



Reach

SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

Sri Ramakrishna on Mind

Purify the spectacles of your mind and you will see that the world is God.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 6.

Sri Sarada Devi on Living a Fulfilling Life

If one sits alone without any work, various thoughts may come into the mind.

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

Swami Vivekananda on Religion

Unity is knowledge, diversity is ignorance. This knowledge is your birthright. . . . We are all destined to have salvation, whether we will it or not. You have to attain it in the long run and become free, because it is your nature to be free.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 41-42.

Buddha on Belief

Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/13132-believe-nothing-no-matter-where-you-read-it-or-who>

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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 2024 TO 10 MARCH 2025

ADELAIDE

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Dr Raman Sharma on (08) 8431 9775

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Daily Activities

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

Regular Activities

- The Centre observed *ekadasi* with *Ramanama Sankirtanam* 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.
- Swami Manyananda also conducted a class on the *Bhagavad Gita* on Sundays from 11:00 am.
- Every alternate Saturday, Swami Manyananda read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* followed by a discussion before the evening *aratrikam*.
- 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

- Sri Sarada Devi's (1853-1920) birth anniversary was celebrated on 22 December, 2024. The morning program included special puja, Vedic chanting, bhajans, aratrikam, pushpanjali and lunch prasad. The evening program started with the aratrikam and was followed by bhajans, a talk on Sri Sarada Devi by Swami Manyananda, pushpanjali and dinner prasad.



Sri Sarada Devi's Birth Anniversary in Adelaide

- Christmas Eve was celebrated on 24 December 2024. The evening program started with the vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna followed by singing of Christmas Carols, a talk on the 'Significance of Christmas Eve in the Ramakrishna Movement' by Swami Manyananda, and prasad distribution.
- Swami Vivekananda's (1863-1902) birth anniversary was celebrated on 21 January 2025. The program in the morning began with special puja, Vedic chanting, bhajans, homa, aratrikam, pushpanjali and lunch prasad. The program in the evening included aratrikam, a talk on Swami Vivekananda by Swami Manyananda, bhajans, pushpanjali and the distribution of dinner prasad.
- Shiva ratri - was celebrated on 26 February 2025. The evening program started with aratrikam and was followed by a special puja of Lord Siva accompanied by chanting and bhajans, worship of Siva Lingam by the devotees, and distribution of prasad.



Swami Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary in Adelaide

- Sri Ramakrishna's (1836-1886) birth anniversary was celebrated on 1 March, 2025. The morning program consisted of special puja with Vedic chanting, bhajans, homa, aratrikam, pushpanjali and lunch prasad. The evening program comprised of aratrikam, bhajans, a talk on 'The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna' by Swami Manyananda, pushpanjali and distribution of 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

- 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 7:45 am to 9:15 am. (b) *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* Class (10:00 am—11:00 am). (c) Bala sangha and Yuva sangha (10:00 am—11:00 am) during school term). (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.
- A monthly satsang was held at Sunnybank Hills on the first Monday of every month at 19, Scribbly Gum Street.
- Fortnightly on Thursdays there was a study of the *Vivekachudamani*, online, from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm organized by Shakti Global, Gold Coast. (zoom)
- A monthly satsang was held at the Centre on the 3rd Sunday of each month. The programme consisted of chanting, bhajans, a talk on a special subject and serving of lunch prasad.
- A reading from the lives of the direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna was conducted on their birth anniversaries after the evening aratrikam.
- Chanting of the *Ramanama Sankirtanam* was held fortnightly at the Centre on *ekadashi* days (7:00 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 (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.
- Monthly, the Vedanta group on the Gold Coast studied the *Bhagavad Gita* from 5.30pm to 6.30pm
- On Fridays, the Centre's volunteers cooked 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, Base Youth Support Services 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.
- A Justice of the Peace (JP) is available at the Centre from 10 am to 11 am on Fridays.
- The Centre, in association with the Namdhari Sikh Association, conducted 'Kirtan and Langar' on the last Sunday of every month. After meditation and singing of kirtans, the Sikh brethren cooked and served delicious meals to anyone who could come and partake of it.

