



Reach

SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

Sri Ramakrishna on Brahman

... It is the power of Brahman in man that causes the mind and the intellect and the senses to perform their functions; and when that power ceases to act, these also stop work.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 2.

Sri Sarada Devi on Aim of Life

The aim of life is to realise God and remain immersed in contemplation of him. God alone is real and everything else is false.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 21.

Swami Vivekananda on Love

All expansion is life, all contraction is death. All love is expansion, all selfishness is contraction. Love is therefore the only law of life. He who loves lives, he who is selfish is dying. Therefore love for love's sake, because it is the only law of life, just as you breathe to live.

Source: *Great sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 35.

Sikhism (Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Grantha Sahib)

He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God.

Source: https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/333495.Guru_Nanak

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We welcome you all to the Vedanta Movement in Australia, as epitomized in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, and invite you to involve yourselves and actively participate in the propagation of the Universal Message of Vedanta.

1. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN CENTRES 11 DECEMBER 2021 TO 10 MARCH 2022

ADELAIDE

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Contact: Dr Raman Sharma on (08) 8431 9775

Mrs Pathma Iswaran on (08) 8379 5336

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Daily Activities

- The Centre functions from 7.30am-12.30pm and 4.00-8.00pm. The evening vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna is performed from 7.00-7.30 pm followed by *bhajans*, devotional reading and meditation.

Regular Activities

- Swami Manyananda conducted classes and discussions on the *Vedanta Sara* - 'Fundamentals of Vedanta' every Wednesday from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon.
- Swami Manyanand also conductrd classes on the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* on Sundays from 11: 00 am.
- Every alternate Saturday, Swami Manyananda conductrd a reading and discussion on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* before the evening *aratrikam*.

Celebrations

- Christmas Eve was observed in a limited way on 24 December 2021 because of an increase in positive Covid 19 cases in South Australia.
- The Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi's birth anniversary was held in a restricted way on 8 January 2022 also because of a spike in local Covid 19 cases.
- Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary was celebrated on 25 January 2022 in a constrained manner because of the rise in locally acquired Covid 19 cases.
- Shivaratri*, focusing on special prayers to Lord Shiva, was observed on 1 March 2022. The evening programme started with *aratrikam*, followed by special puja of Lord Shiva accompanied by chanting, *bhajans*, worship of Shiva by



Swami Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary in Adelaide



Shivaratri in Adelaide



Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary

the devotees individually and concluded with the distribution of prasad.

- Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was observed on 4 March 2022. The morning programme included Vedic chanting, *bhajans*, special puja, *pushpanjali* and lunch prasad. The evening worship started with *aratrikam*, followed by a talk on the 'Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna' by Swami Manyananda, *bhajans*, *pushpanjali* and concluded with dinner prasad.

BRISBANE

96 Vedanta Drive, (next to 2 Poppy Crescent),
Springfield Lakes, QLD 4300

Email: info@vedantabrisbane.org

Contact: Swami Atmeshananda (07) 3818 9986

URL: <http://vedantabrisbane.org>

Daily Activities

- Daily meditation and the chanting of hymns were conducted between 6:15 am and 7:15 am.
- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were held between 6:30 pm and 7:15 pm.

Regular Activities

- Sunday mornings:- (a) Yoga class from 8:00 am to 9:15 am. (b) *Srimad-Bhagavad Gita* Class (10:00 am—11:00 am). (c) *Bala Sangha* or children's classes and *Yuva Sangha* (10:00 am—11:00 am during school term). (d) Hindi language classes fortnightly from 11:15 am to 12:30 pm.
- A class on the *Brahma Sutras* was conducted on Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. In the evening Yoga classes were conducted from 6:30 to 7:45 pm.
- A Vedic Chanting class was held online on Wednesdays from 8:30 am to 9:30 am.
- A monthly *satsang* was held at Sunnybank Hills on the first Monday of every month at 19, Scribbly Gum Street.

- Classes on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* were held from 7:30 pm — 8:30 pm at 134 Fleming Rd, Chapel Hill, Qld, on the last Friday of every month.
- A reading from the direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna was conducted on their birthdates after the evening *aratrikam*.
- Chanting of the *Sri Ramanama Sankirtanam* was held fortnightly at the Centre on *ekadashi* days (7:30 pm — 8:00 pm).
- Devotees took turns in decorating and worshipping Sri Ramakrishna's image every week at the Sri Selva Vinayakar temple, South Maclean, Qld.
- Swami Atmeshananda conducted *Vivekachudamani* classes for the Vedanta Group at Toowoomba on the first Wednesday of every month.
- A class on the *Ashtavakra Gita* was conducted at 101 Sharpless Drive, Springfield Lakes, on a fixed day of the month.
- On alternate Saturdays, the *Bhagavad Gita* was studied by the Vedanta group on the Gold Coast from 5.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.
- On alternate Fridays, the Centre's volunteers cooked food at its soup kitchen for the benefit of the needy. An average of 100 meals per week are cooked by volunteers, packed into containers and frozen. They are distributed free of cost through the Westside Community Centre, the Base Youth Support Services and Serving Our People (SOP).
- Every Friday the Centre's food bank distributed groceries to the needy. An average of 12 grocery hampers along with cooked food and free bread were distributed to the needy. From November 2021 this was provided on an 'on demand' basis.
- The Maa Sarada's kitchen prepares and sells food at a reasonable cost to people. On an average, about 110 persons avail themselves of this service. The kitchen is efficiently managed by volunteers.
- On Fridays, a Justice of the Peace (JP) renders service at the Centre from 10 am to 11 a.m. People needing the service access this free service.

