

## V. The Swami Prabhavananda Era: The Period of Fruition (1950-1976)

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*Swami Prabhavananda*

### 1. Vedanta Society Activities in the 1950s

**D**uring this decade the membership increased in size from 209 in 1950, to 313 in 1955, and to 336 in 1960. Swami Prabhavananda traveled to India in October 1949, accompanied by three future Pravrajikas (Sarada, Varada, and Prabha) and the future Swami Krishnananda. They returned to Los Angeles on May 24, 1950. Saradaprana described their trip to Jayrambati in a modern bullock cart:

The first thing we visited was Mother in the beautiful Temple they had built for her. About that time they were going to offer the food so we had to leave. The Swamis had arranged for us to pass the night in Mother's own home. Just a few steps from the site of the Temple where Mother was born, is the home where she lived so many years. They took us there, and there was the room she had slept in and worshiped the Master in, and the veranda of the room she had sat cutting vegetables to cook for her children. Across the room were two other rooms, one occupied by older women who had lived with the Mother. She pointed to the different places and tried to make us understand that Mother had sat there; had done this here, etc. The other room was given for us. We felt that we were really Mother's children, and she had taken us in her home and was taking care of us in every way. We took prasad on the side veranda of Mother's Temple.

Prabhaprana wrote that at Vishnupur:

We had the greatest blessing the other day. An old man came to see Swami Prabhavananda, who had met the Master when he was nine years old. He went to get a drink of water four or five times from the lake at Kamarpukur and the Master was there. The Master cupped his hands and he gave him water that way. Imagine! The old man was so full of love. When we took the dust of his feet, he was so overcome with emotion he just clung to Krishna. He also stayed with Holy Mother many times at Kamarpukur. He is the only one we have met who actually knew the Master.<sup>1</sup>



*Pravrajikas Baradaprana, Saradaprana, and Prabhaprana*

One of the reasons for the trip to India was to discuss with the Trustees of Belur Math at a Monk's Conference the need for a convent in India. Swami had been corresponding with a group of nuns who formed the nucleus of the future Sri Sarada Math and he had given them financial support. The General Secretary's opening address emphasized the need for a women's Order to run parallel with the men's Order. Sankarananda produced some of Vivekananda's unpublished letters, which explicitly expressed his desire for a convent and even some of the details of the organization. At Belur Math in 1901, Vivekananda raised the topic of a future Math for women, saying, "With the Holy Mother as the centre of inspiration, a Math is to be established on the eastern bank of the Ganga. As brahmacharins and sadhus will be trained in this Math here, so in the other Math also, brahmacharinis and

sadhvis will be trained" (CW, VII:214). After the Trustees of Belur Math approved the establishment of a women's Math, Prabhavananda sent them the money to purchase the property for the convent. The establishment of the Indian Convent in 1954 fulfilled Swamiji's desire.<sup>2</sup>

During her final five or six years Ida Ansell (Ujjvala, 1877-1955) lived at the Vedanta Society in Hollywood. Formerly, when Swami Vivekananda came to San Francisco in 1900, Ida Ansell made shorthand notes of many of his lectures. They were both members of a party that attended a ship-launching ceremony, she was present at a dinner with the Swami before he gave a talk at the Home of Truth, and they and other devotees lived in tents for a two-week stay at Camp Taylor. She remarked about Swamiji:

How he could speak so often and yet always with such originality is something no one has ever been able to explain. He himself confessed that time after time on his lecture tours he felt exhausted intellectually and incapable of appearing the next day. Then, as his authorized life explains, he would be aided by an inner, sometimes outer, voice suggesting subjects and ideas.<sup>3</sup>

As a member of a small band of students, she lived at Shanti Ashrama with Swami Turiyananda. She learned about the practice of meditation from him, took initiation, and was given the Sanskrit name of Ujjvala (the Shining One). Swami Trigunatita also gave her spiritual instruction, and she interacted with Swami Abhedananda. When Swami Trigunatita was in Los Angeles in May-July 1903, he mailed eleven letters to "dearest Ujjvala."

Ujjvala moved to Southern California in 1924. She was a stenographer at the Building of Public Works, living at 1869 Preston Avenue in the Echo Park neighborhood. She originally met Tony S. Nicholas (Haridas) when he was Swami Trigunatita's part-time attendant in charge of the monastery at the Concord Colony between 1912 and 1915. Due to her condition as a partial invalid caused by T.B. in her childhood, she received brotherly care from Tony in Los Angeles for over twenty years. They also co-owned a lemon grove and both were members of the VSSC. It was during the 1930s that Ujjvala

visited the Vedanta Society in Hollywood. There she met the quiet, retiring, and very approachable Sister Lalita, whom she adored.<sup>4</sup>



*Ida Ansell (Ujjvala)*

Her loyal friend and companion, Tony, passed away in October 1948. Swami Prabhavananda then insisted that she come to live in a room at the Hollywood Vedanta Center. In 1949 or 1950, she became one of the family and assisted with their office work. Swami Yogeshananda revealed:

Ujjvala was almost sacred to some of us as a last link with the age of Swamiji. [She was] lively, game, alert, intelligent, and sometimes pathetic. Ujjvala added much to the life of the center.... Now and then I would coax her into a quiet corner and ask her about those historic days.<sup>5</sup>

After living at the Hollywood Vedanta Center for over five years, Ujjvala passed away in January 1955. She was the sixth intimate disciple of Swami Vivekananda to live on Vedanta Terrace (formerly Franklin Circle) and the fourth to pass away while living there. Swami Vidyatmananda relates that on January 31, 1955:

I was present during her final hours, and I know that Ujjvala was in contact with something or someone divine in her last moments.... Swami Prabhavananda had waited gravely in his room. When I brought him the news, he said, "Her guru came for her."<sup>6</sup>

Another person who witnessed her passing said, "I have seen that what Vedanta teaches about the passing away of a devotee is true." The last word she uttered before she became unconscious was "Mother." Swami Turiyananda once told her, "What you want you will get. If you want entertainment, you will get entertainment. If you want Mother, you will get Mother." As a result of her vigorous activity during the final ten years of her life, Ida Ansell has become a historical personality. Pravrajika Brahma-prana prepared a series of eight articles on Ujjvala for the *Vedanta Kesari* (1990-1991), and Swami Vidyatmananda wrote her biography for *Western Women in the Footsteps of Swami Vivekananda* (1995). After Ujjvala left her physical body, Prabhavananda wrote to a devotee, "In one sense our Hollywood Center is blessed. Here the three beloved disciples of Swamiji breathed their last, and Swamiji had to come personally to carry them. Swamiji is quite familiar with this place and with his own work that is carried on."<sup>7</sup>

After becoming an active Board member in 1939, Bert L. DePry (b. 1903) served for over three decades as the President of the VSSC. His tour of duty lasted from 1950, when he replaced Robert L. Stewart, until his resignation from the Board in 1981. He was the President, Director, and Treasurer of the Los Angeles based U.S. Royalty Oil Corp., Consolidated Royalties, Inc., and the Clark Oil Co.<sup>8</sup>

The May 13, 1951 edition of *The Los Angeles Times* included a twenty-inch long spread on the Hollywood Center. It described freeway crews clearing away homes not owned by the Society that were across the street from the temple. Building the eight-lane Hollywood Freeway from 1951 to 1953 within only ten feet of the Vedanta Society's south property line was no doubt a major event for the Vedanta Society. At the request of the Society, in September 1953 Ivar Avenue in front of the temple was renamed Vedanta Place, and in March 1954, Franklin Circle between Vine Street and Ivar Avenue became Vedanta Terrace.<sup>9</sup>

Potential expansion to the south was cut off, so Swami Prabhavananda decided to gradually acquire the property to the north of Vedanta Terrace. Over time, houses were purchased to provide an ashram with living quarters for the growing monastic community, as well as rentals for devotees who wished to live near the temple and participate in its activities. In the summer of 1954 the Society acquired the beautiful three-bedroom house at 2001 N. Vine Street that borders Vedanta Terrace and, as a consequence of the growth of the monastic household (Sister Amiya counted a total of twenty-one monks and nuns in Southern California), four of the nuns moved into the newly acquired home, called Sri Sarada Bhavan. In the 1950s, property was purchased on Vedanta Terrace, Vedanta Place, and two homes on the 1900 block of Vine Street. The Society now owned all the property between the freeway and Vedanta Terrace.<sup>10</sup> The future Swami Anamananda (1914 or

1915-1993) joined the Order, followed by John Yale (1913-2000), a successful Chicago book publisher, in April of 1950. Yale later said, "When I met Swami he was then about fifty-five years of age.... He was most charming, with a big smile. I forgot instantly I was talking to an Oriental; he was just a most intelligent, permissive, engaging man."<sup>11</sup>

Yale (the future Swami Vidyatmananda) utilized his business skills to significantly expand the Vedanta Society's bookshop. At the time it consisted of a table in the back foyer of the temple, with a few books displayed on it. In January of 1952 the Society opened a new bookshop in the old Vivekananda Home. It was filled with a rich assortment of spiritual literature from all the great religions of the world. Yale also initiated and built up a thriving mail order business that sells retail to the general public and wholesale to bookstores. On June 21, 1952 the first Vedanta Catalog came out. It listed two hundred titles, together with pictures of spiritual personalities, bookmarks, phonograph records, and various types of incense. Gradually, a large portion of the Vivekananda Home was transferred into a public bookshop and office. In the office, monastics conducted the Society's business, maintained membership records and information services, scheduled appointments, and handled arrangements for the public meetings. Two new rooms were added in the summers of 1954 and 1957.<sup>12</sup>

The future Pravrajika Shraddhaprana joined the convent in 1954. Being more than fifty years old, she was the first over-aged nun to be accepted in the convent. She joined with the understanding that she would never receive brahmacharya vows, but years later, as she had done so much service and was such a valuable member of the community, Swami decided to give her monastic vows. She lived to be over ninety years of age.<sup>13</sup>

Due to the loud freeway noise, in the summer of 1954 a forced-air ventilating system was installed so that the windows could remain closed. The high-powered system furnished warm and cold air as needed, and it completely exchanged the air in the temple every four minutes. To muffle the noise from the nearby freeway and to insure quiet during lectures, classes, and meditation periods, soundproof glass panes were put in all the windows and a curtain at the entrance to the lobby was installed. Years later, two additional lanes were added to the freeway, at which time a cement wall was constructed to block off much of the increased noise.<sup>14</sup>

### After 1955

Swami Vandanananda (1915-2007), originally from Bangalore in South India, became an assistant minister in Southern California from July 22, 1955 until September 1969. An assistant was needed because of the geographical extension of the Society and the growing membership. He replaced Swami Aseshananda, who had moved to Portland to take charge of the

center there. Vandanananda's mother was a disciple of Holy Mother, as was his grandfather, who later took monastic vows as Swami Srivasananda. Swami Vandanananda had been initiated in 1937 by Swami Vijnanananda (1868-1938), a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and President of the Ramakrishna Order 1937-1938. Prior to coming to the U.S., Vandanananda had edited the *Prabuddha Bharata* from 1950 to 1954, and in California he was called upon to be an editor for *Vedanta and the West* 1963-1969.

