



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 2024 - February 2025

News on Recent Events

Dear Friends of the Ashrama,
Hari OM. Loving Greetings!

Another year has been completed and another new year has started with the ashrama continuing with its various activities.

The ashrama buildings received a 'facelift' with fresh paint. It took four weeks for a team of accomplished painters to complete the task. We were blessed to have had a team of men, who lead a pure life of maintaining good principles.

The month of October 2024 began with the auspicious period called Navaratri, which literally means 'Nine Nights'. It is a period in which the Divine is contemplated in its Feminine Aspect. Daily Satsangs included



chanting specific hymns, watching and listening to video recordings of Swami Venkatesananda's talks in 1982 on a

sacred text called Devi Mahatmyam. Swamiji vividly describes the inner conflict of the seeker and how to overcome the fundamental obstacles of ignorance, desire and intellectualism. The nine nights ended with the tenth night called Vijaya Dasami which symbolizes the triumph of enlightenment. During that Satsang Swami Parvathiananda talked about the importance of facing our problems so that we may progress in the spiritual path.

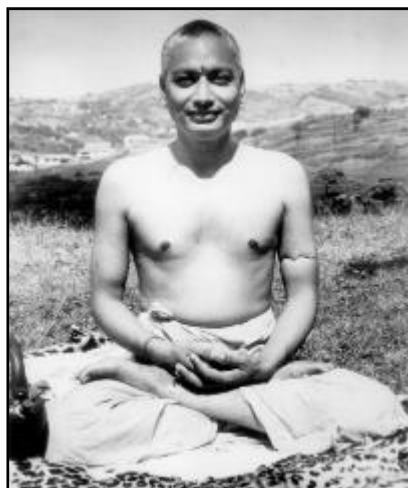


On 9 November the ashrama conducted a special satsang to commemorate the Mahasamadhi of Mother Yogeshwari. We had the privilege of listening to a wonderful talk by Sri Judy Tobler Mataji, a disciple of Sri Swami

Venkatesananda Ji, about her experiences and observations of Mother Yogeshwari, particularly of the times when Sri Swami Venkatesananda Ji was alive. One of the points that stood out was the self-sacrificing and mature nature of Mother Yogeshwari.

On 16 November we had a small thank you function for all the friends who had selflessly committed themselves a two-year project of proofreading the new editions of Swami Venkatesananda's Daily Readings books. This is a very important project as this will enable the posterity of Swami Venkatesananda's legacy. The books that were successfully completed were: The Song of God (Bhagavad Gita), The Book of God (Bhagavatam), Valmiki Ramayana, The Supreme Yoga (Yoga Vasishttha), Buddha Daily Readings, Venkatesa Daily

Readings Volumes 1&2, Sivananda Daily Readings.



The following day we celebrated the Mahasamadhi of Sri Swami Venkatesananda Ji with a beautiful morning of meditation, a vedic fire ceremony, a puja to the statue of Swami Venkatesananda in the garden, chanting and a talk by Swami Vidyananda on Swami Venkatesananda's teachings on discipleship and how he exemplified these.

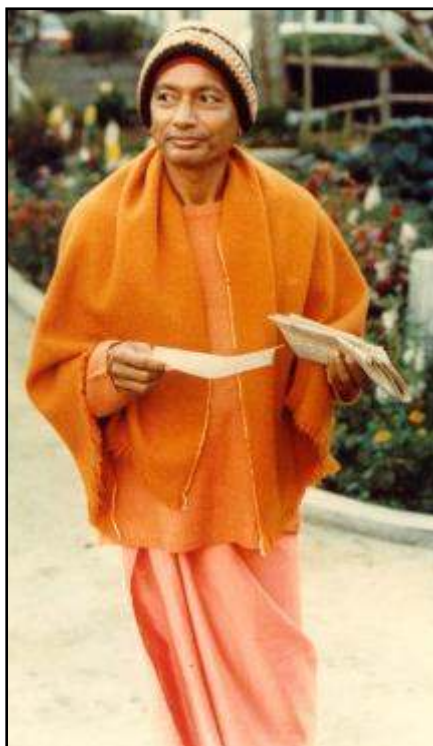
We also celebrated the Mahasamadhi of Swami Venkatesananda Ji on 2 December with an Interfaith Satsang, the theme being "The Religion of Love". Devotees of the ashrama researched and offered short talks on the theme according to various

religious traditions. The presentations were interspersed with songs from these traditions. Geoff Barkley, a disciple of Swami Venkatesananda, from America also shared about an encounter that he had with Sri Swami Venkatesananda in which he experienced the unconditional, universal and yet impersonal love of Swamiji. Impersonal love is love that is independent of personality and relationship. It is there and shines on all.

