



Issue 81

January 2026

Springfield Lakes, 4300 QLD

SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

Sri Ramakrishna on Attachment

The more is a man's attachment to the world, the less is he likely to attain knowledge. The less his attachment to the world, the more is the probability of his gaining knowledge.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 7.

Sri Sarada Devi on Sri Ramakrishna's Renunciation

The chief characteristic of the Master's sadhana was his renunciation. Has anyone ever seen such natural renunciation? Renunciation is his great ornament.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 23.

Swami Vivekananda on Renunciation.

Renunciation, that is the flag, the banner of India, floating over the world, the one undying thought which India sends again and again as a warning to dying races, as a warning to all tyranny, as a warning to wickedness in the world. Ay, Hindus, let not your hold of that banner go. Hold it aloft. Even if you are weak and cannot renounce, do not lower the ideal.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 42.

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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 SEPTEMBER TO 10 DECEMBER 2025

ADELAIDE

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Contacts: Swami Manyananda +61425762436

Dr Raman Sharma on (08) 8431 9775

URL: <http://vedantaadelaide.org>

Daily Activities

- The Centre functioned from 7:30am-12:30pm and 4:00pm-8:00pm. Aratrikam was performed from 7:00-7:30 pm followed by bhajans, devotional reading and meditation.

Regular Activities

- The Centre observed *ekadasi* with *Ramanama Sankirtana* every lunar fortnight.
- Swami Manyananda conducted a class on the *Vedanta Sara* or 'Fundamentals of Vedanta' every Wednesday from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon.
- On Saturdays, Swami Manyananda discussed the *Devi Mahatmyam* from 4:00 pm to 5:00pm.
- Every alternate Saturday, Swami Manyananda read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* followed by a discussion before the evening *aratrikam*.
- Swami Manyananda also conducted a class on the *Bhagavad Gita* on Sundays from 11:00 am.
- On Sundays Swami Manyananda conducted classes on the *Vivekachudamani* from 5:30pm to 6:30 pm.
- Bala Sangha or spiritual classes for children were held on Sundays from 4pm to 5 pm. It is conducted by Swami Manyananda and volunteers, and includes mantra chanting, meditation, yoga, singing, reading from spiritual texts, value-based lessons and arts and crafts. The programme concludes with refreshments.

Celebrations

- Shri Shri Durga puja was celebrated on Tuesday, 30 September, 2025. The morning program included puja, Vedic Chanting and bhajans. Homa, aratrikam, pushpanjali, and prasada distribution also took place. The evening program started with aratrikam and the *Mahisasura Mardhini* stotram. This was followed by a talk on 'Durga Puja - Its Significance and Iconography' by Swami Manyananda. The program then moved on to short presentations by the Vedanta Bala Sangha children.



Devotees and Friends at the Durga Puja Festival in Adelaide

Other Activities

- The 20th Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday, 26 October 2025, at 12:45pm. Swami Manyananda, the executive committee members, and many member devotees were present. The meeting started with prayers and a welcome address. Subsequently, the minutes of the 2023-24 AGM, Vice President's, Treasurer's, and Secretary's Reports were presented. This was followed by updating the devotees about the completed, ongoing, or proposed work in various parts of the building.

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

- Meditation and the chanting of hymns were conducted between 6:30 am and 7:15 am.
- 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 8:30 am to 9:45 am. (b) A talk on 'The Disciples and Devotees of Sri Ramakrishna' by Swami Mahabodhananda between 10:00 am—10:45 am. (c) Bala sangha and Yuva sangha was conducted between 10:00 am—11:00 am during school term as a 4-weekly course. (d) Hindi language classes (fortnightly) from 9:00 am to 10:30 am.
- A class on the *Brahma Sutras* was conducted on Tuesdays from 11 am to 12 noon. In the evening, Yoga classes were conducted from 6:30pm to 7:45 pm.
- On Wednesdays interviews with applicants for prospective lending through NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) are conducted at the Centre by appointment. People in financial hardship can avail themselves of loans of up to \$2000 repayable through their government payments. This is an initiative of the Wesley Mission's Good Shepherd Organization.
- On Fridays, the Centre's volunteers cook food at the Centre's soup kitchen for the needy. An average of 300 meals per week is packed into containers and frozen. They are distributed free of cost through the Westside Community Centre, Gales Community Centre and Serving Our People (SOP). Many needy people come to the Centre and avail themselves of the free meals as well.