Celebrations

- Sri Sarada Devi's (1853-1920) birth anniversary was celebrated on 22 December, 2024 at the Centre. Devotees chanted from the *Lalita Sahasranamam*, Vedic texts and sang bhajans and Swami Atmeshananda performed special worship with homa and gave a talk on the life and teachings of Sri Sarada Devi. This was followed by prasad distribution.



Prasad distribution on Sri Sarada Devi's Birth Anniversary in Brisbane

- Christmas Eve was celebrated on 24 December, 2024. Worship, singing of Christmas Carols, readings from the *Bible* and distribution of prasad were some of the aspects of the celebration.
- Kalpataru day was celebrated on 1 January, 2025. The programme in the morning started with the chanting of Vedic hymns as well as hymns in praise of Sri Ramakrishna and formal worship, Readings from *Sri Ramakrishna*

The Great Master about the Kalpataru incident, meditation and prasad distribution were the other items of the programme.

- The birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was celebrated on 19 January, 2025. Devotees took part in chanting, devotional singing, and worship. Swami Atmeshananda presented a talk on Swami Vivekananda. Prasad was distributed at the end. On 21 January, 2025 the Tithi (birthday according to the Hindu calendar), a few devotees participated in worship, singing and meditation.
- Shiva ratri was observed on 26 February, 2025. Devotees participated in chanting from the Vedas, singing of hymns, and worship. This was followed by the distribution of prasad.



Shiva ratri in Brisbane

- Sri Ramakrishna's (1836-1886) birth anniversary was celebrated on 1 March, 2025. Chanting, devotional singing, formal worship, homa, talks by Angad Deshpande and Sunitha Gokul, and prasad distribution were the items of the programme.



Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary in Brisbane

Other Activities

- The Chenrezig Institute in Eudlo (near the Sunshine Coast) —a Buddhist organization— invited Swami Atmeshananda to participate in an interfaith panel discussion on 14 December, 2024. The theme of the discussion was 'Patience, a key virtue in everyday life'.



At the Chenrezig Institute, Brisbane

- On 15 December 2024 Surinder Singh Jamwal, a famous musician from India gave a music concert at the centre. After the concert *langar* was served by the Namdhari Sikh Association.



Surinder Singh Jamwal, in Brisbane

- ABC Radio, Brisbane, interviewed Swami Atmeshananda on 23 December 2024 and again on 14 January 2025. Questions regarding monastic life and spiritual life in general with particular emphasis on the Hindu view of Christianity were asked by the interviewer.
- Federation of Indian Communities in Queensland (FICQ) invited Swami Atmeshananda to participate in India-Australia Day celebrations on 26 January 2025 at the Sunpac auditorium, Sunnybank.



Milton Dick (3rd from left) Speaker of the Federal House of Reps, Paul Scarr (2nd from left) Federal Senator, and others)

- The Centre, in collaboration with Wesley Lifeforce and Powerofus Suicide Prevention Network conducted a workshop on 5 February 2025. During the workshop, the participants were given tips about recognizing suicidal tendencies and actions to be taken in times of crises.



Suicide Prevention Seminar in Brisbane

CANBERRA

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Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 02 6258 7612 /0433 593860

Regular Activities

- Evening aratrikam and prayers are conducted every evening at the centre.
- Swami Sridharananda conducted his monthly class on the Mundaka Upanishad on 1 February 2025.

Other Activities

- Professor Sadananada Das of Leipzig University, Germany, visited the Vedanta Centre of Canberra on 11 February 2025. He attended the evening aratrikam and met with the devotees. He was teaching a spoken Sanskrit course for beginners that ran for 2 weeks. The course was run by and at the Australian National University. Professor Das has been teaching Sanskrit for over 20 years and has expressed interest in running a similar course in Sydney in the future.



