

Vedanta Temple Inspires Entertainers, Writers and Artists

By Theresa M. Danna, M.P.W.

*Many are the doors of the spirit,
that lead into the inmost shrine:
And I count the gates of the temple divine,
Since the god of the place is God indeed.*
— From "Doors of the Temple" by Aldous Huxley

These lines of a poem by Aldous Huxley, best known as author of the futuristic novel *Brave New World*, reflect the basic tenets of the Vedanta Society of Southern California: that our real nature is divine, and the true object of human life is to manifest that divinity through any world religion or other spiritual path. Although the Vedanta Temple, nestled between Vine Street and Ivar Avenue north of Franklin (in the vicinity of Hollywood's first film colony), offers devotional rituals resembling Hinduism to those who seek such spiritual practice, it suggests a philosophy more than a religion, based on the ancient Sanskrit scriptures known as the *Vedas*. The word *Veda* means "knowledge" and *anta* means "the end of" or "the goal of."

Vedanta can be described as a search for self-knowledge, as well as the search for God—which can be perceived as an



The Vedanta Society of Southern California was established in 1934 as a nonprofit organization "to promote harmony between Eastern and Western thought, and recognition of the truth in all the great religions of the world."

infinite consciousness and bliss or as a personified deity such as Jesus, Buddha, Krishna or a goddess. Vedantists believe that God is present in all of nature and the universe, and that our personal divinity is one with that universal divinity.

With its offer of "unity through diversity," it is no wonder, then, that so many Hollywood entertainers and other creative personalities have visited the Vedanta complex. Encompassing the tiny Taj Mahal-like temple (built in 1938), there is a bookstore with more than 3,500 titles (including sections on comparative religions and psychology), a monastery,

a convent (the building for which was once the home of actress Jeanette MacDonald), and peaceful gardens; including a bodhi tree—the same type of tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment.

From Huxley to musician George Harrison to actors such as Katherine

McGregor (who played Mrs. Oleson on the "Little House on the Prairie" TV show), artists have been inspired by Vedanta's all inclusive answers to life's questions. The very grounds of the Temple complex, with the gentle aroma of sandalwood incense, seems to be a vortex of creative and intellectual energy.

Sound recording artist Eric Potter, who discovered the Vedanta Temple in 1989 while riding his bicycle in the Hollywood Hills, found deeper meaning in his work after studying Vedanta philosophy and practicing meditation at the Temple.

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at Gower Gulch

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In Loving Memory of Harriette Hughes

We have all lost a beautiful lady. Harriette Hughes charmed us with her style and grace for many years in the neighborhood and in the Beachwood Village Coffee Shop. Her parents owned the large Spanish home across the street from the Beachwood Market for many years. Bill Papalexis brought over the turkey for the holiday dinners. She has left a large void in the neighborhood and in our hearts. She will always live in the memories of those who knew her.

A memorial service was held on May 17, 2002 at the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles followed by a reception at the Fuqua home in Los Feliz. A private internment was held at Forest Lawn on May 19, 2002.

Harriette Hughes has been an active member of the Los Angeles community since she came to Los Angeles on a two week vacation which lasted over 50 years!

Harriette Ruth Steckel was born in Pawhuska, Oklahoma on September 21, 1923 to Harry Christian Steckel and Ruth Johanson Steckel. She was the oldest of three sisters. Her two sisters are Barbara Jean Steckel Surdi and Veran Louise Steckel. She attended college in Oklahoma and Missouri. In 1952 she married



Officer of the California Republican Women's Association, member of Navy Belles, Board Member of the P.E.O. organization, member of the Los Feliz Improvement Association, member of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, and Officer of the Wilshire Country Club.

Harriette went to join her husband on Saturday May 11, 2002. She will be remembered by her family and friends as an example of grace, elegance, love and compassion. She was loved by many and her example and inspiration continue in all of those that she touched.

— Harriette's Family and Friends

floorcovering entrepreneur Arthur Testle Hughes in a prominent gala wedding at the home of her then employer Haig M. Prince, the real estate developer. They were married until his death in 1980. She is survived by her two sisters; her two children Kimberly Ann Hughes Duncan and Bradley Scott Hughes, and her grandchildren Ashley Anne Hughes and Alexandra Danielle Duncan.

Harriette was very active in community, political, and philanthropic organizations. She was a tireless worker and community volunteer and held a number of leadership positions, such as: Former Officer of the Ebell Club of Los Angeles, Board Member of the John and Beverly Stauffer Foundation, Board Member of the National Right to Work Foundation, member of Childhelp USA, former Officer of the Pro America Organization, former



VEDANTA SOCIETY

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"When you study universal principles, you tend to start noticing metaphorical encounters with spirit in your daily life," he said.

One such encounter occurred while working on the film "How to Make an American Quilt." At the time, Eric was trying to grasp the concept of both masculine and feminine deity, also known as Kali-Ma, meaning Divine



Sound engineer Eric Potter found deeper meaning in his film work after studying Vedanta.