On 3 December we observed three hours of chanting the Maha Mantra, which included half an hour of meditation. On 3 December 1943 Swami Sivananda Ji initiated the continuous chanting of the Maha Mantra at his ashrama for world peace. Since then it has been uninterruptedly chanted day and night up to this day.



Christmas Eve was celebrated as usual with Christmas carols, a vedic flower-offering ritual to the image of Baby Jesus and a talk by Swami Vidyananda sharing the yogic and gnostic teachings of the inner birth of Christ.



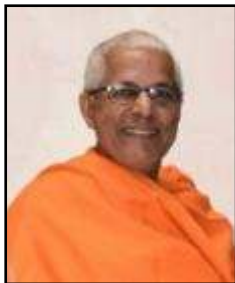
Swami Venkatesananda's Birth Anniversary was celebrated similarly to his Mahasamadhi with a slight difference: Swami Vidyananda's talk was live-streamed to the Sivanandashram's Christmas Retreat. Every year the Sivanandashram in India hosts a Christmas Retreat from Christmas Eve to New Year's Eve. The senior swamis of the ashrama and guest speakers share insights on a theme, this year's theme being: "From the Unreal to the Real". Swami Vidyananda shared insights according to his understanding of

Swami Venkatesananda's teachings, and described the path of direct enquiry which can lead one from the illusions of the mind to the discovery of the reality of the soul.

After having had a month's holyday period, the ashrama resumed its meditation, philosophy and yoga classes on 13 January. Friends returned to the newly-painted ashrama and commented on the freshness of the ashrama. Maybe they were refreshed after the holydays!

On 16 February a special hike with Evelyn Holtzhausen, guide and friend, took place on a windy Silvermine Nature Reserve. Evelyn arranged a change of route due to the winds, which resulted in a pleasant walk. A guided meditation was led by Sri Swami Gurubhaktananda Ji, who was visiting the ashrama at that time.

Swami Gurubhaktananda Ji had also delivered two wonderful talks in the preceding week. The



first talk was on insights into the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali based on the teachings of the great 14th

century Advaita Saint Sri Vidyananda. The second talk was on insights into the Yoga Vasishtha based on a condensed text written by Sri Swami Tejomayananda, former president of the Chinmaya Mission.



On 26 February we observed the holy night of Maha Shivaratri, a night dedicated to the Supreme Being contemplated as

Shiva: Auspiciousness, Pure Light of Consciousness. Twelve hours of devotional practices (kirtans interspersed with puja) were observed to unite with the Divine, overcoming the impulse of sleep and entering into deeper states of being.

May we all attain to that Supreme State.

Yours in Prem and Om,
Vidyananda

Cosmic Links

“It is difficult to free fools from the chains they revere.”

Voltaire

“Seek freedom and become captive of your desires. Seek discipline and find your liberty.”

Frank Herbert

“The secret to happiness is freedom... And the secret to freedom is courage.”

Thucydides

“It is this spiritual freedom - which cannot be taken away - that makes life meaningful and purposeful.”

Viktor E. Frankl

“Jnana, bhakti, yoga and karma - these are the four paths which lead to spiritual freedom. One must follow the path for which one is best suited. But in this age, special stress should be laid on karma yoga.”

Swami Vivekananda

“They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

Benjamin Franklin

“None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear.”

Aung San Suu Kyi

“No one outside ourselves can rule us inwardly. When we know this, we become free.”

Buddha

“Life without liberty is like a body without spirit.”

Kahlil Gibran

“The whole purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of a man's life, to get behind the façade of conventional gestures and attitudes which he presents to the world, and to bring out his inner spiritual freedom, his inmost truth, which is what we call the likeness of Christ in his soul.”

Thomas Merton

“Without freedom there can be no morality.”

