some differences in their physical appearance. But I do not find any real difference between them. The same divine consciousness permeates both these forms of Siva and Vishnu. I realise it. Since you are not realising it, you are entering into argumentation. Hence, forget all outward differences."

Saraswati symbolises the transcendental principle which is beyond all the three Gunas (attributes). As mentioned in the Puranas (ancient texts), it is this principle practised by Saraswati which imparts peace and serenity to the world. Differences lie in the minds of people but God is beyond all differences. It is they who ascribe different names, forms and attributes to attributeless, formless God. As are the feelings, so is the form. As is the form, so are the attributes. Based on our imagination, we picture God in different forms. But it is a mistake to be carried away by our imagination. People describe God as Rudra as well as Santhaswarupa (embodiment of peace). But God is always Santhaswarupa only. He is always pleasant and smiling. To consider such an embodiment of peace in a different form is only the imagination of the devotees. All differences are the result of man's imagination.

- B C H
Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on the morning of 8th March 2005.



Love Is The Greatest Binding Force



What is the use of all spiritual practices without the control of senses? What is the use of doing Yoga without forbearance? What is the use of performing Japa without inner peace? All this is futile like ploughing a barren field. (Telugu Poem)

a D a o r k
Students!

Any task can be accomplished in this world with proper effort. In order to achieve victory in any field of activity, one has to make necessary effort. Even a tiny ant can walk miles together if it makes effort. On the other hand, an eagle cannot move even a step forward if it does not make effort. Man cannot perform even a small task if he does not have the will to do or he does not make effort in the proper direction.

Make Love the Basis of all Spiritual Practices

With his strong will power, Dhruva attained the vision of God even at a tender age by performing intense penance, overcoming all difficulties and sufferings with courage and fortitude. It was because of his strong will power that he attained immortality and became shining pole star. In the same way, any person can achieve success when he performs actions with full confidence, no matter what his age, strength or capacity is. You must have heard the life stories of many great sages who had to ultimately face frustration and disappointment in spite of performing intense penance for a number of years because they lacked forbearance.

Nothing in this world has more power than love. Love is more powerful than even an atom bomb, a hydrogen bomb or any other bomb. If you have only love, you can achieve everything. So many of you have gathered here. What is the reason? It is love. It is because of Swami's love for you and your love for Swami that so many of you have come here. Has anyone sent any invitation to you? No. Love is the greatest binding force. Therefore, develop love, talk to each other with love, perform all actions with love and always contemplate on the principle of love.

Viswamitra is an example in this regard who lost all his power of penance due to his lack of forbearance and sense control. He had to restart his penance from the very beginning.

Self-effort is most essential in every field of activity.

Your rendition of Raga becomes more and more melodious with more and more practice. Even a Neem fruit tastes sweeter if you keep on chewing it more and more. (Telugu Poem)

It is because of their strenuous effort and intense practice that boys are able to sing Bhajans melodiously.

Though Sage Durvasa was one of great penance, he lacked self-restraint. He was full of anger and totally devoid of inner peace. That is why he could not attain any exalted status. Though he performed intense penance and attained great powers, he lost everything due to his lack of inner peace. Along with inner peace, one should have forbearance also. Forbearance is like the very eye of man.

Forbearance is truth, forbearance is righteousness, forbearance is the teaching of the Vedas, forbearance is non-violence, forbearance is sacrifice, forbearance confers happiness and heavenly bliss. In fact, it is everything in all the worlds. (Telugu Poem)

Love is the very life of all spiritual practices. There can be no life without love. You have to make efforts to understand this principle of love and make it a part of your life. The boy who spoke earlier said, "Life is love, enjoy it". "Life is a dream, realise it". What is a dream? The entire life of man is a dream. Now it is daytime and you are sitting here, listening to Swami's Discourse. You think, it is not a dream because you are seeing it with your eyes, hearing it with your ears, reflecting on it with your mind and experiencing it in your heart. You think, you are directly experiencing all this. But, how long will this experience last? At night when you go to sleep after your dinner, this experience will vanish. Similarly, you experience happiness and sorrow in your dream. But, how long does this experience of sorrow and happiness last? It lasts so long as the dream lasts. As soon as you are awake, all your dream experiences become untrue. Your night dreams do not exist during the day. Similarly, you don't remember your daytime experiences in your sleep. Hence, one is night dream and the other is day dream. Day dreams do not exist in the night dream and night dreams do not exist in the day dream. But you are present in both. Therefore, you are omnipresent. Since both your daytime and night-time experiences are just a dream, it is said, life is a dream. You have to realise it. That is true religion. Religion means to realise. Understanding the truth is true religion.