- Every Friday the Centre's food bank distributed groceries to the needy. An average of 10 families per week receive grocery hampers along with cooked food and free bread.
- The Maa Sarada's kitchen prepares and sells food at a reasonable cost to people on Saturdays. On an average, about 120 persons avail themselves of this service. The kitchen is efficiently managed by volunteers.
- On Saturdays a Justice of the Peace (JP) is available at the Centre from 10 am to 11 am, or when required.
- Every month, on a Thursday, there was a study of the *Vivekachudamani*, online, from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm organized by Shakti Global, Gold Coast.
- On the last Saturday of every month, the Vedanta group on the Gold Coast studied the *Bhagavad Gita* from 5.30pm to 6.30pm
- Chanting of the *Ramanama Sankirtana* was held fortnightly at the Centre on *ekadashi* days between 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm.
- Swami Atmeshananda conducted *Vivekachudamani* classes for the Vedanta Group at Toowoomba on the first Wednesday of every month (6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.) at the Toowoomba Council Library .
- A class on the *Ashtavakra Gita* was conducted at 101 Sharpless Drive, Springfield Lakes, on a fixed day of the month.
- Devotees took turns in decorating and worshipping Sri Ramakrishna's image every week at the Sri Selva Vinayakar temple, South Maclean, Qld.

Celebrations

- Shri Shri Durga puja was performed on 30 September, 2025 when nearly 1000 devotees participated. During Navaratri, *Shri Durga Saptashati* was chanted every-day from 23 September to 3 October 2025.
- On 3 October, 2025, *Vijayadashami* was held in the evening. The programme included a musical offering and the sprinkling of Shanti Jal. Nearly 400 devotees received prasad.



Durga Puja Festival in Brisbane

Other Activities

- On 14 September 2025, suicide prevention day, a bushwalk, tree planting and a laughter yoga session were organized by the Centre. This was done jointly with the PowerOfUs, a suicide prevention network and the Wesley Mission.



Suicide Prevention Day Bushwalk

- On 11 October 2025, during mental health week, a programme entitled 'The Power of Connection: Small Actions, Big Changes' was organized at the Centre. A skills workshop to cope with mental health issues was conducted by Shuktika Bose, a Psychologist. Dr. Sukhvir Singh conducted a session on 'Connection through Laughter Yoga'. Sound healer, Roshika Akhil soothed the body and minds of the participants with music using century-old bowls.

- The Centre took part in the Diwali celebrations at King George's square, Brisbane, on 24 October. The event was organized by the Federation of Indian Communities Queensland. Volunteers of the Centre set up a food stall and an information desk at the event.
- Volunteers of the Centre set up a food stall at the Diwali festival and AFL (Australian Football League) game at Brighton Homes Arena of the Brisbane Lions' club on 25 October 2025.
- A violin concert by Ganga Sasidharan, a child prodigy from Kerala, India, was staged on 1 November 2025 at the Lighthouse Auditorium, Forest Lakes, Queensland. She mesmerized the audience with a 2.5 hour concert. The event was organized by the RKSV foundation and the proceeds were donated to the Vedanta Centre.



Ganga Sasidharan in Concert in Brisbane

- The Annual Volunteer Appreciation Day was held on 16 November 2025. Nearly 100 volunteers attended the programme. Talks were delivered Dr. Ashim Majumdar (Senior Vice President of the Brisbane Centre), and Swami Atmeshananda. A token of appreciation was given to the volunteers. Everyone was served with a delicious lunch after the event.



