

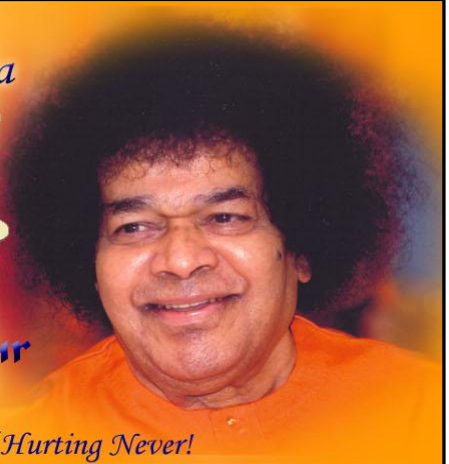
Aum Sri Sai Ram

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!

January 15th Sunday Sankranthi Celebrations: 9:30 AM to 1 PM
 Extended Devotional Singing followed by Swami's Video
 Venue: Longfellow Center, 610 S Ridgeland Av, Oak Park, IL 60304

January 22nd Sunday Bhajan Workshop: 9:30 AM to 1 PM
 Conducted By: Dr. Ram Bala Venue: Longfellow Center

January 29th Sunday Study Circle Workshop: 9:30 AM to 1 PM
 Conducted By: Dr. Suriya Sastri Venue: Longfellow Center

February 5th Sunday Membership Meeting: 9:30 AM to 1 PM
 Venue: Longfellow Center, 610 S Ridgeland Av, Oak Park, IL 60304

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



Love All , Serve All

Date	Calendar of Events
01/07 – Saturday	10:00 am – 02:30 pm: Gift Bag Distribution with Bread Truck (o S. Armitage Ave.) 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.)
01/08 – Sunday	10:00 am – 11:00 am: Bingo with Residents of Berkley Nursing & Rehab Center in Oak Park 09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program
01/14 – Saturday	06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at Northside Housing Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
01/15 – Sunday	09:30 am – 11:30 am: Sankranthi Celebrations: Extended Devotional singing followed by Swami's Video
01/21 – 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.)
01/22 – Sunday	09:30 am – 01:00 pm: Sunday Center Program followed by Bhajan Workshop with Dr. Ram Bala
01/28 – Saturday	06:00 am – 08:00 am: Breakfast Service at Northside Housing Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
01/29 – Sunday	09:30 am – 01:00 pm: Sunday Center Program followed by Study Circle Workshop with Dr. Suriya Sastri
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 – 11:30 am: Sunday Center Program followed by Membership meeting
	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.)



Repose faith in your conscience



*The sun appears serene and peaceful.
The days have become shorter, and the cool wind is blowing.
The fields are ripe with golden crops.
Marigold flowers are blossoming like garlands of pearls on the banks of rivers.
The farmers are rejoicing and singing.
The sweet festival of Sankranti has come in the month of Pushya (a month in Indian calendar), filling our homes with the newly harvested grain.
(Telugu poem)*

God willed that the Sankranti festival shall bring all prosperity to the people and they shall not feel any inconvenience in the matter of food and other needs. The farmers, having brought home the produce after harvesting it, will be happily taking rest in their homes. Even the agricultural workers will be free, for the harvesting season will be over by then. Having worked hard day and night in the fields for some months, they will be now enjoying the comfort of a home, by God's grace. Whatever God does, it is for the good of the people! For, they are all His amsa (parts) only! Mamaivamsho jivaloke jivabhuta Sanathana (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being), said Lord Krishna in the Bhagavadgita. Not only human beings, even animals, birds, and insects are the embodiments of God! However, all people do not realize this truth.

Saint Thyagaraja sang in one of his immortal kirtanas, *Cheemalo Brahmalo Siva Kesavaadulalo prema meera velasi unde birudhu vahinchina Rama nannu brovara*
Oh Rama! In Your pure and unsullied form of love, You indwell all beings from an ant to Brahma as also in Siva and Kesava. Please be my protector too.

