



Sabka Maalik Ek

SAI SANDESH

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Love All, Serve All

Mahashivaratri Special Issue



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SIGNIFICANCE OF MAHASHIVARATRI

The Lord is essentially formless and known by the name, Shiva. Despite being infinite, He manifests in the form of Shakti [nature] for the purpose of creation. Scholars also go a step further and describe Shiva as the Creator, the male aspect of God and Shakti as the creation, the female aspect. This, in the author's opinion, is just for the purpose of explanation. For, the one who is infinite and formless is above and beyond the mortal attributes of gender.

Shiva is the one to whom Mahashivaratri is dedicated. Shiva is often depicted as a deity bearing an ascetic form and engrossed in meditation. The three eyes of Shiva are the eyes which reveal the past, present and future. Shiva alone has all three. The elephant skin which forms His cloak is 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 symbolise Shaantham, Roudhram, Mangalam and Utsaaham [peace, fierceness, auspiciousness, determination]. Meditating thus on Shiva will help one get rid of the last lingering vestiges of delusion.²

The origin. Shastras [traditional Indian scriptures] attribute the origin of Mahashivaratri [the night dedicated to Shiva] to various stories. Some ascribe the holiness of this day to its being the birthday of Lord Shiva. The Lord being the one without a beginning or an end can, in reality, have no birthday. Another story commemorates the salvation attained by a hunter who sat on a bilva tree on the look-out for animals to kill, and without any intention to worship, unknowingly dropped some of its leaves on a Linga that lay beneath. This story, however, does not make clear why this day is specially sacred.

Another story describes this occasion as the night on which Shiva danced the Taandava [cosmic dance] in the ecstasy of His innate nature, with all the Gods and Sages sharing and witnessing that cosmic consummation. When He consumed the Haalahala [poison] that emerged from the churning of the ocean and threatened to destroy the universe. The heat of the fumes were unbearable, even for Him. So, Ganga flowed uninterruptedly on His matted locks; but, that gave Him only partial relief. (It is for this reason that abhishekam [ritual bathing ceremony] is performed on Shiva regularly. The ritual pouring of water, it is said, is very pleasing to the Lord.) The Moon was placed on the head. That was of

great help. Shiva, then, danced the Taandava with all the Gods and Sages. All this, it is said, happened on the same night and so, Mahashivaratri, was held in commemoration of this occasion.¹

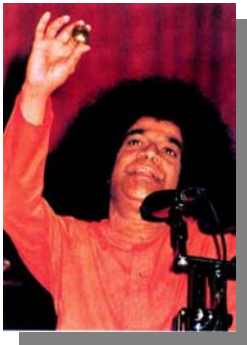
The Significance. Shivaratri falls not just once a year, but once every month. Then why is this Mahashivaratri so important? Night is dominated by the moon. The moon has 16 kalas [fractions of divine glory], and each night, during the dark fortnight, one fraction is reduced, until the entire moon is annihilated on new moon night. From then on, each night, a fraction is added, until the moon is full circle on Full Moon Night. The Chandra (moon) is the presiding deity of the mind and hence the mind waxes and wanes like the moon. Chandramaanaso jaathah—out of the manas of the Purusha [Supreme Being], the moon was born.

In a like manner, during the dark fortnight of the month, sadhana [spiritual striving] has to be done to eliminate each day a fraction of the mind, for, every day, a fraction of the moon too is being taken out of cognizance. On the night of Chathurdhasi, the 14th day, the night of Shiva, only a fraction remains. If some special effort is made that night, through more intensive and vigilant sadhana, like puja or japam or dhyana [ritual worship, one-pointed repetition, holy names, and meditation], success is ensured. God alone has to be meditated upon that night without the mind straying toward thoughts of sleep or food. This has to be done every month; once a year, on Mahashivaratri a special spurt of spiritual activity is recommended, so that what is shavam [corpse] can become Shivam [God], by the perpetual awareness of its Divine Indweller. The chief aim of all sadhana is to eliminate the mind. It is only then that maaya [illusion] will be dispersed and the reality revealed.

