together with

NZICA WELLNESS RETREAT 2026

The Art of Giving

Harmonising Heart, Head and Hands

A day of seva and wellbeing for the NZICA community at our forest retreat

saṁ gacchadhvaṁ saṁ vadadhvaṁ
Walk together, speak together



YOU ARE WARMLY INVITED

A day retreat for NZICA members across New Zealand, jointly organised by the NZ Indian Central Association and the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre NZ

When	Cost	Register
Sunday 15 November 2026	Free	**By the day of the retreat**
7:00 am to 3:00 pm (NZ time)	Koha welcome	Online at vedanta.nz (link and QR code below)

Join us in person at Glen Murray

You will get the most from the day by being there.

The dawn meditation in the barn, the walk into the forest, sharing meals, the seva tree and planting the partnership tree are best experienced together. We warmly encourage every member who can travel to come in person.

- Vedanta Retreat Centre, **166 Waikaretu Valley Road, Glen Murray, Waikato**
- Please arrive before 7:00 am. Breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea are provided
- Wear comfortable clothes and walking shoes for the forest session
- **Bring a water bottle** and sun protection, as it may be a hot day

Too far to travel? Join online via Zoom

Members who live too far away can join from home, anywhere in New Zealand. Register online and the Zoom link is emailed to you. Sessions are shown live, including the walk in the forest.

Please share this invitation with your branch, family and friends.

THE SPIRIT OF THE DAY

Growing through giving

Ask NZICA members why they joined, and most will give two answers: to grow as a person, and to serve our community. Very often we treat these as two separate things. This retreat is about discovering that they are one path. When we serve in the right spirit, the service itself becomes our growth.

Service is not only something we do for others. Every act of selfless service quietly changes the one who serves. It loosens our selfishness, softens the heart, steadies the mind and brings a joy that no reward can buy. In our spiritual tradition this is called **karma yoga**: seva (selfless service) as a path to inner freedom.

> *"The world is a grand moral gymnasium wherein we have all to take exercise so as to become stronger and stronger spiritually."*
>
> Swami Vivekananda, Karma-Yoga, "We Help Ourselves, Not the World" (Complete Works, Vol. 1)

Swami Vivekananda taught that true service needs the whole person, working in harmony:

Heart	Head	Hands
FEEL	THINK	ACT
Feel deeply for others, and serve with love and respect rather than pity.	Understand the real need, plan wisely, and give the right help at the right time.	Turn love and understanding into steady, practical work, without seeking name or recognition.

When the three work together, giving becomes an art. We give our time, knowledge and skills humbly, and even gratefully, seeing the person we serve as an embodiment of the divine. As Swamiji asks in the same chapter of Karma-Yoga: *"Is it not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellow-man?"*

This is also the motto Swami Vivekananda gave to the Ramakrishna Order: ***ātmano mokṣārthaṁ jagad-hitāya ca***, "for one's own liberation and for the welfare of the world." Our own growth and the good of others are one ideal.

Serving together as one. This retreat is also an invitation to the members and branches of NZICA to become more focused, coordinated and united in our collective service. Each branch already does valuable work in its own community. When we are all attuned to the true spirit of seva, serving without ego, without competition and without seeking recognition, our separate efforts begin to support one another. Like the many hands of one body, the branches can share ideas, plan together and move in one direction. The retreat also begins a partnership between NZICA and the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre NZ to support this shared work in towns and cities across the country.

There is also an urgent reason to come together now. Many young people in New Zealand, including in our own families, are struggling with stress, anxiety and low mood, and many of our elders feel lonely. Our community carries a rich heritage of practices for a calm and healthy mind: meditation, chanting, selfless service and living in harmony with nature. This day is a chance to experience these practices ourselves and to explore how, together, we can offer them as a gift to our own community and to all of Aotearoa.

OUR RETREAT THEME

Saṁ gacchadhvam: walk together

The theme of the day comes from the very last hymn of the Rig Veda, the oldest scripture of India. Known as the **Saṁjñāna Sūkta**, the hymn of harmony, it has been chanted for thousands of years as a prayer that people may think, feel and work together as one. We will chant it together at the close of the retreat.

Sanskrit and transliteration	Meaning
VERSE 2 सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् । देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानाना उपासते ॥ *saṁ gacchadhvaṁ saṁ vadadhvaṁ saṁ vo manāṁsi jānatām,* *devā bhāgaṁ yathā pūrve saṁjānānā upāsate.*	**Walk together, speak together**, and let your minds understand one another, just as the devas (divine beings) of old, in harmony with one another, each took up their own share.
VERSE 3 समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम् । समानं मन्त्रमभि मन्त्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥ *samāno mantraḥ samitiḥ samānī samānaṁ manaḥ saha cittam eṣām,* *samānaṁ mantram abhi mantraye vaḥ* *samānena vo haviṣā juhomi.*	**Common be your counsel, one your assembly**, alike your minds and joined your thoughts. I place before you a common purpose, and offer worship with your common offering.
VERSE 4 समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः । समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥ *samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hṛdayāni vaḥ,* *samānam astu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati.*	**One be your intention, united your hearts**, and one your mind, so that you may live and work happily together.