Other Activities

- Vishwa Hindi Diwas (World Hindi Day) was organized at the Centre on 8 January 2022. The event was jointly organized by the Vedanta Centre, the Indian High commission and FICQ (Federation of Indian Communities Queensland). On the occasion, students of the Hindi class of the Centre enacted a skit, recited poems, organized a quiz and Prof. Sarvadaman Singh, ex-consul, Indian Consulate, Brisbane and Mrs. Archana Singh, Honorary Consul, Indian Consulate, Brisbane and Mr. Shyam Das, President, FICQ gave speeches.



Vishwa Hindi Diwas Function at Brisbane

- A holiday programme for children was conducted at the Centre from 13 to 17 December. Both children and their parents attended these activities.



Holiday Programme for Children

- As the Omicron virus spread rapidly in Brisbane, the Centre decided to do food relief to people in isolation. Volunteers cooked food at the centre and for about two weeks, delivered the food to families who were isolating. Around 500 meals were cooked and delivered in January 2022.



Distribution of Meals During Covid

- Swami Sridharananda, accompanied by Swami Dhanyananda and volunteers – Kirit and Nitu Sodha – visited the Centre from the 6 to 10 March 2022.

Celebrations

- Christmas Eve was celebrated at the Centre. Readings from the Bible, carols, devotional songs and a service to Christ were the items on the programme.



Christmas Eve in Brisbane

- Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi's birth anniversary was celebrated on Sunday, 26 December 2021. The programme comprised of special puja (worship), hymns and *bhajans*, a talk on the 'Life and Teachings of Holy Mother', and *havan* (fire worship).
- *Kalpataru Day* was celebrated on 1 January 2022. On the solemn occasion, worship was conducted followed by a talk on 'The Significance of *Kalpataru* (wish-fulfilling tree)'. The programme was conducted from 8.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. Prasad was distributed to the attendees after the programme.
- Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary was celebrated on 25 January 2022. Due to COVID restrictions, a limited number of devotees were allowed to participate in the puja (worship).
- *Shivaratri* worship was conducted on 1 March 2022. After the evening *aratrikam*, worship was offered to Lord Shiva by devotees. Hymns and songs were offered to the Divine during the worship.



Shivaratri in Brisbane

- Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was conducted on 4 March 2022 with worship and hymns.
- The public celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday was observed on 6 March 2022. After formal worship, Ms. Sampada Kotha, a young

devotee spoke on 'The Significance of Sri Ramakrishna's Life and Teachings'. This was followed by a talk by Dr. Ashim Majumdar, Vice President of the Centre. *Havan* (fire worship) and *aratrikam* were conducted after the talks and concluded with the distribution of prasada.



Ms. Sampada Kotha at the Public Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary

CANBERRA

17 Bean Crescent, Mckellar, ACT 2617

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Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 6258 7612 / 0433 593 860

Regular Activities

- On account of the Covid 19 pandemic the *Bhagavad Gita* classes have been suspended temporarily. Friends and devotees are accessing the classes online. When the classes recommence they will be held at the Belconnen Community Meeting Room, 12 Chandler St, Belconnen, ACT. Monthly lectures are advertised by e-mail once scheduled.

Other Activities

- The Indian High Commission in Canberra commemorated the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda on Wednesday, 12 January 2022, via a nationwide zoom meeting. The members of the Canberra chapter were invited. The Canberra chapter assisted with the coordination and Swami Sridharananda's recorded talk was broadcast as the main feature.

- The Annual General Meeting for the Canberra Chapter was communicated via email in February 2022. The AGM was not held last year due to Covid 19.

MELBOURNE

5-7 Angus Ave, Ringwood East, VIC 3135

Email: vedanta.melb@gmail.com

Contact: Swami Sunishthananda (03) 8684 9594

URL <http://www.vedantamelbourne.org>

Regular Activities

- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, reading from the Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda literature and meditation were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm daily.
- The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was discussed online on Tuesdays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- A class on *Mundaka Upanishad* was conducted on Thursdays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm. This class is conducted online.
- A scriptural class on Sundays from 10:00 am to 11:00 am on the *Bhagavad Gita* online.
- Guided meditation was conducted online on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7:30 pm to 8:00 pm and on Sundays from 9:30 am to 10:00 am.

Celebrations

- On the evening of Friday, 24 December 2021, Christmas Eve was celebrated online. The programme included *aratrikam* followed by carols and a talk on 'Vedantic Interpretations of the Beatitudes' by Swami Sunishthananda.
- On the morning of Saturday, 8 January 2022, Holy Mother's birth anniversary was celebrated online. The programme included special worship and homa. The evening vesper service was followed by *Sarada Naama Sankirtanam*.
- On the morning of Sunday, 9 January 2022, Swami Sunishthananda delivered a talk on the topic, 'Sadhana Chatustaya as Exemplified in the Life of Holy Mother.'



Christmas Eve in Melbourne

- On the morning of Sunday, 23 January 2022, Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary was celebrated online. The programme included special worship and *homa*. At 4 pm, a music concert 'The Roar of the Lion of Vedanta' organized in collaboration with The Consulate General of India, Melbourne, to pay homage to Swami Vivekananda, was streamed in m4TV.
- On the evening of Tuesday, March 1 2022, Shivaratri was celebrated online. The programme included *aratrikam* followed by the worship of Shiva and Rudra Prasna Chanting.
- On the morning of Saturday 5 March 2022, Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was celebrated online. The programme included special worship and homa. In the evening an Inter-



Interfaith Meeting in Melbourne

faith Meet, 'Merging in Silence, Emerging in Love' funded by the Ministry of Multicultural Affairs, Victorian Government, was organized at Knox Gardens Community Hall which was represented by various faith leaders. The Interfaith Seminar was followed by an Interfaith Sacred Music Session.