Young Volunteers at the Volunteer Appreciation Day in Brisbane

- On 20 November 2025, Swami Atmeshananda, Unni Krishnan Nair and Usha Gokul attended the Annual General Meeting of the Queensland Faith Communities' Council (QFCC). Swami Atmeshananda offered a prayer from the Hindu scriptures. The keynote speaker was Professor Peta Goldberg, Catholic delegate, Leader of the Sisters of Mercy in Brisbane (Mater Hospitals, All Hallows School) and lecturer at the Australian Catholic University. Peta gave a wonderful presentation on *Nostra Aetate*, the document from the Second Vatican Council that explains the Catholic Church's approach to other religions.
- Swami Atmeshananda and Tracey Donnelley, a part time employee of the Centre, attended the Ipswich Food Solutions workshop organized by the Foodbank Queensland and other organizations on 1 December 2025. It was organized to find out the needs of organizations serving people and gave valuable information about finding resources - both financial and human, to run organizations efficiently.
- The Ipswich Council invited Swami Atmeshananda to participate in the 'End of the Year Community Leaders' Network celebrations on 4 December 2025.



The Queensland Faith Communities Council AGM in Brisbane

CANBERRA

4 Brigalow St, O'Connor ACT 2602

Email: vedacanberra@gmail.com

Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 02 6258 7612 / 0433 593 860

Daily Activities

- Evening aratrikam and prayers are conducted every evening at the Centre.

Regular Activities

- Evening aratrikam and prayers were conducted every evening at the Centre. Swami Sridharananda conducted the ongoing public lectures on the *Mundaka Upanishad* at the Quaker's Hall on 22 November, 2025. This was Swami Sridharananda's last public lecture. Lectures will commence again in February 2026 after the seasonal break.



Last Public Lecture of Swami Sridharananda in Canberra on 22 November 2025

MELBOURNE

5-7 Angus Ave, Ringwood East, VIC 3135

Email: vedanta.melb@gmail.com

Contact: Swami Sunishthananda +61426864750

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

Daily Activities

- Aratrikam, bhajans, readings from the Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda literature, and meditation were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm.

Regular Activities

- A class on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was conducted on Tuesdays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A class on the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Thursdays from 7:30 to 8:30 pm.
- A guided meditation session was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Sundays from 10:00 am to 10:30 am.
- A class was conducted on Sundays from 10:30 am to 11:30 am on the *Bhagavad Gita* by Swami Sunishthananda.

Celebrations

- Shri Shri Durga Mahastami puja was celebrated on the morning of Tuesday, 30 September 2025, at Knox Gardens Community Hall. The program included special worship, and bhajans by devotees. The event concluded with the sharing of prasad.



Sri Sri Kali Puja in Melbourne

- Shri Shri Kali Puja was celebrated on the evening of Monday, 20 October 2025, at Mount Waverly Community Centre. The program included special worship, Kali Kirtan, and bhajans by devotees. The event concluded with the sharing of prasad.

Other Activities

- Swami Sunishthananda along with Mr. Suresh Ravinutala, Secretary and Mr. Moulinath Ganguly, senior Managing Committee member attended the Premier's Diwali function at Centrepiece, Melbourne Park, Olympic Boulevard, on the evening of Wednesday, 8 October 2025.



Premiere's Diwali Function in Melbourne



Sri Sri Durga Puja in Melbourne

PERTH

51 Golf View Street, Yorkine, WA 6060

Email: vedantaperth@gmail.com

Contact: Sumita Chetty +61438928136

Daily Activities:

- Aratrikam was conducted each night by a person or family taking the responsibility for it.

Regular Activities

- Swami Manyananda, from the Vedanta Centre of Adelaide, visited the Centre in Perth, for the monthly Satsangs on 18 to 20 September, 16 to 18 October and 20 to 22 November 2025. The monthly Satsangs, conducted by Swami Manyananda, included aratrikam, bhajans, a talk on the *Mahishasura Mardhini* story, followed by the distribution of prasad.