Unity does not mean sameness. Like the devas in the hymn, each of us keeps our own share: our own gifts, skills and experience. We offer it to a common purpose. This is how NZICA branches across New Zealand and the Vedanta Centre can walk together, each giving what it does best.

Who should come or join online?

This retreat is for the members of NZICA. In-person attendance at Glen Murray is being coordinated with members by Shefali Mehta and the NZICA Health and Wellness Sub-Committee. You will get the most from the day by attending in person, so we encourage everyone who can travel to come to Glen Murray. To make the day accessible to members of branches throughout New Zealand, every session will also be shown live on Zoom. If you cannot travel, you are warmly invited to join online from wherever you are in New Zealand, for the whole day or for the sessions that suit you. No previous experience of meditation or Vedanta is needed, and the day is free.

SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2026

What will happen on the day

7:00 am

Dawn in the barn

We begin the day the way our ancestors did, with sacred sound and stillness. NZICA members join the chanting of Vedic hymns. Swami Tadananda then guides a meditation, followed by devotional singing (bhajans). Breakfast follows in the barn at 8:00, with gentle music in the background.

8:30 am

Session 1: Why we serve

- Lighting of the lamps, jointly
- Words of welcome from Veer Khar, NZICA President, and Shefali Mehta, Chair of the NZICA Health and Wellness Sub-Committee
- A talk by Swami Tadananda, **The Art of Giving**: serving with heart, head and hands, without seeking name or recognition, and how service helps us grow
- Seva stories: senior members share real experiences of service, what it asked of them and what it gave them
- A short reflection with the person next to you, and a glimpse of a day in the life of a sevak (volunteer)
- Your questions

10:00 am

Tea break

Tea and refreshments, from 10:00 to 10:30 am.

10:30 am

Session 2: Into the forest

We walk together deeper into the native forest of the retreat centre, a little beyond the 1,000 trees that NZICA members planted here on 8 August 2026, part of the way in silence. Among the trees we reflect on the tree as a teacher: its roots are the values we protect, its falling leaves are what we learn to let go, and its new shoots are our young people. Small circles share what the forest has taught them. Online participants walk with us through a live broadcast.

12:00 pm

Lunch together

A simple, wholesome lunch and time to get to know members from other branches.

1:00 pm

Session 3: Walking together

- What the latest figures tell us about the wellbeing of young people, elders and new migrants in New Zealand, in plain language
- An introduction to the Vedanta Wellness Project: retreats and workshops at Glen Murray, community outreach, and free online courses, podcasts and meditations
- Branch presidents and Veer Khar lead a planning conversation: what could your branch do in the year ahead?

2:30 pm

Closing: a tree for our partnership

We share our feedback, plant a tree to mark the partnership between NZICA and the Vedanta Centre, and close by chanting together our theme mantra, ***saṁ gacchadhvam***.

What you will take home

- A calmer mind, and simple practices of chanting and meditation to continue at home
- A fresh, joyful understanding of seva that refreshes rather than tires you, and helps you grow
- A card with the theme mantra and its meaning
- An introduction to the services the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre NZ offers and is planning for our people across New Zealand: retreats and workshops, community outreach, and online courses, podcasts and meditations
- Practical ideas, and a simple plan, for wellbeing activities in your own branch

About the venue and your guides

The Vedanta Retreat Centre sits among native forest and rolling farmland at Glen Murray in the Waikato, south of Auckland. It is a place of quiet, birdsong and open sky, and many NZICA members already know it from the tree planting day in August.

Swami Tadananda is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order and President of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre NZ. He leads retreats, courses and wellbeing programmes that bring together the wisdom of Yoga and Vedanta with modern science. He is joined by Swami Shuklananda, the assistant monk at the Centre.

Register now

Joining online? Scan the code, or open the link below and press RSVP. The Zoom link will be emailed to you.

vedanta.nz/event-details/the-art-of-giving-nzica-wellness-retreat

Registration is free and open until the day. Koha is welcome.

Questions

NZICA: Shefali Mehta, Chair, NZICA Health and Wellness Sub-Committee

Vedanta Centre: Swami Tadananda, mail@vedanta.nz

> *saṁ gacchadhvaṁ saṁ vadadhvaṁ saṁ vo manāṁsi jānatām*
> Walk together, speak together, and let your minds understand one another. (Rig Veda 10.191.2)