The Lingam. Lingam is the symbolic form of the Godhead. Lingam means that in which this Jagath [creation] attains laya [mergence]; that into which this Jagath goes (gamyathe). The three gunas [primordial qualities] are represented by the three-tiered Peetha [platform]; the Lingam above symbolises the goal of life. Lingam means "a symbol," the symbol of creation, the result of the activity of the three gunas and of the Brahman [Supreme Reality] which permeates and gives it meaning and value. The worship of the Lingam must be done with faith in its symbolic significance.²



Emergence of the Linga from Swami. Swami in his Mahashivaratri discourse, once said: “This is a day dedicated to the Shiva that is in each of you. From the Himalayan ranges down to Kanyakumari, the entire country is resounding today to the authentic declaration “Shivoham,” “Shivoham” and to the adoration, “Om Namah Shivaya.” Since thousands pray here and elsewhere, in lakhs and crores, the Linga is emanating from Me, so that you may derive the bliss that pervades the world through Lingodhbhava [emergence of Linga].



The manifestation of the Linga is a part of My nature. The Linga emerges as a result of prayer and grace. You have to recognize in this event, a glimpse of Divinity, a sign of infinite grace. Just as Om is the sound symbol of God, the Linga is the form symbol or the visible symbol of God, the most meaningful, the simplest and the least endowed with the

appendages of attributes. All forms merge in the formless at last. Shiva is the principle of destruction of all names and forms, of all entities and individuals. The Linga is the simplest sign of emergence and mergence.”

Shivaraathri and Numerology. Based on numerology, every letter of the alphabet has a specific numerical value. "Si" bears the value 4. "Va" has the value of 5, "Ra", a value of 2. When the values of the three are combined, you have a total of 11. This eleven represents the eleven Rudras [negative or destructive principles].

Role of Rudras in man's life. What are the functions of these Rudras? The Rudras, in association with the Buddhi [the intellect], enter the minds of people and cause them various types of difficulties and worries. Of these difficulties, three types are predominant in the world. They are Aadhibhouthika, Aadhyaathmika, and Aadhidhaivika. Aadhibhouthika refers to difficulties caused by the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) and the five sheaths (relating to food, life, mind, awareness and bliss). These sufferings are caused by human beings, animals, insects or other creatures.

Aadhyaathmika refers to sufferings caused by Vaatha [wind], Pittha [bile], and Kapha [phlegm]. Aadhidhaivika refers to the calamities caused to man by floods, drought, storms, earthquakes, and similar natural disasters. The eleven Rudras are the cause for all these sufferings. The whole world is permeated by the Rudras. Only Aadhidhaivika has an element of security. Whatever

emanates from Rudra is fraught with fear. The name itself testifies to the dangerous power implicit in it. Rudhram means that which induces fear. The eleven Rudras are dreadful in form. These dreadful entities enter the minds of human beings and subject them to all kinds of afflictions. While the Rudras are inflicting sufferings on mankind in various ways, by the control of the senses, if humans turn their minds towards God and devote themselves to Godly pursuits, they will find their path to Moksha [liberation]. Moksha means getting rid of Moha [the delusions relating to the physical].³

Rudras and sense-control. The Mahashivaratri festival has been designed to subdue these Rudras. With sense control the Rudras can be controlled. Control of senses is, however, not easy. Even if evil impulses from external sources are controlled, those arising from within cannot be easily controlled. But if, at least on one night out of 365 days in a year, the senses are brought under control, then peace may be experienced and the quest for liberation may be initiated. When the entire night is dedicated to the chanting of the Lord's name, one's mind, speech, and senses all get centered on God. This is a form of sense control. When this is done, people can realize the Supreme.