Monthly Satsang in Perth

SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, 2115

Email: vedasydney@vedantasydney.org

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.
- 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

- Devotees received spiritual counselling and guidance, with appointments from Swami Sri-dharananda and others.
- Swami Dhanyananda conducted a class on the *Vivekachudamani* on Sunday mornings from 10:30 am to 11:30 am.
- *Ramanama Sankirtana* was conducted on *ekadashi* days after the vesper service.
- The quarterly newsletter entitled *Reach* is compiled and published by the Vedanta Centre of Sydney.
- Yoga Classes were conducted by Sudhir Mooray on Saturdays from 9:30 am to 11:00 am and Sundays from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm.
- An online bookstore is run by the Centre at <https://spiritualbookstore.org.au/>

Celebrations

- Shri Shri Durga puja was observed at the Vedanta Centre on 30 October 2025. The program included worship of Mother Durga, Kali Kir-tan, bhajans. An estimated 1800 people attended the event throughout the day. Prasad was distributed to all.

Other Activities

- Volunteers gathered weekly on Saturdays, to engage in the upkeep of the Centre. Activities



Durga Puja in Sydney

included gardening, painting, cleaning and carpentry amongst other activities.

Visiting Swamis

- Swami Sunishthananda from the Vedanta Centre in Melbourne, visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 9 October to 11 October 2025.
- Swami Manyananda from the Vedanta Centre in Adelaide visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 3 November to 6 November 2025.

2. Passing Away of Swami Sridharananda, President, Vedanta Centre of Sydney (1925-2025)

It is with profound sadness in our hearts that we inform you that Swami Sridharananda, President of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney (Australia), passed away in the early hours of 13 December 2025, just falling short of his hundredth birthday, (according to the Gregorian calendar) on 18 December 2025.

Swami Sridharananda has been the Minister in Charge of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney since October 2000. Over the past 25 years, he consolidated the work of his predecessors, like Swami Ranganathananda and Swami Damodarananda, whose work was in nebulous form. The Vedanta Centre of Sydney, now has six sub-centres, located in the states and territories of Australia, like Brisbane (Queensland), Canberra (Australian Capital Territory), Melbourne (Victoria), Adelaide (South Australia), Perth (Western Australia) apart from Sydney (New South Wales). Some of these sub-centres have monastics as Resident Ministers.

Prior to this, Swami Sridharananda's monastic life began in 1947, when he joined the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at its branch called

the Advaita Ashrama (Kolkata). Then he had two short stints at the Varanasi Home of Service in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He later served at the Rangoon Sevashrama (earlier Burma, now Myanmar) between July



1953 to December 1953. He was next sent to Patna, where he served between January 1954 and December 1954. His longest stint was at Lucknow, where he initially served as an assistant between 1955 and 1965. Thereafter, he served at Lucknow as the head, between 1966 to mid 2000. Finally, he was the Minister in Charge of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney between October 2000 to 13 December 2025.

Swami Sridharananda received his *mantra diksha* or spiritual initiation from Swami Virajananda, who was the sixth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. He later had his *brahmacharya diksha* or initiation from Swami Shankarananda in February 1952. After his *brahmacharya*

vows he was called Br. Shrichaitanya. He finally had his *sannyasa diksha* or final monastic initiation from Swami Shankarananda in February 1958, after which he was given the name Swami Sridharananda.

Over the early period of his monastic life, he served Swami Shantananda and Swami Virajananda.

Swami Sridharananda was a Karma Yogi who was deeply dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and his Guru Swami Virajananda, the sixth President of the Ramakrishna Order.

He continued to work and practice Karma Yoga, in spite of having various medical and health issues like having a stent put in, heart fibrillation (irregular heart beat), kidney problems, frozen shoulders, arthritis in the knees. He used to humorously say that everything below the neck does not work, but the nut on top is still sharp. Indeed, he retained the sharpness of his mind until the very end.

Worship and / or memorial meetings in his honour were conducted in Sydney, Kolkata (Belur Math), Lucknow (where he spent 40 years), Shyamlatol (his Guru's place) and many other places. More such memorials will be conducted in January 2026.