In everything, love is most important. Rishis do penance in dense forests where fierce beasts roam about freely. These Rishis don't have guns, swords or any other weapons with them. Yet these Rishis and fierce beasts live together in harmony in these forests. Neither are the Rishis afraid of the beasts nor are the beasts afraid of the Rishis. What is the reason? The reason is that Rishis are full of love, due to the effect of which even the wild beasts are transformed into loving animals. Hence, whatever is the type of company you have, it will have the same type of effect on you. That is why it is said, "Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are". When you associate with good company, you will imbibe good qualities. In everything, love is most important. Love is the form of God. Live in love.

Perform all Actions to Please God

There lived in Italy a great violinist named Antony, who earned a great name as the maker of violins. But he used to take one year to make one violin. His friends used to tell him, "Antony! You are a householder. If you make only one violin in a year, how much income will you get out of it? How will you meet the needs of your family? How can you lead a happy life?" Then Antony told his friends, "My friends! God is the embodiment of perfection. Therefore, even a small task that man performs should be perfect. Only then can he please God. I am not making these violins merely for the sake of my family nor am I making these for my own pleasure. I am making these to please God who is the embodiment of perfection". Whatever work a man undertakes, he should do it to please God. Sarva Karma Bhagavad Pretyartham (do all actions to please God). There is no use doing any spiritual practice without inner peace. Similarly, if you lack forbearance, whatever yogic practices you undertake will be mere physical exercises and will not confer peace of mind on you. If you lack inner peace and contentment, the Japa that you do will become merely artificial and will not be pleasing to God. Everything that you do, you should do it to please God. Even a small task is enough if it pleases God. God sees quality, not quantity. Even a spoonful of cow's milk is better than a barrel of donkey's milk.

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H E

Prasanthi Nilayam on 5th July 1996..
(To be continued)



How Far is Vaikunthha?



Provided your intellect is sharp and free from prejudices and predilections, the reality will reveal itself to you in a flash, for it is quite a simple thing. Only, it must be capable of seeing the problem in its basic essence, apart from all the jumble of irrelevancies.

Once a very learned pundit was holding forth in a very pedantic manner the story of Gajendramoksha from the Bhagavatha (see also S.B. 8.2: 4), before the Mahârâja in his Durbar Hall, before a large gathering of courtiers. He described how the Lord, on hearing the agonised call for succor from the elephant held by the jaws of the monstrous crocodile, hurried from Heaven (Vaikunthha) without stopping even to collect His insignia and weapons, without even intimating to His Consort where He was bound to and on what mission. Suddenly, the Mahârâja interrupted him with the question. "Tell me, pundit, how far is this Vaikunthha?" The learned pundit did not know the distance; he was non-plussed. Nor did any of the other scholars in the palace know.

But the servant who was fanning the King from behind the throne offered to furnish the answer, if his impertinence be pardoned. The pundit was shocked at his effrontery, but the Mahârâja allowed him to speak. "Your Majesty! Vaikunthha is as far as the cry of the elephant could be heard", he said. Yes, when the anguish of a devotee's heart is expressed as a cry or a groan or a sigh, the Lord is as far only as that sound could reach; He is always on the alert to listen to the cry of His children. His Residence, Vaikunthha, is within hearing distance of every cry, from every grief-stricken heart. That illiterate servant knew in a flash the Omnipresence and the Compassion of the Lord.

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 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 11 th – Padhuka Puja	03:30 pm to 05:00 pm	Bolingbrook	630-819-9081
Thursday, February 23 rd	07:30 pm to 08:30 pm	Mundelein	847-557-3619

For more information, please contact any of the Center Officers

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