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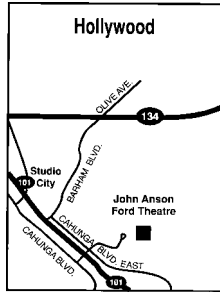
L.A. Arts Open House

Oct. 5, 2002

Centers of Activity

John Anson Ford Theatre

2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East
323-461-3673
"A Celebration of Tradition: Latino Culture in Los Angeles" hosted by Hector Resendez and Kathy Diaz. (Latino food available to purchase.) 11am – 3:30pm



John Anson Ford Theatre

Little Nosh Productions

Hollywood Court Theatre
6817 Franklin Ave.
323-219-9732
"Breakfast at Epiphanies by Melissa Schultz and Out of the Cupboard by Geoffrey Dwyer." An evening of poignant comedies: she's coming up and he's coming out! 8PM

Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions

6522 Hollywood Blvd.
323-957-1777
"The Fourth Annual Altooids Curiously Strong Collection Exhibition includes work by Jesse Bransford, Dave Muller, Shirley Tse, Dread Scott and many others." 6PM – 7PM

Velaslavasy PANORAMA in Hollywood

5553 Hollywood Blvd.
323-464-4108
"Panorama of the Valley of the Smokes depicts a 360 degree vision of what the Southland might have looked like many years ago." Noon – 5PM

There are many other Open House locations throughout L.A. For a complete list, go to www.lacountyarts.org.

Verify Time and Location

Schedules can change. To avoid disappointment verify by calling the phone number listed with the event, logging on to www.lacountyarts.org, or calling the 24-hour hotline: 213-972-3099.

American Film Institute

Mark Goodson Screening Room
2021 N. Western Ave.
323-856-7606
"Delight in a private screening of AFI's 100 years... 100 Passions." 1PM – 4PM

Corita Art Center

5515 Franklin Ave.
323-466-2157
"The World is My Valentine" A Corita-style workshop – an experiment in collage, group work and creativity. 1PM – 4PM

Hollywood Entertainment Museum

7021 Hollywood Blvd.
323-465-7900
"Marlene Dietrich: Forever Young" An exhibition of Dietrich's legacy makes it's exclusive North American appearance. 11AM – 6PM

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Take it slow,
Let our little,
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*** Burma Shave *****

THEATER REPORT

— Continued from page 4
undergo another change. A change that the entire Hollywood community has been hoping for; a respected, legitimate mid-size theater in the heart of Hollywood. The new owners, The Inner City Cultural Center (I am the Producing Director), are placing more than hope on this crucial change. The purchase of the Ivar could mean the difference between life and death for this almost thirty-year-old institution.

To Be Continued....

— Gloria Calomee has been a theatrical producer and actress for more than twenty-five years. She is former producing director for Inner City Cultural Center's New Ivar Theater, and she is currently an associate producer for the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department's Performing Arts Division.

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Mother, who paradoxically symbolizes both war and peace, destruction and protection, death and life.) "I realized how Maya resembled Kali, and then I could better understand the complexity of Kali. I also realized that this was no ordinary job assignment!" From Hollywood's golden age into today's digital age, the appeal of discovering divinity in the ordinary continues to draw those who see a different perspective on life to the Vedanta Temple.

Actress/singer Indira Stefanianna (www.indiring.com), whose credits range from the voice of Daphne in the original "Scooby Doo" cartoon series to the Civic Light Opera, discovered the Vedanta Temple in 1968 while on a serendipitous detour to a party in the neighborhood. "The impact of intellectuals like Huxley, Christopher Isherwood and Gerald Heard was in a cresting wave," she recalls.

"Swami Prabhavananda (founder of the local Vedanta Society) saw many great hearts in the young ones coming to him with long hair, bare feet, different lifestyles. Three decades later, many of us are still at the Temple."

Indira feels that Vedanta is "good for artists who are looking for the truth behind the veil." Since becoming involved with Vedanta, she has "allowed the divine to be in the driver's seat" of her life. Besides feeding her creative and spiritual hunger, she credits Vedanta with helping her be a good mother.

"Coming to Vedanta, I was at last in a free environment to pursue my spiritual studies of all faiths, to see the one in all the great religions. And now my son is growing up in that environment."

Sunday lectures at the Vedanta Temple take place each week at 11 a.m., during which child care is

available. Weekly classes, free and open to anyone interested in Vedanta philosophy, are offered evenings. The Temple is open daily from 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., with special worship services at noon and 6 p.m. The bookstore is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed from 11 a.m. to noon on Sunday and from 1:30 to 2 p.m. all other days). You can learn more about the Vedanta Society by calling (323) 465-7114 or visiting the Temple's Web site at www.vedanta.org.

— Theresa M. Danna has a master's degree in professional writing from University of Southern California and has personally been associated with the Hollywood Vedanta Temple since 1988.



Actress/singer Indira Stefanianna likens Vedanta to "a sort of maypole by which I could organize my wide interests."

"If I were to begin life again, I should want it as it was. I would only open my eyes a little more." — Jules Renard, *Journal*, March 1906, ed. and tr. Louise Bogan and Elizabeth Roget.