Other Activities

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited to speak on the topic 'Spiritual Paradigm to be Adopted to Effectively meet the Challenges in Human Asset Management' at the International Conference on Maintenance and Intelligent Asset Management (ICMIAM 2021) organized online by the Federation University, Australia, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India, and Manipal University, India, on Monday, 13 December 2021.
- Dr. Dustin Halse, the Member for Ringwood in the Parliament of Victoria, visited the centre on 25 January 2022. He, along with his colleague Sharon Young, toured the centre and was briefed about the history, aims and functions of the Organization and shared a meal with the members of the Centre.

- The Federal MP for Deakin and Assistant Treasurer, Michael Sukkar, visited the Centre on 19 February 2022. He was accompanied by Tony Dib, Councillor, City of Maroondah, and Vasan Srinivasan, Member of the Australian Multicultural Council and Chairperson of Mental Health Foundation of Australia. They were briefed about the activities of the Centre and shared a meal.



Michael Sukkar and Others at the Vedanta Centre

- Swami Sunishthananda represented the Hindu Faith to conduct a Guided Meditation Session at 'Seeds of Awakening', an Interfaith Event organized by the Interfaith Centre of Melbourne at St Michael's Church on Sunday, 27 February 2022.



Dr. Dustin Halse's Visit to the Melbourne Centre



'Seeds of Awakening', an Interfaith Event

Reach

- Swami Sunishthananda attended an online meeting of the Council for Chaplaincies in Tertiary Education (CCTI) as its member on Thursday, 10 March 2022.

PERTH

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Parthiv Parekh 0430 511 699

Regular Activities:

- Aratrikam* was conducted each night by a person or family taking the responsibility for it.
- A *Satsang* was held on 12 December 2021 to watch a lecture by Swami Sridharananda on the third chapter of the Bhagavat Gita. The programmes included *aratrikam*, *bhajans* and *prasad* distribution.

SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, NSW 2115

144A Marsden Road, Ermington, NSW 2115 (Entry)

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Contact: (02) 8197 7351

URL: www.vedantaaustralia.org

Daily Activities

- The shrine was open from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm seven days a week.
- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were conducted from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The times change on special occasions.

Regular Activities

- Swami Sridharananda conducted his study of the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* on Sundays between 9:30 am and 10:30 am. Due to the current restrictions owing to Covid 19, the talks were pre-recorded and uploaded to the Centre's

website and Youtube Channel.

- Sri Ramanama Sankirtanam* was conducted on *ekadashi* days after the vesper service.
- Devotees also received spiritual counselling and guidance.
- The quarterly newsletter entitled *Reach* is compiled and published.

Celebrations

- Christmas Eve was celebrated on 24 December 2021 with *aratrikam*, carols, a talk on Christ by Swami Mahabodhananda. Because of the Covid 19 situation, attendance was by registration and restricted.



Christmas Eve in Sydney

- Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi's birth anniversary was observed on 26 December 2021. In the morning there was the worship of the Holy Mother. In the evening there were

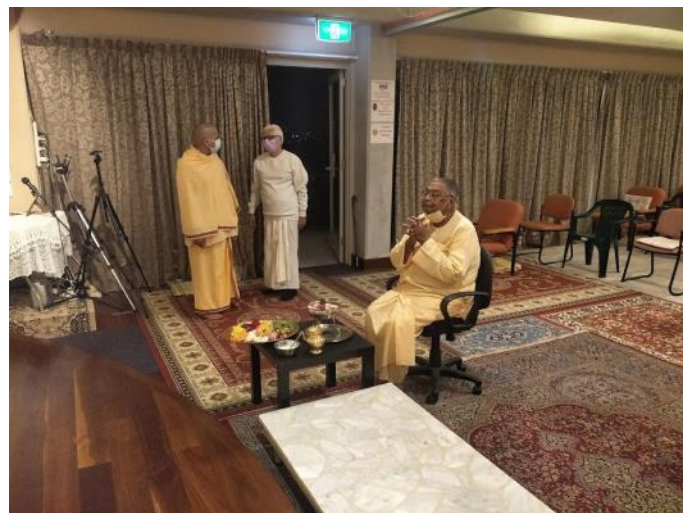


Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi's Birth Anniversary

aratrikam, *bhajans*, and a talk on a 'Translation and Commentary of Prakritim Paramam' (The *aratrikam* hymn dedicated to the Holy Mother by Swami Abhedananda) by Swami Dhyanananda. Packed prasad was also distributed. Because of the Covid 19 situation, attendance was by registration and restricted.

- *Kalpataru day* was observed on 1 January 2022. The regular *aratrikam* was followed by a reading by Swami Dhyanananda from *Sri Ramakrishna's Divine Play* of Sri Ramakrishna's divine revelation.
- The birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was conducted on 25 January 2022. The morning worship was followed in the evening by *aratrikam*, *bhajans* and a talk on 'The Life and Teachings of Swami Vivekananda' by Swami Vedamritananda of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood. Prepacked prasad was distributed at the end of the function.
- *Shivaratri* was held on 1 March 2022. The evening function included *aratrikam*, worship, *bhajans* and individual worship by the devotees. This was followed by prasad distribution.

- Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was observed on 4 March 2022. In the morning there was worship and *homa* dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna. In the evening there was *Kali kirtan* by Swami Dhyanananda, *aratrikam*, *bhajans*, a talk on the 'Scientific Temper and Sri Ramakrishna' by Swami Mahabodhananda and prasad distribution.



