



SAI DHARMAM

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Cooksville

What is Shivarathi?

During the 11th month of the Hindu calendar, we celebrate Maha Shivaratri, the Great Night of Shiva. Maha Shivaratri is one of the major festivals in the Hindu culture. On this day, Lord Shiva saved the world from destruction. All night long, devotees praise Lord Shiva, by singing bhajans and songs in his name, celebrating his life. It serves as a reminder to us, to overcome darkness and ignorance among us. Many believe this will bring good luck and fortune to your life. Some also believe this night was when Lord Shiva conquered all his enemies. Many try to start practicing virtues like honesty, and forgiveness of others. Devotees also offer water, milk and flowers to the Shivalinga to please the Lord. To please Lord Shiva, they specifically offer Bilva tree leaves, which are dear to the Lord. This tree was created by Lord Brahma, but originated from Goddess Lakshmi's right hand. People fast all day and night, and the next morning they go to the temple and offer their prayers to Lord Shiva, and hope their wishes will be fulfilled. The temple would be full of bells ringing and devotees chanting "Shankar ki Jai" or "Mahadev ki

Jai". Devotees also apply three horizontal lines of vibhuti to represent spiritual knowledge and cleanliness. This year, Hindus all around the planet will be celebrating Maha Shivaratri on March 4th, 2019. So let's all come together on this night, and celebrate Lord Shiva!





My first memory of Shivarathri is watching a video of our dearest swami performing a vibhuthi abhishekam for the Shirdi Sai Baba idol. This amazed me as for a long time, vibhuthi kept pouring out of this little vessel. Every time swami took his hands out, the flow of

vibhuthi stopped and then started again. It was impossible for me to understand it at that time, but it made an impression on my young mind and I started to accept swami as a God. Swami says Shivarathri is the night of Goodness and Godliness. Growing up I have seen many youth waste Shivarathri by watching movies and spend the night in worldly activities, forgetting the essence of this holy night. As years passed and as I slowly learnt more of Swami's teachings, I understood the value of Shivarathri. It is a night to detoxify your soul. Spend the night chanting the lord's name and feel oneness with God. Singing bhajans and reciting mantras for the whole night brings a renewed and energized feeling to your body and mind. It is a night to sacrifice your

animal qualities like anger, greed, envy and lust. By attending Shivarathri bhajans, I learnt to control my mind for longer periods of time to only focus on God. My faith in God became stronger as I listened to Swami's discourses and I am slowly learning to control my thoughts and words, and guide them to be more positive and kinder. I look forward to attend Shivarathri bhajans each year as the vibrant bhajans makes me feel happy and closer to Swami. This divine feeling must be felt as it cannot be expressed in words. I also use this as an opportunity to pray for the welfare of all human beings with a sacred heart and pure mind. As Swami says the positive vibrations of prayers and bhajan fills the earth with a divine energy. Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavanthu!

Why is this festival so important?

In a Radio Sai audio series, the team lead of Radio Sai and a volunteer converse about the meaning of Shivaratri and the Shiva Principle. In their discussion they discussed the connection between the mind and the moon which I found to be very interesting. In fact, this is the essence of Shivaratri! Bhagavan says, when the moon wanes, the mind's ability to control itself increases. Thus with some effort and spiritual sadhana, we are able to better control our monkey minds and concentrate it on divinity. A question I asked myself while reading the transcript of this conversation was that, if our mind's power increases when the moon is full then why do we only celebrate Shivaratri once a year when the moon cycles every month? After some further research I learnt that

Shivaratri is observed every month as Masa/Masik Shivaratri but the Shivaratri that occurs during the Indian calendar month of Magha, is known as Maha Shivaratri. This is the Shivaratri that is observed by 12 hours of Akhanda bhajans and the night that Swami has historically materialized a lingam. So what makes this month so special? Reading further I learnt that there are many legends about this night that occurs in the already auspicious lunar month. Some believe that this is the night of Shiva and Parvathi's marriage, others believe this is the night Shiva performed the Tandava dance, and some believe this is the day Shiva drank the haalahala poison to save the world from destruction. (Cont'd on the next page-3) 2

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Another common belief is that this day is assigned to celebrate Shiva's birth.

Towards the end of the conversation, the two Radio Sai members discuss how Shiva's family is so diverse and what we can learn from this. Shiva has a snake around his neck which is the enemy of Ganesh's mouse and Subramanyam's peacock. Ganesh has the

head of an elephant whose enemy is a lion, like the one that Parvathi rides. Shiva wears only the skin of a tiger while Parvathi is adorned in gold and wears a rich looking red sari. The list of differences is endless! Just like this divine family, God has made creation so diverse. I think that especially in today's day and age it is important to celebrate everyone's uniqueness and do our best to live in harmony.

President's Message

Even the gods had their favorite days!

