

Sat Chit Anand

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Interfaith the way forward

How to speak of God when there is only God?



The British historian Arnold Toynbee said that the meeting of Buddhism and Christianity would be the most significant event of our period in history. His prophetic words are often quoted in various encounters between the two traditions. If a theistic and a non-theistic religion can reconcile their differences, then perhaps all faiths can be brought into harmony. Buddhism and Christianity have an historic mission to create, together, a new vision for the world.

When religions and cultures meet in openness and willingness to learn, they change each other. They are living organisms that grow. The two worldviews of Buddhism and Christianity have the capacity to carry humankind to a higher level of awareness. If the two traditions work together on resolving the critical issues facing the planet, committing themselves to open-ended dialogue on matters of belief, prayer, and social engagement, they will

make a precious contribution toward the evolution and communication of a new consciousness around the world.

History is dialectical – it advances through a series of polar tensions that are resolved in a higher view. The dialectic must progress because truth cannot tolerate contradiction and a higher synthesis or understanding must be reached. Religions are not static systems and are capable of unlimited growth. What emerges will go beyond both Buddhism and Christianity in their present views. It will be a new view that both can embrace; a subtle refinement of what they have both known. To journey towards this enlarged vision, we must experience the truth waiting to be found in the meeting and dialogue of opposites.

In dialogue, opposites open a way for the truth to reveal itself. Buddhist mysticism begins

and ends where Christian mysticism ends: in unitive consciousness. Buddhism declares non-dual awareness as the truth, the ultimate level of reality. Christian mystics refer to the same thing. Meister Eckhart, for instance, tells us of the soul's return to the Godhead, the Divine ground. This God is the absolute reality of ultimate awareness. Ultimate awareness, the vast unlimited consciousness of the Divine, is also the nature of enlightenment. Thus Christian mysticism ends where Buddhist mysticism begins and ends – the goal of non-duality, or unity with the Divine.

Followers of Christ and the Buddha are engaged in deep, meaningful, vital, exciting, ongoing conversations. With their openness, awareness, and sense of responsibility to humankind and the planet, they will serve as a platform to launch humanity to a new understanding of life, reality, nature, and the cosmos – an inter-spiritual understanding. History clearly demonstrates that spiritual vision sustains civilization. The Buddhist-Christian relationship is a bridge to a new, universal civilization.

If Christians and Buddhists enter into relationship with genuine openness and trust, these meetings will change both paths. The relationship will mutually expand the horizon of their faith and understanding of reality. The fruit of these conversations will be a new vision of the Divine, one that embraces all sentient beings. The resulting spirituality and mystical practice will embrace the totality of humankind's inner experience. This is something that is needed in the universal inter-spiritual age that is dawning. [With extracts from *The Mystic Heart* by Wayne Teasdale]

Gentle Mindful Hatha Yoga

Tuesday evenings: 18h00 - 19h30 ... with Leela

Wednesday afternoons: 16h30 - 18h00 ... with Leela

Friday mornings: 09h00 - 10h30 ... with Richard

NOTE: LAST WEEK OF YOGA THIS YEAR

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