

snapshot Your introduction to a metro Atlanta place of worship

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# A place for spiritual growth

## The Vedanta Center of Atlanta

2331 Brockett Road, Tucker, GA 30084

► Phone: 770-938-6673.

► Web site: [www.vedanta-atlanta.org](http://www.vedanta-atlanta.org).

► Services: 10:30 a.m.-noon Sundays. Classes and discussion on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8-9:30 p.m. Meditation nightly from 6-7 p.m., except Sundays.

► Worship style: Discourse by Swami Yogeshananda or a visiting speaker, group discussion, meditation, some chanting.

► Average attendance: 30.

► Director: Swami Yogeshananda

► Denomination affiliation: Vedanta (in the Hindu fold). The worldwide Vedanta Center is based in India.

### Mission statement

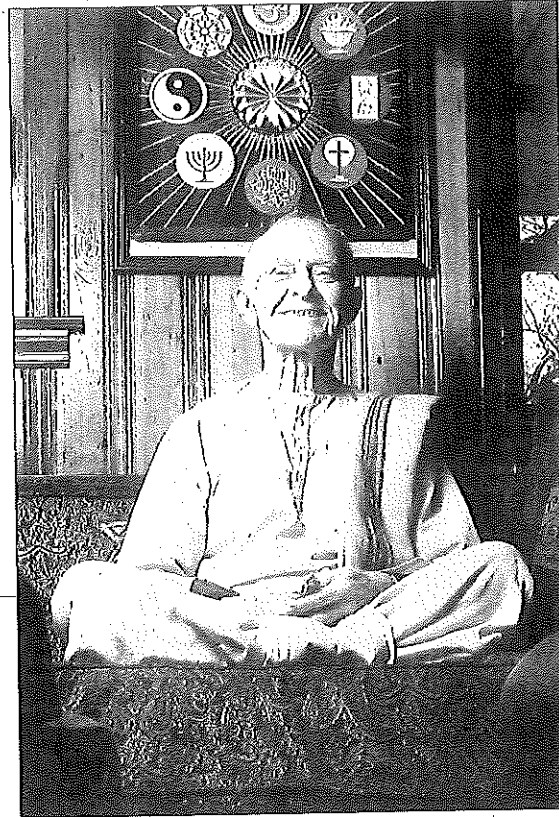
"To awaken individuals to their true nature, which is divine. To provide scriptural and contextual food for the spirit. To assist aspirants to learn to practice personal, spiritual disciplines such as meditation."

### History

The Vedanta Center was established in 1976, and Swami Yogeshananda was asked to move here at the end of 1981 as full-time director. He remembers the ice storm that greeted him that winter. "I wondered where the Southern warmth was," he said, laughing.

The new director held regular meetings in his apartment, until the group outgrew the space in 1994 and began meeting in a rented house. In 1999, enough donations were collected to purchase the current location in Tucker.

"This is a small outpost of a worldwide movement," said the swami, adding that 16 centers and about five monasteries are in the United States. "Vedanta means the truth, which is eternal, unchanging and accessible, and which is found in all the bibles of the world including those of science."



JOEY IVANSCO / Staff

At the Vedanta Center in Tucker, Swami Yogeshananda, 83, leads a small group in the Hindu tradition.

### Director's path

Yogeshananda, 83, was born in Tacoma, Wash., to Christian missionaries. A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, the swami has spent 60 years in monastic life and 36 years in ministry.

"At the age of 22, I recognized that my teacher was the spiritual light that he was because he was a monk," recalled Yogeshananda. "I knew he couldn't be what he was unless he was a monk. He had no attachments, no income. He depended entirely on God. I wanted to be like that."

The swami's service as a conscientious objector during World War II was in civilian public service, mostly at Pennhurst, a facility for 1,500 mentally handicapped men and boys near Philadelphia. Dur-

ing that time, he began looking for a spiritual teacher and found Swami Yatiswarananda in Philadelphia, a monk of the Ramakrishna order.

Yogeshananda, an American monk also of the Ramakrishna order, lived in several monasteries in the United States, India and England, before coming to Atlanta. He has written four books and produces a newsletter that reaches 100 contacts across the country. He serves on the board of directors of the Faith Alliance of Metro Atlanta.

### Ministries

Center members participate in three Atlanta-based interfaith organizations and service projects such as nursing home visits and clothing donations to disabled communities. Certain feasts, known as Pujas, are celebrated in commemoration of events such as Ramakrishna's birthday and the Buddha's birthday.

The center places more emphasis on encouraging individual spiritual growth of each devotee. One Sunday each month is devoted to a meditation workshop. Classes are offered on Tuesday and Thursday nights, and the Center is open for meditation from 6-7 p.m. six days a week.

### Thoughts from the swami

"The center invites persons of faith or no faith to its services. The center wants to encourage people to practice spiritual disciplines and offers help to do so. We revere the great teachers of the world's religions and study their lives and their words," said the swami. "It is not tolerance, it is reverence. We regard each major faith as a path to the same goal. Now that not saying that we regard each religion as the same. We're often misquoted that way. We're saying every religion is a path to the same ultimate goal if one is sincere

— Candice Hannig