The booklet *Vedanta in Southern California* 1960 mentioned that Swami Vandanananda was "much loved and respected by all the men; he quietly rules the group, patiently answering all questions from the most philosophical to the most practical. The swamis give classes in the Hindu scriptures for the brahmacharis periodically."

Vandanananda was very personable and made an extensive effort to establish rapport with devotees. Large audiences were drawn to his lectures, particularly when he discussed Indian psychology from a modern point of view. Before the swami returned to India, some five hundred people attended his going home party. Afterward, and for over thirty years, devotees made pilgrimages to India to visit him. After returning to India, he was appointed head of the New Delhi Center in 1970, and then General Secretary of the

Ramakrishna Order at Belur Math in 1979. He retained the post until 1985. Most of Vandanananda's retirement years were spent at Belur Math. Concerning the present book, the ninety-year-old swami wrote, "I wish the book all success."<sup>15</sup> After his



Swami Vandanananda

passing, the website for the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi stated, “The Swami’s erudition and intellectual abilities, combined with excellent communication skills and affable manners, won him the love and respect of many. He was a forceful speaker and was also known for being punctilious in the discharge of his duties.”<sup>16</sup>

Cliff Johnson (Bhuma Chaitanya), a monastic at the VSSC for ten years, gave the following reminiscence:

Swami Vandanananda had one of the most inquiring minds I have ever known. This was apart from his obvious spiritual qualities, which certainly recommended him. But his desire to know all manners of things, to ponder endlessly and discuss a variety of subjects played a predominate role in his personality.... The Swami also possessed a compassionate heart. I recall one incident. During the protests of the 1960s, a young woman tragically set herself afire. Next to her was a picture of Ramakrishna, which was printed in the newspapers. The Swami visited the young woman in the hospital and blessed her. She died the following day.... He will long be remembered for a full life of service, leaving behind a spiritual family of many devotees and friends.<sup>17</sup>

Rina Chand, a devotee of many years, mentioned that in 1965 she was taking a class on Comparative Religion at Pasadena City College. The professor’s explanation of Hinduism created much confusion and very negative impressions on the students. Rina asked the instructor if Swami Vandanananda could be invited to address the class one day. The instructor readily agreed and invited him. She was fortunate enough to go with him and was able to watch as all the students listened to his lecture with rapt attention and clear understanding. Later, a few students told her that in one hour, Swami’s lecture taught them more about Hinduism than they had learned in all of the previous classes. Rina observed the instructor was also very grateful to Swami and very gracious to him.<sup>18</sup>

Prema Chaitanya (formerly John Yale, to be Swami Vidyatmananda) was greatly aided in the bookshop by Ralph Erickson (1891-1974). For many years, from 1956 or 1957 through January 1974, Mr. Erickson was in charge of the mail order department of the Vedanta Press and bookshop, both the wholesale and retail divisions. For thirty years before retiring, he ran the book division of Robinson’s Department Store in downtown Los Angeles. He was an ideal karma yogi, working thirty hours a week in the bookshop without pay. He worked by following the philosophy, “There is nothing in the world I would rather do than sell books.... There is a right book for every person if you can find it.” He had the highest regard for Prabhavananda and his writings, but he did not seek initiation. Because of Mr. Erickson’s gentle, selfless nature, Prabhavananda quoted Maharaj’s words about Mahatma Gandhi, “By sheer goodness Mr. Erickson was going toward perfection.”<sup>19</sup>

During the 1950s three ecumenical events that Swami Prabhavananda participated in were important enough to be covered in the *Los Angeles Times*. In 1957 twenty-five hundred Southern Californians of different faiths visited Bridges Auditorium at Claremont College for the Pomona Valley “Festival of Faith” held to pray for world peace. Prabhavananda represented Hinduism at the event. It was sponsored by the College and forty-five different churches. One picture in their booklet shows five religious leaders centered around and gazing at Prabhavananda, who is obviously the center of attention. Goodwin Knight, the Republican Governor of California from 1953 to 1959, was one of the keynote speakers. Afterwards, Dr. James A. Blaisdell, the founder of Claremont College in 1925, asked Swami’s advice about starting a College of Religion and how it could be accomplished.<sup>20</sup>

After becoming a monk at the Hollywood Center in the early 1940s, Brahmachari Krishna (George Fitts, the future Swami Krishnananda), a graduate of the 1930 class at Harvard Law School, was now considered ready to become a sannyasin. It was decided in India that he had “developed those qualities of self-effacement, thoughtfulness, cogency, and devotion that made him eligible to become a monk.” Krishna traveled to Belur Math in India to become a swami on February 20, 1958. The monastics there wrote to Prabhavananda saying that Krishnananda “had been utterly transformed by sannyas in a single day.” He was the first Westerner to become a swami of the Ramakrishna Order in thirty-five years, and the third to receive sannyas at Belur Math. According to Swami Vidyatmananda’s data, the Westerners who became swamis of the Ramakrishna Order were: Swamis Abhayananda (New York, 1895) one of Swami Vivekananda’s women disciples, Kripananda (New York, 1895), Yogananda (New York, 1896), Yogeshananda (San Francisco, before 1923), Atulananda (Shanti Ashrama, India, 1923),

Krishnananda (Southern California, 1958), Atmaghananda (New York, 1959), Chidrupananda (San Francisco, 1962), Anamananda (Southern California, 1964), and Vidyatmananda (Southern California, 1964).<sup>21</sup>

In a personal letter in 1958, the novelist Henry Miller (1891-1980) wrote, “Give my best to Swami Prabhavananda, please. He probably doesn’t remember our one and only meeting. But he did much for me then—unforgettable.” Four years later, Miller wrote to the Vedanta Society:

I can only say that Swami Vivekananda remains for me one of the very great influences in my life—one of the great exemplars. I first heard and read about him in 1911 or 1912.... It was long after that that I read of Ramakrishna.... And give my best wishes to Gerald Heard and that dear soul Swami Prabhavananda whom I shall remember to the end of my days.

In 1945 Miller had written *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*. Referring to Swami Prabhavananda in it, he writes, “The most masterful individual, the only person I met whom I could truly call ‘a great soul,’ was a quiet Hindu swami in Hollywood.”<sup>22</sup>

Swami Prabhavananda invited Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), the noted scholar and later President of India, for lunch at the center. A July 13, 1959 reception was held for S. Radhakrishnan at the Ambassador Hotel. It was attended by Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley, and other distinguished guests including Will Durant, author (with his wife Ariel) of *The Story of Civilization*, *The Story of Philosophy*, and other works. About Sri Ramakrishna, Radhakrishnan observed, “Under the inspiration of this great teacher there has been a powerful revival of social compassion.... He has helped to raise from the dust the fallen standards of Hinduism, not in words merely, but in works also.”

When Swami Prabhavananda and the five pravrajikas traveled to India in 1959, Swami Ritajananda came to Southern California on a temporary assignment to substitute for him and alternate lectures with Vandanananda. He liked Southern California so well that he decided to remain as a permanent assistant swami after Prabhavananda returned, from August 1959 until November 1961.



Swami Ritajananda

Swami Ritajananda (1906-1994) had received initiation from Swami Shivananda (1854-1934), a direct disciple of Ramakrishna, and sannyas in 1940 from Swami Virajananda, a monastic disciple of Vivekananda. He managed the Ramakrishna Mission schools and orphanage in Sri Lanka from 1942 to 1945. He became the Proctor of the Vivekananda Students’ Home in Madras 1946-1954, at which time Nikhilananda requested him to become his assistant minister in New York City (1954-1959).

Ritajananda was a very personable and approachable assistant swami who was deeply loved and appreciated by Swami Prabhavananda. At the dining table, he had a great store of tales about his experiences with different swamis. He wrote ten articles for *Vedanta in the West* (1960-1966). Prabhavananda realized that Ritajananda had all the qualifications to be in charge of a center himself, so a few years after the death of Siddheswarananda (1897-1957) at the Gretz Center near Paris, France, he arranged that

Ritajananda become the second President of the Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna. Ritajananda had already mastered six languages, so adding French to his repertoire was easy for him. While at Gretz, the swami planted the seeds of Vedanta in Germany, Italy, Spain, and other European countries, and he received a very warm welcome when he returned for a visit to the Hollywood Center. He wrote the biographical *Swami Turiyananda Life and Teachings* (1963).<sup>23</sup> Years later, Swami Ritajananda told Cliff Johnson in Paris that his predecessor Siddheswarananda had been of a wonderfully charismatic nature and the devotees there were very devoted to him. It took a while for Ritajananda to earn their devotion and trust.

