

Ananda Kutir Ashrama

serve . love . give . purify . meditate . realise

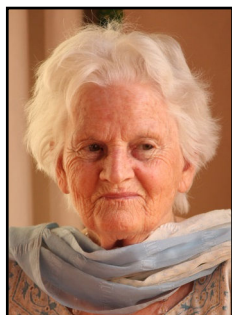
It is the objective of this Ashrama to disseminate the Teachings of
H.H. Swami Sivananda Maharaj
according to H.H. Swami Venkatesananda Maharaj

November 2022 - March 2023

Update from Swami Vidyananda

Blessed Swamijis and
Friends of Ananda Kutir Ashrama,
Hari OM. Loving Greetings!

We have entered another
New Year with prayers of Peace
and Spiritual Enlightenment.



On 1 November 2022 we
commemorated
the One-Year
Anniversary of
the Maha
Samadhi of
Mother
Yogeshwari.
We believe
that Mother
Yogeshwari

merged with the Divine due to her
inner Spiritual Awakening, the
Yogic life she led, and the Yogic
manner in which she left her body.
Swami Vidyananda shared some

of his thoughts and experiences of
Mother Yogeshwari, highlighting
her spiritual qualities, which
remained ever alive, even under
trying circumstances. How we deal
with the difficulties of life
highlight our spiritual progress,
and we witnessed the deep
equanimity that Mother
Yogeshwari possessed.

On 10 November 2022 we
celebrated the
Maha Samadhi
Anniversary of
Sri Swami
Venkatesananda
Ji, the Guru of
Ananda Kutir
Ashrama,
according to the
Vedic calendar.
We observed



Puja, singing Kirtans and Swami Parvathiananda gave a discourse on Swami Venkatesananda's life and personality, highlighting important spiritual principles that he exemplified. The lives of the Enlightened Masters serve as important teachings to seeking humanity.

A Yoga Camp was held at the ashrama over the weekend of 2-4 December. This marked the dual occasion of commemorating once again Swami Venkatesananda's Maha Samadhi (this time according to the Western calendar) as well as the 40th Anniversary of Ananda Kutir Ashrama.



We were blessed with the visit of Sri Geoff Barkley, a disciple of Swami Venkatesananda in the USA and Clinical Social

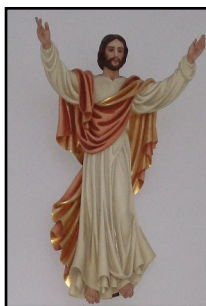
Worker. Geoff has written a book entitled 'Dying Free'. The title as well as the Maha Samadhi Anniversary served as the inspiration to the Yoga Camp theme: 'The Art of Dying Spiritually'.

Geoff gave a wonderful talk and interactive session sharing his insights into the teachings of

Swami Venkatesananda, as well as drawing on his experiences of working with dying people and his own experience of a recent heart attack. It was remarkable to learn how the teachings of his Guru manifested in Geoff at the time of his heart attack, showing that if we practise the teachings with sincerity and regularity, they will come alive in crucial moments.

The Yoga Camp also included an Interfaith Satsang at which devotees shared readings or presentations from different religious traditions on the above topic. Swami Vidyananda also gave a talk on dying, based on the teachings of the eighth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

Swami Parvathiananda gave an extensive and detailed description of the history of Ananda Kutir Ashrama at the closing Satsang of the Yoga Camp.



Christmas Eve was celebrated with a special satsang including carols, flower offerings to Lord Jesus Christ and a discourse by Swami

Vidyananda focusing on the Yogic

understanding of the birth of Jesus Christ in terms of the Divinity of Christ as well as the birth of Christ within the seeker.

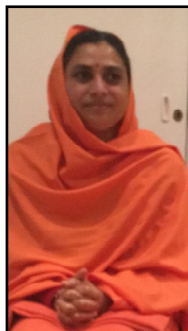
On 29 December the ashrama celebrated the Birth Anniversary of Sri Swami Venkatesananda Ji. This included Puja, Kirtan and a discourse by Swami Parvathiananda, sharing her experiences of Swami Venkatesananda, highlighting his sublime spirit of service to the Guru and humanity. Service is Bliss.