Swami Sridharananda and Swami Suhitananda in Sydney on 29 October 2017



Swami Sridharananda and Guest Monks from Overseas during the Inauguration of Springfield Lakes Ashrama (Brisbane) on 27 June 2018



Swami Sridharananda's Memorial in Sydney on 24 December 2025

3. Worship of Substitutes and Images and The Chosen Ideal —SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (From *Bhakti Yoga, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*)

In this issue of Reach we continue serializing Swami Vivekananda's *Bhakti Yoga*. *Bhakti Yoga* was included in the 3rd volume of 'The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda'. In the *Worship of Substitutes and Images*, Swami Vivekananda stresses the importance of *Pratikas* and *Pratimas* being a tangible substitute to Brahman or Ishvara. *Pratikas* and *Pratimas* are symbolic of something more subtle and omnipresent. For worship to be genuine *Bhakti*, it should be of Brahman or Ishvara, not a *Deva* or *Pitri*. In the *Ishta Nishtha* section he outlines the importance of steadfast devotion, especially in the early stages, to one's chosen ideal.

WORSHIP OF SUBSTITUTES AND IMAGES

The next points to be considered are the worship of *Pratikas* or of things more or less satisfactory as substitutes for God, and the worship of *Pratimas* or images. What is the worship of God through a *Pratika*? It is—"Joining the mind with devotion to that which is not Brahman, taking it to be Brahman"—says Bhagavan Ramanuja. "Worship the mind as Brahman, this is internal; and the *Akasha* as Brahman, this is with regard to the *Devas*", says Shankara. The mind is an internal *Pratika*, the *Akasha* is an external one; and both have to be worshipped as substitutes of God. He continues, "Similarly--'the Sun is Brahman, this is the command', 'He who worships Name as Brahman'—in all such passages the doubt arises as to the worship of *Pratikas*." The word *Pratikas* means going towards; and the worshipping a *Pratikas* is worshipping something as a substitute which is, in some one or more respects, like Brahman more and more, but is not Brahman. Along with the *Pratikas* mentioned in the *Shrutis* there are various others to be found in the *Puranas* and the *Tantras*. In

this kind of *Pratikas*-worship may be included all the various forms of *Pitri*-worship and *Deva*-worship.

Now worshipping *Ishvara* and Him alone is *Bhakti*; the worship of anything else--*Deva*, or *Pitri*, or any other being--cannot be *Bhakti*. The various kinds of worship of the various *Devas* are all to be included in ritualistic Karma, which gives to the worshipper only a particular result in the form of some celestial enjoyment, but can neither give rise to *Bhakti* nor lead to *Mukti*. One thing, therefore, has to be carefully borne in mind. If, as it may happen in some cases, the highly philosophical ideal, the supreme Brahman, is dragged down by *Pratikas*-worship to the level of the *Pratikas* and the *Pratikas* itself is taken to be the Atman of the worshipper or his *Antaryamin* (Inner Ruler), the worshipper gets entirely misled, as no *Pratikas* can really be the Atman of the worshipper.

But where Brahman Himself is the object of worship, and the *Pratikas* stand only as a substitute or a suggestion thereof, that is to

say, where, through the *Pratikas* the omnipresent Brahman is worshipped--the *Pratikas* itself being idealised into the cause of all, Brahman--the worship is positively beneficial; nay, it is absolutely necessary for all mankind until they have all got beyond the primary or preparatory state of the mind in regard to worship. When, therefore, any gods or other beings are being worshipped in and for themselves, such worship is only a ritualistic Karma; and as a *Vidya* (science) it gives us only the fruit belonging to that particular *Vidya*; but when the *Devas* or any other beings are looked upon as Brahman and worshipped, the result obtained is the same as by the worshipping of *Ishvara*. This explains how, in many cases, both in the *Shrutis* and the *Smritis*, a god, or a sage, or some other extraordinary being is taken up and lifted, as it were, out of his own nature and idealised into Brahman, and is then worshipped. Says the Advaitin, "Is not everything Brahman when the name and the form have been removed from it?" "Is not He, the Lord, the innermost Self of every one?" says the *Vishishtadvaitin*.—"The fruition of even the worship of *Adityas* etc.