Some devotees expressed their opinion of Swami Prabhavananda. After Jane Molard first met Prabhavananda at the Hollywood Vedanta Center, she recalled, “There was something different about the swami. He seemed very calm and wise. We spoke to him of our considerable personal problems, but he didn’t seem to find them at all upsetting or unusual. Nor did he say, ‘Do this, do that,’ as everyone else did. As I think back, he didn’t offer us any solution at all as ordinary people understand the word. But his very presence started us thinking. We read several books, including *The Eternal Companion* and [and its French version] *Discipline Monastique*, and found we were interested.”<sup>24</sup>

Joan Rayne, a professional writer who was a nun in Southern California for a year, said of her meeting with Prabhavananda:

A few days after my arrival I was invited to lunch and meet Swami Prabhavananda. He scared me a little. He still does. Or perhaps scared is the wrong word; I think what I mean is that in his presence I felt a sense of awe and reverence, which is mixed up with a lot of other emotions. He conveyed so much love and understanding that I felt immediately drawn to him.... I sought a private interview with the swami, and had to wait several weeks for an appointment. When I finally sat with him in his study, he gazed at me gravely from behind his desk and asked quietly: "What can I do for you?" I was dumbstruck. I had prepared in my mind quite a speech about myself and my reasons for my seven-thousand-mile pilgrimage to Hollywood, but it was all forgotten.... I told him I wished to learn how to meditate, and he asked me what was my conception of God. "Oh, the Impersonal, Swami. I think I visualize God as the ocean or sky or something very vast." "Is there any holy personality that appeals to you?" "Well, yes, I've always had a great admiration for Buddha." He gave me a few instructions. Then I asked him if he would accept me as his disciple and initiate me one day. (I had read about such things). "Gladly," he replied. And that was the end of the conversation which had lasted less than ten minutes.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Vedanta Society Activities in the 1960s

During the 1960s, there was a steady increase in attendance at both the Hollywood and Santa Barbara Temples. A closed-circuit television system was set up in Hollywood so that an overflow crowd could hear and see the lectures in the Green House living room. During Sunday lectures in Santa Barbara, people sat in the aisles and on the steps leading to the podium. A new influx of promising probationary monks and nuns entered the monastery and convent. By 1964 membership had grown to 450. Devotee appointments with Swami Prabhavananda in Hollywood were generally held in the small study to the right of the shrine in the temple. Occasionally he met people in his bedroom, which was located on the west half of the Head Swami's present living quarters.<sup>26</sup>

Clementine Rigby (b. 1912), a woman from Belgium, wrote the following "Reminiscences" after she had attended her first Swami Prabhavananda lecture in March 1960:

I started to sob uncontrollably in front of these strangers around who probably wondered what was happening to me. The sobs were controlled, but tears continued to roll on my cheeks. While this was taking place, a strong thought fortified itself in my mind: "This Swami has what I have been looking for all these years. I have to see him again and ask for it." I felt for him a kind of love that I never experienced before except for my little infant Jesus, companion of my youth. [After the lecture at the door] with a smile that I was never to forget he took my hand and holding it for a moment he said: "Ah! You came!" Bewildered I said: "Yes thank you for a beautiful lecture, I will come back to see you again."... I was in such a state of happiness, I could say wholeness, that I wanted it to last.<sup>27</sup>

Many members expressed a desire to live close to the temple where they could easily take part in the religious activities of the Society. To meet this need in Hollywood, a twenty-year expansion program of the Vedanta property began in 1951 and continued until 1970. To begin the decade in 1960-1961, a fourteen-unit Apartment at 2000 N. Ivar Avenue was built. The architect for the apartment, Raymond Kappe (b. 1927) became an internationally recognized architect and a member of the Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (FAIA) Hall of Fame in 2004. The builder was Ted Tyler (1916 or 17-2007) of Pasadena.<sup>28</sup>

The lot had been purchased in 1954, but building was delayed because of the freeway construction and the long-term noise problems it created. When it was finished, it provided nearby housing for the Society's devotees, a new source of revenue, and a useful redevelopment for the Hollywood neighborhood. It received Honorable Mention For Excellence in Design and Livability, one of just twelve apartments in the United States to receive an award. The American Institute of Architects, *House and Home*, and *Life* magazine (August 1963) co-sponsored the competition. Judges were impressed with its "use of space-capturing extensions like deep roof overhangs, outriggers, free-floating fascias, balconies, outside stairs, and

patio fencing.” As constructed, the westside “end wall presents an almost solid facade to the roar of traffic from a nearby freeway.”<sup>29</sup>

During 1962-1963 a home and two duplexes were purchased between 6317 and 6333 Vedanta Terrace. The long-range goal to acquire all of the homes on Vedanta Terrace was now consummated. Next, in 1965, the Vedanta Society bought two lots west of the convent on Longview Avenue. The original plan was to construct a new multi-million dollar temple on them, but they now serve as a flower garden for the shrine. The remaining three graceful homes, on the west side of the 2000 block of North Vine Street, up to Longview Avenue, were purchased between 1966 and 1970. These included the present Vedanta Archive building.<sup>30</sup> The Society’s income was and still is derived from four primary sources: the rental units; dues and contributions; bookshop and Vedanta Press revenues; and interest, dividends and sales of property and stocks and bonds.

With devotees living at most of the residences on Vedanta Terrace, an ashram atmosphere was created. Dedicated lay members formed a spiritual community with strong interpersonal relations. That had always been the goal: not just a collection of individuals, but a vibrant, integrated congregation linked by dedication and foresight, sustained by friendship and shared experience.

Dorothy Frederica Mercer (1901-1962) was a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda and held a job as an Instructor of English at the City College of San Francisco for many years. She published on seventeen occasions in *Vedanta and the West* (1946-1965) and appeared in John Yale’s *What Vedanta Means to Me* (1961).

Dorothy had the good fortune of being “born into Vedanta.” As a little girl, Swami Trigunatita had held her on his lap and deeply impressed her. Once every week her family went to see Trigunatita at the Hindu Temple and in return, he would occasionally visit them. Dorothy attended all of Swami Abhedananda’s lectures and classes in the San Francisco area during the 1918-1920 period. She recalled: “Swami Abhedananda was tall, handsome, austere, and of a commanding presence. An eloquent, scholarly, and well-organized lecturer, he addressed hundreds every week, including many eminent San Franciscans.”

Approaching the end of her life, Mercer told Prabhavananda, that she was maintaining, every moment, the recollectedness of Sri Ramakrishna. She said: “I know that Swami Trigunatita is going to come for me.’ And this is how, six days later, it was.”<sup>31</sup>

In the *Pacific Spectator* (Winter 1956) journal, Dorothy Mercer made the following statement:

Swami Prabhavananda is psychologically astute and profoundly kind, and in the subject matter of his lectures pre-eminently practical for spiritual aspirants. Impartial love and understanding mark his teachings: no one is too young or too old for his attention, too stupid or too intellectual, too important or too inconsequential.

For many years Swami Prabhavananda spent a good part of the summer months at a devotee’s house on the Pacific Ocean. Swamis came from all over the United States to visit, staying for varying lengths of time. Many were disciples of Swami Brahmananda and Holy Mother, who would spend many hours talking about their experiences with the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. No swami made more summer visits to Southern California than Pavitrananda (1896-1977), the head of the New York Vedanta Society (the West side Center, the original Center). He appeared as a guest speaker in Southern California in 1951 and 1954, and for the eighteen consecutive summers of 1956-1973, until poor health prevented his visits. Swami Pavitrananda wrote nine articles for *Vedanta and the West* over a thirty-year period (1938-1968), and he authored the greatly appreciated book *Common Sense About Yoga* in 1946. Initiated by Swami Brahmananda, Pavitrananda joined the Order in 1922 and received monastic vows from Swami Shivananda the following year. He worked as Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* from 1931 to 1934, was President of Advaita Ashrama in Mayavati 1937-1947, and became a member of the Board of Trustees of the Ramakrishna Order in 1947. Swami Pavitrananda directed the oldest Vedanta Center in the U.S. from 1951-1977. It had been established in New York City in 1894 by Swami Vivekananda. Upon Pavitrananda’s passing, he was described in the *Prabuddha Bharata* (December 1977) as “much-loved and respected by his brother-monks, by devotees, and by his disciples. He maintained a spirit of independence and aimed at precision and perfection in everything he said or did.”<sup>32</sup>

Swami Prabhavananda was featured in the Hindi illustrated magazine *Age of Religion (Dharma Yuga)* April 29, 1962:

Regarding the period he has spent in the United States, Swami Prabhavananda is completely satisfied. He says, “These Americans are very wonderful people. That is why I decided that since I have to live and work with them, I too should become an American, I have therefore taken U.S. citizenship.”

Swami’s virtues have made him very popular among his followers. Though possessing spiritual qualities, pompousness has never touched him. He loves to mix and work freely with everyone, and he has a very jolly and smiling nature. He also possesses a great business sense. To everything that is beneficial either to the society or to his followers, he gives his complete attention. That is why his friends consult him, not only in spiritual matters, but in practical problems as well.

In response to an invitation from the Vivekananda Centenary Committee in Calcutta, Prabhavananda traveled to India 1963-1964 to preside over several conferences held in honor of the hundredth anniversary of Vivekananda’s birth. During the winter months, from December 18, 1963 until February 1964, he was accompanied by both Swami Krishnananda and Christopher Isherwood, who was researching his own upcoming book on Ramakrishna. Swami Prabhavananda and Isherwood visited the Star Theatre, where Girish Ghosh used to direct and act in the plays he wrote, and they saw an old painting of Sri Ramakrishna and Girish still hanging there.

The “Swami Vivekananda Centenary: A Parliament of Religions” was held in Calcutta from December 29 to January 5. Swami Prabhavananda delivered the Presidential Address and explained that attempts to bring all people under one religion have failed in the past and will fail today. Following Vivekananda’s idea of a “universal religion,” it is necessary that people should aspire to be “men of God” and not Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains, or Sikhs.

Prabhavananda was also the President of the Calcutta and Madras sessions of the Vivekananda Centenary celebration. The eighteen-day Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Celebration (January 10-27, 1964) was held at the Ramakrishna Math in Madras (now Chennai).