Maha Shivaratri was celebrated on the night of 18 February with a 12-hour night vigil of singing kirtan interspersed with four pujas.

This all-night vigil is a wonderful way of overcoming sleep and loosening the limitations that we place on ourselves. Now and again it is good to go a little beyond our limitations, but only in order to enter the Divine.

We also had the inspiring visit of Sri Mahatma Suvidhya Bai Ji from Manav Dham. Mahatma Suvidhya Bai Ji has been visiting our ashrama regularly for a



number of years, sharing her knowledge and wisdom lovingly with all. This time she spoke on the Eight Limbs of Yoga as expounded in the text 'Yoga Sutras of Patanjali'. The Eight Limbs describe the fundamental disciplines and aspects of meditation and peaceful living. Mahatma Suvidhya Bai Ji emphasised how especially the disciplines of the first two limbs help us to create a peaceful mind. She pointed out that meditation is only possible if the mind is at peace. Meditation is the path to self-knowledge, where the seeker realises his/her true nature as being the soul, which is one with God.

Wonderful events amongst the ashrama's weekly spiritual activities! May we all attain the Highest!

Cosmic Links

“A primary aim of Zen is the uncovering of what is known as inherent knowledge... It is said that the ignorant are obstructed by ignorance, while the intellectuals are obstructed by intellectual knowledge. One way of getting past these obstacles and approaching inherent knowledge is to let go of whatever comes to mind.”

Muso Kokushi

“The soul then, as being immortal, and having been born again many times, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, has knowledge of them all... all enquiry and all learning is but recollection.”

Socrates

“The simplest aspect of self-enquiry is to just hold onto the sense I AM, the sense of Being. Keep the sense of "I" or "I AM" by itself. Everyone can do this exercise - it brings immediate results.”

Mooji

“An unquestioned mind is the world of suffering.”

Byron Katie

“Becoming adept at the process of self inquiry and symbolic insight is a vital spiritual task that leads to the growth of faith in oneself.”

Caroline Myss

“Difference of opinion leads to enquiry, and enquiry to truth; and I am sure... we both value too much the freedom of opinion sanctioned by our Constitution, not to cherish its exercise even where in opposition to ourselves.”

Thomas Jefferson

“I rejoice in a belief that intellectual light will spring up in the dark corners of the earth; that freedom of enquiry will produce liberality of conduct; that mankind will reverse the absurd position that the many were made for the few; and that they will not continue slaves in one part of the globe, when they can become freemen in another.

George Washington

“What is enquiry into the Truth? It is the firm conviction that the Self is real, and all, other than That, is unreal.”

Sri Adi Shankaracharya

Moksha Gita (continued)

By Swami Sivananda

The mind has the power of creating or undoing the whole universe in the twinkling of an eye. Slay this mind through vicara (enquiry), destruction of vasanas (psychological impressions or conditioning) and control of its fluctuation.

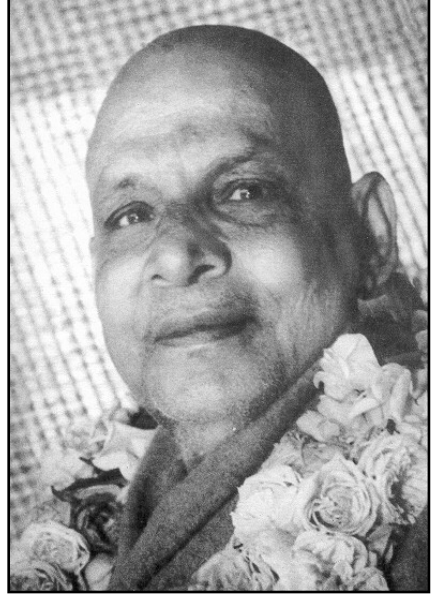
Mind is a bundle of vasanas (subtle desires). Through vasanas bondage is caused. Destruction of vasanas will bring freedom. The mind will attain quiescence like a gheeless lamp if the vasanas are destroyed.