Professor Sadananada Das in Canberra

MELBOURNE

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Regular Activities

- Morning meditation and prayers were conducted from 6:30 am to 7:30 am.
- Aratrikam, bhajans, readings from the Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda literature, and meditation were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm daily.
- A guided meditation session was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Sundays from 10:00 am to 10:30 am.
- A scriptural class was conducted on Sundays from 10:30 am to 11:30 am on the *Bhagavad Gita* by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A class on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was conducted on Thursdays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A *Vivekachudamani* class was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Tuesdays from 7:30 to 8:30 pm.
- A children's class was conducted on Sundays from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm.



Sri Sarada Devi's Birth Anniversary in Melbourne

Celebrations

- The birth anniversary of Sri Sarada Devi (1853-1920) was conducted on 22 December, 2024, at the Huntingdale Community Centre. The programme included special worship, talk on the life and teachings of Sri Sarada Devi by Swami Sunishthananda, and bhajans. Devotees shared prasada after the event.
- Christmas Eve was observed on Tuesday, 24 December, 2024. The programme included evening prayers, offerings, singing of Carols and a talk on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ by Swami Sunishthananda.
- Swami Vivekananda's (1863-1902) birth anniversary was conducted on Sunday, 19 January, 2025. The function was held at the Mulgrave Community Centre and the programme included special worship, talk on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda by Swami Sunishthananda and bhajans. Devotees shared prasada after the event.
- On the morning of Sunday, 2 February 2025, Saraswati Puja was celebrated at Hughesdale Community Centre. The programme included special worship, and bhajans. Devotees shared prasada after the event.



Saraswati Puja in Melbourne

- Shiva ratri was held at the Mount Waverly Community Centre. on 26 February, 2025, The programme included special worship, bhajans and prasada.

- Sri Ramakrishna's (1836-1886) birth anniversary was held at Oakleigh Hall on Sunday, 9 March, 2025. The event included worship, a talk on life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and bhajans., Following this devotees shared prasada.



Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary, Melbourne

Other Activities

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited as the chief guest for the Yuva Divas (Youth day) on Sunday, 12 January 2025. The event was organized by the Vivekananda Society of Australia in collaboration with the Hindu Council of Australia, Vedanta Centre of Melbourne, and the Consulate General of India, Melbourne



Yuva Divas (Youth Day) Celebrations, Melbourne

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited along with Honourable Tim Watts, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade along with other dignitaries, for dinner at the Melbourne residence of his excellency the Consular General of India, on Monday, 24 February, 2025.



At the Consular General's (Victoria) Residence

PERTH

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Regular Activities:

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

Celebrations

- The monthly satsung in December observed Sri Sarada Devi's (1853-1920) birth anniversary and Christmas Eve on 24 December, 2024. The programme was a mix of bhajans, reading and Carols. Janet Waughray spoke about the life of Sarada Devi. Dr. Sameer Chatterjee gave a talk on the 'Meaning of Christmas' and Jayeeta Dasgupta spoke about Jesus. This was followed by the distribution of prasad.
- Swami Vivekananda's (1863-1902) birth anniversary was celebrated on 25 January 2025. The celebration comprised aratrikam,

prayers, a talk on Swami Vivekananda by Janet Waughray on 'His Devotion to his Mother' and the distribution of prasad.

- The Centre commemorated Sri Ramakrishna's (1836-1886) birth anniversary on 2 March, 2025. The programme included aratrikam, bhajans, readings and talks, and prasad distribution. Devotees cooked and offered 'bhog' or offering to Sri Ramakrishna. Milind Kadam read from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Dr. Sameer Chatterjee gave a talk on the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Janet Waughray read from Swami Atmasthananda Maharaj's book, *Sri Ramakrishna God of all*. There were around forty people who attended..
- Apart from this, emails were sent to devotees and friends that the centre was open in the evening, as usual, on Sri Sarada Devi's actual birthday on 22 December 2024 and Kalpataru day on 1 January 2025.



The devotees in Perth at a recent function

SYDNEY

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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

- Swami Dhyanananda started teaching the *Vivekachudamani* on Sunday mornings from 20 October 2024
- *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 by the Vedanta Centre of Sydney.
- Yoga Classes were conducted by Sudhir Mooray on Saturdays from 9:30 am to 11:00 am.
- A *Balak Sangha* (Children's Group) and a Vivekananda Youth Group met on Saturdays at 5 pm.