*Swami Sastrananda*

After visiting Jayrambati and Kamarpukur, Prabhavananda was accorded a special ceremony at Brahmananda College in Vishnupur. He also spoke at Vishnupur High School where his brother was Headmaster. After spending two months primarily in Bengal and Madras, Swamis Prabhavananda and Krishnananda returned to the U.S. They had been cordially received and the trip was considered to be a great success.<sup>33</sup>

Swami Sastrananda (1917-2003), a native of South India, worked in Bangalore for eight years before coming to Southern California. Upon his arrival in Los Angeles, the summer of 1964 until the spring of 1967, there was an abundance of resident swamis. A Tuesday night class on the *Bhagavatam* was added 1964-1967. In 1966 Sastrananda stopped at the Seattle Center during a proposed return trip to India, and then after attending a dedication service in Chicago, he heard that Swami Prabhavananda had a heart attack. Sastrananda returned to Hollywood to help out for several months. When he did return to India, he became the Director of the Ramakrishna Mission Centers in Chandigarh and Singapore for about two decades.<sup>34</sup>

### After 1965

Swamis Prabhavananda and Vandanananda undertook speaking engagements with high school, community college, and university groups. Prabhavananda was also invited to appear as a guest on television and radio host shows. One of these was a February 4, 1965 dialogue series in Santa Barbara called “Ferment in Religions of the World” sponsored by the Catholic Human Relations Council. The Director of the Adult Education Division later wrote to Swami Prabhavananda:

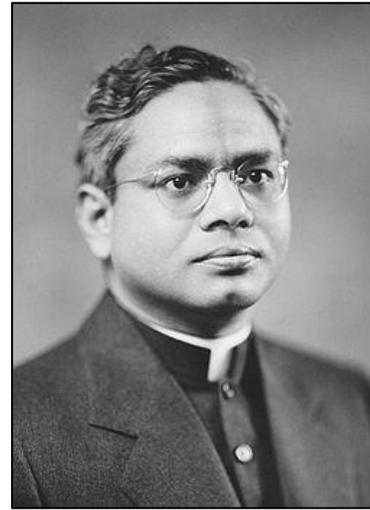
We have many enthusiastic comments about your lecture, and it is being broadcast over our local radio station KTMS tonight. The audience was unusually attentive, showing themselves to be enraptured by your talk. Even after the five-minute break, not a soul left the hall.... the turnout for your talk was the largest to date.

Pravrajika Varadaprana said about it, “Some Franciscan monks heard him speak there and invited him to their monastery, where he had an intimate talk with the monks about spiritual life and answered their many questions.”<sup>35</sup>

In 1965, the Hollywood shrine room was completely refurbished for the first time since the inception of the temple in 1938. New fabrics and a dark marble base for the shrine were installed, and an iron grille replaced wooden doors so that the altar could be viewed during the daytime. That same year the chapel was enlarged, mahogany paneling was placed on the walls, and stained glass was put on three sides of the room. The planning and selection was done by the renowned California architect Lulah Maria Riggs, with the assistance of Jim Barnett (the future Swami Buddhananda). Three years later, the temple was water blasted and painted during the summer months.<sup>36</sup>



Swami Budhananda



Swami Ashokananda

Swami Budhananda (1917-1983) (not the above mentioned Buddhananda), an editor of the *Vedanta Kesari* 1951-1956, served as an assistant minister at the Vedanta Society of New York under Swami Nikhilananda 1959-1964. He became an assistant minister in Southern California from Fall 1965 to Summer 1966, though as early as July 1964 he offered regular lectures at the center. While he was in the U.S., he collected numerous books written by the great Western mystics. When he returned to India, Swami Budhananda held the positions of President of Advaita Ashrama 1969-1976 and headed the New Delhi centre in the capital city 1976-1983. An outstanding scholar, he wrote many books.<sup>37</sup> Three short, practical, and very popular books are: “The Mind and Its Control,” “Overcoming Anger,” and “Will-Power and Its Development.”

Swami Prabhavananda paid a visit to Swami Ashokananda (1893-1969) in San Francisco in November 1965. The friendship between the two swamis became renewed, almost as if it had never been interrupted. They had co-founded the magazine *Voice of India* (January 1938) that later was renamed *Vedanta and the West*, and they were united in common cause to maintain and protect American Convents. Some swamis at the Belur Math did not understand the special requirements of the Western monastic. For example, many Westerners did not find out about Vedanta until they had reached their thirtieth birthday, so both swamis wanted to keep the maximum age of a new monastic at less than thirty-six instead of the Indian requirement of thirty. The two swamis were allowed an independence of action by Belur Math, partly due to their many accomplishments, but we are reminded of Swami Vivekananda’s letter to Alasinga in 1895, “We have no organization, nor want to build any. Each one is quite independent to teach, quite free to preach whatever he or she likes.... Individuality is my motto” (CW, VII:487).

Ashokananda took the vow of sannyas in 1923 from Swami Shivananda, the second President of the Order, and in 1932 he became the revered and highly successful leader of the Vedanta Society of Northern California. Prabhavananda and Ashokananda were the two most successful swamis in the U.S., expanding their organizations and having both monasteries and convents. Ashokananda added sub-centers in Berkeley and Sacramento, a retreat at Olema, and a new temple in San

Francisco during his thirty-seven years as swami-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of Northern California. Yogeshananda wrote:

His meditation was unforgettable. He sat on the mat with eyes closed and hands resting together on his lap; gradually his breathing became slower until I could not detect, strain as I might, that he was breathing at all. In this way Swami Ashokananda remained for a long time, until the “vibrations” in the room seemed to intensify so much I thought my head would burst.... Listeners were very much moved, even overwhelmed by the swami’s speaking. At one period I simply could not avoid the embarrassment of tears streaming down my cheeks and I was not alone.... By 1965, when I left for India, the attendance when he spoke on Sunday mornings was commonly 275.<sup>38</sup>

The nuns in Hollywood held many important positions in the organization at that time: Treasurer of the Society who took care of the rentals (Yogaprana), Manager and Assistant Manager of the Vedanta Press and of the Bookshop (Anandaprana), secretary to the swamis, Sunday School supervisor, director of the seventeen-voice Hollywood Women’s Choir from 1963 until 1977 (Bhaktiprana), as well as shrine pujarinis, and puja cooks serving hundreds of devotees.<sup>39</sup>

Swami Prabhavananda had a mild heart attack in August 1966. He was transferred from the hospital to a convalescent home and was not expected to resume public activities for some time. His next scheduled lecture was not until the following year, on March 26, 1967. When his health returned, Swami resumed public speaking duties until he was hospitalized again in March 1968 for three weeks because of a cold that led to serious complications.<sup>40</sup>

In November 1966 a large two-storied building within a block of the temple at the corner of Vine Street and Longview Avenue was purchased for a new Hollywood Monastery. On August 4, 1967, on the occasion of the birthday of Swami Ramakrishnananda, a monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, the Vedanta Society formally dedicated the Ramakrishna Monastery at 2027 N. Vine Street. A special worship in the temple and a homa fire ceremony were held in the living room of the new monastery. Swamis Prabhavananda, Vandanananda, Asaktananda, and Pavitrananda performed the worship service and the *viraja homa*. The Spanish-style house was renovated by the monastics without the use of professional help. It functioned as a separate unit, the monks preparing all of their meals and taking care of the household duties.<sup>41</sup> About ten monks remained there until 1974, after which the building became the Sarada Convent in Hollywood.

On October 24, 1967, Swami Prabhavananda, Christopher Isherwood, and the Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health appeared on the nightly one-hour television Les Crane interview show on Channel 11 television. The central theme was the use of LSD and other hallucinogenic drugs in relation to spiritual experiences. Prabhavananda spoke vehemently against the use of hallucinogenic drugs. A large number of people throughout the nation viewed the show.<sup>42</sup>

### 3. Vedanta Society Activities 1970-1976

Final vows of renunciation were received by the American monk Swamis Amohananda (Bimal), Bhadrananda (Amal), and Tadatmananda (Nirmal) at Belur Math on February 27, 1971. Swami Bhadrananda (1917-2000) had been raised in England as a child laborer in the coal mines during his teens, became a male nurse in the British Army Medical Corps, spent four years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp during the Second World War, barely escaping execution, and in 1958 wound up spending the latter half of his life in a Vedanta Monastery in Southern California. He was a devotee of Jesus Christ. Since he had medical training, he could take care of the medical needs of several visiting swamis. During Prabhavananda’s final illness, he nursed his guru for two years in Hollywood.<sup>43</sup>

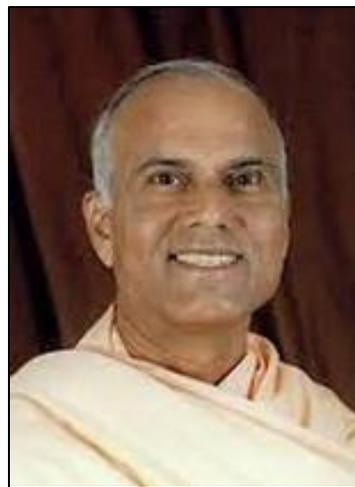
In 1969 Los Angeles City authorities requested some religious leaders to assist in easing school tensions that had arisen in Los Angeles. These officials soon realized that it would be a good idea to meet regularly, so they formed the Interreligious Council of Southern California (IRC). The Council was composed of representatives from four bodies: Los Angeles Council of Churches, Southern California Council of Churches, the Board of Rabbis, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese. To expand the scope of their organization, they invited the Islamic Center of Southern California, and then the Buddhist Federation of Los Angeles, to join their group. The purpose of the Council was stated: “To provide an opportunity at the interfaith level to deal with issues which affect the total religious community.... To enhance the respect of the community for its religious

leaders by the understanding and respect they show toward each other.” It was the desire of the IRC President, Rabbi Alfred Wolf, to have the most inclusive interfaith Council in the country. Wishing to broaden their membership in 1972, they asked the Indian Consulate in San Francisco whom they would suggest to represent Hinduism. The Vedanta Society was recommended.