Shivaratri in Sydney

2. FEATURE ARTICLE: SIKHISM

(COMPILED PRIMARILY FROM THE BBC'S WEBSITE AND OTHER SOURCES).

Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak in the 15th Century CE on the Indian Subcontinent in the state of Punjab. As a relatively new religion it draws heavily from Hinduism and Islam. Its prophets are Guru Nanak and the 9 Gurus who came after him. The subsequent Guru is the scripture of the Sikhs called *Guru Grantha Sahib*. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion in which Sikhs worship in a *Gurudwara* facing the *Guru Grantha Sahib*. It places a lot of emphasis on service, equality and the community feeling is cultivated through *Langar* or communal meals.

Historical Context of Sikhism

Sikhism was born in the Punjab area of South Asia, which now falls into the present day states of India and Pakistan. The main religions of the area at the time were Hinduism and Islam.

The Sikh faith began around 1500 CE, when Guru Nanak began teaching a faith that was quite similar to Hinduism and Islam. Nine Gurus followed Nanak and developed the Sikh faith and community over the next centuries.

Sikhism at a Glance

There are 20 million Sikhs in the world, most of whom live in the Punjab province of India.

The most important thing in Sikhism is the internal religious state of the individual.

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion. It stresses the importance of doing good actions rather than merely carrying out rituals. Sikhs believe that the way to lead a good life is to:

- Keep God in heart and mind at all times
- Live honestly and work hard
- Treat everyone equally
- Be generous to the less fortunate
- Serve others
- The Sikh place of worship is called a *Gurudwara*
- The Sikh scripture is the *Guru Grantha Sahib*, a book that Sikhs consider a living Guru

The tenth Sikh Guru decreed that after his death the spiritual guide of the Sikhs would be the teachings contained in that book, so the *Guru Grantha Sahib* now has the status of a Guru, and Sikhs show it the respect they would give to a human Guru.

The community of men and women who have been initiated into the Sikh faith is the *Khalsa*. The *Khalsa* celebrated its 300th anniversary in 1999.

Guru Gobind Singh decreed that where Sikhs could not find answers in the *Guru Grantha Sahib*, they should decide issues as a community, based on the principles of their scripture.

Sikh Beliefs about God, Karma, Death and Rebirth.

- There is only one God
- God is without form, or gender
- Everyone has direct access to God

- Everyone is equal before God
- A good life is lived as part of a community, by living honestly and caring for others
- Empty religious rituals and superstitions have no value

Living in God and Community

Sikhs focus their lives around their relationship with God, and being a part of the Sikh community. The Sikh ideal combines action and belief. To live a good life a person should do good deeds as well as meditating on God.

God and the Cycle of Life

Sikhs believe that human beings spend their time in a cycle of birth, life, and rebirth. They share this belief with followers of other Indian religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

The quality of each particular life depends on the law of Karma. Karma sets the quality of a life according to how well or badly a person behaved in their previous life. The only way out of this cycle, which all faiths regard as painful, is to achieve a total knowledge of and union with God.

The God of Grace

Sikh spirituality is centred round this need to understand and experience God, and eventually become one with God.

To do this a person must switch the focus of their attention from themselves to God. They get this state, which is called *mukti* (liberation), through the grace of God. That means it's something God does to human beings, and not something that human beings can earn. However, God shows

people through holy books, and by the examples of saints, the best ways to get close to him.

Truth is the highest of all virtues, but higher still is truthful living.

Sikhs believe that God can't be understood properly by human beings, but he can be experienced through love, worship, and contemplation.

Getting Close to God

When a Sikh wants to see God, they look both at the created world and into their own heart and soul.

Their aim is to see the divine order that God has given to everything, and through it to understand the nature of God.

Most human beings can't see the true reality of God because they are blinded by their own self-centred pride (Sikhs call it *haumain*) and concern for physical things.

God Inside Us

Sikhs believe that God is inside every person, no matter how wicked they appear, and so everyone is capable of change.

Just as fragrance is in the flower, and reflection is in the mirror, in just the same way, God is within you.

God Beyond Ourselves

Sikhs believe that God's message can be found in several ways outside ourselves.

- The message is written in the whole of creation; look at it with open eyes and see the truth of God, for creation is the visible message of God
- Sikhs believe that most of us misunderstand the universe. We

think that it exists on its own, when it really exists because God wills it to exist, and is a portrait of God's own nature

- The message has been shown to us by the Gurus in their lives and in their words

The message is set down in the teachings of scripture

Living a Good Life in this World

Sikhs don't think it pleases God if people pay no attention to others and simply devote themselves slavishly to religion.

Sikhism doesn't ask people to turn away from ordinary life to get closer to God. In fact it demands that they use ordinary life as a way to get closer to God.

A Sikh serves God by serving (*seva*) other people every day. By devoting their lives to service they get rid of their own ego and pride.

Many Sikhs carry out chores in the *Gurudwara* as their service to the community. These range from working in the kitchen to cleaning the floor. The *Langar*, or free food kitchen, is a community act of service.

Sikhs also regard caring for the poor or sick as an important duty of service.

The Three Duties

The three duties that a Sikh must carry out can be summed up in three words; Pray, Work, Give.

- Nama japa:
- Keeping God in mind at all times.

Kirt Karna:

- Earning an honest living. Since God is truth, a Sikh seeks to live honestly. This doesn't just

mean avoiding crime; Sikhs avoid gambling, begging, or working in the alcohol or tobacco industries.

Vand Chhakna:

(Literally, sharing one's earnings with others) Giving to charity and caring for others.

The Five Vices

Sikhs try to avoid the five vices that make people self-centred, and build barriers against God in their lives.

