

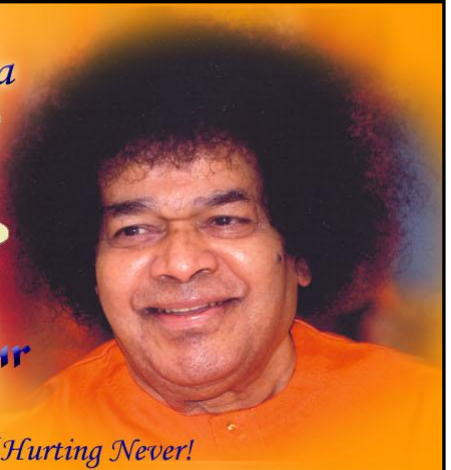
Aum Sri Sai Ram

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!

Friday, February 28th 8:00 PM – Saturday, March 1st 6:00 AM, Maha Shivrathri Celebrations
 Venue: Sant Nirankari Bhavan, 1S750 Route 59, West Chicago, IL

Saturday, March 8th, Bread Truck Project
 Time: 7:00 AM to 9:00 AM Sandwich and Lunch Bag Preparation
 Venue: 1419 Greenlake Dr., Aurora, IL 60502
 Time: 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Lunch Bag Delivery to Bread Truck
 Venue: Port Ministries, 5017 S. Hermitage Avenue Chicago, IL 60609

Sunday, March 30th, Ugadi Celebrations (Extended Devotional Singing)
 Time: 09:30 AM to 1:00 PM Venue: Longfellow Center, Oak Park, IL

Sunday, April 6th, Sri Rama Navami Celebrations
 Time: 09:30 AM to 1:00 PM Venue: Longfellow Center, Oak Park, IL



Love All , Serve All

Date	Calendar of Events
02/01 – Saturday	06:00 PM – 09:30 PM: Dinner Service Project at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 06:00 PM – 08:00 PM: Dinner Service Project at Sarah’s Circle Women’s Shelter (on N. Sheridan Road)
02/08 – Saturday (YA Service)	06:00 AM – 08:00 AM: Breakfast Service at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
02/09 – Sunday	10:00 AM – 11:00 AM: Bingo with Nursing Home Residents (on North Ave., Oak Park)
02/15 – Saturday	06:00 PM – 09:30 PM: Dinner Service Project at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 07:00 PM – 10:30 PM: Dinner Service Project at Jesus People USA Men’s Shelter (on Kenmore Ave.)
02/22 – Saturday	06:00 AM – 08:00 AM: Breakfast Service at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.)
03/01 – Saturday	06:00 PM – 09:30 PM: Dinner Service Project at Northside Housing Men’s Shelter (on Lawrence Ave.) 06:00 PM – 08:00 PM: Dinner Service Project at Sarah’s Circle Women’s Shelter (on N. Sheridan Road)
	<p>Sunday Center Schedule: 09:00 AM – 09:30 am: Center Setup 09:30 AM – 10:25 am: Study Circle (Current Topic – Review of Swami’s Discourses on Ramayana) 10:30 AM – 11:30 am: Devotional Singing</p> <p>Ongoing service projects on Sundays:</p> <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.) • Food items delivery to Mother’s House (North Avenue, Oak Park)



Prasanthi Vahini



Every sadhaka must needs enter on the path of inquiry. Then only can the conviction dawn and grow, that nature and all learning connected with nature are unreal. Then only will these be given a relative, not an absolute value. They are of course to be learnt and experienced as necessary for existence, as a kind of daily routine. They should not be mistaken to be the Highest knowledge, the unchanging Eternal Truth. That mistake, if committed, leads to asanthi, an agitated mind. Agitation produces worry and anxiety. They in turn destroy peace.

If you aspire for santhi, peace, equanimity, the basic thing is have faith in the temporary nature of Nature, and be engaged in the uninterrupted contemplation of the changeless Godhead.