Royale Vadakin, a Catholic, met with Swami Prabhavananda and explained what their purpose and activities were. Prabhavananda liked the idea and appointed Swami Asaktananda who was an assistant as the official IRC representative of Hinduism. The Council furnished an important organizational link for the Vedanta Society with the outside religious community. Asaktananda attended the meetings twice, and recommend that the Society join. Asaktananda became its Vice-President.



*Swami Asaktananda*



*Swami Chetanananda*

Swami Asaktananda who was an assistant minister of the Vedanta Society of Southern California from February 1967 to July 1975, returned to India to assume leadership of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Narendrapur in West Bengal. The ashrama has a monastic staff of about thirty, resident staff of more than three hundred, and a total employee strength of more than twelve hundred workers. Educational facilities include a secondary school, technical school, the Ramakrishna Mission Residential College, the Blind Boys' Academy, and an agriculture training center. Social services include a charitable dispensary and a hospital that treats over sixty-thousand cases a year, rural development, urban slum development, and rural agricultural training. Following the spirit of Swami Vivekananda's ideas of service, Asaktananda had the expertise and vast experience in the field of relief to disaster victims and assistance to rural areas. He returned to visit the VSSC in March 1989, and in 1999-2000, in conjunction with other speaking engagements in the area. For supervising relief work in rural India, he received the 1999 Albert Schweitzer Award, given by the International Association for Religious Freedom in Vancouver, BC.<sup>44</sup>

*Vedanta Voices* at the Hollywood Monastery expressed its appreciation of Swami Asaktananda:

He was a wonderful host to many monastics and devotees who visited India helping them adjust and find their way. He also assisted various humanitarian efforts. One group was ASTI (American Service to India). In fact, Kalyani (Barbara Piner) was in the ashram on behalf of ASTI at the time of his passing. Though he could be firm, Swami was much loved by the students at Narendrapur as well as by devotees in India and the West. His affection, concern and support for people earned him many friends and admirers. He will be greatly missed.<sup>45</sup>

In 1975, after Asaktananda returned to India, he was replaced by Swami Chetanananda, who became the Vice-President of the Interreligious Council of Southern California in 1977. Chetanananda formerly worked in the editorial and publication

department of Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati in the Himalayas and at Calcutta (now Kolkata). He came to the VSSC as a replacement for Swami Vandanananda and began lecturing in March 1971. When Chetanananda first arrived in Los Angeles, seventy to eighty devotees were waiting for him at the airport. A stranger who was not a member of the Vedanta Society started pushing people aside to grab his hand. He asserted, "I do not know who you are, but you must be very important since so many people are waiting for you. Let me shake hands with you first." That was his initial reception in Los Angeles. The swami's lectures drew large crowds and were very popular with Westerners.<sup>46</sup>

The following year, in April 1978, a monthly meeting of the IRC was held at the VSSC in Hollywood. Sister Mary Jane Vogler, the Regional President of the National Assembly of Women Religious, held a meeting with a Vedanta nun, while Rabbi Wolf and a friend looked over the books on Judaism in the bookshop. A stream of religious leaders, including two turbaned Sikh representatives, informally toured the Vedanta Society grounds.<sup>47</sup>



Swami Nikhilananda

In an indirect way, the VSSC owes much to Swami Nikhilananda (1895-1973). An erudite scholar with a dynamic personality, he attracted affluent and creative people who proved beneficial to the Southern California Center. When he came to the U.S., he gave some relics to Swami Prabhavananda. He and Swami Akhilananda, to whom Nikhilananda had become assistant to in 1931, founded a new Vedanta Society in Washington, D.C. on October 20, 1940. Prabhavananda spoke at Nikhilananda's Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, and it was through Nikhilananda, at a later date that Swami Prabhavananda first met Spencer Kellogg, in 1941. It was Spencer Kellogg who donated the Santa Barbara property to the Vedanta Society. In the same year, Italian Prince Andrea Boncampagni-Ludovici came to the Hollywood Center and said he was sent by Nikhilananda. The money donated to the center by the prince ultimately paid for a large portion of the Santa Barbara Temple.

In 1950, Nikhilananda requested Malvina Hoffman to create a bronze sculpture of Swami Vivekananda. Prabhavananda thought so highly of it that he commissioned a copy to be made for the Trabuco Monastery.

Nikhilananda served as an Editorial Advisor for *Vedanta and the West* (1963-1970) until its termination. Henry James Forman, who wrote the Foreword for *The Sermon on the Mount according to Vedanta* (1963), was a student of Swami Nikhilananda. He was the chief Vedantic supporter of Frances Leggett, a factor that helped keep Ridgely in the Ramakrishna Order. In addition, Nikhilananda provided two to five years of training to three future assistant swamis of the Southern California Center: Swamis Ashananda in Southern California 1949-1955, Ritajananda 1959-1961, and Budhananda 1964-1966.

As a young man, the future Swami Nikhilananda (1895-July 21, 1973) spent two years in prison because of his association with an anti-British revolutionary group during 1916-1918. Influenced by Swami Turiyananda, he turned from revolution to religion. He was initiated by Holy Mother in Jayrambati and joined the Order in 1922, receiving sannyas two years later from Swami Saradananda. He associated intimately with seven of Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples, including Brahmananda and Premananda, and he worked in the publication department of the Advaita Ashrama for quite some time before departing India.

Before he came to the United States, Swami Shivananda slapped Nikhilananda on the back with the blessing, "Wherever you go, you will be victorious." He was destined to become one of the leading swamis in the United States for over forty years, from 1931 until 1973, as founder and spiritual director of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, on the Eastside. His successor, Swami Adiswarananda (1925-2007), noted: "Swami Nikhilananda was a brilliant speaker. He could hold an audience spellbound by his spiritual insight, depths of understanding, and his charming flashes of humor."

His guru, Sarada Devi, appeared before him in three separate dreams, urging him to write her biography for the West. As a result, he wrote *Holy Mother* (1962).<sup>48</sup> We are also indebted to him for his monumental work, for which he will ever be

remembered: the translation of M.'s *Kathamrita* in Bengali which he entitled *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. He also translated from the Sanskrit, with commentary, *The Upanishads* (in four volumes), the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Atmabodha*.

In the first nine months of 1972, seven young women and men joined the convent and monastery in Southern California. Some of the nuns occupied overcrowded quarters bordering on the Hollywood Freeway, so by necessity a new convent for the Hollywood nuns was in the planning stages in 1972. The present Hollywood Monastery was built in 1974, largely from a donation by Dorris Carlson (1903-1998). The lowest for the new building was \$307,000 (equivalent to \$1,448,000 in 2013). By that time, the membership of the VSSC had grown to well over seven hundred.



Dorris Carlson



Chester Carlson

Dorris' husband, Chester "Chet" Carlson (1906-1968), President of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, accompanied Swami Nikhilananda when he visited Belur Math for the Centenary Celebrations of Swami Vivekananda in December 1963. In the 1960s the Carlsons sponsored a project that allowed the VSSC bookshop to distribute religious books to prison libraries. In 1966, they contributed to the purchase of the former quarters of the Vedanta Society of Chicago on South Hyde Park Boulevard. Around 1967 Chester Carlson contributed \$1,500, for Swami Vidyatmananda to research Swami Vivekananda's activities in Europe during the years 1895-1900. Shortly before his passing in 1968, the Carlsons donated the funds to build the Zen Buddhist, New York Zendo, and eight years later, Dorris financed the Dai Bosatsu Zendo. Under the direction of the venerable Eido Shimano Roshi, both Zendos enshrine photographs of Chester and Dorris. Each year they commemorate Chester and his wife's death day.<sup>49</sup> Rather than to create a financial dynasty for themselves, the Carlsons donated over three-fourths of their fortune, over \$150 million, to worthy causes.<sup>50</sup>

Chester Floyd Carlson received induction into the prestigious National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1981 for his invention of xerographic printing for instant copying of photographic reproductions. While other inventors attempted to develop chemical or photographic solutions to instant copying, Carlson used the dry techniques of electrostatics. In 1938 he made the first electro-photographic copy, and in 1942 he filed for his xerography patent. After "the machine nobody wanted" was turned down by twenty companies, in 1944 Carlson found a nonprofit industrial research company that showed interest in developing his duplicating invention beyond its initial stages. The future Xerox Corporation took birth in 1947 and three years later introduced the first copier for sale. After years of technical research, it began selling Xerox copying machines in 1959 on a wide scale. Royalties from his xerography patents made Carlson a multi-millionaire.<sup>51</sup>

### After 1975

The new Sarada Convent Hollywood building (now the Hollywood Monastery) was dedicated on March 27, 1975, the birthday of Sri Chaitanya. Present for the dedication were an all-star cast of visiting swamis: Asheshananda (Portland), Bhaskarananda (Seattle), Prabuddhananda (Northern California), Shraddhananda (Sacramento), Swahananda (Berkeley),

Yuktananda (St. Louis), as well as Pravrajikas Nirbhayaprana, Nityaprana, and Vishuddhaprana from Northern California. The ceremony began with a homa fire conducted by Swami Asaktananda. The following Saturday, on March 29, a formal public opening was held in the courtyard of the new convent building. The festival began with the blowing of conch shells, and garlanded photographs of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, and Maharaj were carried around the courtyard by the swamis. The grounds were consecrated with Ganges water, the Hollywood and San Francisco nuns chanting from the Vedas and, with the waving of incense and chanting by Swami Chetanananda, holy pictures were placed in a temporary shrine in the courtyard. Swami Prabhavananda invoked the blessings of Thakur, Holy Mother, Swamiji and Maharaj.<sup>52</sup>