Just as a silk-worm is caught in its own cocoon, so also man is caught in this vast net of samsara (worldly life) by his own sankalpas (thoughts and notions) and vasanas.

The enemy of the atman (self) is the fluctuating mind only. The mind through its power of fluctuation generates countless vasanas and sankalpas. Destroy this fluctuating power of the mind through constant Brahma-vicara.

Brahman will not shine when the dualities of the mind are not destroyed. Destroy the dualities. Brahman will shine in its pristine glory.

Ahamkara (egoism) which is the source of all troubles has its seat in the mind. Annihilation of egoism will bring about destruction of the mind and



annihilation of the mind will cause destruction of egoism.

The ideas of 'mine' and 'thine' are only the creation of the mind. If the mind is destroyed through vicara, these ideas will vanish. Destruction of the mind alone is moksha (liberation).

Destruction of sankalpas is really destruction of the mind. It is only sankalpas destroyed beyond resurrection that constitute the ineffable, imperishable, and effulgent Brahmic seat.

Just as gold is purified by heating it on the fire, so also mind is purified by the fire of meditation.

Unbroken Awareness

By Swami Venkatesananda

It is not that the yogi does not think or is afraid to think. Thought is mental action and has its place in life. Action belongs to life. It is only when thought or emotion, memory or imagination determines action, that there is confusion. Thought is used in the initial stages of meditation, to turn awareness towards itself. This is vitarka. Hope, fear, frustration, anger and so on are not allowed to find a cause to express themselves; their presence as the cause is recognised. Then they are observed: this is vicara. Vicara is the intensely active movement of awareness-energy. Even the emotions are realised as such movement of awareness-energy. This recognition frees emotion from the terrifying label; and there is intense delight. Of course, the observer continues to be.

In all this there is some effort. But the observer minus an object to observe needs no effort to be aware. Hence now the effort ceases. The observer aware of itself is awareness. All that is left now is the potentiality of objective experience - the samskara. Samskara is formed in the absence of self-knowledge when we invent a purpose to life, a function for God and the role of the understander or interpreter to the self.

Vritti is the understander, the measurer. There is an extraordinary faculty in the understander to register as memory, impressions of experiences and expressions which are impressive! These completely and tragically distort the pure action of the intelligence that indwells life. Memory has its own proper field of activity; but when it is allowed to interfere in life and in relationships, it is destructive. The understander can also indulge in imagination. Ignorance is imagination: otherwise, how does ignorance arise in pure intelligence? Ego-sense is imagination too: how does an ego exist apparently independent of the totality, the undivided intelligence? Likes and dislikes, craving and hate, are imaginary. Imagination gives rise to fear and thus to hope, and calls all this the 'future'.

By directly comprehending all this, the understander is understood to be but a shadow. For dispelling this shadow one of the methods suggested by Patanjali is 'unbroken awareness' spread over the eight limbs of yoga. Without such awareness, these practices may be counterproductive.



News from Children Of Light Educare

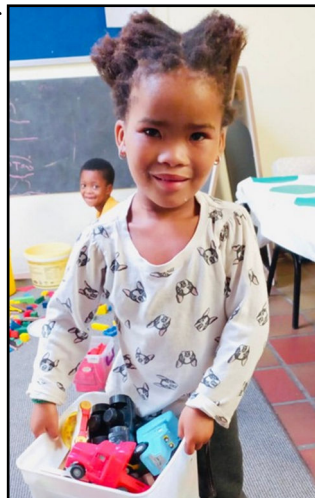
MESSAGE FROM PRINCIPAL MALA (MAITRI) MAKAN

Loving greetings, dearest friends of COLT. I hope 2023 is off to a wonderful start for you and your loved ones!

For us at COLT, it has been a bittersweet experience as we bid farewell to our graduating pupils and said hello to new children joining our family for the very first time. 12 children were placed in a primary school close to their home and we admitted 8 new children to COLT this year.