Unable to realize this truth, people kill the ant that crawls on their bodies. The same people worship the ant if it appears as an embodiment of Divinity. Thus, the feelings make all the difference. During this season, the sun appears to be gentle and soothing during the day time. The days are shorter, and the nights are long. During the nights, the moonlight is cool and comfortable. Having worked hard during day, people will have comfortable sleep during the night. The human body needs rest. Hence, every human being should have adequate rest. As the saying goes, "Sleep a while after lunch." One should take a nap at least for a short period after lunch. However, one should not keep awake for long during the night. One should have sound sleep during night. Everything is God's will. The entire universe is created by God. Nothing in this world will move without God's will. Not even a blade of grass will move without divine Will. People who do not realize this truth get carried away by their pride of intelligence and discrimination.

Who is a "HINDU"? The letters in the word HINDU stand for: H: Humility, I: Individuality, N: Nationality, D: Devotion, U: Unity. Wherever there is unity, there will be Divinity. Only Divinity can unite the world.

You should not try to break the world into pieces saying, "this is my India", "this is my Japan", "this is my Germany", etc. The Divinity called "I" in all human beings is only one! There is only one race: the human race. Humanness is very sacred, holy, and divine. The word manava (human being) means very sacred. The festival of Sankranti reminds you of this truth and awakens you to this reality. During this holy period of Makara Samkramana, people, especially the village folk, enjoy by participating in several kinds of rural games and play.

As a matter of fact, this is a festival season for the animals too!

Some people in the villages bring together the gangireddu (a decorated bull) and a cow, naming them Rama and Sita, and perform their marriage symbolically, in the hope that their marriage will bring forth peace and welfare to the world. The cowherd gives proper training to the bull and the cow in advance. He asks the cow "Amma! Is Rama beautiful?" The cow shakes its head in disapproval of the suggestion. Then, the gangireddudasu with the stick in his hand tries to counsel the cow "Amma! Rama is blackish blue in colour. Yet he is very good. He is a great king. He is mighty and prosperous." Thereupon the cow nods its head in approval. It seems to indicate, "Yes, I like Rama." The children in the village watch the play very enthusiastically. They invite their friends and relatives to witness this play, thus:

*Oh my dear brother, here comes the gangireddudasu.
Come, let us go and see him.
He wears a silver medallion and a waist belt.
He carries a decorated staff and wears special marks on his forehead.
He brings with him richly caparisoned sacred cow and bull and performs their marriage.
Let us see the marriage ceremony and offer our gifts.
(Telugu Song)*

Man today does not listen to the sound advice of the elders and acts contrary to the nature of a human being. People do not listen to good things, and they indulge in all unnecessary and unwarranted activities. The festival of Sankranti is meant to remind man about the sanctity of humanness. It is said, Easwara Sarva Bhutanam (God is the indweller of all beings). Hence, every human being, nay, every living being, is an amsa (part) of God! But there seems to be a flaw in your own behavior. Why? You throw sacred feelings to the winds and allow your mind to run after all and sundry things. That is how your behaviour is tainted. You are now in your prime of youth. Your body, mind, and intellect are strong and secure in this age. Hence, you have to make proper use of your capability to live up to your sacred feelings.

Sankranti is not to be considered as a mere festival like any others. The festival of Sankranti brings great joy to one and all. Even a poor man will arrange to make payasam (sweet pudding) in his house and partake of it happily. The festival of Sankranti will bring joy in ever so many ways. It is not limited to song and play. It expands one's heart with joy. It is a festival of unity, that unity develops purity, resulting in Divinity in human beings. Hence, people must cultivate unity and purity in the first instance. What is purity? Our vision must be sacred; our words must be soft and sweet, and our ears must listen to only good things. Our nose should smell only divine fragrance. Thus, all the senses in our body must be put to proper use.

*Man is born out of karma.
Karma is the most important dharma (duty) of a human being:
Man is born in action, is sustained by action, and ultimately merges in action.
Action is the cause for pleasure and pain.
Truly speaking, action is God for man.
(Telugu poem)*

Hence, we should continue to perform karma.