- Lust
- Covetousness and greed
- Attachment to things of this world
- Anger
- Pride

If a person can overcome these vices they are on the road to liberation.

The Five Ks

Khalsa initiation

The 5 Ks date from the creation of the *Khalsa Panth* by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

The Guru introduced them for several reasons:

- Adopting these common symbols would identify members of the *Khalsa*
- Because all members of the *Khalsa* wear the 5 Ks the members of the community are more strongly bound together

Each K has a particular significance

The Five Ks are:

- *Kesh* (uncut hair)

- *Kara* (a steel bracelet)
- *Kanga* (a wooden comb)
- *Kaccha* - also spelt, Kachh, Kachera (cotton underwear)
- *Kirpan* (steel sword)

The Meaning of the 5 Ks

The 5 Ks taken together symbolise that the Sikh who wears them has dedicated themselves to a life of devotion and submission to the Guru.

The 5 Ks are 5 physical symbols worn by Sikhs who have been initiated into the *Khalsa*.

Kesh - uncut hair

Various reasons and symbolisms have been put forward for the Sikh practice of keeping hair uncut.

- Throughout history hair (*Kesh*) has been regarded as a symbol both of holiness and strength.
- One's hair is part of God's creation. Keeping hair uncut indicates that one is willing to accept God's gift as God intended it.
- Uncut hair symbolizes adoption of a simple life, and denial of pride in one's appearance.
- Not cutting one's hair is a symbol of one's wish to move beyond concerns of the body and attain spiritual maturity.
- A Sikh should only bow his head to the Guru, and not to a barber.
- It is a highly visible symbol of membership of the group.
- It follows the appearance of Guru Gobind Singh, founder of the *Khalsa*.

Sikh women are just as forbidden

to cut any body hair or even trim their eyebrows, as Sikh men are forbidden to trim their beards.

Kara - a steel bracelet

- A symbol of restraint and gentility.
- A symbol that a Sikh is linked to the Guru.
- It acts as a reminder that a Sikh should not do anything of which the Guru would not approve.
- A symbol of God having no beginning or end.
- A symbol of permanent bonding to the community-being a link in the chain of *Khalsa* Sikhs (the word for link is 'kari').

The *Kara* is made of steel, rather than gold or silver, because it is not an ornament.

Kanga - a wooden comb

This symbolises a clean mind and body; since it keeps the uncut hair neat and tidy.

It symbolises the importance of looking after the body which God has created. This does not conflict with the Sikh's aim to move beyond bodily concerns; since the body is one's vehicle for enlightenment one should care for it appropriately.

Kachha - special underwear

This is a pair of breeches that must not come below the knee. It was a particularly useful garment for Sikh warriors of the 18th and 19th centuries, being very suitable for warfare when riding a horse.

It's a symbol of chastity.

Kirpan - a ceremonial sword

There is no fixed style of Kirpan

and it can be anything from a few inches to three feet long. It is kept in a sheath and can be worn over or under clothing.

The Kirpan can symbolise:

- Spirituality
- The soldier part of the Soldier-Saints
- Defence of good
- Defence of the weak
- The struggle against injustice
- A metaphor for God

For a Sikh the fact that the Guru has instructed the Sikhs to wear the 5 Ks is an entirely sufficient reason, and no more need be said.

The symbols have become greatly more powerful with each passing year of Sikh history.

Every Sikh remembers that every Sikh warrior, saint, or martyr since 1699, and every living member of the Khalsa, is united with them in having adopted the same 5 Ks.

Gurpurbs

Gurpurbs are festivals that are associated with the lives of the Gurus. They are happy occasions which are celebrated most enthusiastically by Sikhs.

The most important *Gurpurbs* are:

The birthday of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism (April or November)

The birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, founder of the *Khalsa* (January)

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan (June)

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (November/December)

Sikhs celebrate *Gurpurbs* with an *akhand path*. This is a complete and continuous reading of Sikh scripture, the *Guru Grantha Sahib*, which takes 48 hours and finishes on the day of the festival. This is also performed in times of ceremony such as birth, death, marriage and moving into a new home.

Celebrations

Vaisakhi is celebrated in much the same way as *Gurpurbs*. *Gurudwaras* are decorated and visited. Parades, dancing and singing happen throughout the day. Many Sikhs choose to be baptised into the *Khalsa* brotherhood on this day.

The *Guru Grantha Sahib* is carried reverentially into the *Gurudwara*

Nagar Kirtans

The festival is marked with *nagar kirtan* processions: processions through the streets (*nagar* means "town") which form an important part of Sikh culture and religious celebrations.

Kirtan is a term meaning the singing of hymns from the *Guru Gratha Sahib*, the Sikh holy book. Celebrations always include music, singing and chanting scriptures and hymns.

The processions are led by traditionally dressed *Panj Piaras*.

The *Guru Grantha Sahib* will be carried in the procession in a place of honour.

Worship

Sikhs worship God and only God. Unlike members of many other religions they worship God in his true abstract form, and don't use images or statues to help them.

Sikh worship can be public or private.

Private worship

Sikhs can pray at any time and any place.

Sikh aims to get up early, bathe, and then start the day by meditating on God.

The Sikh code of conduct lays down a stern discipline for the start of the day:

A Sikh should wake up in the ambrosial hours (three hours before the dawn), take a bath and, concentrating his/her thoughts on One Immortal Being, repeat the name Waheguru (Wondrous Destroyer of darkness).

Reht Maryada (Sikh code of conduct)

There are set prayers that a Sikh should recite in the morning and evening, and before going to sleep.