Carl Jung

Yogasara Upanishad Mantra 14

By Sri Swami Sivananda

“The Yogi separates himself from the three Gunas (qualities) and attains Kaivalya “

Notes and Commentary

By increasing the satvic modifications of the mind such as ksama (patience), love, mercy, magnanimity, generosity, truthfulness, celibacy, you can destroy the rajasic and tamasic mental vrttis. Internal fight is ever going on between gunas satva, rajas and tamas, between good vrttis and evil vrttis.

If satva predominates in the mind, thoughts of God, Brahmanvicara (enquiry into truth) will manifest. The mind will be one-pointed. The meditative mood will come by itself without any exertion. In spiritual neophytes the satvic state of mind will not last for a long time. Rajas and tamas will try to rush in. You will have to be very careful and vigilant. You will have to watch the mind through careful introspection. Your important duty is to increase the satva in the mind. A satvic man will be ever virtuous, God-loving, dispassionate and powerful. A rajasic man will be ever engaged in worldly activities. He wants to lord over people. He has a domineering attitude. He

wants powers. He is much attached to wife, children and property. The dross or impurities of the mind - rajas and tamas - should be removed by heating the mind in the fire of vairagya and abhyasa (dispassion and spiritual practices of sadhana). Then alone you will become a dhyana yogi.

Eventually the purusa (soul) realises his own native state of divine glory, isolation or absolute independence (kaivalya). He has completely disconnected himself from the prakrti and its effects. He feels his absolute freedom and attains kaivalya, the highest goal of a raja yogi. All klesha-karmas are destroyed now. The gunas, having fulfilled their objects of enjoyment and evolution, now entirely cease to act. He has simultaneous knowledge now. The past and future are blended into present. Everything is "now". Everything is "here". He has transcended time and space. The sum-total of all knowledge of the three worlds, of all secular sciences is nothing, nothing, compared to the infinite knowledge of a yogi who has attained kaivalya. Glory, glory to such exalted yogis. May their blessings be upon us all!

Kaivalya (Freedom)

By Swami Venkatesananda

'Kaivalya' means 'one alone', independent of everything else. What is liberation? In aiming at freedom, how do I relate to others? Can I go on oppressing someone else? As long as there are these two - dominator and dominated - freedom is nebulous. What is meant by freedom? Some call it 'nirvana', which is literally 'blowing out the flame'. While the flame is burning, there are two things: the oil and the flame. It is the oil that makes the flame. When the flame is extinguished, the fire (the energy), the burning potential, is still there in the oil. But now instead of two, there is one: one alone (kaivalya).

If I watch carefully what goes on in my life, I see that the feeling of happiness results from someone's kind actions (words or deeds) towards me. When, on the other hand, I receive insults, I am unhappy. There is pleasure on the one side, pain at the other. What have I got to do with it? Am I involved in this? Whether you erect a 'beautiful' building or an 'ugly' structure, space is still space, omnipresent, independent of what is, was or will be in it.

Watching myself I note that I am happy when a hope, a wish is fulfilled. When frustrated I am unhappy. Where are happiness and unhappiness? They are directly related to hope. As long as there is

hope, there must be disappointment, suffering. As long as there is desire to be happy, there must be unhappiness.

As one goes on seeing all these polarities, one realises one's freedom. When I have no hope, I have no despair; once I am free from the desire to be happy, there is no more unhappiness for me. As long as there is still duality: 'I' and 'another', this 'I' is subject to happiness, and its opposite. Therefore the yogi goes deeper into his consciousness in order to understand what this 'I' is. He keeps on asking. Then, by the grace of God and by serious practice of yoga, one realises that perhaps the thing I have been calling 'I' is like the room.

Within the room, outside the room and through the walls of the room only space exists. And yet in that one space, somehow I imagine the existence of a partition, a small room. What is this room? Nothing but imagination, an idea. What is 'I'? Nothing but imagination or an idea. When this knowledge arises, then the idea of 'I' as a finite being disappears. With the realisation of the indivisibility of one Cosmic Being, there is total freedom or kaivalya, because then there is consciousness of only One. There is no other. *That* alone exists - neither I nor you. There is oneness, freedom.

News from Children Of Light Educare



Picture taken of the annual Christmas Party in December 2024 and the activity was sponsored by @Elevate.CapeTown which was hour of silent dancing.