Brahman Himself bestows, because He is the Ruler of all." Says Shankara in his *Brahma-Sutra-Bhasya*--"Here in this way does Brahman become the object of worship, because He, as Brahman, is superimposed on the *Pratikas*, just as Vishnu etc. are superimposed upon images etc."

The same ideas apply to the worship of the *Pratimas* as to that of the *Pratikas*; that is to say, if the image stands for a god or a saint, the worship is not the result of Bhakti, and does not lead to liberation; but if it stands for the one God, the worship thereof will bring both Bhakti and *Mukti*. Of the principal religions of the world we see Vedantism, Buddhism, and certain forms of Christianity freely using images; only two religions, Mohammedanism and Protestantism, refuse such help. Yet the Mohammedans use the graves of their saints and martyrs almost in the place of images; and the Protestants, in rejecting all concrete helps to religion, are drifting away every year farther and farther from spirituality till at present there is scarcely any difference between the advanced Protestants and the followers of August Comte, or agnostics who preach ethics alone. Again, in Christianity and Mohammedanism whatever exists of image worship is made to fall under that category in which the *Pratikas* or the *Pratima* is worshipped in itself, but not as a "help to the vision" (*Drishtisaukaryam*) of God; therefore it is at best only of the nature of ritualistic Karmas and cannot produce either Bhakti or *Mukti*. In this form of image worship, the allegiance of the

soul is given to other things than Ishvara, and, therefore, such use of images, or graves, or temples, or tombs, is real idolatry; it is in itself neither sinful nor wicked--it is a rite--a Karma, and worshippers must and will get the fruit thereof.

THE CHOSEN IDEAL

The next thing to be considered is what we know as *Ishta-Nishtha*. One who aspires to be a Bhakta must know that "so many opinions are so many ways". He must know that all the various sects of the various religions are the various manifestations of the glory of the same Lord. "They call You by so many names; they divide You, as it were, by different names, yet in each one of these is to be found Your omnipotence. . . . You reach the worshipper through all of these, neither is there any special time so long as the soul has intense love for You. You are so easy of approach; it is my misfortune that I cannot love You." Not only this, the Bhakta must take care not to hate, nor even to criticise those radiant sons of light who are the founders of various sects; he must not even hear them spoken ill of. Very few indeed are those who are at once the possessors of an extensive sympathy and power of appreciation, as well as an intensity of love. We find, as a rule, that liberal and sympathetic sects lose the intensity of religious feeling, and in their hands, religion is apt to degenerate into a kind of politico-social club life. On the other hand, intensely narrow sects, whilst displaying a very commendable love of their own ideals, are seen to have acquired every particle of that love by hating every one who is not of

exactly the same opinions as themselves. Would to God that this world was full of men who were as intense in their love as worldwide in their sympathies! But such are only few and far between. Yet we know that it is practicable to educate large numbers of human beings into the ideal of a wonderful blending of both the width and the intensity of love; and the way to do that is by this path of the *Ishta-Nishtha* or "steadfast devotion to the chosen ideal." Every sect of every religion presents only one ideal of its own to mankind, but the eternal Vedantic religion opens to mankind an infinite number of doors for ingress into the inner shrine of divinity, and places before humanity an almost inexhaustible array of ideals, there being in each of them a manifestation of the Eternal One. With the kindest solicitude, the Vedanta points out to aspiring men and women the numerous roads, hewn out of the solid rock of the realities of human life, by the glorious sons, or human manifestations, of God, in the past and in the present, and stands with outstretched arms to welcome all--to welcome even those that are yet to be--to that Home of Truth and that Ocean of Bliss, wherein the human soul, liberated from the net of Maya, may transport itself with perfect freedom and with eternal joy.