**- Excerpt From Bhagavan's Makar Sankranti Discourse
15th January 2007**



Truth And Love Form The Quintessence Of My Message



Contd/- from November 2011 version of watch
(http://r05iil002ct.saimedia.org/WATCH/2011/WATCH_Nov_2011_WV.pdf)

Who are you? You think you are the body. But you are neither the body nor the mind. The body is like a water bubble. How can you identify yourself with such an ephemeral body? You may say, "I am the mind". Mind is nothing but a bundle of desires. It has no form of its own; it takes the form of various desires of man. One day or the other, you have to give up all desires. Hence, do not identify yourself with the mind. Man's mind wavers from moment to moment like a monkey. You belong to mankind. So, you have to conduct yourself as a human being. Do not allow your mind to behave like a monkey. Constantly remind yourself that you are a human being. Daivam Manusha Rupena (God incarnates in the form of a human being). Give up body consciousness and live in the constant awareness that you are God.

We construct temples to consecrate idols and worship them. Where does the idol come from? It is your own creation. You offer worship to the man-made idols but you are not prepared to worship the God in man. There is no point in merely worshipping idols if you do not realize your innate divinity. Everyone must respect and revere the principle of the Atma within. Consider Atma Viswasa (faith in the Self) as your Swasa (life-breath). Faith in the idols is temporary. When you go to Tirupati, you worship God in the form of Lord Venkateswara. You extol Him saying, "Lord Venkateswara is our family deity". When you make a pilgrimage to Brindavan, you worship God in the form of Lord Krishna. In Ayodhya, you worship Him in the form of Lord Rama. Depending on the place and circumstances, different names and forms have been attributed to God. But in reality Venkateswara, Krishna, Rama, Sai Baba, all are one and the same. You should not be deluded by differences in name and form. Develop firm faith in the oneness of the Atma. Religions are many but the goal is one.

Embodiments of Love!

Having come here after spending a lot of money and putting up with many inconveniences, you should make proper use of your stay here. Ask yourself whether you have spent your time in a purposeful manner. What is the use of coming here if you do not put Swami's teachings into practice? Develop unwavering faith in the oneness of divinity. Only then can you experience peace. So long as you do not contemplate on the oneness of God, you will remain unsteady and restless.

Desires are the Cause of Man's Delusion

There are two words, good and bad. Though these are articulated differently, the sound that constitutes them is the same. You criticize someone as a bad person today and extol him as a good person tomorrow. Good and bad are related to your own thinking. Your mind is the cause for both. In reality, man is always good. Human life is highly sacred. Do not belittle yourself by thinking that you are a mere mortal. You are verily God Himself. The very fact that you portray God in a human form and worship Him proves that human being is essentially divine. Do not attach undue importance to names and forms. Understand your inherent principle of divinity.

Born as a human being, you should imbibe human qualities. Have a human mind, not a monkey mind. What is the use of taking birth as a human being if you conduct yourself like an animal? However, you need not give up everything and become a Sannyasi (renunciant). A Sannyasi is also a human being. See God in everyone. God is all-pervasive. You cannot say that God is

confined to a particular place. There is no place where God does Sarvataha Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvataha Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruithya Tishthati (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything, God permeates the entire universe).

We cultivate paddy. However, we do not consume it in its raw form. We remove the husk covering the grain and refine it into rice. Our desires are like the husk covering the rice grain. We will be free from the cycle of birth and death once we give up all desires. Paddy becomes suitable for consumption only after it undergoes the process of refinement and becomes rice. Rice is used for making various preparations such as Pulihora, Chitrannam, Chakkeram Pongali, Payasam, etc. Rice flour is used for preparing Idli and Dosa. The names of these food items may vary, but the essential ingredient of rice is the same in all. Just as paddy is transformed into rice, our mind should also be purified through the process of Samskara (refinement). Everything needs Samskara. Samskara in the process of cooking makes food fit for consumption. The shape of an object may change but the fundamental principle remains changeless.

Embodiments of Love!