Prayer - spending time with God

Although the Sikh God is beyond description Sikhs feel able to pray to God as a person and a friend who cares for them.

Sikhs regard prayer as a way of spending time in company with God.

For prayer to be really effective a person tries to empty themselves of everything of this world so that they can perceive God.

Guru Arjan wrote of the im-

portance of prayer.

'The praising of His Name is the highest of all practices. It has uplifted many a human soul. It slakes the desire of restless mind. It imparts an all-seeing vision.'

Public worship

Although Sikhs can worship on their own, they see congregational worship as having its own special merits.

Sikhs believe that God is visible in the Sikh congregation or *Sangat*, and that God is pleased by the act of serving the *Sangat*.

Congregational Sikh worship takes place in a *Gurudwara*.

Sikh public worship can be led by any Sikh, male or female, who is competent to do so.

Gurudwara

A *Gurudwara* is the place where Sikhs come together for congregational worship.

The first *Gurudwara* in the world was built by Guru Nanak in 1521-2 at Kartarpur. There are about 200 *Gurudwaras* in Britain.

The literal meaning of the Punjabi word *Gurudwara* is 'the residence of the Guru', or 'the door that leads to the Guru'.

In a modern *Gurudwara*, the Guru is not a person but the book of Sikh scriptures called the *Guru Grantha Sahib*.

It is the presence of the *Guru Grantha Sahib* that gives the *Gurudwara* its religious status, so any building containing the book is a *Gurudwara*.

Although a *Gurudwara* may be called the residence of the Guru (meaning the residence of God), Sikhs believe that God is present

everywhere.

Before the time of Guru Arjan Dev, the place of Sikh religious activities was known as a *Dharamsala*, which means place of faith.

The purpose of a Gurudwara

- It's a place to learn spiritual wisdom
- It's a place for religious ceremonies
- It's a place where children learn the Sikh faith, ethics, customs, traditions and texts
- A *Gurudwara* is also a community centre, and offers food, shelter, and companionship to those who need it.

Gurudwaras are managed by a committee of their community.

Inside the Gurudwara

There are no idols, statues, or religious pictures in a *Gurudwara*, because Sikhs worship only God, and they regard God as having no physical form. Nor are there candles, incense, or bells, or any other ritualistic devices.

The focus of attention, and the only object of reverence in the main hall (or *Darbar Sahib*) is the book of Sikh scripture, the *Guru Grantha Sahib*, which is treated with the respect that would be given to a human Guru.

The *Guru Grantha Sahib* is kept in a room of its own during the night and carried in procession to the main hall at the start of the day's worship.

The book is placed on a raised platform (*Takht* or *Manji Sahib*, meaning "throne") under a canopy (*Chanani* or *Palki*), and covered with an expensive cloth when not being read.

During a service a person with a whisk or fan called a *Chaur* waves it over the *Guru Grantha Sahib*.

Although Sikhs show reverence to the *Guru Grantha Sahib*, their reverence is to its spiritual content (*shabad*) not the book itself. The book is just the visible manifestation of the *shabad*.

The Four Doors

There are four doors into a *Gurudwara*, known as the Door of Peace, the Door of Livelihood, the Door of Learning and the Door of Grace.

These doors are a symbol that people from all four points of the compass are welcome, and that members of all four castes are equally welcome.

There's always a light on in a *Gurudwara*, to show that the Guru's Light is always visible and is accessible to everyone at any time.

The Free Food Kitchen, or Langar

Every *Gurudwara* has a *Langar* attached to it where food is served to anyone without charge. The term *Langar* is also used for the communal meal served at the *Gurudwaras*.

The food served in the *Langar* must be simple, so as to prevent wealthy congregations turning it into a feast that shows off their superiority.

Although Sikhs are not required to be vegetarian, only vegetarian food is served in the *Gurudwaras*. This ensures that any visitor to the *Gurudwara*, whatever the dietary restrictions of their faith, can eat in the *Langar*.

The meal may include *chapati*, dal (pulses), vegetables and rice pudding. Fish and eggs are counted as

meat and excluded.

Flying the Flag

Gurudwaras fly the Sikh flag outside.

The flag is orange/yellow and has the Sikh emblem in the middle.

Before Going into a Gurudwara

All visitors to the *Gurudwara* should remove their shoes and cover their heads before entering the main hall. It is forbidden to

smoke or take tobacco on to the premises and visitors cannot enter the *Gurudwara* while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

On Entering a Gurudwara

Sikhs will bow to the *Guru Grantha Sahib* as the first thing they do, touching the floor with their forehead. This not only shows their respect but also indicates that they submit themselves to the truths contained in the book.

People also place an offering of food or money in front of the *Guru Grantha Sahib*. This is used to run the *Gurudwara* and the free food kitchen (*Langar*). The offering is not charity but a sharing of God's gifts. If a person has no money or food to offer they may offer flowers, or just some words of sincere thanks.

After bowing to the *Guru Grantha Sahib* a Sikh will greet the congregation in a low, quiet voice with the words: *Waheguru ii ka Khalsa, Sri Waheguru ji ki fateh*. This means

The *Khalsa* owes allegiance to God, sovereignty belongs to God alone.

Non-Sikh visitors should also bow and make an offering.

Seating in a Gurudwara

Everyone sits on the floor in a *Gurudwara*. This is to be humble before the *Guru Grantha Sahib* and because it gives everyone a place

of equal status to sit. Most people sit cross-legged. Cushions and seats are not allowed.

No-one should sit with their feet pointing at the *Guru Grantha Sahib*. Anyone who walks round the *Guru Granth Sahib* or the *Gurudwara* must do so in a clockwise direction. Men and women generally sit on separate sides of the hall.