Ending Off 2024 With Silent Dancing At The Annual Christmas Party

A joyful Christmas celebration, spreading joy and cheer to Children of Light Educare.

Our annual Christmas party was a resounding success, thanks to the generosity of Elevate Cape Town who came out to sponsor the activity for the day. The event was a wonderful way to conclude the year, filling the hearts of our children with joy, laughter, and unforgettable memories. The highlight of the party was undoubtedly the silent dancing session courtesy of Elevate. The children were absolutely thrilled, donning their special silent disco headphones and hearing the stories whilst moving around freely to dance and play. The day was packed with exciting activities, including:

- Gift-giving: Each child received a thoughtful gift carefully selected to bring a smile to their face.

- Delicious treats: Pretty cupcakes, yummy doughnuts and juice boxes.

As we looked back on 2024 we were reminded of the power of community and the importance of spreading love, kindness and joy. We were honored to be part of these children's lives and excited for what 2025 would bring.



Picture taken at Littlestream Constantia: the children enjoying a nice cool walk in the stream.

Young Explorers Embark On Thrilling Adventures

This term, the children from Children of Light Educare embarked on an exciting journey of discovery, exploring the wonders of nature and the thrill of new experiences.

Their adventures took them to Keurboom Park, where laughter and excitement filled the air as they played, ran and made memories with friends. The park's lush greenery, play park with swings, slide and jungle gym provided the perfect backdrop for their carefree fun.

Next, they ventured into the enchanting Littlestream picnic area in Klein Constantia where the children spent the day exploring the tranquil beauty of the little river, climbing and playing at the playpark. Sounds of birds chirping and the rustling of the leaves captivated their senses. As they played in the little river and wandered through the forest, they discovered hidden treasures, from tiny insects to majestic towering trees.

One of the highlights of the term was the train ride to St James Beach. The thrill of chugging along the coast, feeling the ocean breeze, and watching the waves crash against the shore left them beaming with light.

Throughout their adventures, the children demonstrated remarkable curiosity, enthusiasm, and teamwork. They discovered new sights, sounds, sensations, broadening their horizons and deepening their connection with the world around them.

The Sunflower Classroom Of Children of Light Educare Blooms Anew

The sunflower classroom, the heart of Children of Light Educare, has undergone a magnificent transformation. This vibrant space, where the children learn, grow and thrive has been revitalized to provide a safe, inspiring environment for young minds to flourish.

A new roof: Gone are the days of leaky ceilings, mold build-up and disrupted lessons. A sturdy new roof now protects the classroom from the elements, ensuring that learning continues uninterrupted. This vital upgrade has brought a sense of security and stability to the space.

A fresh floor: The old wornout tiled floor has given way to a sleek, laminated surface that invites exploration and discovery. This durable, easy-to-clean floor is perfect for energetic children, who can now move freely and safely.

A vibrant new coat: The classroom's fresh coat of yellow paint has infused the space with a sense of hope and optimism. The bright, cheerful yellow colour creates a welcoming atmosphere, inspiring creativity and imagination in the children.

With Prem and Om,
Maitri Makan (Principal)



Picture taken of the children enjoying their new classroom with a new coat of paint and shiny laminated flooring.

News From The Outreach Project

Food Packs

On Monday mornings the dedicated Outreach volunteers assemble 100 food packs of rice, split peas/lentils and soya mince. Each pack, with water added and cooked for about 30 minutes, provides a nutritious meal for 4 people. The Outreach project was in recess during the festive season when the Ashrama is closed but resumed on 20 January.

Home Rosters

Juliet Clavaux and her friends, long-time supporters of the Outreach project continue to make food packs which are delivered to the ashram.

World Aids Day

Phumlani Clinic observes World Aids Day in December every year as the clinic sisters share information with their clients re HIV/Aids. We were happy to provide cookies, fruit and drinks for their tea.

Christmas buckets

We were unable to provide the clinics with Christmas buckets in December so we decided to do something special for Easter in April.

Outreach Finances

Thanks to our donors, those who donate monthly and those who donate during the year the Outreach finances are in a healthy position. Everyone involved does so on a voluntary basis: all money received is used for the benefit of the clinic clients we support.