Celebrations

- Sri Sarada Devi's (1853-1920) birth anniversary was held on 22 December 2024 at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney. In the morning, there was worship including homa and prasad distribution. In the evening, after aratrikam, there was a talk by Swami Dhyanananda on Sri Sarada Devi.



Carols on Christmas Eve in Sydney

- Christmas Eve was observed on 24 December 2024. Following the aratrikam, there was a reading on Christ's nativity from the Gospel according to Matthew by Swami Mahabodhananda. After this the children from the Vivekananda Youth group sang some Christmas Carols.
- Kalpataru Day was held on 1 January 2025. The evening programme consisted of bhajans, a talk on 'Sri Ramakrishna as the Kalpataru' by Swami Dhyanananda, and aratrikam. This was followed by prasad distribution.
- Swami Saradananda's (1865-1927) birth anniversary was held on 5 January 2025. The programme in the morning included puja, bhajans by Swami Dhyanananda and other devotees, and prasad distribution.
- Swami Vivekananda's (1863-1902) birth anniversary was observed on 21 January 2025. In the morning there was a puja, including homa, aratrikam and pushpanjali. In the evening there was aratrikam, bhajans, a sitar recital by



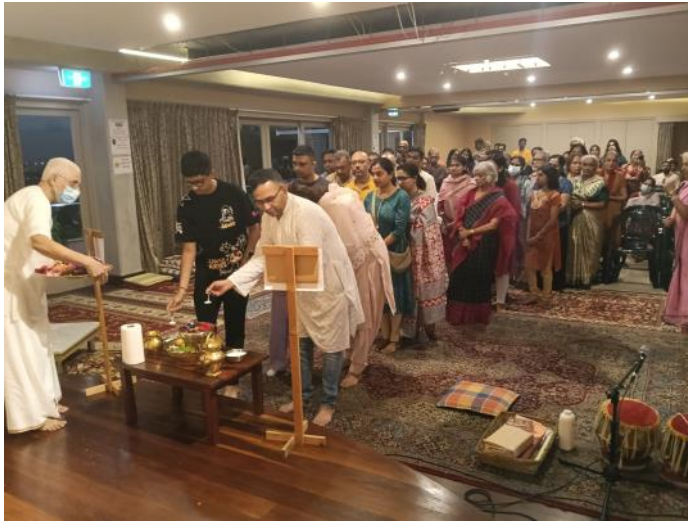
Sri Sarada Devi's Birth Anniversary in Sydney



Homa during Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary

Achala Shankarnath with Arun Muruganathan on mridangam and a talk by Swami Ishatmananda, from the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, United States.

- Shiva ratri was observed on 26 February 2025 at the Vedanta Centre. In the evening, the programme included aratrikam, puja, bhajans and the individual worship of Shiva by the devotees. After the programme the devotees part took of prasard.



Worship of Shiva by the devotees in Sydney

- Sri Ramakrishna's (1836-1886) birth anniversary was celebrated on 1 March 2025 in the morning and evening. In the morning there was puja, homa, aratrikam, bhajans and prasard distribution. In the evening there was aratrikam, short skits from the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda by the children of the Youth Sangha, and a talk by Swami Sridharananda on the



At Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary in Sydney

pranam mantra composed by Swami Vivekananda.

- **Other Activities**
- Raghunath Das Maharaj sang some Abhangas (Bhajans) mainly glorifying Sri Krishna or Vitthala in the Sri Tukaram tradition on 11 February 2025 after the evening aratrikam.



Raghunath Das in Sydney

Visiting Swamis

Swami Ishatmananda from the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 21 January to 27 January 2025.