Sacred Food in the Gurudwara

Towards the end of a service *karah prasad*, a sweet vegetarian food that has been blessed, will be served. This should be taken and received in cupped hands as a gift of God

Conclusion

The Sikhs understand their religion as the product of five pivotal events. The first was the teaching of Guru Nanak: his message of liberation through meditation on the divine name. The second was the arming of the Sikhs by Guru Hargobind. The third was Guru Gobind Singh's founding of the *Khalsa*, its distinctive code to be observed by all who were initiated. At his death came the fourth event, the passing of the mystical Guru from its 10 human bearers to the *Guru Grantha Sahib*. The final event took place early in the 20th century, when Sikhism underwent a profound reformation at the hands of the Tat Khalsa. Sikhs are universally proud of their distinct faith.

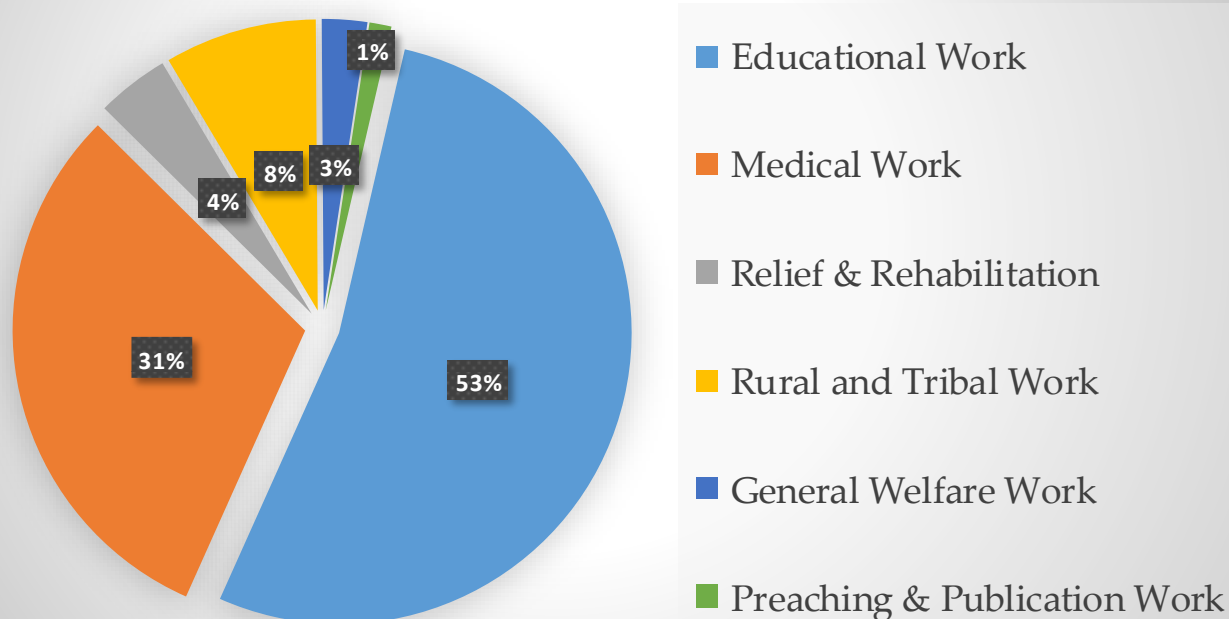
Sources

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2. Summary of the Proceedings from the Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission held on 20 February 2022 for the 2020-21 Indian Financial Year

Per centage of the Expenditure on the Different Services by the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in 2020-21



Source: Press Release of the Ramakrishna Mission's 112th Annual General Meeting 20 February 2022