Therefore, do not be bound by selfish attachments. Engage yourself in the discharge of your duties, do not allow yourself to be gladdened by success or saddened by failure. Be ready to renounce all that is harmful; and then, through discrimination, you can beat the Drum of Victory! Great Declarations like these, reveal the Highest Truth and the Glory of Godhead.

If the two paths, Jnana and Bhakthi, are compared, it can be said that the Lord's Grace is won more easily by bhakthi, than by the other path. In bhakthi sadhana, there is the need to grasp the reality and its inner meaning, fully and clearly. For this, the objective world is itself the proof and argument, the effort and the means. To know this, spiritual inquiry has to be pursued. Such an inquiry will grant unshakeable santhi. Inquiry alone can reveal the Truth behind all the objective world. It is your experience, is it not, that when you do some task carefully for a long time, correcting your mistakes as and when you discover them, avoiding the repetition of the same while continuing with the task, you invariably achieve even more success than you hoped to get? What is wanted is just the unflagging desire to achieve victory. That will lead you to discover the means thereof, to develop earnestness and care in the pursuit of those means, and to get success. The wish must be strengthened by the will, and the will by the effort.

Well, take the example of a person anxious to become stronger. If the wish is powerful, he will first learn the means of realising his aim—the exercises, the diet, the disciplines, etc. Then, when he practises them his will is changed to steadiness in effort. But one important thing must be noted. There are many who say that the absence of wish and will is the best. This is not so good as having one wish, more than all others; or, rather "one wish" and one alone, to the exclusion of all else. Even more superior is the person who has steadiness of effort, in realising that one wish. For he can promote not only his own good, but even the world's good. Let your wish and will and effort be directed to your own good. Do not divert them to worldly pleasures, for that will cause harm and destroy santhi.

Man is a bundle of impulses and intentions. He reduces his innate divinity and inner peace by giving free vent to these two. The impulses are the fuel, the intentions are the fire. The fire can be put out only by placing the fuel aside. The dying down of the fire is the attainment of peace. Dive deep into the ocean of peace and earn the invaluable pearl Atmananda, the Bliss of the Atman. When that opportunity is seized, man becomes the personification of the effulgent, holy state of peace.

That is why the Vedas declare that Man is the embodiment of santhi. Therefore, you should not delude yourself by imagining that you are the seat of disquiet and untruth. Know that you are the embodiment of santhi, that prema is the blood that flows in your veins, and that your very nature is Joy. Realise this by actual practice and experience.

Without santhi, it is impossible to see the Truth. As the rays of the Sun are for the blossoming flower and the ripening fruit, so are the rays of santhi necessary for the full development of man. Then only can he ripen into the realisation of the true, the eternal, the blissful Brahman.

Brahman is a shoreless, bottomless ocean. That ocean is the basis for the ever-shifting waves, the evidence and result of its power. The wave emerges from the sea, leaps forth from it, falls back into it and dissolves itself into it. Though the power of the sea is thus manifested in ups and downs, rise and fall, the sea is steady and fixed. But the world is concerned more with the temporary and the shifting, and thinks that the waves are very important. So also, the sadhaka is more concerned with attainments that are evanescent and changing and not with the unchanging experience of the principle behind the Brahman. All the senses, all the impulses rise up in overpowering strength like waves from the sea, roar in fury, and subside in the waters. They do not confer peace. The wise thing is to forget these waves and to direct attention towards the sea beneath which is without change. Then only can you attain santhi and swim about happily in the deep undisturbed waters.

Why are those denizens of the deep sea so happy? The reason is they have water all around them—above, below, on all sides.