We had a whirlwind last term celebrating many milestones including our 5th birthday, annual Christmas party, Advent and Graduation event. The new year has been equally busy and I am really excited to update you in this, our first newsletter for the year.

Thank you once again for all your support and well wishes for COLT. It is only through your sustained efforts that we are able to serve the children and their communities. May God bless you all.



COLT TURNS 5!



The Children of Light Educare celebrated its 5th birthday with a yajna (fire ceremony) and a tea party at the school on the 4th of November 2022.

All children, teachers, volunteers and friends participated in a yajna led by Swami Vidyananda. The yajna is a purification ceremony and consists of making sacred offerings into the fire while chanting vedic mantras.



After the puja (prayer), everyone enjoyed some cake and treats to celebrate this milestone birthday.

The Southern Suburbs Tatler was onsite to capture the highlights of the day and published an article on COLT that week.

For more community updates, have a look at <https://www.southernsuburbstatler.co.za/>.

GRADUATION AND ADVENT FESTIVAL

In November 2022, we held our annual Grade R Graduation Ceremony and Advent Festival. We had 15 children graduate and we celebrated the journey of each child together with their parents.

As part of the ceremony, every COLT child completed the "spiral walk" - a walk symbolizing the child moving from darkness to light, carrying that light within along their journey.



CHRISTMAS PARTY



One of the highlights in the COLT calendar is undoubtedly the end of year Christmas party. It is a time to reflect on the year gone by, the many blessings we have received for the Educare and for ourselves personally.

We make a concerted effort to ensure Christmas is a time of great cheer and celebration for our children - and like all children, they love presents! 56 children (past and present pupils) received Santa Shoeboxes on the day. Thank you to Society Sistas for sponsoring these and for committing to doing the same this Christmas.

Thank you to our friends who helped make this a special occasion for our children through sponsorships, providing gifts and being present on the day. A special thank you to Najda from Ubuntu for sponsoring gifts for the children.

PAT' JOURNEY



Behind every COLT child, lies a story of small miracles, overcoming great challenges and a spirit of hope, courage and determination. One such story is that of Pat's journey with us.

As one of our graduating Grade R pupils, Pat (not her real name) needed to be placed in a primary school for Grade 1 but had not secured a spot by late November last year. Teachers intervened and enlisted the help of the Department of Education's district

office to support Pat's placement in a school and she was eventually accepted into Morgenson Primary School. Through donations from friends such as yourself, COLT was also able to purchase a new uniform for Pat. Read a more detailed account of her journey on our blog, <https://colt.org.za/colt-teachers-do-it-again/>.

START OF NEW TERM

January 2023 saw us kick off a new school year and first term at COLT. This year we have 14 children at the Educare - 5 in the Sunflower class and 9 in Grade R. All our children come from three informal settlements / communities i.e. Hadji Ebrahim, Pook se Bos and Flamingo Heights.

The work we do stretches beyond the classroom and extends into social and emotional support in the form of counselling and providing food parcels for these communities. Contact us to learn more about how you can get involved: info@colt.org.za.



DONOR BREAKFAST

In February this year, we held a special breakfast to give thanks to and update our donors and sponsors - without which, we would not be able to do the things we do. The event was officiated by Lucille Meyer, the CEO of the Chrysalis Academy (<https://chrysalisacademy.org.za/>) and a mentor to our teaching staff at COLT.

Three parents shared their personal experiences and how COLT has contributed to their lives. There was not a dry eye in the room for this segment! The Southern Suburbs Tatler was onsite once again to cover the day's events.



AFTERCARE PROGRAMME



The new year also saw us launch our aftercare programme for past pupils of COLT. This has been a much awaited event and a project close to all our hearts!



While at COLT, our children are held in a safe and loving space and it is not uncommon for them to struggle with the transition into primary school. In particular, their primary school teachers informed COLT that the children are struggling with literacy and numeracy - and they are not able to receive support at home. Hence the idea of an aftercare programme was born out of a need to further serve the needs of the child.

Through the aftercare programme, we are now able to assist our children with homework, give them a meal after school and teach them life skills to help them master this phase of their lives.