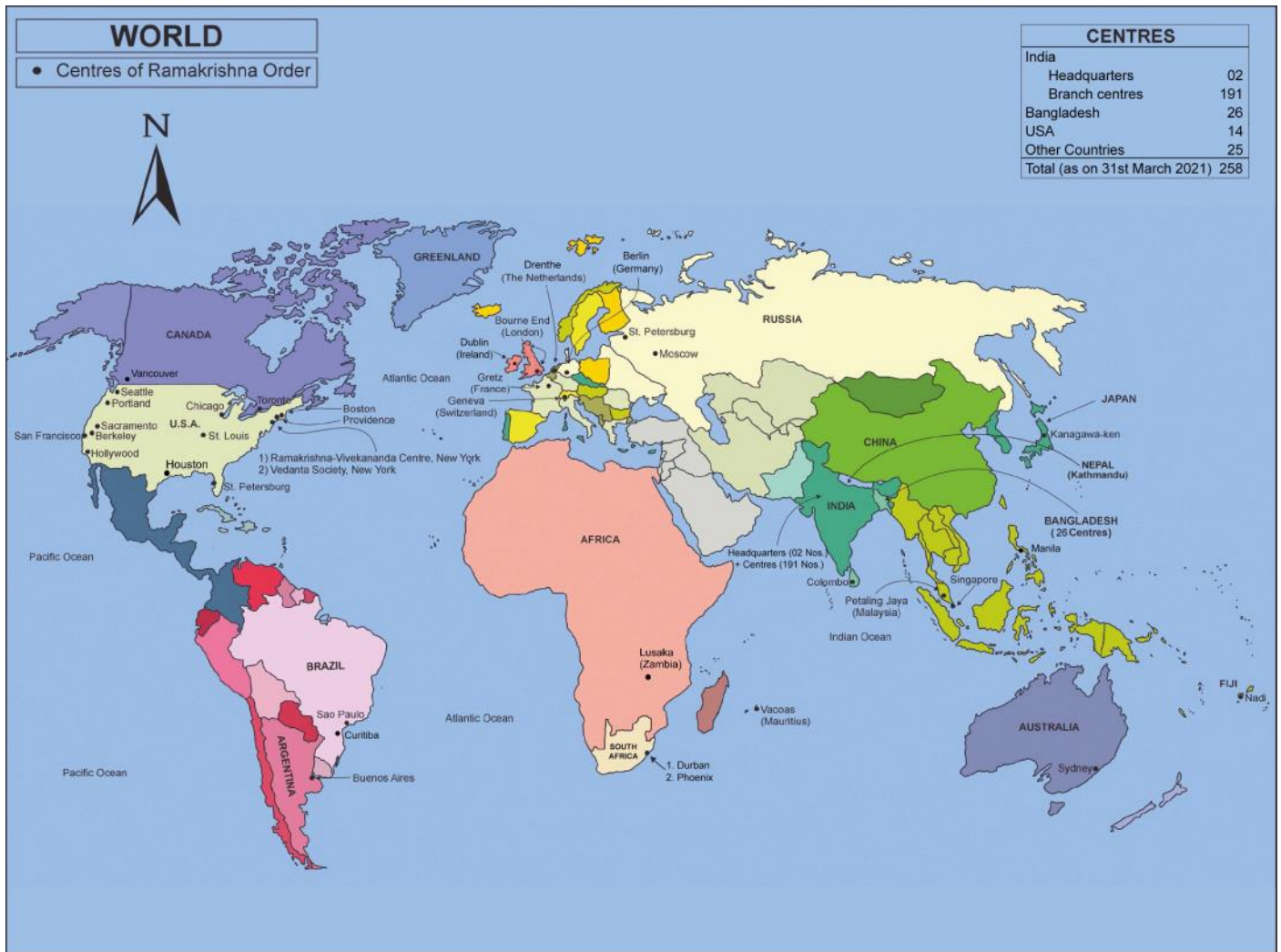
According to the above graph Education work accounts for more than half of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission's total outlay (53 per cent). This is followed by Medical Services that accounts for 31 per cent of total outlay. Medical services are high because of the machinery and technology costs of the main hospitals. These are followed by Rural and Tribal Work (8 per cent), Relief and Rehabilitation (4 per cent), General Welfare (3 per cent) and finally Preaching and Publication at 1 per cent.

Beginning and Affiliation of New and Sub Centres by the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

No. of New Centres Newly Started	No. of New Centres Affiliated (ie Former Sub)	No. of Sub Centres Newly Started	No. of Sub Centres Newly Affiliated
3	1	1	5

Source: Press Release of the Ramakrishna Mission's 112th Annual General Meeting 20 February 2022

The table presents the beginning and affiliation of new and sub centres. The five sub centres newly affiliated were from Australia located in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Perth.



Source: Audit Office, Ramakrishna Mission

The image presents the distribution of the 256 Centres around the globe that are affiliated to the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Headquarters in India as of March 2021.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DEVOTEES AND FRIENDS

Jnana Yoga: An Interpretation by a Devotee (Peter Summers of the Melbourne Centre)

The Sanskrit term, Jnana Yoga, denotes the two essential aspects of our primordial sacred-wisdom tradition. Jnana, of course, refers to that special knowledge that alone can dispel spiritual ignorance, which basically, is primordial ignorance regarding our true identity as being always and already essentially one with the divine Absolute.

The Light that is infinite pure Awareness cannot be contrasted with, say, darkness, for it isn't a phenomenon, and has no qualities whatever to contrast with anything. This Light or unmanifest Glory is the absolute reality, but cannot be experienced as an object, for it is always the primal Awareness.

That which is the unmanifest Glory is now manifest as this universe, and the creator-God of this universe. The creator-God, with name and form, is generally recognised by enlightened mystics as the manifest Glory of the divine Absolute. In other words, the one absolute unmanifest Glory has been manifested as the Creator, and through the Creator, as billions

of entities throughout the universe, including all of humankind. This manifestation is apparent, rather than real.

This formless Light or unmanifest Glory is, therefore, the sublime Reality behind every manifested reality, from the omnipotent Glory of the Creator, down to the humblest, most insignificant creature. From this, the conclusion cannot be avoided, that while there is obviously a vast difference in status and outward glory between manifested beings, the one Reality behind each is the same. When our minds are touched and renewed, as it were, by our opening to the divine Glory which is our true nature, we begin more and more to feel the divine Creator.

This knowledge we can learn

from a qualified and capable spiritual teacher, who will, by every possible means, point us to this liberating truth. But owing to the restlessness and lack of focus of most minds, something else is needed to turn the revelation of truth into an unshakeable realisation, and that's where the yoga part comes in.

For our purposes here, yoga simply means union through practice, and implies regular, repetitive practice. At the very least, it means focusing for some time every day on the sublime truth of what we really are, and how we can manifest the divinity within us in thought, word and deed. Yoga must mean for us the training of the mind and body to 'walk the talk' and the formation of new life-habits that reflect the vi-

brant presence of the 'unmanifest glory' in our midst. It's this indivisible combination of deep, intuitive knowing with the daily practices of abiding as Awareness, accommodation, meditation, devotion, association, and service, that truly makes one a Jnana Yogi. After all, it's one thing to finally recognise the awesome truth about what we really are; it's another thing again to constantly abide in that sure knowledge; however, it's quite another thing again, to validate and affirm that assurance through determined daily practices that keep one focused on the calling and being a blessing to others. To act in accord with the unitive vision is what really matters; that's authentic Jnana Yoga, or spirituality, by whatever name.