

Om Sai Ram



**SRI SATHYA SAI CENTER OF SOUTH BETHESDA, MARYLAND  
REGION 2 – MID-ATLANTIC, ZONE 1 – UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**MEMBER INTRODUCTION TO THE CENTER  
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Welcome to the Sri Sathya Sai Center of South Bethesda (SSSBC). This booklet will provide a brief introduction to the SSSBC and its activities and is intended primarily for those who are already Sai devotees but who have joined the Center recently. As you peruse this booklet and wish to find out more about Sri Sathya Sai Baba or have questions answered about the South Bethesda Center, please contact one of the current Office Bearers or the Welcome Desk. We will be happy to help in any way possible since we are your fellow spiritual travelers and we too have journeyed the same path.

**Overview of SSSBC**

The SSSBC, a chapter of the Sathya Sai Baba Organization of the United States, was established in 1972 and is one of the largest Centers in the USA, serving as a focal point for Sai activities in the Washington DC metropolitan area. The Sathya Sai Baba Organization is an international spiritual institution, founded in India and currently present in over 145 countries around the world.

**Goals and Methods**

Since its inception, Sai Baba has repeatedly stated that the primary goal of the Sathya Sai Baba Organization is the transformation of the individual and enabling each one to recognize the Divine as their core reality. *“The main objective of the Sathya Sai Organization - which you must always keep before you - is to help man recognize the divinity that is inherent in him. So, your duty is to emphasize the One, to experience the One in all you do or speak. Do not give any importance to differences of religion or sect or status or color. Have the feeling of one-ness permeate every act of yours. Only those who do so have a place in this Organization; the rest can withdraw.”* The Sathya Sai Baba Organization is not a social, political, or religious entity and is not affiliated to any other organization or entity.

The Sathya Sai Baba Organization’s methods are rooted in the principles of spiritual inquiry and practice as a means of discovering one’s own Divine nature. Since the goal of individual transformation can only be achieved through a balanced approach that blends all facets of spiritual practice, no one method such as meditation or community service alone is exclusively adopted by the organization. In addition, since all religions have the same spiritual essence, they are recognized as different paths leading to the same Divinity.

**Three Wings of the Center and its Activities**

The Sai Center of South Bethesda is organized into three wings: Devotion, Education and Service. Although the three wings each have a distinct focus and activities, they operate in a united and cohesive manner. The three wings and their respective activities are briefly described below.

**Devotion Wing**

The Devotion wing aims to deepen our understanding of Sai Baba’s teachings, elevate our spiritual awareness through group devotional activity, and assist us in undertaking the spiritual practice that is essential to reaching the goal. The main activities are Bhajans and Study Circle.

Bhajans are group singing of devotional songs that are undertaken in order to express the glory of God and charge the atmosphere with divine adoration. Baba says, *“Devotional singing (bhajan) is one of the*

*processes by which you can train the mind to expand into eternal values. Teach the mind to revel in the glory and majesty of God; wean it away from petty horizons of pleasure . . . Devotional singing induces in you a desire for experiencing the truth, to glimpse the beauty that is God, to taste the bliss that is the Self. It encourages man to dive into himself and be genuinely his real Self.”* To assist devotees in learning to lead Bhajans, Bhajan Practice sessions are conducted regularly at the Center.

Study Circle is group discussion of Sai Baba’s teachings that are undertaken in order to better understand Baba’s message and how to practice it in daily life. Baba says, *“Study with faith and devotion. Delve into the significance and the meaning of what you read; and, always have before you the goal of putting what you read into practice. Unless you do so, the Study Circle will remain a half-Circle forever; it cannot be a full Circle.”*

In addition, two important resources are available to all members: the Welcome Desk, which serves as central point of information and assistance on the Center’s activities, and the Library, which lends out Sai materials including books, children’s books, video tapes and audio tapes. A monthly calendar for the Devotion activities is e-mailed to the Members ahead of the month. Members interested in leading bhajans, study circles, and Devotion related volunteer activities are urged to contact the Devotional Coordinator at [Bethesda.devotion@gmail.com](mailto:Bethesda.devotion@gmail.com).

### **Education Wing**

The Education wing (Sai Spiritual Education or Bal Vikas) aims to impart Sai Baba’s teachings to children with a view to assist the blossoming of each child’s noble character or human excellence so that they may become upstanding spiritual and moral citizens. Baba says, *“Spiritual education is not a separate and distinct discipline. It is part and parcel of all types and levels of education.”*

The Sai Spiritual Education program is based on the Five Human Values (Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love, Non-Violence), the Universality of Religions, the Life and Teachings of Sai Baba and great spiritual leaders through the ages. Baba says, *“Spiritual education for children (SSE) can serve children of all faiths. Do not talk about the differences in religions in the beginning; stress the obvious similarities. Bring to the pupils the common good advice about human conduct that is contained in the scriptures of all religions.”*

The main activities are formal Classes conducted for children in Group I (ages 6 through 9), Group II (ages 10 through 12), Group III (ages 13 through 16), and Group IV (ages 17 through 18). The Classes include prayers, story telling, bhajan singing, role-playing, writing, speaking, and other related spiritual activities. The Sai Spiritual Education Overview booklet contains more information regarding the program and the classes. If you have any additional questions about the Sai Spiritual Education Program including enrolling your children in the classes, please contact the Welcome Desk or the Education Coordinator at [Bethesda.education@gmail.com](mailto:Bethesda.education@gmail.com).