Swami Ishatmananda from Chicago in Sydney

4. Spiritual Realization the aim of Bhakti Yoga —SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (From 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'. These classes begin with a prayer. This is followed by a chapter entitled 'Definition of Bhakti'. This chapter is called 'Spiritual Realization the aim of Bhakti Yoga'. This chapter includes the topics: Bhakti yoga— A path beyond reason, The Feeling for Something beyond Physical and Natural Functions, God as the Highest and Only Utility of Human Existence, The Utility of Concrete Helps to Bhakti Yoga like Mythology and Symbology and The trap of Materialism

Bhakti Yoga—A path beyond reason

To the Bhakta these dry details are necessary only to strengthen his will; beyond that they are of no use to him. For he is treading on a path which is fitted very soon to lead him beyond the hazy and turbulent regions of reason, to lead him to the realm of realisation. He, soon, through the mercy of the Lord, reaches a plane where pedantic and powerless reason is left far behind, and the mere intellectual groping through the dark gives place to the daylight of direct perception. He no more reasons and believes, he almost perceives. He no more argues, he senses. And is not this seeing God, and feeling God, and enjoying God higher than everything else?

The Feeling for Something beyond Physical and Natural Functions

Nay, Bhaktas have not been wanting who have maintained that it is higher than even Moksha--liberation. And is it not also the highest utility? There are people--and a good many of them too--in the world who are convinced that only that is of use and utility which brings to man

creature-comforts. Even religion, God, eternity, soul, none of these is of any use to them, as they do not bring them money or physical comfort. To such, all those things which do not go to gratify the senses and appease the appetites are of no utility. In every mind, utility, however, is conditioned by its own peculiar wants. To men, therefore, who never rise higher than eating, drinking, begetting progeny, and dying, the only gain is in sense-enjoyments; and they must wait and go through many more births and reincarnations to learn to feel even the faintest necessity for anything higher.

God as the Highest and Only Utility of Human Existence

But those to whom the eternal interests of the soul are of much higher value than the fleeting interests of this mundane life, to whom the gratification of the senses is but like the thoughtless play of the baby, to them God and the love of God form the highest and the only utility of human existence. Thank God there are some such still living in this world of too much worldliness.

The Utility of Concrete Helps to Bhakti Yoga like Mythology and Symbology

Bhakti-Yoga, as we have said, is divided into the Gauni or the preparatory and the Para or the supreme forms. We shall find, as we go on, how in the preparatory stage we unavoidably stand in need of many concrete helps to enable us to get on; and indeed the mythological and symbological parts of the religions are natural growths which early environ the aspiring soul and help it Godward. It is also a significant fact that spiritual giants have been produced only in those systems of religion where there is an exuberant growth of rich mythology and ritualism.

The dry fanatical forms of religion which attempt to eradicate all that is poetical, all that is beautiful and sublime, all that gives a firm grasp to the infant mind tottering in its Godward way--the forms which attempt to break down the ridge-poles of the spiritual roof, and in their ignorant and superstitious conceptions of truth try to drive away all that is life-giving, all that furnishes the formative material to the spiritual plant grow-

ing in the human soul--such forms of religion too soon find that all that is left to them is but an empty shell, a contentless frame of words and sophistry with perhaps a little flavour of a kind of social scavenging or the so-called spirit of reform.

The trap of Materialism

The vast mass of those whose religion is like this, are conscious or unconscious materialists--the end and aim of their lives here and hereafter being enjoyment, which indeed is to them the alpha and the omega of human life, and which is their Ishtapurta; work like street-cleaning and scavenging, intended for the material comfort of man is, according to them, the be-all and end-all of human existence; and the sooner the followers of this curious mixture of ignorance and fanaticism come out in their true colours and join, as they well deserve to do, the ranks of the atheists and materialists, the better will it be for the world. One ounce of the practice of righteousness and of spiritual Self-realisation outweighs tons and tons of frothy talk and nonsensical sentiments. Show us one, but one gigantic spiritual genius growing out of all this dry dust of ignorance and fanaticism; and if you cannot, close your mouths, open the windows of your hearts to the clear light of truth, and sit like children at the feet of those who know what they are talking about--the sages of India. Let us then listen attentively to what they say.