The Lord is experienced as Sath-Chith-Aananda. Sath is Being, that which is eternally present. Chith is awareness (or consciousness). Chith is like water. When Sath (as sugar) is combined with Chith (as water) you have neither sugar nor water, but syrup. The combination of Sath and Chith results in Aananda [Bliss]. When the unchanging, eternal Divinity unites with the changing and inert Prakrithi [nature], you have Aananda. The significance of Mahashivaratri is that it is an auspicious occasion when Sath-Chith-Aanandha can be experienced.

Let us resolve, on this Holy Shivaratri, in the Presence of Shiva Sai, to visualize Shiva as the inner power of all. With each breath, you are even now, asserting “Soham,” “I am He,” not only you, but, every being that breathes, every being that lives, everything that exists. It is a fact which you have ignored so long. Believe it from now on. When you watch your breath and meditate on that magnificent truth, slowly, the I and the He will draw nearer and closer, until the feeling of separateness will fade away—and the Soham will be transformed into OM, the Pranava, the Primal Sound, the Fundamental Formula for God. That Om is the Swaswaruupa—the reality behind this “relative reality.”

1. Shivaraathri Day Discourse, February 1969.
2. Prashanthi Nilayam, Mahashivaratri, July, 02, 1959.
3. Discourse, March 11, 1994.

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at:
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**Devotees can send articles,
experiences, etc. to
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UPCOMING EVENTS

March

Tuesday, March 08, 2005: Mahashivaratri

Friday, March 25, 2005: Holi Festival

April

Saturday, April 09, 2005: Ugadi/Gudi Padwa

Wednesday, April 14: Tamil New Year and Vishu
(Malayali New Year)

Monday, April 18: Sri Rama Navami

**4 Phases of Abhishek will be performed
on Shivaratri. To sponsor, please call:
1.718.461.0454**

OM SAI MANDIR'S DAILY ACTIVITIES

DAILY ARATIS:

Kakad Arati	8.00 A.M.
Madhyana Arati	12.00 P.M.
Dhoop Arati	6.00 P.M.
Sheja Arati	8.00 P.M.

SPECIAL BHAJANS:

Every Thursday	7.00 P.M. – 8.30 P.M.
Every Sunday	2.00 P.M. – 3.00 P.M.

SAI NAAM JAP (CHANTING BABA'S HOLY NAME):

Last Saturday of Every Month 8.30 A.M. – 8.30 P.M.

**STOTRAS (CHANTING SAHASRANAM, BABA'S 108
NAMES, ETC.):** Daily 12.30 P.M. and 6.30 P.M.

ANNADAN [FOOD SERVICE]: Daily at the Temple
ANNADAN [FOOD SERVICE] FOR HOMELESS

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: Every Saturday at 29th Street
& 1st Avenue: 1 p.m. For more information, call the
temple at: (718) 461-0454.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

“You are all Sath-Chith-Ananda Swarupa [embodiments of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss]; only, you are unaware of it and imagine yourself to be an individual subject to limitations. This is the myth that must be exploded in order that divine life may begin. It is the Divine that inspires, that activates and is the fulfillment of the life of every being. From the tiny atom to the vast Universe every single entity is moving towards that consummation where it merges in the sea of Bliss.”

- Baba

SHORT STORIES BY BABA

PUT INTO PRACTICE

One day, an old lady came to Ramakrishna Parmahansa with her 10-year old grandson. She prostrated before him and said, “Master! I have come to seek your advice. This boy is my grandson. He lost his father and mother when he was just a child of five. I have been taking care of him. He is very fond of sweets. He eats so much that his health is deteriorating day by day. The doctors have advised him not to eat sweets but this fellow does not pay any heed to their advice. However, he has great respect and admiration for you. So I have come to request you to stop the boy from eating sweets. I am sure, you alone can do this.” Ramakrishna said, “Mother, don't worry, come with your grandson after a month. In the meanwhile I shall think of a plan to convince the boy that one's health is very important, more important even than wealth.” The old woman thanked him and took leave.

