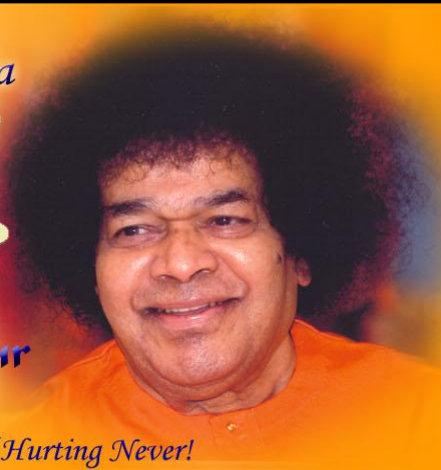


*Aum Sri Sai Ram*

*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!**

**Sunday, March 10<sup>th</sup> Maha Shivarathri Celebrations**

**Time:** 8:00 PM – 12:00 Midnight  
**Venue:** Clarion Inn  
 933 S Riverside Dr., Elmhurst, IL 60126

**Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup> Bread Truck Project**

**Preparation Time:** 6 AM to 9 AM  
**Delivery Time:** 10 AM  
**Venue:** Please call 312-970-0857 for location and directions

**Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup> Easter Celebrations**

**Time:** 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM  
**Venue:** Ramada Inn  
 780 North Avenue, Glendale Heights, IL 60139



**Love All , Serve All**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Calendar of Events</b>
02/16 – Saturday	<b>06:00 pm – 09:30 pm:</b> Dinner Service Project at Northside Housing Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) <b>07:00 pm – 10:00 pm:</b> Dinner Service Project at Jesus People USA Men's Shelter (on Kenmore Ave.)
02/17 – Sunday	<b>09:00 am – 01:00 pm:</b> Sunday Center Program
02/23 – Saturday	<b>06:00 am – 08:00 am:</b> Breakfast Service at Northside Housing Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
02/24 – Sunday	<b>09:00 am – 01:00 pm:</b> Sunday Center Program
03/02 – Saturday	<b>06:00 pm – 09:30 pm:</b> Dinner Service Project at Northside Housing Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) <b>06:00 pm – 08:00 pm:</b> Dinner Service Project at Sarah's Circle Women's Shelter (on N. Sheridan Rd.)
03/03 – Sunday	<b>09:00 am – 01:00 pm:</b> Sunday Center Program
03/09 – Saturday	<b>06:00 am – 08:00 am:</b> Breakfast Service at Northside Housing Men's Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
03/10 – Sunday	<b>09:00 am – 01:00 pm:</b> Sunday Center Program <b>10:00 am – 11:00 am:</b> Bingo with Nursing Home Residents (on North Ave, Oak Park)
	<p><b>Sunday Center Schedule:</b>                      09:00 am – 09:30 am: Center Setup                      09:30 am – 10:25 am: Study Circle                      10:30 am – 11:30 am: Devotional Singing</p> <p><b>Ongoing service projects on Sundays:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grocery collection for the needy families (Delivered at the end of every month)</li> <li>• Sandwich preparation &amp; delivery for residents of Northside Housing Men's Shelter (Lawrence Ave.)</li> </ul>



# Annihilate the Mind by Vigil and Contemplation



There are many different stories given in the Shastras (sacred texts) to explain the origin of the Sivarathri festival.

A story is that this is the day on which Siva performed the Tandava Nritya (cosmic dance) in his ecstasy, with all the gods and sages taking part in the cosmic event. When he consumed the Halahala (deadly poison that emanated from the ocean after its churning by gods and demons) to save all the worlds from destruction, the heat of the fumes was well-nigh unbearable, even for him. So, it is said, Ganga was poured uninterruptedly on his matted locks – this is the explanation for the Abhisheka (ceremony of pouring consecrated water, oil, milk, etc., on the Linga) which is offered in all Siva temples for hours on end, and at some places, uninterruptedly – but Siva was only partly relieved. So the cool moon was placed on his head; that gave some relief. After this, Siva danced with all the gods, the Tandava Dance. That is the story, but all this did not happen on a particular day and so Sivarathri cannot be said to commemorate that day.

*You need not waste time in trying to discover Me and My Nature. Understand what I teach, not 'who is the teacher', for I am beyond your intellect and your Shakti. You will understand Me only through My work. That is why sometimes in order to reveal who I am, I Myself show you My 'visiting card', something that you call a miracle. Know the Marma (mystery) and carry out the Karma (duty) I assign you.*

Some say that Siva was born on this day, as if Siva has birth and death like any mortal! The story that a hunter sat on a Bilva tree on the lookout for animals to kill and without intending any worship, unknowingly, dropped the leaves of that tree upon a Lingam beneath, and so attained salvation, explains only the importance of this day; it does not explain the origin. Besides, we have not only Mahasivarathri, but have every month a Sivarathri, dedicated to Siva worship.

