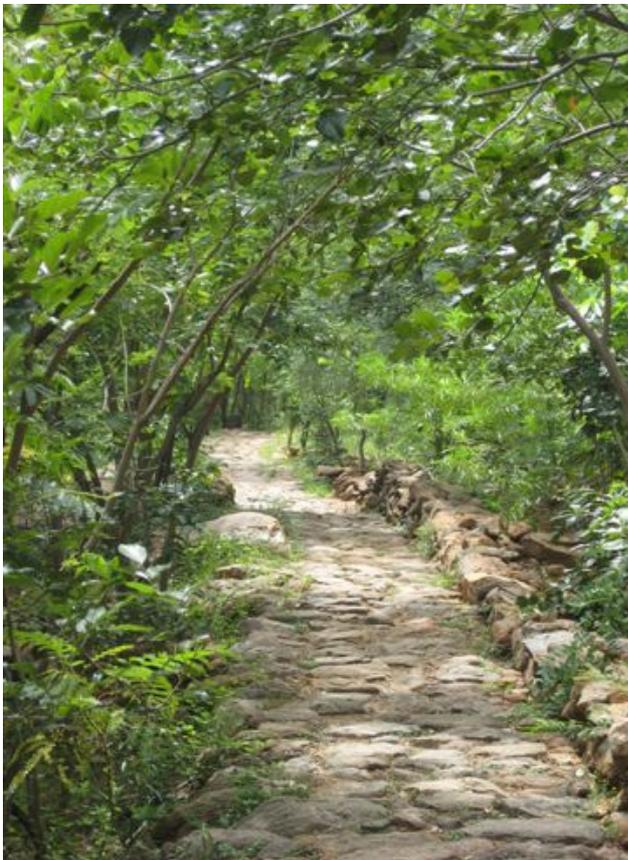


Sat Chit Anand

From: "Sat Chit Anand" <satchitanand@global.co.za>
Sent: 20 March 2011 05:25 PM
Subject: Newsletter: 20 March 2011



Psalm 63: O God, you are my God, for you I long.
 For you my body pines, like a dry, weary land without water.



Have you ever come back from somewhere special and felt depressed? Someone sent me an article that touched me because it echoed how I feel every time I come back from India. When something precious ends, feelings of loss, longing and emptiness may be experienced. While on pilgrimage / retreat, our hearts and minds open and something primitive within us is touched: a knowing of the Transcendent – that there is something bigger and so much more important than the small little worlds we normally inhabit and enclose ourselves in. In the Judeo-Christian tradition this knowing is expressed beautifully in Psalm 63: *“O God, you are my God, for you I long. For you my body pines, like a dry, weary land without water.”*

We touch that place of longing in us, and in that longing we taste the One who is the object of our longing. For we are all part of one big pilgrimage, one big outpouring of that deep longing for God that is within all people, and that is the goal of all religious

quest. In some way, we get in touch with our need for God and God stoops down to meet that need. So it is no wonder that when we get back home, we find everything else in life mundane. It takes time to integrate our experience and to adjust back to so-called “normal life”. O, how we wish these experiences could last forever, a reflection of our longing for eternal union with God. But until then, one has to be prepared to accept the supreme joy of that union and the almost unbearable pain when it comes to an end.

I didn't want to leave India. The day before I left, I went to the little village to buy last-minute gifts for family and friends. As the rickshaw pulled onto the main road, I saw a man lying on the side of the road, bleeding from a gash on his forehead. It was not clear how this had happened – whether he had been drunk, or in a fight, or knocked over by a vehicle. People

were standing around him sprinkling water on him to revive him. I had hardly left the Ashram during my stay there, and now when I left the protected environment of the Ashram, this was the first thing I saw. This image disturbed me a lot and I couldn't get it out of my mind for the rest of the day. What was it telling me? I felt there was a message there.

The message seemed to be that as you leave the special spiritual environment of an Ashram, where your soul is uplifted to where it wants to be, you re-enter samsara – the world of suffering. You are leaving the protected energy-field created by all the merit accrued on the Ashram, and are thrown back into a world of danger, death and destruction. It was like a warning. Spiritual forces and way of living lead to light and life. Worldly forces and way of living lead to death and destruction. I felt so safe and protected on the Ashram – it was like another world. That evening when I walked to supper at the Nunnery, a snake slithered across the path in front of me. It reminded me of Brother Martin's talks on the Garden of Eden. I was about to leave a Garden of Eden. We don't want these special times to end, but we have to come back to mundane life and bear our responsibilities, problems and challenges, burdens and crosses, until the glorious day when we are re-united with the Divine forever.

But that day lies in the future. Its hope gives us the strength we need to carry on, and in the meantime, we must remember that the Transcendent is also immanent. God is very near to us – he is in our hearts! And we can make that pilgrimage at any time and at any place. We don't have to go anywhere – we can do it here and now. We can try to live as if each new day is a pilgrimage. As we walk into each new day we are walking as into a foreign land, we are going beyond our experience. Live as a pilgrim, in the present moment, carrying only what you really need, leaving behind excess baggage, expecting nothing and grateful for everything, open to new experiences, aware of all that is! Then every road will be a camino and every stopping-place a refugio.

With extracts from article: Are you suffering from post-Camino blues? by Fr Frank de Gouveia

<http://www.csjofsa.za.org/> go to Reflections > Experiences on the Camino > and scroll down

Photo: shady footpath leading up Arunachala mountain behind Ramana Maharshi Ashram, Tiruvannamalai, South India

Hope everyone had a good long weekend. If you need to get away to re-connect to the Transcendent aspect which may be missing or neglected in your life, our retreat cottages provide the perfect place to do this. Daily meditation, yoga, services, and walks on the beach, will assist you in connecting with yourself and with what is truly important in life, which unfortunately often gets neglected in the busyness of life when other things seem to demand attention and priority. See <http://www.satchitanand.co.za/programme.htm> We offer weekly specials, and reduced rates for single persons in Bodhi cottage. See <http://www.satchitanand.co.za/accommodation.htm> We also have a new Library for you to browse in at your leisure and find that spiritual book that is waiting to speak to you.

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