She came with her grandson exactly after a month. Both of them paid their salutations to the master. Ramakrishna made the boy sit beside him and said, “My dear boy! Remember, one's real wealth is health. Unless you take proper care of your health, you will not be able to grow into a strong and healthy young man. You will not be able to do anything great in life if you are weak. When something that we eat does not suit our constitution, we should give up eating that item. From tomorrow you should not eat sweets. After some time you may eat moderately. You are a nice boy and will listen to me, will you not?” The boy nodded his head and promised that he would not eat sweets.

The old woman sent the boy on some errand just to have a confidential talk with the master. "Master! May I ask you a question?" said the old woman. "Certainly mother," replied Ramakrishna. "Master! This advice which you have given today to my grandson, you could have given last month itself. Why did you ask me to come again after a month? I don't understand." Ramakrishna replied with an understanding smile, "Mother! I myself eat lot of sweets. How can I advise the boy to do something that I am not doing myself? One has no right to preach anything to others before practising it himself. So I asked for some time. This one month I did not eat sweets. So I have earned the right to advise your grandson." The old woman marvelled at the righteous conduct of Ramakrishna. She fell at his feet and took leave of him.

Moral: We should never advise anyone about anything which we ourselves have not put into practice.

- Adapted from *Oka Chinna Katha* by N. Kasturi

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DEVOTEES' EXPERIENCES

Mrs. Pushpalata Sarma, 59, a housewife from Nepal, relates a few of her experiences of the Divinity of Bhagawan in her own words.

"I came to Prasanthi Nilayam in 1975. Earlier, my husband who was skeptical of the Divinity of Bhagawan went to Prasanthi Nilayam along with a cancer patient and returned as a devotee. We began to do bhajan in our house. I was suffering from depression. I underwent expensive treatment but all was in vain.

One night, Bhagawan came in my dream. He materialized vibhuti and 'drenched' me in it, bathing me with vibhuti completely. After that I felt very happy. I was completely cured of my 17-year old ailment. Later, I came to Prasanthi Nilayam in 1975 with my husband. Swami called us for interview. He materialized vibhuti for all of us. Then looking at me and beaming with a smile, He asked, 'how do you feel after vibhuti snanam?' I was stunned and overwhelmed with joy, and began to cry, shedding tears un-abashedly. It was the same case with my husband also. I experienced the bliss and joy of shedding tears for God for the first time then.

We have visited Prasanthi Nilayam many times. Swami, out of His compassion and love, used to call us for interview every time. In 1995, we performed Satyanarayana Puja in our house in Nepal by kindling 125,000 wicks. We kept the picture of Satyanarayana Swami under the Photograph of Swami that was hanging on the wall in our private bhajan hall. We took photographs of puja with all our family members.

Swami came in my dream that night and said, 'send that photograph to me. I will autograph it.' I told my husband about it. Though he did not appear to have believed, he agreed to take the photograph to Prasanthi Nilayam. During our next visit, Swami came to my husband and asked, 'where is the photograph?' He took it and signed on it.

When Swami performed upanayanams to my sons Rajesh and Rupesh on December 7, 1985, I went inside carrying a tray with flowers and other puja samagri. Swami remarked, 'of what use are those flowers that wither away after a while? Give me the flower of devotion of your heart.'

My husband's sister brought a silver bowl filled with cow ghee and wicks to give harati to Swami. When my

husband told Swami about it, He remarked, 'do you want me to go away?' Arati is generally given in the end to mark the conclusion of puja. Swami was kind enough to allow us to give arati to Him at the end that day.

I used to worry about the marriage of our daughter, Rita. Swami told us, 'let her complete her graduation. I will take care of it. Don't worry.' After completion of her graduation, Swami appeared in my dream and took me to a playground. 'See your son-in-law,' Swami told me showing a lad who looked like a handsome cine-hero.

Later, whenever I saw photographs of bridegrooms suggested by our relatives and well wishers, I used to say, 'not this one!' One day, my brother who was a police officer brought a proposal. As I looked at the photograph of the bridegroom, I recognized him instantly as the one showed by Bhagawan in my dream. 'This is the one!' I cried with joy.

