

## **Satya Sai Baba Center of Atlanta**

### **Study Circle on Swami's Teachings on Shivaratri**

Among the days of the year, some are treated as holier, when a special effort is made by the devotees to approach God through special ritual worship (puja) or sacred mantras (japa) or meditation (dhyana). Shivaratri is such a day. And for you assembled here, this is a day which you will treasure in your memory for a lifetime. Meeting with fellow-pilgrims and kindred aspirants is a piece of rare good fortune. Every one of you is a temple, with the Lord installed in your heart, whether you are aware of it or not. No one is separate from his neighbor; all are bound by the one life-blood that flows through the countless bodies. (Sathya Sai Baba: 18 February 1966)

Shiva is said to go about with a begging bowl. He teaches that renunciation, detachment, indifference to good fortune or bad, are the paths to attain Him. Shiva is known as "He who vanquishes death." And, He is also "The destroyer of desire." These two Names show that he who destroys desire can conquer death, for desire breeds activity, activity breeds consequence, consequence breeds bondage, bondage results in birth and birth involves death. Shiva is the God who blesses beings with the most desirable gift of meaning in the Universe. Realize the God in you first; then, if you involve yourself with the material world, no harm can come to you, for you will recognize the objective world as but the body of God. But, if you try to involve yourself with the objective world first, and then try to discover God, you will see the material world only. (Sathya Sai Baba: 5 March 1973)

The three eyes of Shiva are the eyes which reveal the past, present and the future. Shiva alone has all three. The elephant skin which forms His cloak is just a symbol for the elemental bestial primitive traits which His Grace destroys; He makes them powerless and harmless. His four faces symbolise peace, fierceness, auspiciousness, and determination. In this way, realise while worshipping the Lingam, the inner sense of the many attributes of Shiva. Meditate thus on Shiva this day, so that you may get rid of the last lingering vestiges of delusion. (Sathya Sai Baba: 7 February 1959)

**What does it mean to you to make a day holy?**

**How do you know when you are involving yourself with the objective world first, rather than realising God in yourself first?**

The mind is nothing but a bundle of desires. If you separate threads, cloth disappears. Similarly, if you remove desires one by one, the mind ceases to exist. The mind is a bundle of desires which are the root cause of man's delusion. Man's life today is full of delusion as he harbors limitless desires. You should have the firm conviction that you, being the embodiments of love, are basically Divine. Your life will be redeemed once you know that you are the spark of the Divine. (4 September 1998; 16 July 2001)

The night is dominated by the moon. The moon has 16 fractions (kalas); and each day when it wanes a fraction is reduced, until it is annihilated on new moon night. After that, each day a fraction is added, until it completes itself on full moon night. 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 spiritual practice is directed towards this end. (7 February 1959)

Every day during the dark half of the month, the moon – and symbolically its counterpart in man, the mind – wanes, and a fraction is diminished; its power declines – and finally, on the fourteenth night (Chathurdashi), there is just a wee bit left, that is all. If a little extra effort is made that day by the spiritual aspirant, even that bit can be wiped off and mastery of the mind completed. The fourteenth night of the dark half is therefore called Sivarathri, for that night should be spent in the sacred mantras (japa) and meditation (dhyana) of Siva, without any other thought either of food or sleep. Then success is assured. A person with humility is one of auspiciousness (sivam). On the other hand, a person with ego is verily a corpse (savam). Once a year, on Mahasivarathri night, a special spurt of spiritual activity is recommended, so that what is corpse (savam) can become God (Sivam) by the removal of this dross called mind. (7 February 1959; 12 March 2002)

**How might your life change if you were to control and reduce the desires of your mind?**

**What are ways that help you to realise that you are a spark of the Divine, rather than the mind or body?**