Bhakti-Yoga, therefore, lays on us the imperative command not to hate or deny any one of the various paths that lead to salvation. Yet the growing plant must be hedged round to protect it until it has grown into a tree. The tender plant of spirituality will

die if exposed too early to the action of a constant change of ideas and ideals. Many people, in the name of what may be called religious liberalism, may be seen feeding their idle curiosity with a continuous succession of different ideals. With them, hearing new things grows into a kind of disease, a sort of religious drink-mania. They want to hear new things just by way of getting a temporary nervous excitement, and when one such exciting influence has had its effect on them, they are ready for another. Religion is with these people a sort of intellectual opium-eating, and there it ends. "There is another sort of man", says Bhagavan Ramakrishna, "who is like the pearl-oyster of the story. The pearl-oyster leaves its bed at the bottom of the sea, and comes up to the surface to catch the rain-water when the star *Svasti* is in the ascendant. It floats about on the surface of the sea with its shell wide open, until it has succeeded in catching a drop of the rain-water, and then it dives deep down to its sea-bed, and there rests until it has succeeded in fashioning a beautiful pearl out of that rain-drop."

This is indeed the most poetical and forcible way in which the theory of *Ishta-Nishtha* has ever been put. This *Eka-Nishtha* or devotion to one ideal is absolutely necessary for the beginner in the practice of religious devotion. He must say with Hanuman in the Ramayana, "Though I know that the Lord of Shri and the Lord of Janaki are both manifestations of the same supreme Being, yet my all in all is the lotus-eyed Rama." Or, as was said

by the sage Tulasidasa, he must say, "Take the sweetness of all, sit with all, take the name of all, say yea, yea, but keep your seat firm." Then, if the devotional aspirant is sincere, out of this little seed will come a gigantic tree like the Indian banyan, sending out branch after branch and root after root to all sides, till it covers the entire field of religion. Thus will the true devotee realise that He who was his own ideal in life is worshipped in all ideals by all sects, under all names, and through all forms.

4. Excerpts from the 116th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission for the 2024-25 Financial Year

The Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission is a global, spiritual and service organization. It has Centres in 6 of the 7 continents in the world, except Antarctica (Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe, and Australia). Its headquarters is in Kolkata, India (Belur Math). The Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission carried out various service activities through 99 Centres and Sub Centres located in 24 countries outside India. The Vedanta Centres in Australia are branches of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Figure 1: The Number of Branches and Sub-Centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in India and Abroad as of 2024-25 (Financial Year)

Centres and Sub Centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission	Number of Centres and Sub Centres
India	244
Abroad	99

Source: Press Release of the 116th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission

Figure 2: The Number of New Centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in India and Abroad which began in 2024-25 (Financial Year)

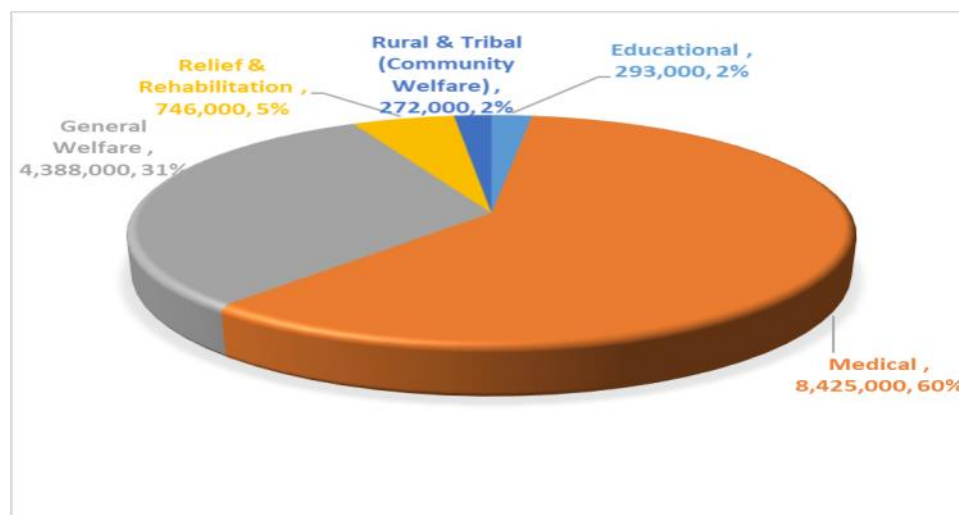
Countries	Ramakrishna Math	Ramakrishna Mission
India	Adipur (Gujarat), Kolhapur (Maharashtra), Pathanamthitta (Kerala) and Rewa (Madhya Pradesh).	Haflong and Kuralbhanga (Assam), Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), and Sarati and Siliguri (West Bengal).
Abroad	Washington DC, USA	