## Close Affinity between the Mind and the Moon

The night is dominated by the moon. The moon has 16 Kalas or fractions; and each day when it wanes, a fraction is reduced until it is annihilated on the new moon night. After that, each day a fraction is added until it completes itself on the full moon night. The moon is the presiding deity of the mind; *chandravala manasat jatah* (the moon was born out of the mind of the Supreme Being). There is a close affinity between the mind and the moon; both are subject to decline and progress. The waning of the moon is the symbol for the waning of the mind; for the mind has to be controlled, reduced and finally destroyed. All Sadhana is directed towards this end – Manolaya (the annihilation of the mind) so that Maya (delusion) may be rent asunder and the reality revealed.

During the dark half of the month, the moon, and symbolically its counterpart in man, the mind, wanes, and a fraction is diminished every day. With this, its power on the mind also declines – and finally, on the fourteenth night, Chaturdasi, there is just a wee bit left, that is all. If a little extra effort is made that day by the Sadhaka, even that bit can be wiped off and Manonigraha

(mastery of the mind) completed. The Chaturdasi of the dark half is therefore called Sivarathri, and that night should be spent in Japa and Dhyana of Siva without any other thought either of food or sleep. Then success is assured. And, once a year, on Mahasivarathri night, a special spurt of spiritual activity is recommended, so that what is Savam (corporeal) can become Sivam (auspicious) by the removal of the dross of the mind.

## Symbolic Meaning of Words Used in Scriptures

This is the purpose of Sivarathri. So, it is foolish and harmful deceit to imagine that "keeping awake" is the essential thing in its observance. People try to escape sleep on this night by playing cards, attending non-stop cinema shows or watching plays or dramas. That is not the Sadhana which should be intensified on Sivarathri. That is a travesty of the vow of 'sleeplessness'. It vulgarizes you and encourages evil and sloth, wickedness and hypocrisy.

On Sivarathri, the mind must achieve Laya (mergence). Linga means that in which this Jagat (world) attains Laya – Leeyate; that into which this Jagat goes – Gamyate. Examine the Linga; the three Gunas (primordial qualities) are represented by the three-tiered Peetha (platform); the Linga symbolizes the goal of life. Linga means symbol, the symbol of creation, the result of the activity of the three Gunas and of Brahman (Supreme Reality) which permeates it and gives it meaning and value. When you worship the Linga, you should do so with faith in this symbolic significance.

Every word, every form used in the Sastras has a symbolic meaning, which gives it value. The word Prapancha which you use so freely to indicate this created world means, "that which is composed of the Pancha Bhutas – the five elements of earth, fire, water, wind and ether." Take the word Hridaya used for the heart. It means Hridi (in the heart), Aya (He). That is to say, it means not the organ that pumps blood to all parts of the body, but the seat of the God, the altar where Siva is installed, the niche where the lamp of Jnana is lit. Again, Siva does not ride on an animal called bull in human language. The bull is only a symbol of Dharma standing on the four legs of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema.

## Linga is the Symbolic Form of the Godhead

The three eyes of Siva are the eyes which reveal the past, present and future. Siva alone has all three. The tiger skin which forms his vesture is just a symbol for the elemental bestial primitive traits which his grace destroys; he makes them powerless and harmless. In fact, he tears them to pieces, skins them so to say, and makes them ineffective. His four faces symbolize Santham, Roudram, Mangalam and Utsaham (peace, fierceness, auspiciousness and enthusiasm). In this way, realize, the inner sense of the many attributes of Siva while worshipping the Linga. Meditate thus on Siva this day, so that you may get rid of the last lingering vestiges of delusion.

*You cannot claim to be educated or grown-up unless you have mastered the science of self-control and destroyed the root cause of delusion. It is not this night alone that you should spend in the thought of Siva; your whole life should be lived in the constant presence of the Lord.*



## Sankranti Teaches Us To Broaden Our Heart



Continued from December 2012/ January 2013 issue of WATCH  
[http://r05i1002ct.saimedia.org/WATCH/2012/WATCH\\_Dec\\_2012\\_WV.pdf](http://r05i1002ct.saimedia.org/WATCH/2012/WATCH_Dec_2012_WV.pdf)

*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 keep ourselves engaged in action at all times. What is meant by Karma? It is not merely reading books and playing games like volleyball, cricket, etc. Even the process of inhalation and exhalation involves Karma. It is not possible to perform any action without breathing. When we inhale, the sound 'So' is produced, and the sound 'hum' is produced when we exhale. 'So-hum' means 'That (God) I am'. This Prana (life principle) given to man by God is very vital for his sustenance. After building a temple, people, first of all, perform Prana Pratistha (consecration) of the idols. It has immense significance. Human birth is not meant to eat, drink and be merry and act in an arbitrary manner. Wherever you go, people will respect you only for your qualities. People should talk about you in such terms: "His behavior is exemplary; it gives us great joy to talk to him; if he just looks at us, we feel so happy". It is only your good qualities that bring joy to you. Therefore, man should make proper use of five senses, five life principles and five elements. The food we eat should be Sattwic (pure and sacred). It is not good to put too many chillies in food. Some people like spicy items like Avakaya (mango pickle) and Gongura (hemp plant) chutney. Such people are not satisfied by any other food. If you put Avakaya and Gongura in their plate, they think it is enough. They develop a taste for such items. But do not run after taste, otherwise your life will be a waste. Therefore, we should take our food without giving undue importance to taste.

