

Sat Chit Anand

From: "Sat Chit Anand" <satchitanand@global.co.za>
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Talk and slide show presentation on my trip to India

Thursday evening 20 January at 19h00 at St Christophers Church Hall

Wishing everyone all the best for the New Year. I recently returned from just over a month in India, where i spent 2 weeks on a Vedanta Ashram doing an advanced self-knowledge retreat; and 2.5 weeks living on a Hindu-Christian Ashram called Saccidananda. I will be sharing my journey to India and experiences of living an ashram, also giving a brief overview of the spiritual approach of these ashrams. In particular, i will share some teachings that i found very helpful in providing a context for the spiritual journey of evolution.

How did i end up on Hindu / Christian ashrams in South India? A few years ago, i felt that a change in direction was needed. I had been going to Buddhist monasteries for the last decade, and i felt it was time to integrate what i had learnt into a wider religious context. Acknowledging that this is a Christian country i started feeling the urge to make Buddhist meditation techniques available to Christians, who have often lost the contemplative aspect of religion, which is still so alive within the Buddhist tradition. Buddhist mindfulness meditation is often presented in an entirely secular way, but i wanted to keep a spiritual context. Therefore i saw the need to expand into an interfaith spiritual centre. This move was supported by Existence, and two things happened in my life that aided me in this transition: i met and became good friends with our Catholic priest, Fr Johan, and i ended up on a Hindu ashram doing my yoga teacher training, where i re-connected with the beautiful teachings that initially inspired me to call our Centre Sat Chit Anand 10 years ago.

Sat Chit Anand is the Hindu name for the godhead, from the Sanskrit words Sat (being, the ground of being), Chit (awareness or consciousness), and Ananda (the bliss of union which expresses itself as love). The Hindu quest for God, enshrined in this ancient word, finds a parallel in the Christian Trinity. Fr Johan encouraged me to go to an ashram by the same name, where the search for God - the quest for the Absolute - was related to the Christian experience of God in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Saccidananda Ashram is part of the Benedictine Order and the ashram is a place where people of all religions can come and experience the contemplative life. Fr Bede (who inspired many of my newsletters last year) wished to bring Indian spirituality, with its emphasis on interiority, to Christian life, as he felt that the ideal of contemplation – of direct experience of God in prayer – had been

lost: "People were no longer satisfied with theories about God, but longed for direct experience; longed to learn a method of prayer, a way to reach the centre, the point beyond thought ... the one reality beyond all, a reality found in all religions."

What people need above everything, is the knowledge of God. An ashram is a place of prayer, where people can find God; where they can experience the reality of the presence of God in their lives and know that they were created not merely for this world but for eternal life. One of the greatest gifts offered by India is awareness of the interiority of the presence of God dwelling in the heart of every human person and creature. This awareness is fostered by prayer and meditation, by contemplative silence, and the practice of yoga and sannyasa. The aim of Saccidananda Ashram is to bring into Christian life the riches of Indian spirituality, to share in that profound experience of God which originated in the Vedas, was developed in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, and has come down to us today through a continual succession of sages and holy men and women. [From Saccidananda Ashram brochure]

This resonated deeply with what i felt. How could i resist going to this Ashram? So 10 years later, i ended up on an ashram with a similar name to our Centre. Life works in mysterious ways ... You are invited to come on Thursday evening to hear more about my trip to India. Please note that the venue will be the Catholic Church Hall, and there will be tea and cake after the presentation ... For those who dont live in Plett, i have a notebook full of teachings and inspiration which will in due course manifest into newsletters. Please email me your details should you wish to go on our mailing list. Our 2011 schedule will be updated soon and notification will be given. With love, Leela xxx

Gentle Mindful Hatha Yoga

Tuesday evenings: 17h30 - 19h00

Wednesday afternoons: 16h30 - 18h00

Cost: R50 per class

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