Our pilot programme has launched with 3 children attending every Tuesday afternoon and the volunteer services of Teacher Grace. With your support, we can increase this intake and take on the services of a class assistant. Please contact us if you are able to assist with this initiative: info@anandakutir.org.za

SPECIAL FEATURE - UPDATE ON REGISTRATION

We are often asked for more information about our registration status and why we are not able to receive government subsidies and funding for COLT. We thought we would provide you, our friends and well wishes, with a special feature in this newsletter that updates you on where we are with that process.

As you already know, COLT is registered as a Non-Profit Organisation (Reg No. 149-100 NPO) and this allows us the licence to operate and raise public funds. It also provides the governance framework through which we are held accountable to the public, internal and external oversight committees for all our activities but especially around how we spend public money. This gives assurance to all donors and sponsors that there is transparency and credibility in all our dealings.

As an Early Childhood Development centre (ECD), we are also busy with registering as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO). PBOs are defined as those organisations that are engaged in activities that benefit the public. A significant benefit of being recognised as a PBO is the ability to issue tax deductibles to donors on all donations received. Most large businesses and corporates require PBO approval before they consider making any financial contributions to the Educare. In addition, once we receive our PBO approval, we will then qualify for government grants and subsidies set aside by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for ECDs. Registration with the DBE is a pre-requisite for PBO approval.

Over 2022, we focused our resources and efforts to meet all the necessary requirements for DBE registration. Although this has almost entirely depleted our financial resources, we are pleased to share that we have just received our building occupancy, health and fire safety clearance certificates after completing the necessary renovations. We are very close to achieving our approval and God Willing, expect to have it in the next few months.

Until then, we rely solely on loving donations both in kind and in cash from friends and well-wishers as yourselves. Please do contact us if you are able to contribute in any way and also if you know of potential donors and sponsors we can reach out to. Every little bit of help we receive goes a long way in making a difference in our children's lives and future.

Thank you once again, dear friends, for all your support and contributions.

To donate, please visit, www.colt.org.za/donate/

The Self

By Swami Venkatesananda

Does the end of the body mean the end of the self? Once death has come, will I still exist or not? Most of us do not take this enquiry seriously. One thinks, “Why worry, who cares what is the meaning of life and what happens when it comes to an end?” Instead of meditating on this, one looks after the body, enjoys oneself, works or steals to get more money. We go from one stupid action to another until death knocks at the door. When it is too late, you suddenly jump up, “Oh no, wait, I must meditate”. But you cannot do it now.

Can I bring about this ‘facing death’ *now*? Physiologically or biologically death has not yet come to me, but psychologically or spiritually it has. Then I see that all the pleasures I have enjoyed have made me weaker; that all I think I possess, possesses me!

These things happen in the world around us, but even though we see them, we close our eyes to the truth. The dialogue between ‘me’ and ‘death’ which may be taking place within me right now, becomes meaningless, unless I am sincere in my search for truth. If I am sincere and serious I will not be side-tracked. The temptations are not outside. Temptation is in

the mind, desire is in the mind and the desire is the temptation. If I am serious about this question: “What is death and what happens to me in death?”, when I discover that death only removes that which never belonged to me, I am no longer afraid of it. It is as simple as that.

Then the query arises: “What is ‘I’?” The only obstacle to answering this question is unsteadiness of attention. Watch and note if merely *seeing* is temptation. If you look within, inwardly watching the mind, you find that the attention does not change, does not shift at all. The eyes still see, the ears still hear, life still goes on - but your attention is within yourself. And there, deep within the innermost core of your being, you realise that you *are* the Self. Not the self which is some kind of an image, nor something which looks like a big light, nor something which looks like a god. (All these ideas have been created by you.)

This Self has nothing whatever to do with your good actions or bad actions, it has nothing whatever to do with your suffering or your pleasure. Uninvolved in pain, uninvolved in death, uninvolved in birth - It *is*.