### **Service Wing**

The Service (Seva) wing aims to serve people in need with Love and without any desire for reward, thereby cultivating the realization that Divinity is the inner reality of all people. Unlike many other organizations that undertake community service projects, the Sai Organization undertakes Seva as a spiritual practice (Sadhana) that enables the individual to overcome his ego and see Divinity in all.

Baba says, *“I do not attach any value to the turning of rosaries by hands that know no help. Do not keep yourself apart, intent on your own salvation through meditation; instead, move among your sisters looking for opportunities to be of help, with the Name of God on your tongue and the Form of God before the mind’s eye.”* He says, *“Many do such things now as ‘social service’ and not as a spiritual exercise, in a full-hearted manner; spirituality is not found in the activity. The spiritual exercise of service is quite distinct. In service, you devote all your energy and attention to the task at hand, for it is a dedicated task. You forget your body and ignore its demands. You set aside your individuality and its prestige and perquisites. You pluck your ego by its roots and cast it away. You give up your status, your conceit, your name and form and all that they demand from others. This process makes the mind pure.”*

The main activities of the Service wing are a wide range of Seva projects that take place in various locations across the Washington metro area during the week as well as the weekend. A few examples of Seva projects include (not a complete list): Narayana Seva – cooking and serving of food to the homeless in downtown Washington; Environmental Seva – conduct environmental clean-up projects, tree-planting and lectures. Please contact the Welcome Desk or the Service Coordinator at [Bethesda.service@gmail.com](mailto:Bethesda.service@gmail.com) on updated information on the Center Seva projects and how you can participate in them.

### **Center Information**

The Sai Center of South Bethesda's activities are conducted every Sunday from 3:15 PM to 5:30 PM in the Main Hall (cafeteria) at the Thomas Pyle Middle School, 6311 Wilson Lane, Bethesda, Maryland (Please do not use this address for mailing). The Devotional and Educational activities are conducted on these premises on all Sundays of the month. The Service activities are conducted in varied locations in the Washington area on Saturdays or other days. In addition, special programs such as the celebration of Sathya Sai Baba's Birthday may be conducted in other locations. Please check with the Welcome Desk for more details on timings and locations of the Center's programs.

### **Membership and Contributions**

Membership in the Sathya Sai Baba Organization and the Sai Center of South Bethesda is open to people of all nationalities and religions. The primary condition for being a member in good standing is practicing the Code of Conduct that has been laid down by Sai Baba and observing the Center Protocols. If you wish to be a Member of the SSSBC, please fill in and submit the Member Registration Form at the Welcome Desk.

Baba says, *"Where money is asked and offered, I have no place."* Membership in the Sathya Sai Baba Organization or the SSSBC does not require any fees or annual dues. The Organization, the Center and its Members are not permitted to ask for money or donations in kind. All Center activities are supported through strictly voluntary contributions from Center Members made out via check to "SSSBC". If you wish to clarify any questions or discuss this matter further, please contact the President at [Bethesda.president@gmail.com](mailto:Bethesda.president@gmail.com).

### **Governance & Guidelines**

The SSSBC operates under and conforms to the Guidelines for American Sathya Sai Baba Centers published by the Sathya Sai Baba Central Council of the United States of America. In addition, a number of local supplemental Guidelines adopted by the SSSBC pertain to the Center and apply to its Members. Please contact the Welcome Desk or the President for copies of the National and Center Guidelines

The Sai Center of South Bethesda has five office bearers: President, Vice-President, Devotion Coordinator, Education Coordinator, and Service Coordinator. The Welcome Desk has the names and contact information of the current office bearers. These office bearers are responsible for the governing of the Center and work with the Regional and National officials of the Sathya Sai Baba Organization in ensuring all the guidelines are followed at the Center.

### **How to Participate and Assist at the Sai Center**

The Sai Center of South Bethesda has numerous activities that are conducted under the auspices of the three wings: Devotion, Education, and Service. Substantial planning, coordination and execution go into all the programs that the Center conducts. All this work is undertaken by volunteer devotees who offer their time and effort as an expression of their Love for Swami and His devotees. Assisting in activities at the Center provides us the privilege and satisfaction of carrying out Sai Baba's work. It also presents opportunities to perform Seva to one's fellow devotees. You are encouraged to find an activity or program at the Sai Center that matches your personal preferences and aptitudes and take an active role in helping plan and execute it. If you are interested in finding out more about how to assist, please contact the Welcome Desk, the President or one of the other office bearers.

### ***How to Get Information and Help***

This booklet provides a brief introduction to Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Life and Teachings as well as the South Bethesda Center and its activities. As you peruse this booklet and wish to find out more about Sri Sathya Sai Baba, there are a number of avenues to explore. The official international website of the Sathya Sai Baba Organization [www.sathyasai.org](http://www.sathyasai.org) or the local website of the SSSBC [www.sathysaibethesda.org](http://www.sathysaibethesda.org) are available as resources. These are the only official websites; all other websites are not official and often contain information that is inaccurate or misleading. We urge you not to read and be drawn into other websites. We encourage you to fill out the registration form to receive E-mails from the office bearers of the center regarding information from the National, Regional and local events pertaining only to the Sathya Sai organization. Power point presentations of the Study Circle and other special announcements are also communicated via E-mail.

In addition, the SSSBC maintains a large Sai Library that provides access to a wide array of Sai literature including Sai Baba's own writings and discourses as well as the experiences of numerous devotees. We urge you to take advantage of this resource and contact the Librarian to borrow materials that are of interest to you.

As you participate in activities of the Sai Center of South Bethesda and have any questions that you wish answered, please contact one of the current Office Bearers or the Welcome Desk. We will be happy to help in any way possible since we are your fellow spiritual travelers and we too have journeyed the same path.