In May 1975, the nuns moved into the convent adjoining the temple, but at the end of the year, the VSSC received a directive from Belur Math that the monks would move from the present monastery on Vine Street down the hill into the new building where the nuns resided. In turn, the nuns of the Hollywood Center would relocate to the monastery at 2027 N. Vine Street and the adjoining home at 2017. The exchange of living quarters took place and in February 1976, on Valentine's Day, the nuns moved up the hill into the new convent. The move worked out well, since it was felt that group events involving many householders, community meals, visiting of numerous guests, the coming and going of outside maintenance workers, and lay male workers living on church grounds, was better suited for a monastery than a convent.<sup>53</sup>

In July 1975 Swami Gangeshwaranandaji, the ninety-five year old pontiff of the Udasin sect, spoke at the Hollywood Temple. He visited nine large cities in the U. S. with the specific intention of spreading the "ancient word of the Vedas among scholars of Sanskrit in America." The revered swami presented copies of the "Ved Bhagwan," a compilation of the four major Vedas into a single thousand-page volume, to the Vedanta Society, Self-Realization Fellowship, and the Los Angeles Public Library. This rare volume is now housed in the Hollywood Monastery opposite the dining hall. The blind swami claimed to have memorized over 20,000 ancient hymns. Seeking no money, he distributed the "Ved Bhagwan" to more than six hundred organizations. He is the first person to personally install the Vedas throughout the world. According to his attendant, "At home in Ahmadabad, India, he gives dictation fourteen hours a day, with eight stenographers taking notes simultaneously"<sup>54</sup>

The VSSC is under the spiritual direction of the Ramakrishna Order of India. Financially, it is an autonomous organization operating under its own bylaws and the laws of the State of California. Its business affairs are under the control of the Board of Trustees, consisting of fifteen members, nine monastics, and six lay devotees. The Santa Barbara nuns, Hollywood monks and nuns, and the Trabuco monks are each represented about equally on the Board. The Board elects their own officers and they meet on a monthly basis to act on business and policy matters that affect the center. Their authority and method of management are clearly outlined in the articles and bylaws of the Society.



*Swami Prabhavananda*

Unfortunately, the widening of the freeway that took place in 1964-1965, could not keep up with the increased volume of vehicles. By 1974 it became necessary to add another lane to the Hollywood Freeway, a two-year project. A small 311 square feet triangle of land at the lower corner of the parking lot, together with a larger piece, 1458 square feet, across the street from the temple, were purchased by the State of California. A sound barrier between the freeway and the temple was built to mitigate some of the noise.<sup>55</sup>

During Swami Prabhavananda's last illness, Swami Bhadrananda a skilled nurse served him for two years, sleeping in his room the last months of swami's life. He also attended Swamis Pavitrananda, Vividishananda, Satprakashananda, and Vandanananda when they were at the Society.

Twice each day Swami Prabhavananda would walk around the temple compound, followed by scores of devotees who adored him. Swami Vidyatmananda observed:

He possessed great charisma, intense charm, and a visible intensity of conviction. Sometimes he was dazzlingly beautiful. Thus, he transmitted to others the idea that the search for God, that spiritual life, could be the only important human concern. On puja days particularly, especially on the day when we celebrated Swami Brahmananda's (Maharaj's) birthday, Swami was visibly elated and bursting with love and spiritual power.<sup>56</sup>

After Vidyatmananda received sannyas, Swami made this important statement to him, "Nothing—remember, nothing bad can ever happen to you again. It may be bad, it may seem bad, but it won't be bad for you." Vidyatmananda recorded the following teachings of Swami Prabhavananda:

Slavery is in the mind; liberation is in the mind. Restlessness and unhappiness are in the mind; peace is there too. The only way to be happy is to think of God, to visualize him in some form attractive to you. When you don't think of God, you cannot be happy; when you see him all the time, then you are in bliss all the time—and incidentally a saint.... If it's God you really want I can show you how to find him.... Feel for others.... Prema, you must learn to feel for others.... I've never suffered in my life.... Meditate, meditate, meditate.... Always be positive.... Never give up the struggle.... There is no failure in spiritual life.... Never lower the Ideal.... My only hope for my children is that they should become men and women of God.<sup>57</sup>

One of the last things Swami Prabhavananda wrote was the following December 14, 1975 letter to the members of the Society:

Not only through its activities here, but through the books the Society is making available in this and other countries, this center is helping in some measure, to fulfill the spiritual needs of the West. We have only seen the beginning. The more we can give of ourselves in effort and support to this work which Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples have established here, the greater will be the number of people who will receive benefit from this center. And the more we can deepen our own spiritual life, the more we will feel the Lord's blessing. That each one of you may realize the Lord within your own heart is my wish and prayer.<sup>58</sup>

Swami Krishnananda reported:

On June 1st [1976] Swami was transferred to a private room in the coronary care unit of the hospital. Toward evening, a wonderful mood came over him and continued to build. Sumitra noted that he repeated his mantram, then Mother Kali's mantram, followed by other names of God, and a verse from "Prakritim." Speaking alternately in Bengali and English, he also mentioned the names of Swamis Shivananda, Turiyananda, Abhedananda, Saradananda, Vijnanananda, and Abdhutananda—all of whom he had known. He repeated Maharaj's statement, "Light, more light; is there any end of it?" And he recalled Swami Turiyananda's and Sadananda's predictions that he would go and work in America. Shortly after six in the evening, Swami asked that his monastic disciples be called. They came from Hollywood, Santa Barbara, and Trabuco at various times and entered his hospital room, in twos, to receive his final instructions. Those who discussed this evening afterwards agreed that they had never seen Swami in such an extraordinary mood. A wonderful power and radiance shone through his frail and almost transparent body. His facial expression was loving and joyful.... He told one monastic, "Always serve the Lord; it is His work you are doing."<sup>59</sup>

One day Swami Prabhavananda said, "Maharaj gave me the boon of choosing when I leave this world." On the afternoon of July 3, 1976, he had a heart attack.

Later he said, "I am dying." One of the nuns began to chant softly, "Hari Om, Ramakrishna." When she began to repeat the Lord's name softly, he stopped her saying, "Not yet."... At 11:15 p.m., Swami Prabhavananda asked his nurse what time it was. When he was told, he said, "No, too soon, too soon. It must be midnight.... At 11:55 p.m., Swami's monastic disciples

were summoned to his bedside.... While we [the monastics] were chanting “Hari Om Ramakrishna,” he entered into mahasamadhi. At 12:03 a.m., on the Bicentennial Fourth of July 1976, Swami went to Maharaj.

He got his wish and left the body on July 4, 1976 as Swami Vivekananda had done seventy-four years before. Swami Prabhavananda lived in the U.S. for fifty-three years, one month and two days, longer than any other swami of the Ramakrishna Order from India up to that time. All through the night and on the following morning, many devotees came to pay their respects. Bhaktiprana remarked that after his passing:

It was amazing. His room had a special atmosphere. And there was a sweet smell in his room that came after he left his body.... And the Temple had such an atmosphere. You would sit down to meditate in the Temple, and for about two weeks after the cremation, the atmosphere was very powerful.<sup>60</sup>

The *Prabuddha Bharata* of August 1976 mentioned in part:

By the power of the Swami’s loving inspiration and expert guidance, the Vedanta work made rapid progress.... Swami Prabhavananda was a forceful writer and speaker, and a spiritual teacher of a high order, harmoniously synthesizing simplicity of expression, practical Vedanta, devotional fervour, ritualistic precision, rational understanding, and the goal of God realization. He translated many of the Indian scriptures and wrote several books on Vedanta in theory and practice.

Memorial services were held on July 16 in Hollywood and July 18 in Santa Barbara. In Hollywood talks were given by his many friends: Adiswarananda (New York: Eastside), Areshananda (Portland), Bhaskarananda (Seattle), Chetanananda (Southern California), Prabuddhananda (San Francisco), Sarvagatananda (Boston), Shraddhananda (Sacramento), Swahananda (Berkeley), and Christopher Isherwood.

Afterward, Pravrajikas Prabhaprana, Shaktiprana, and Shuddhaprana of Santa Barbara spent six weeks in India. Their most memorable moment was the blessing of being present for the immersion of Swami Prabhavananda’s ashes in the Ganges near Belur Math. Swami Krishnananda flew to India solely for the purpose of taking care of Swami’s ashes. On November 9 at 9:00 a.m. the senior Trustees gathered at Maharaj’s Temple. They sailed into the middle of the Ganges, faced Maharaj’s Temple, and immersed many of the ashes. Krishnananda took the rest to a sacred spot at Hardwar where the river comes down from the mountains.<sup>61</sup>

For those people who did not have the wonderful opportunity to hear the swami speak, a nearly 11-minute lecture “Blessed are the Pure in Heart” by Swami Prabhavananda and a 5-minute speech by him on the Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali can be heard on YouTube, along with other videos that contain photos of him. The full-length version of these two videos, each containing two lectures delivered by Prabhavananda in 1971, are sold by the Vedanta Society of Southern California. A number of the swami’s CD’s, together with the comprehensive *Realizing God: Lectures of Swami Prabhavananda* edited by Edith D. Tipple, are also available from the VSSC bookshop and online at [www.vedanta.com](http://www.vedanta.com). An hour long video of Swami Prabhavananda’s, “His Meeting Sri Sarada Devi, Holy Mother” is available at <http://www.vedantavideo.com/SwPrabhava.htm> On the Web: [www.vedanta.com](http://www.vedanta.com) (near the bottom of the page), one can listen to free MP3 audio Downloads of Swami Prabhavananda’s 12 classes on the “Sermon on the Mount According to Vedanta,” 56 Classes on “Shankara’s Crest Jewel (Vivekachudamani),” 12 classes on the “Mundaka Upanishad,” and two free talks “Faith” and “The Yoga of Meditation.” Swami Prabhavananda’s complete audio lectures on “Karma and Freedom,” “Self Effort and Divine Grace,” “Hound of Heaven,” and “His Meetings with Holy Mother,” are available at <http://www.vedantavideo.com/SwPrabhava.htm>

Pravrajika Varadaprana (1923-2014), who lived over sixty years in Santa Barbara, said about Swami Prabhavananda:

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The Swami spoke with a deep, sonorous voice, and with the authority of one who had experienced that of which he spoke. He had the ability to lift our minds, and we hung on to every word. His message was always simple and

practical.... He could make the most abstruse philosophy understandable. As the Swami himself said, “I have been given the ability, if I understand something myself, to express it in a way that others can understand.”... How much he shaped my thinking and ideals, without apparently trying to do so. Most of the principles that I cling to in life are the principles and values that he taught and exemplified.... It was a comfort to know that we could always go to Swami with a spiritual question and receive the answer we needed to hear.... When he found one of us going too far off the track, he would correct us. He often warned us that spiritual life is like the razor’s edge.... He stressed regularity in meditation, and he was the most regular among us, even in his later years.... Some people used to give him money on his birthday and at Christmas time. He never spent any of it on himself, but it would be used for charity. He was extremely generous.... Swami was completely natural; he did not seem to care what people thought about him. There was no show about him, or “playing the holy man.”... Maharaj was always in Swami Prabhavananda’s thoughts. He daily relived some of his special experiences with Maharaj and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna both in his meditation and during spare moments.<sup>62</sup>

John Shenkel (Ananta Chaitanya), a Trabuco monk, indicated in May of 1952, “He [Swami Prabhavananda] is the only person I ever met in my life I like everything about.”<sup>63</sup>

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Swami Yogeshananda lived as a monastic in Southern California for seven years from October 10, 1949 until 1956. He also worked in Philadelphia, Northern California, New York, and London. Before retiring to the Trabuco Monastery in 2009, he was in charge of the Vedanta Center in Atlanta, Georgia for many years. He said of Swami Prabhavananda:

[He] had practiced being absorbed in God until it had become natural, spontaneous.... What struck me first was the remarkable physical beauty of the man ... the air of grace, lighness, elegance and charm he exuded.... He was a delight to look at. To watch him move, laugh, frown, and especially perform worship, was in each case a profoundly rewarding experience.... In Swami Prabhavananda’s eyes and face one very often saw the combination of deep inward joy and the shedding of its light like a beam on everything encountered, which one sees in most of the photographs of Swami Brahmananda.... He was steeped in the thought of his guru, obsessed with him, possessed of him, merged in him—and everybody knew it.... Living around Swami one always felt that every moment must somehow be employed in the direct pursuit of the one goal of life, to realize God here and now. One morning when Swami came to the breakfast table he announced, “This morning I am seeing nothing but Brahman—I see John-Brahman, Phil-Brahman, Jim-Brahman” ... those words were a revelation I carry with me to this day.... Through His grace, the world of Thakur, Mother, Swamiji and Maharaj has become more real to me than this one. Swami Prabhavananda was extremely adaptable in dealing with a wide range of people with different temperaments and backgrounds.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, Yogeshananda recorded Swami Prabhavananda’s following teachings:

I have just one rule in the monastery or convent. Go to the shrine-room three times a day and try to practice meditating on the Lord. That is all I insist on.... I feel great joy when I see you boys trying to meditate on the Lord! I count this as my success. This is all I care about in my work—not the buildings and works, but the lives of you children; whether you are growing in devotion to God.... After reading everything, following all sorts of practices, etc., you come to just one conclusion: that the essence of religion is just to remember the Lord constantly.... The pure religion of love as taught by Christ to his disciples, perhaps more in silence than through words, has become obscured by too many impossible theological dogmas and doctrines of the Church.<sup>65</sup>

Swami Yogeshananda shared his reminiscences (given in part below) with us in a lecture presented at the Hollywood Temple on February 16, 2014.

I heard Swami Prabhavananda recite a Sanskrit verse from the Guru Stotra over and over again, morning after morning, from this shrine. The mood that it created was unmatched. Its English rendering is: “There is no higher austerity than

service to the guru. There is no higher truth than the guru. There is nothing higher than realization of that blessed guru. My salutations again and again. My Lord is the Lord of the universe. My guru is the teacher of the universe. My true Self is the Self of the universe.”

Well, what was Swami Prabhavananda like? Other notable Swamis I have known, and I have known many, reported their guru’s teachings, and spoke of them with great reverence, but this Swami seemed to be living constantly in the presence of his guru. Just to look at him, you knew he was absorbed in the memory and thought of Swami Brahmananda, whom he called Maharaj. Brahmananda was his teacher and the first President of our Order. Prabhavananda felt he was born, lived and would die in the presence of Swami Brahmananda. He seemed to be wearing him as an overcoat. You hardly thought of him without thinking of Maharaj. He would be silent most of the time, and when he turned to talk, there would be a far-away look in his eyes.

“First I think of Maharaj, then I speak.” That was the attitude he had. Many great Swamis have had a mood. Prabhavananda’s was the mood of meditation, trying to live in the presence of his teacher. “Try to remember him constantly, expressing, outwardly or inwardly, love to him.” He felt that Brahmananda Swami was God and he was his son. When he was thinking of his guru, tears would come very easily to his eyes. He told us at Trabuco, “You boys must keep these corridors clean. Do you know why? Because Maharaj walks here. I see him.”

Swami Prabhavananda came to this country with a Western outlook. He came thinking, I belong now to the West. So he dressed in Western sport clothes that were appropriate to that time. His English was quite perfect, very clear, and he spoke with a low voice. Prabhavananda seemed to know how to identify with us. No other Swami had the same rapport with American people. He became one of us and that is why this institution has succeeded. He understood American humor, told jokes, and was charming with children. His simplicity was simply astonishing. He wasn’t simple really, but on the outside there was an air of simplicity.

Swami Prabhavananda inaugurated puja in the West. He loved ritual and initiated the practice of having a simple daily worship in the Temples. No one could perform puja as beautifully as he did. His hands were beautiful, with long slender fingers. It was beautiful to watch him do vigil. Those hands were so expressive, so totally under his control, so completely perfect for any object for which they were intended. We had the first homa fire in this country. When he performed the puja and closed his eyes, he would get lost. When you looked at him, you could feel he was gone, and yet he was perfectly efficient.

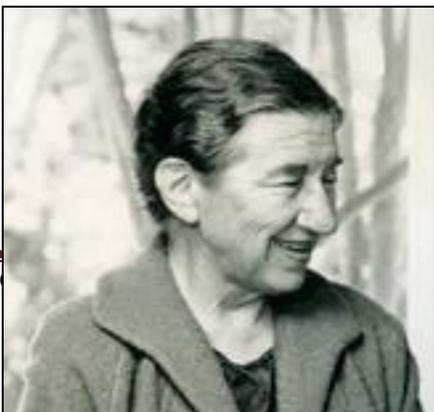
What he taught us was that the purpose of a shrine and the shrine room is to create within and without the presence of God. It was to create the presence of God in your mind and heart, and also to create an atmosphere in the room so that those who came would feel the intensity of God.

In his dealings with us, he had only one saying for everyone, “I give you a long rope. If you hang yourself with it, it’s your fault.” Very seldom scolding, very seldom directing, he let you go your own way and find your own way to God. He told me one day, “We only tease the people we love.” He was not a person who dictated to others. He gave a free hand to the writers who were around him. He gave a free hand to the architects who were employed when they built the Temples. His attitude was, I can express my opinions, but I leave it up to them.”

#### 4. Santa Barbara Convent

The Holy Mother birth centenary was celebrated on July 17, 1954 at the Sarada Convent in Santa Barbara. Swami Prabhavananda performed the worship service, dedicating the newly redecorated shrine room. Dr. Floyd Ross, head of the

Department of Religion at the University of Southern California, attended the puja. Following the worship service, the visitors gathered under an outdoor cluster of olive trees on the convent grounds. Swami Vividishananda mentioned that he had “the blessed privilege of seeing the Holy Mother and talking to her many times.” Asheshananda told of the “events leading to his initiation by the Holy Mother.” He indicated that “as ideal healer and teacher, Holy Mother has raised the status of



women all over the world.” Prabhavananda emphasized “her boundless compassion which made no difference between sinner or saint, race or creed.”<sup>66</sup>

Before the temple in Santa Barbara was built, seventy or more people were squeezed into the living room of the convent for the Sunday talk. To make room for the chairs, all the furniture had to be moved out onto the porch. Brahmacharini Varada placed her little organ in the kitchen. A curtain was set up between the kitchen and the living room. Before the lecture commenced, the nuns’ choir would station themselves behind the curtain in order to sing. It was time for a change. In 1954-1955 Lulah Maria Riggs was hired to be the architect for the Vedanta Temple building off Ladera Lane. She told Prabhavananda she had never been in a church that she liked. Swami told her, “I give you carte blanche to build one that you do like.” Lulah Riggs was engaged by Mrs. Ruth Sheets (Sita, d. January 1955), a socially prominent Montecito woman who was a major supporter of the project. Ruth and her husband Harold contributed an additional \$19,500 for the temple fund. Sheets also donated an antique Egyptian wood-carved screen that separates the entrance from the main hall. Years before, Prince Andrea Boncampagni-Ludovici donated \$15,000 to the Vedanta Society. In 1941 an orange grove in Whittier was bought with the funds. Fourteen years later the orange grove sold for \$45,000, and the money was used to help pay for nearly seventy percent of the expenses of the Santa Barbara Temple.<sup>67</sup>

Lulah Maria Riggs’ (1896-1984) career as an architect spanned several decades, resulting in numerous outstanding residential and commercial projects. Later she became the first woman in California to become a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1960 and to serve as both Commissioner and a member of the California State Board of Architectural Examiners 1961-1964. Lulah was selected to be one of nine people in Southern California to receive the *Los Angeles Times* 1966 “Women of the Year” award.<sup>68</sup>