My thanks go to my fellow co-ordinators Damyanti Gajjar, Elsa Oliver and Jennifer Stephens.

Rosemary Frith
(Coordinator)

Remembering Pat Markovina



At Pat's home in Betty's Bay

From Swami Parvathiananda

If I remember correctly, I first met Pat while she and Miso were still living in Rondebosch and Ananda Kutir Ashram had just started. Very soon Pat had become part of a group of friends who dedicated themselves to helping those less fortunate by coming to the Ashram and making sandwiches weekly for taking to the various township clinics. Precious friendships were made as a result.

She also organised her own sandwich making groups.

Soon she found herself immersed in the teachings of Swami Venkatesananda and joined study groups.

Being a Nature lover, once Pat moved to Betty's Bay she spent more time sharing her special gift - painting. She loved her early morning swims, walking her dogs on the beach, protecting bird life and caring for her family.

She was very happy and content.

The last few years she continued her study of The Supreme Yoga, The Yoga Vasistha via zoom and we shared our thoughts and reflections.

She bravely and confidently accepted the last month of her life surrounded by her loving and caring family.

As fellow seekers I have treasured her friendship and as such my life has been enriched by having known her.



Outreach get-together



From Damyanti

I had known Pat for many years and think we may have joined the Ashram at the same time. We initially met weekly doing sandwiches for the Outreach Project, providing these to some TB clinics in the Western Cape. Of course these weekly sessions were always interesting as we discussed all kinds of topics thinking we could solve the problems of the world!!!

Later when Pat moved to Betty's Bay she extended an invitation to all of us to visit her at the sea. These were special times where we spent the day with her and took a walk to the beach and then had a lovely lunch together.

I admired her dedication in studying vedantic teachings. She shared her findings and I always found it very interesting.

The loss of her daughter Thea impacted her greatly and I think she found solace in the spiritual teachings.

She was a dear friend, very warm and forthright. I do miss her and pray that her family find comfort in the memories of the many beautiful times they shared together.



2019 Kirstenbosch



Pat and the sandwich makers at Ananda Kutir Ashram preparing sandwiches for three township clinics

From Tina

Pat was part of our Ananda Kutir family for many years.

Pat organised the outreach home roster for volunteers to prepare sandwiches and boiled eggs at their homes to be delivered together with fruit each week to the ashram. These food parcels would be delivered to the Browns

Farm TB and HIV clinic. She was very much part of the outreach project and a wonderful friend.

I had such deep and wonderful conversations with her about spirituality and she would always share all the teachings that she came across and loved.

Pat's last sharing with me

6 July 2024

...I have become very aware of the Buddhist teaching - everything changes, nothing is permanent, a very important fact to learn to accept. Wonderful how all these teachings help in every way...

...I am emotionally well, physically uncomfortable if I am not sitting down)- so I do sit down as much as possible and don't go for walks with the dog other than the short distance to the beach in front of our house. But

this house is still a perfectly situated paradise for us and gives us a good life. I will be 83 soon and do feel old, which strangely also is rather liberating as I finally accept that I cannot and do not need to run the world anymore... let go, let go is the mantra and it is a good place to be...

20 October

On the way out and home☺ well looked after by my family here. They insist I stay home and not Hospice. My hand is Held as I knew it would be

Xxx

18 November Pat
Markovina passed away

Pat was an inspiration. Her enthusiasm for wisdom was beautifully contagious. We could go on discussing and sharing anything and everything that was uplifting for the soul. She will be truly missed and never forgotten.



Wisdom from Mother Yogeshwari



FREEDOM

When will I be free,
When I ceases to be.
No more false delusion,
No more doubt, confusion,
No more wrong conclusion.

When will I be free?
When I ceases to be,
No more mighty missions,
No more inhibitions,
No more empty visions.

No more thoughts of gain,
And fear of loss and pain,
God is there to guide me,
Help me and to chide me,
And to override me.

That's when I'll be free,
When I ceases to be.

Ananda Kutir Ashrama Membership Application Form

Friends 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

R250 valid for the financial year March-February. R350 for married couples.

Name _____

E-mail _____

Postal Address _____

Phone _____

Cellphone _____

Signature _____

Date _____

**For more information please contact:
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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
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Donations to the Children of Light Educare

Bank: Absa
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Account No: 9322073615
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