They cannot survive even a second, outside it. Even when they have perforce to come out of it, they struggle frantically to reach water again, for the disaster will bring about death itself. So too when man is immersed in santhi he will experience the joy and exhilaration of that state, in all ways. A person who has tasted that joy and exhilaration can never tolerate even for a second the state of asanthi, and he will never desert the santhi stage. If it ever happens that he is forced into asanthi, he will struggle furiously and desperately to return to the state of santhi and might even die in the attempt. But why should such a person ever be thrown on the shore of asanthi and ever risk his life in escaping back into santhi? He can ever be in a state of bliss, immersed in the ocean of santhi, isn't it? He should not float on the upper waves of impulses and intentions of vasanas (desires, tendencies) and sankalpas (intentions, resolves). He must dive deeper and try to revel at the calmer levels. This is the most urgent task. Then, you will not endanger yourself by being thrown out and beyond, upon the dry shore.

This type of pure and holy santhi alone will remove the walls that now divide man from man. It will transform all the absurd hatreds, misunderstandings, disgusts and prejudices that warp human behaviour. Santhi is the manifestation of the greatness of prema (love). It will endow all who come under its authority with tremendous power for good. It can place God within man's grasp and man within God's grasp.

Sadhana can confer no higher power. It is the very secret of the life-principle in creation. It is the highest individualisation of the glory of the Atman. It is the magic wand in the hands of the bhaktha, with which he can master the entire world. Besides, it confers the greatest degree of contentment.



Significance of Shivarathri



Embodiments of Love!

The Trinity in Man

The cosmic process shrishti (creation), sthithi (sustenance) and layam (dissolution) goes on in every human being. Creation is the outcome of sankalpa (or thought). Sthithi is protection of creation. Layam is the merger of creation in its source. Srishti, Sthithi and Layam are also identified with the three qualities - Sathva, Rajas and Thamas... The three gunas (or qualities) represent the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshvara). The Trinity represent the Thrilokas (three Worlds). The three worlds and the Trinity are present in every human being. The three are to be regarded as one and worshipped as Shivam. What is Shivam? It is the embodiment of Auspiciousness. When man recognizes the unified form of the Trinity his humanness acquires auspiciousness.

In a government there are different departments like education, finance, etc. Likewise in the spiritual field also there are different departments. They are: Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution. Each department has a head. Each head has to govern his department on right lines. There is an overlord presiding over all departments. He is like the Prime Minister in a cabinet. He is God. He is called Allah. By attributing different names and forms to God, Divinity is fragmented in various ways. The one Divine is responsible for the threefold cosmic process. These three aspects of God can be seen in the English word GOD. 'G' represents Generation - Srishti. 'O' represents Organization - Sthithi. 'D' represents Dissolution - Layam. GOD represents the unity of the three aspects.

There is a misunderstanding about these three. Layam is considered as destruction or dissolution. Its real meaning is mergence. 'O' represents organization. It means protection. 'G' stands for generation (creation). Brahma, Vishnu and Eeshvara are three potencies Immanent in man. To understand this it is essential to follow the spiritual path. Spirituality does not mean leading a lonely ascetic life. Spirituality means getting rid of attachment and hatred and looking upon the whole humanity as one. Everyone should understand this inner meaning of spirituality.

Significance of Shivarathri

Shivarathri is an auspicious night. You experience the night every day. These are ordinary nights. They are nights of darkness. But Shivarathri is an auspicious night. How is it auspicious? There are sixteen aspects for the mind. The moon is the presiding deity for the mind. Of the sixteen phases of the moon, today in the fourteenth day of Margashersha month (lunar calendar), fifteen of the phases are absent. On this day it is possible to get full control of one's mental faculties. Hence it is considered an auspicious day.

Auspiciousness consists in diverting the mind towards God. This calls for getting rid of the inherited animal tendencies in man. This is the occasion to recognise the omnipresence of the Divine in all beings and in all objects. It follows that whomsoever you adore or condemn, you are adoring or condemning God. You must follow the injunction: Help ever, hurt never.

Every human being has sacred qualities, based on his Shivathvam (Divine essence). Hence man should realise his inherent divinity, though his body is made up of the five elements. Thereby humanness is transformed into divinity. The human birth is intended for the pursuit of Dharma. Dharma implies harmony in thought, word and deed. When every person realises his essential divine nature, the entire world will be transformed. The body and the mind are mere instruments. Man's reality is the Aathma (Self). Man should use the instruments given to him to perform his duties well and realise his oneness with God.