'You have fallen for his good looks and say this is the one,' joked my husband. Goaded by me, my husband went to the house of my would-be-son-in-law and was impressed by seeing their house and status. The only question was whether the match was within our reach or not. Owing to Swami's grace, the match was settled miraculously. When the bridegroom came to see the bride, he came to our house in his Ford car, the only one of its kind in Nepal at that time. 'We are devotees of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba,' my husband told the bridegroom that day, 'you can gauge that from the photographs of Swami seen in the house all over. So we cannot allow non-vegetarian food, drinks, tobacco or any such things into our house even for the sake of our revered new son-in-law.' The bridegroom smiled and said, 'it's ok with me and my people.' By the grace of Swami, the marriage was consummated excellently well.

In our private bhajan hall in our house, we keep several photographs of Swami. One night Swami appeared in my dream and said, 'your bhajan hall is very good. You have all photographs except one.'

'What is it, Swami?' I asked. 'The photograph of Sai Gita (Swami's pet elephant) is missing,' Swami said. We bought a photograph of Sai Gita during our next visit to Prasanthi Nilayam.

In November 2001, we came to Prasanthi Nilayam. On November 9, Swami called us for interview. He took my head in His hands, and blessed six times with His hand on my head. For my husband He did so three times.

I suffered from kidney stone in 2002. It was confirmed by the Super Specialty Hospital at Puttaparthi. Surgery was indicated. I went for darshan even though I had severe pain. I sat behind eight or nine persons. Swami, coming along Darshan line, saw me and accosted 'when are you leaving?' I said, 'November 11, Swami,' I got up and moved forward towards Swami.

Swami materialized vibhuti and gave me. It was ice-cold, very heavy looking, and cream-colored. I swallowed it and applied a little on the affected area. Next day, we went to the hospital. They examined and said, 'no stone!' It simply disappeared and I was healed completely. It has not recurred since."

- Mrs. Pushpalata Sarma.

Source:

<http://www.vedamu.org/forum/ExperienceoftheDivinityofBhagawan/MrsPushpalataSarma.asp>

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CHILDREN'S CORNER

Sai Ram Children,



Once a rich gentleman heard about Baba's fame and told his friend that he wanted to see Baba. Since he had everything, he thought he would ask Baba to give him Brahma Gyan [knowledge of God].



His friend reminded him how difficult it would be to get Brahma Gyan, especially for someone like him who was only interested in wealth.

The rich gentleman ignored his friend's advice and



went to see Baba. He fell at Baba's lotus feet and said, "You show Brahma to all those who come to you. Please show me the Brahma too."

Baba replied, "Don't be anxious, I shall show you the



Brahma. Usually people come to me asking for money, health, power, etc. Very few people come to me seeking Brahma."

Baba then called a young boy and asked him to go to



Nandu, a shopkeeper, to get a loan of Rupees five. The boy returned saying that he could not find Nandu. Baba then asked him to go to another

shopkeeper. But the boy returned without the money this time too. Baba sent the boy to a number of other places, but the boy returned every time without the money.



actually testing the rich gentleman.

Baba is God Himself, so one might ask why did Baba need Rupees five. In fact, Baba knew before hand that none of the shopkeepers were available. Baba was



The rich gentleman had a bundle of notes and if he was earnestly seeking Brahma, he would have offered Baba that amount without hesitation. Instead

of offering Baba the money, the rich gentleman was getting impatient and repeatedly asked Baba to show him the Brahma, as he wanted to return home.



surrender everything to God. "

Baba then replied, "Did you not understand anything? I did all this for you to see the Brahma. The most important thing to do to know Brahma is to

Moral: In order to seek Brahma Gyan, one should surrender completely.

We should always understand the importance of humility, sacrifice and love.

Source:

http://www.shrisaibabasansthan.org/main_English/saibaba/stories/rich08.asp

Children are requested to send stories, articles, drawings, pictures etc. for publishing in the Children's Corner section of the newsletter.

For more information, please write to: saisandesh@omsaimandir.org

AN APPEAL

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