You have a pure and sacred heart but it gets covered by the clouds of your desires. Just as the sun and the moon are not visible to us when they are covered by clouds, we are unable to visualise our reality because of delusion. Man passes his childhood in play with his playmates. In youth, he is deluded by ego as he feels proud of his youth. As the end approaches, he regrets for not having attained peace of mind because he kept hankering after worldly pleasures. Man passes through various stages in life such as childhood, youth, middle age and old age. However, there is no transformation in him with the advancement of age. Instead of trying to change the Srishti (creation), man should change his Drishti (outlook). We can see the reality only when we change our Drishti. There is nothing wrong with Srishti. God's creation is perfect and none has the power to change it. In the creation, everything happens by the Will of God. You are deluded because of your materialistic outlook. You have to change your outlook. Do not expect God to change the creation. He has given you everything in its pristine form. But you are polluting it because of your selfish desires. The mind is the root cause for all this. Hence, annihilate the mind and everything will be clear to you.

So long as one is endowed with physical strength and vigour, one may enjoy Atalu, Patalu (playing and singing). As the age advances, the physical body undergoes certain changes. All of you are aware what a great singer M.S. Subbulakshmi was. However, she could not sing when she grew old. When she mentioned this to Me, I told her that she had overused her faculty of singing and thereby damaged her throat, and that was the reason for her predicament. One should not put one's faculties to too much strain. Your voice and vision are bound to change with the passage of time. You suffer from unrest and anxiety because you rely on your physical body that is subject to change. Instead, rely on the changeless and eternal principle of the Atma.

Man invites troubles in life by his own defects. If we improve our conduct, our life will become free from troubles. So, first and foremost we should take to the path of righteousness. It is not food and drink that is important in life. Character is most important. If you lack character, you will have to face innumerable difficulties.

- From Bhagavan's Birthday Message in Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium, Prasanthi Nilayam on 23rd November 2005.



The Lord has no fixed form



There was an artist who had traveled far and wide and had built up for himself an extensive reputation. But so far he had not achieved access to Krishna! As much he was anxious to seek approbation from Lord Krishna as well. With his view, one day he got an appointment with Krishna, met Him and requested Him to stay still, so that he could paint His picture. He prepared the outline and told Krishna that he would get ready the final painting in a week's time. Krishna knew the ego of the painter. After a week, the painter brought a finished portrait, covered with a white cloth. In Krishna's presence, when he uncovered the painting, the painter himself was shocked at the lack of similarity between Krishna and the painting. The painter was completely surprised and asked for a week's time to get the job done: The painter tried several times but every time the result was equally disappointing. In complete frustration and total dejection, he wanted to leave the city and go away. When he was going away, sage Nārada met him. Nārada told him that the Lord has no fixed form and He can change His face every second. Nārada advised, "If you do want to paint Him, I will tell you a secret" and Nārada whispered something to the artist.

Following the advice given by Nārada, the painter came back, with a white cloth covering something and again approached Krishna and told Him that this time, He is welcome to change in any manner but the painting will look exactly like Him. When the cloth was removed, Krishna saw only a mirror and this mirror reproduced an exact replica of Krishna. If therefore, you are imaging that God is like this or like that, it is not correct. You cannot describe God and your attempts will fail. Make your mind clear and clean; fill it with love and devotion; that will enable you to have the true vision of God.

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, January 14 th – Padhuka Puja	10:00 am to 01:00 pm	Bolingbrook	630-819-9081
Monday, January 23 rd	07:00 pm to 09:30 pm	Aurora (Shirdi Mandir)	630-854-2004

For more information, please contact any of the Center Officers

Role	Name	Phone	e-mail
President:	Shankar Uppala	708-642-1400	uppalasrao@yahoo.com
Vice-President:	Anand Girap	630-730-4849	argsscmcvp@gmail.com
Devotion Coordinator:	Srividhya Ganesh	847-452-2505	srividhyaganesh@yahoo.com
Education Coordinator:	Sai Prasanna Ravichandran	860-558-0976	sairavichan@gmail.com
Service Coordinator:	Ravi Vemulapalli	732-322-7802	rkvemulapa@yahoo.com
Bookstore & Library Coordinator:	Rani Sanka	847-478-1475	ranisanka@yahoo.com
Study Circle Coordinator:	Suriya Sastri	630-842-9214	ssastri@hotmail.com
YA Male Representative:	Srinu Raghupatruni	248-346-5675	srinuraghu@gmail.com
YA Female Representative:	Aparna Sekhar	314-315-1479	aparnasekhar@gmail.com