According to a legend, Lord Shiva once confided to his consort, Devi Parvati, that the 14th day of the dark fortnight (Krishna Paksha) in Phalgun month is one of his choicest days. From then onwards, it was considered as a sacred night among all the nights. One of Prajnaana, Vignaana, Sugnaana and One of brightness that is Shivaratri, the 14th day of the waning phase of the moon in Chaturdashi. The moon has 16 aspects and the mind of man also has 16 aspects. There is close relationship between the mind and the moon.



Shivaratri night is 15 aspects of the moon and therefore the mind has been overcome and just one aspect alone is left. Therefore, we are very close to our true goal. Hence humanity being so close to God on this night, whosoever chants the name of the Lord, with a pure heart, will be benefited greatly.

In Hindu mythology Kaal ratri, Mohratri and Shivaratri are considered the three most propitious days for worship. On Mahashivrathri day, devotee usually wakes up early and bathes in any sacred river as a part of self-purification. While doing so, he offers prayers to the Sun god, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. Then he wears clean new clothes and makes a mark of three stripes on his forehead with an application of the sacred ash (vibhuti) that represents purity, spiritual knowledge and penance also known to symbolize the three eyes of Lord Shiva.

There are many who wear a Rudraksha mala also (rosary created with the seeds of Rudraksha tree) on this day. As per Shiva purana, six items are incorporated in the worship of Maha Shivarathri. This tradition has been followed till today-bael leaves, vermilion, unbroken rice, fruits, incense, diya and betel leaves. Bael leaves symbolize purification of the soul. Application of vermilion paste on the linga after bathing symbolizes virtue. Offering unbroken rice and fruits to Lord Shiva ensures wish fulfillment and a long life. Lighting incense sticks ensure financial gain while kindling a lamp is associated with attainment of knowledge. Betel leaves represent contentment with material pleasures.

The three most significant rituals followed in this festival are: fasting throughout the lunar day, keeping a night vigil and performing the Rudra abhisheka.

The night of Mahashivrathri is divided into four quarters or 'praharas', each of a period of three hours. A devotee chants specific prayer meant for each of the three praharas. The next day, the worshiper first gives alms to Brahmins or priests and feeds them. He then makes a prayer to Lord Shiva to attain wisdom and to be blessed with salvation. Thereafter, the devotee breaks his fast by consuming the lord's Prasad. Observing all these rituals is said to provide a person with bliss not only in this world but in the next one too.

On this auspicious occasion we take this as an opportunity to welcome all of you and celebrate Mahashivrathri chanting Vedas, Mantras and Bhajans at our Centre on Monday March 4th, between 6 pm to 12 midnight.

Shivaratri

D V P L M V U F B H M Z N T D S O H A J C R X D
 O E D E V B M M C B R G F X Z U B L M P M N M N
 Z P H L I G P N E L I L I K V J W H I F X Y P R
 X N W P S Y H B A Q T Y C J Y K O R T F B A M O
 C X J M H A S I S Q M C G P M L T O O D R J I Z
 N R N E I W A D W N T X W C D A I L M V E A C Q
 G V A T V H G L T J A B N S R D C A A V B T I X
 U A D R A C J O I W K E S A D Z N T M J Z T D O
 Z R G M H E U Q X D C U V U Z S I D P U H R L H
 F N L O Y T Y C T X K I B I L I I L G Q C Y J O
 H B R Q Y W M K V L H O W U J Z N O Y B W N V V
 F Y K R Z E E N G S T N B D H R R T I L O L B Q
 G O H F E Y N O C B A R R N K S F A B H C T U F
 D M O L U O Q T S E E G A I R R A M O P W C L E
 Z P J W Q H L R S G Z D O H Z E S X L F K W E Q
 L H J G X J E E P E E I G W S W T D X D I G E G
 J E C G S O J X B A A T O D Y O I Z R I H G N I
 K M E R T F X C S N I R F Z Q L N O Y M V N U O
 Z D K P A T T K W F S B T T V F G F W N B W O D
 J G P Y Y M P S N H R W Y N G U L I Q H E B A G
 K X S W F D D R I Y J M N L A F Q R Z C D U R P
 V F K N G Y E P I K Z X X F V M B M K D H Z A W
 S E J F G D E L O V I Z H G N B F T C B V Y S M
 K P E X P C S Y N C S I A C L H Z V L R Y C S Y
 A L O O D V G B F T E C Q L T D U T B F W R Q B

HINDU
 SHIVA
 FASTING
 TEMPLE
 PARVATI
 MARCH
 MARRIAGE
 MANTRA
 FLOWERS
 WORSHIP
 YOGA
 MAHA
 SHIVARATRI

Bhajan

Shiva Shankara Shiva Shankara Shiva
 Shankara Roopa Maheshwara Sai
 Shiva Shankara Shankara Shankara Sai
 Omkaara Priya Shiva Shankara Sai
 Kailaasa Priya Shiva Shankara Sai
 Nathajana Priya Shiva Shankara Sai
 Shiva Shankara Shankara Shankara Sai

Meaning: *Worship the Lord of Lords, Sai Shankara. O Resident of Kailasha! Thou art fond of the Tandava dance*