Your Real Nature

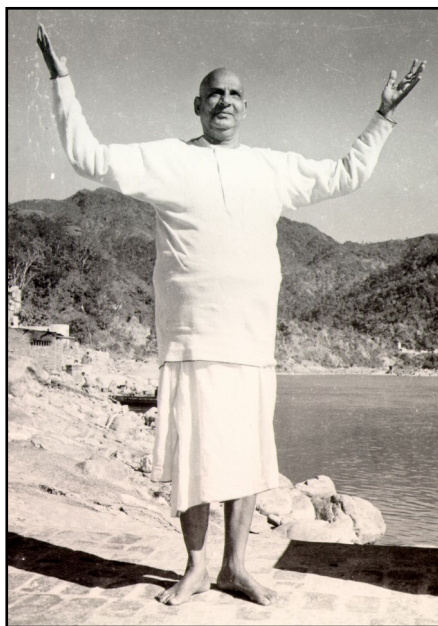
By Swami Sivananda

Do you know who you are? I shall tell you. Hear me. You are the master of the body and the senses and the mind. You are the master of your life. All power is within you. You have to know this and manifest it.

How can the mind torment you? How can despair overcome you? Despair is a quality of the mind and the mind is your servant. *You* are all bliss, all light, all strength, all knowledge. *You* are divinity. *You* are above and beyond both body and mind. *You* are immortal satcidananda (existence-knowledge-bliss absolute).

The important thing to know clearly is that you are not the slave of the mind and the senses. You have got into the habit of thinking that their craving is your craving. Now get out of this habit, by constantly reminding yourself that you have nothing to do with the mischievous mind and senses.

Remember constantly that you are not this perishable body. You are not this perishable, changing mind. You are the all-pervading consciousness. You are the eternal seer. You are the eternal witness. Therefore be ever free and blissful.



Intensify your spiritual life. Seek the light of vedanta. Be a flame of the light of the Upanishads. Ever meditate on: "I am the immortal, all-pervading Brahman." Om is the bow, the soul is the arrow and Brahman is the target.

When you realise the effulgent supreme being you shake off all evil and attain the supreme stainless unity. Devote yourself to the holy quest of truth. Devote yourself to the discovery of the ultimate spiritual essence that is all-pervading and interpenetrating.

Wisdom from Mother Yogeshwari

SELF INQUIRY

I am a vibration,
Nothing more,
Causing creation.
“Whatever for?”
To clear all the debris
Barring the way,
Lose my identity
In the Lord's play.

When the inner voice is heeded
We may say,
Emancipation is conceded.
“When?” Some day!

Yoga Vāsiṣṭha

7.9

Do not be that
which is understood,
nor the one
who understands.

Abandon all concepts
and remain
what you are.

Ananda Kutir Ashrama Membership Application Form

Seekers who are keenly involved in the Ashrama and who are actively supportive of its objectives can become members. A member receives a copy of Swami Sivananda's 20 Spiritual Instructions and Swami Venkatesananda's Prayer. A member can vote at the AGM and can serve on the management committee.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

R200 valid for the financial year March-February. R300 for married couples.

Name _____

Postal Address _____

Phone _____

Cellphone _____

E-mail _____

Signature _____

Date _____

**For more information please contact:
Ananda Kutir Ashrama
031-418 NPO**

Tel: +27 21 696 1821
Email: info@anandakutir.org.za
www.anandakutir.org.za
Residential and Postal Address:
24 Sprigg Rd,
Rondebosch East, 7780
Cape Town, South Africa

Banking Details

Donations to the Ashrama

Bank: Standard Bank
Branch code: 051001 (Rondebosch Branch)
Account name: Ananda Kutir Ashrama
Account No: 10158117954
Reference: Your name & purpose of payment

Donations to the Outreach Project

Bank: Standard Bank
Branch code: 051001 (Rondebosch Branch)
Account name: Ananda Kutir Outreach Project
Account No: 10158113770
Reference: Your name & purpose of payment

Donations to the Children of Light Educare

Bank: Absa
Branch code: 632005 (Claremont)
Account name: Children of Light Educare Trust
Account No: 9322073615
Reference: Your name & purpose of payment