Unity in Diversity

All the phenomena in Nature proclaim the glory of the Divine. Why foster religious differences? Let everyone carry out the dictates of the Divine, who governs the universe. Everything that happens is by the Will of God. The principle teaching of the Vedhas is that all men should strive together in harmony and share their joys together in amity. Through unity, humanity can achieve purity, leading to divinity. The three great enemies of man are lust, anger and greed. These have to be eliminated. The greatest quality in man is love. Love is God. Live in love.

Live in the Constant Presence of Shiva

Every form conceived in the Shastras 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, Shanti and Prema (Truth, Righteousness, 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, skins them, and they become totally ineffective. His Four Faces symbolize Shantam (Equanimity), Roudram (Terror), Mangalam (Grace) and Uthsaham (elevating energy). While adoring the Lingam on this Lingodhbhava Day, you must contemplate on these Truths of Shiva that the Linga represents.

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 Mahaa Shivaraatri conveys to you.

Man is called so, because he has the skill to do manana, which means, inner meditation on the meaning and significance of what one has heard. All the joy you crave for is in you. But, like a man, who has vast riches in the iron chest but has no idea where the key is, you suffer. Hear properly the instructions, dwell upon them in the silence of meditation, and practice what has been made clear therein; then, you can secure the key, open the chest and be rich in Joy...



Iswara Sankalpa (will, resolve) will Always be Fulfilled



I shall tell you the story of Īswara-Sankalpa and how nothing could stop its realisation. Lord Siva was every day discoursing on Kailasa to sages and saints and devas in the evening hours. One day, Parvati suggested that a hall be constructed for accomodating them all, so that they could all listen without being affected by the constant fog and mist and cold winds. Siva did not have the sankalpa to put it up; still, Parvati insisted that her idea must be implemented. The astrologer, who was consulted before the foundations were dug, said that 'the stars forecast that the hall will be consumed by fire, since Shani (Saturn) is not propitious from the very beginning'. The hall was completed, nevertheless. Now, that set a problem for the couple. Siva proposed to ask Sani for the favor of saving the hall from his anger, though He doubted whether the planet, reputed for his inevitable ire, would ever agree. Parvati felt deeply hurt and she resolved not to give the tiny tyrant, Shani, the credit for destroying the hall that She had got built. She swore that instead of giving him the chance to declare arrogantly that he had set fire to the hall, she would herself set fire to it. But Siva asked her to first await the outcome of His appeal to Shani; for He was Himself proceeding to his headquarters! He told Her, "If Shani agrees to exempt the hall from his anger, I shall come back and report the good news to you; but if he is adamant, I shall raise My hand and twirl this Dakka. On hearing that signal, you may set fire to the hall and rob Shani of the credit for doing so".

Parvati was ready with a burning torch in anticipation of the signal, so that there may not be a moment's chance for the wicked planet to execute his nefarious plan of revenge. Shani, however, agreed to the request made by Siva; he said that he would not burn down the hall in kailasa and S'iva was happy at his reply. So, when Shani prayed that he may be granted one small boon, Siva agreed and asked him what it was. It seems Shani had never before seen the famous Dance of Siva which all the stellar divinities were extolling and Shani craved that Siva may show him a step or two. Siva readily assented and started the Thandava Dance, raising His hand and sounding Dakka! Listening to the signal, Pavati applied the torch and the hall was, as per the Sankalpa of S'iva, burnt to ashes! Divine Sankalpa must be fulfilled. Shani was just a tool in the Divine Plan.

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 15 th – Padhuka Puja	10:30 am to 12:30 pm	Bolingbrook	630-819-9081
Sunday, February 23 rd – Bhajans	5:30 pm to 06:30 pm	Deerfield	847-236-9945

For more information, please contact any of the Center Officers

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