Source: Press Release of the 116th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission

India

The 116th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, 14 December 2025, at 3.30 p.m. Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission presented the ‘Report of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission on the working of the Association during 2024-25’ financial year. In India, between 2024 and 2025, there were 244 Centres. The total expenditure through the Headquarters and its branches in India was **Rs. 1670.79 Crore** or **\$277, 297, 507.64 (AUD)** (@ 1 INR = 0.01658 AUD as on 28/12/2025)

Figure 3: The Number of Beneficiaries from the Different Service Areas in India of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in the 2024-25 (Financial Year)



Source: Press Release of the 116th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission

According to Figure 3, Medical Services had the highest number of beneficiaries in the 2024-25 Financial Year. Medical services constitute about 60 per cent or over 8 million beneficiaries. The second most number of beneficiaries is General Welfare. This makes up approximately 31 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries. General welfare is a general category which comprises many different services of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. This is followed by Relief and Rehabilitation, Educational, and Rural and Tribal Services.

Figure 4: Total Expenditure on the Different Service Areas in India of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission for 2024-25 (Financial Year).

Column1	Expenditure in INR	Expenditure in AUD
Educational	7,431,700,000	123,342,364.24
Medical	6,005,400,000	99,670,362.67
General Welfare	428,800,000	7,116,703.55
Relief & Rehabilitation	115,900,000	1,923,567.96
Rural & Tribal (Community Welfare)	63,400,000	1,052,236.49
Preaching and other services	2,409,500,000	39,989,965.51
Publication of literature	253,200,000	4,202,307.23
Total	16,707,900,000	277,297,507.64

Source: Press Release of the 116th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission

Figure 4 tabulates the expenditure of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in India on the different service areas for the 2024-25 (Financial Year). The original expenditure was in Indian Rupees (INR). These have been converted to Australian dollars (AUD) (as on 28/12/25 @ 1 INR = 0.01658 AUD). The bulk of the expenditure is on Educational services, Medical services and Preaching and other services.

5. Musings of a Disciple of Swami Sridharananda

By Ambika Prasad

Where do I start
And what do I say?
To express my feelings
As my beloved Diksha Guru slowly moves away?
He moves into his heavenly abode
Along the road that the Trinity have showed

He has been taken to Sri Ramakrishna's Loka,
In humble prayer I chant the Guru Vandana Shloka.

Words are never adequate to extol one's Guru
Whose overflowing compassion one thoroughly knew..
Yet, I will do just this in the next couple of days
While now I will just stay amazed at Mother's Grace - Her Divine ways ..

This I state now for exactly a week ago,
At Ramakrishna Sharadashram in Ponnampet you know,
Rev. Sw. Parahitanandaji asked me to in Kannada speak
On a topic truly unique:
He asked me to throw light on our Australia's minister in charge and his hard work & tenacity
This made me consciously collate relevant facts with veracity
I surprised myself with my flow as I diligently spoke
For a speaker I am not - only a humble writer, Dear folks...
Of course it was Mother whose Grace flowed
As she gave me the topic & made my speech glow
I was overwhelmed with gratitude as I visualised our Master's walk
For he, in every domain, vigilantly lived his talk

Ohhhh what a tremendous blessing that chance opportunity has been
The visit to Ponnampet Home of Mother - Mother's embrace's scene.

Blessed am I, Mother by your compassion - infinite
For You've shown me Your hand in life that's so intricate

Now to these very hands I request - my prayerful plea..
Please carry my beloved Guru and hand him your key..
Your key to sublimity with You - Absolute Oneness,
Your key to unending Peace and Supreme Bliss

With this humble prayer, I will never pause or falter
As, for my beloved Guru, only the above stated is a befitting altar
Please, O please, Mother Dear, do lend your ear
And cheerfully veer our beloved Master well & truly into your Divine Sphere