*Sankranti gives us many types of joys; they are not limited to just singing and playing; the happiness we get from this festival broadens our heart. This gives man the experience of unity with all, which develops purity in him. Where there is purity, there is divinity. Therefore, first and foremost, you should have unity and purity.*

*There is no greater charity than charity of food.  
There are no greater gods than parents.  
There is no greater benefit than having a good company.*  
(Telugu Poem)

### Be Careful in Choosing you Friends

There is nothing greater than truth. Truth is only one; not two. When you associate with good people, you will also become good. Who are your friends? Only good people are your true friends. You become like those whom you associate yourself with. *Tell me your company and I shall tell you what you are.* Therefore, you should meet good people, talk to good people and live with good people. Only then will you become good. Otherwise, you may lose your goodness. You may be having a friend. What is the good that your friend has done to you? Similarly, what is the good that you have done to your friend? If sometimes, your friend takes you to wrong path, you should try to bring him on the right path. In the same way, your friend should help you if you deviate from the right path. What is the use of your friendship if you do not help and transform each other? Thus, try to help each other to tread the right path. This is the hallmark of true friendship.

Even if you have to associate with a bad person, you should transform him into a good person. But the present-day friends first say 'hello, hello' followed soon by 'goodbye'. Instead of saying goodbye, you should become a good boy. In this manner, we should follow the path of truth in our daily life. Only then can we become truly educated, and acquire discrimination and courage.

If you are good and endowed with the spirit of sacrifice, many people will follow you. If you are not good and your behavior is not proper, nobody will even look at you. Then, only those who lack character will associate themselves with you. Your association with such people has no value. Their friendship is only temporary. You may consider them as your good friends initially. But, how long will they remain good in your view? Only for a short while. Afterwards, if you do not listen to their words and do not give what they want, they will turn into your enemies. Therefore, you should be careful in choosing your friends.

Our conduct is our witness in every matter. You may live anywhere, and go to any country. But you should always have good character. Love and respect everyone. Never hate anybody. Earn a good name.

### Never Forget your Divine Reality

Students! Study well. Don't waste time. Whenever you are free, read only good books. Follow good path and become good. When we do good, we will experience only good results. Good deeds yield good results. Be exemplary in your behavior. Never tell a lie. Do not resort to injustice or unlawful acts. Attain immortality by following the path of truth. You are an aspect of the Divine. You should never forget this truth. Whatever study you may undertake, keep this truth always in your mind. It is My duty to give happiness to you all, to make sure that you do not suffer on any account, to bring you up in life and bring happiness to your parents. Your bliss is My food. I need no other food. It is enough for Me if you are happy. It is My wish that you lead your lives happily. Brush aside all the difficulties and losses that you have to undergo and march forward.

If someone abuses you, you should think that he is abusing your body and not you. If he abuses you loudly, it will go into thin air. If he abuses you within himself, it will go back to him and will not come to you. Hence, do not take it to heart. Keep your faith strong and steady. God is immanent in everyone. Names and forms may be different, but God is only one. He is present in all of you. All of you are the embodiments of divinity. Develop this strong conviction. Never observe the difference of high and low. All are one. Lead your life with firm faith in the Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God.

- From Bhagavan's Sankranti Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2007.

*My acts are evidences of Divine power, signs and signals of Divinity. I am granting things out of Prema (love). My Prema will never diminish.  
I have no desire of any kind. I talk of love, I guide you along the path of love. I am Love.*

*Baba.*





## Prayers must emanate from the Heart



Listen to what happened to sage Ramadas of Bhadrachalam, the singer who was imprisoned by the Nawab of Golconda, for misappropriation of public funds (to renovate the Râma Temple at Bhadrachalam), whose liberation from jail was effected by Râma and Lakshmana themselves paying the Nawab the sum appropriated!

Ramadas had piled up a large mass of palmyra leaves, on each of which he had written with his style a song on Râma. When his eyes fell on the heap one day, a thought struck him: "Did I compose these songs for my pleasure? Or, for pleasing Râma?" He wanted to know those songs which had pleased Râma, and fling away those which did not. He decided to throw the whole bundle into the Godavari River, and let Râma save those which He approved. Almost the whole lot sank in the depths; only 108 floated and were rescued. They alone had arisen from the heart; the rest smacked of cleverness, artificiality, punditry, pedantry.

Prayers must emanate from the heart, where God resides and not from the head, where doctrines and doubts clash.

### 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 23 <sup>rd</sup> – Bhajans	05:00 pm to 06:00 pm	Westmont	630-963-0056
Saturday, February 16 <sup>th</sup> – Padhuka Puja	10:30 am to 12:30 pm	Bolingbrook	630-819-9081

### For more information, please contact any of the Center Officers

Role	Name	Phone	e-mail
President:	Shankar Uppala	708-642-1400	uppalasrao@yahoo.com
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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
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