Lulah Riggs selected the site of the Vedanta Temple in Santa Barbara to give visitors “an element of surprise, the effect of discovering a little place of worship set in a clearing in the native chaparral of the hillside.” As a tribute to her artistry, the temple won the 1956 Santa Barbara Civic Awards’ first prize as the best new civic building in the city. Through the years, the elegant temple has been on the Chamber of Commerce tour and is regularly visited by architectural groups from all over the world. In addition, Riggs designed the gatehouse in 1957, the lanterns for the temple and a carport in 1960. She also designed the house of Eva Hermann in 1968, which was built on a plot of land directly above the temple itself. It has served as the Santa Barbara Monastery since she passed away in 1979. Several of Riggs’ productions, including the Vedanta Temple and gatehouse, are recognized as classic buildings, and have become regular stops on organized tours of Santa Barbara.<sup>69</sup>

The *Vedanta Kesari* described the temple:

The exterior of the temple is reminiscent of certain simple wooden buildings of Travancore, South India. The interior recalls the timber construction of India about 400 BC, which was later copied in stone in the rock cut cave temples of Bhaja, Karli, and Ajanta. The shrine room is set off by steps from the auditorium below. A canopy resting on four posts protects the altar, which consists of black marble and wood carved risers touched with gold leaf. On the topmost step, there is a large picture of Ramakrishna. The Indian-inspired architecture blends harmoniously with the natural setting of native Californian shrubs and boulders which was carefully preserved.<sup>70</sup>

Swami Vidyatmananda noted that his acquaintance with Lulah Riggs enriched his life:

Our temple was built on the side of the mountain where nothing had existed before except big boulders and savage vegetation. All this was preserved and indeed enhanced.... To give beautiful acoustics and a reposeful atmosphere, the temple was built almost entirely of wood. A special wood preservative was applied to every piece of wood that went into the construction. Hence, nothing would rot or warp in the future. The interior was supported by wooden columns, some twenty-eight in all. They had to be, not posts found in the lumberyard, but the trunks of [Douglas Fir, Oregon Pine] trees, which had their bark, stripped off. “Big and round and solid like this,” she [Riggs] explained, throwing her arms out in a wide embracing gesture. These pillars and the walls were finished naturally with nothing but wax, applied with a hand-rubbing using fine steel wool. During the finishing, one of the pillars came out paler in color than the others. The decorator added a touch of paint in finishing that pillar to make it uniform with the others. Lulah spotted this

artificiality immediately and was not amused. It did violence to naturalness; it was not an authentic action. The result for us was a building which, upon seeing it and going into it, creates joy. “You don’t have to make an effort to meditate in the Vedanta temple of Santa Barbara; there meditation comes upon you,” is an often overheard commentary.

Like a yogi, Riggs pursued perfection and harmony, striving to create a beautiful building to provide a life for the spirit. She sacrificed her time and the payment normally due her for the extra time spent and, consequently, she remained poor all her life.<sup>71</sup>

Swami Madhavananda, the General Secretary and future President of the Ramakrishna Order (1962-1965), and Swami Nirvanananda, the Treasurer of the Order, made a special pilgrimage from Belur Math to Santa Barbara for the temple dedication. Nirvanananda was a close friend of Prabhavananda and a fellow monastic disciple of Brahmananda. For three weeks they remained in Southern California, officiating at the dedication of the temple in Santa Barbara and that of the Vivekananda House in South Pasadena. The first dedication worship in the temple was performed February 13, 1956, on Brahmananda’s birthday anniversary. On the following Sunday, February 19, over four hundred devotees attended a special dedication. Madhavananda gave the address, stating, “From this temple will emanate a spiritual force that will help anyone of any faith to realize God quickly. May Sri Ramakrishna bless you all! May this temple bind everyone with the tie of brotherhood and love!” This momentous occasion ended with a solemn benediction pronounced together by the six attending Swamis.<sup>72</sup>

Swami Prabhavananda received permission from Belur Math to bestow solemn vows of sannyasa on five American nuns. The five senior brahmacharinis were expected to adhere to the rules as laid down by Belur Math and formulated by Swami Vivekananda. Religious ceremonies, with only slight modification, followed those that traditionally take place at Belur Math. The epic event marked the first time sannyasa vows were given to women outside of India by the Ramakrishna Mission. On August 25-30, 1959, nine swamis descended on Santa Barbara to attend this solemn ceremony.<sup>73</sup>

On September 22, 1959, the five pravrajikas (Prabhaprana, Saradaprana, Satyaprana, Varadaprana, and Yogaprana), accompanied by Prabhavananda, made a trip to India, where they were known as the “panchapranas” (five pranās). They stayed in the guesthouse at Belur Math and made pilgrimages to many sacred locations. The nuns had an interview with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) and his sister. Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama at Khatra in West Bengal created a written “Address of Welcome” on December 28, 1959 for Revered Swami Prabhavananda Maharaj. It read:

It fails us to give adequate expression to the feeling of joy and pride surging up in our heart at this opportunity of welcoming you along with the five Pravrajikas.... Behind all your activities there have been your ideal character and all-conquering love serving like a dynamo in infusing hope, strength and courage into the hearts of those who grope in hopeless darkness. As a spiritual Ambassador of India, you have always followed the holy footsteps of Swamiji Maharaj and through all your activities, you are bringing about real unity, cooperation and understanding between East and West.<sup>74</sup>

Swami Prabhavananda received a visit from the famous German-American theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) at the convent in Santa Barbara. Tillich was a true gentleman. He and Swami held a religious discussion on the divinity of Jesus and in an unusual theological debate, Prabhavananda, an Indian swami, mentioned that Jesus Christ was a divine incarnation and quoted from the Book of John 10:30, “I and my Father are One.” Conversely, Tillich, a leading Christian thinker, accepted Jesus not as God, but as a “divine being which has become man.” Tillich believed “the only thing God cannot do is to cease to be God, and that is what the statement ‘God has become man’ means.” An alternative view is that a divine incarnation is a manifestation of God. At another time, the Buddhist thinker D. T. Suzuki had made a strong impression on Tillich. Consequently, Tillich visited Zen monasteries in Japan for weeks near the end of his life.<sup>75</sup>

During their first twenty years of existence, the Santa Barbara Convent and temple appeared in many featured articles in the *Santa Barbara News-Press*, and one or more times in the *Oakland Tribune*, *Walla Walla* (Washington) *Union Bulletin*, *This Week in Santa Barbara*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, among other publications.<sup>76</sup>

### The 1960s and Afterwards

Just as the Vedanta neighborhood in Hollywood expanded with the purchase of properties adjoining the temple, Santa Barbara devotees bought property and built homes surrounding the convent and temple. Two devotees, Eva Hermann and Gerda Zinn (Ambika), built on Vedanta property. The site Hermann built on in 1968 was just above the temple on the drive that the Pavilion is now located. Ambika's home at 2719 Bella Vista Drive, the road that runs across the foothills at the top of Ladera Lane, was built on the 12 acres that Ruth Falconer (Hari Mati) had given the Society in 1955, across the arroyo from the convent and temple.

In 1955 Lolita Hart had built her three-bedroom home on three acres directly across from the convent at 886 Ladera Lane. In March of 1961 she had some serious physical problems and couldn't stay alone, so she gave the property to the VSSC in exchange for lifetime occupancy of a one-bedroom apartment in the new building at 2000 N. Ivar Street in Hollywood. The Ladera Lane house was used as a Retreat House for devotees on short retreats. Rooms were furnished with linen and bedding, and meals were provided by Gerda Zinn (Ambika), who oversaw its operation. But the enterprise was not successful and it soon became the first monastery in Santa Barbara, overseen by a monk for visiting swamis, and used by Swami Prabhavananda for Gospel reading classes. When Eva Hermann passed away and her home became available, the monastery moved to her house directly above the temple. Since then, the Hart house has been used as a rental.

When the gatehouse was built in 1957, Ralph and Lois Thom (Bimala) moved in to oversee the property after the temple had been vandalized twice the year before. Ralph and Lois were Swami Prabhavananda's first disciples in Portland, and Ralph had been President of the Society there. When the Thoms retired in 1975, the gatehouse was converted into Sarada Convent Books. The gatehouse has a unique history. According to the *Santa Barbara News-Press* in 1959:

Lutah Maria Riggs designed the gatehouse in the likeness of the Temple, as a small daughter might resemble her mother. Rippling down from the little house between a line of large rocks is a "stream" of flat stones with rounded edges.

During the August 1959 Open House celebration, the gatehouse was visited by six swamis from other centers, in conjunction with five pravrajikas receiving their final vows. The gatehouse, "a rectangular redwood and glass house standing on wooden stilts and a concrete platform, is nestled comfortably within its natural surrounding of eucalyptus groves and large boulders." Six pictures of the gatehouse were featured in an article appearing in the *Los Angeles Times* on September 15, 1963. The article concluded, "It represents such a unique and charming design for a small house that it should be of considerable interest to those contemplating building a smaller home for their retirement years."<sup>77</sup>

Bob and Shraddha Louis were the first devotees, after Lolita Hart, to begin what was considered to be Swami Prabhavananda's wish, a clustering of devotees in the area. They had lived many years in India closely associated with the Ramakrishna Order. In the early '60s they built a house on an 8-acre plot on Bella Vista Drive above the temple. They bequeathed it to the VSSC and it is now a rental for the Society. Bob was a movie aficionado and left 36 reels of 16mm. film, which were given to Edith Tipple to edit. She spliced them into 3 videos with voice-over documentation. The earliest of the movies, *Swamis in America*, begins with Swami Gnaneshwarananda in Chicago. A film of India begins with President Swami Virajananda and very early shots of Belur Math. There is also a film of very early Belur Math and ancient pilgrimage sites.

In 1962 Edith Tipple and her husband bought the property at the foot of Ladera Lane. Later, Ted (Tat Twam Asi) and Lavanya Michel and Helen Barrus (Sharvani) bought homes on Picay Lane, which is a quarter way up Ladera, and Vijali Hamilton and her husband, Dale Clark, lived in the first house on Hidden Valley, which is halfway up Ladera Lane. Two houses from Hidden Valley Lane is the Lolita Hart home at 886 Ladera.

In 1968 Katherine Whitmarsh (Prasanna) [See Chapter III] built her home on a three-acre property at 938 Ladera Lane directly across from the temple. She gave it to the Sarada Convent in 1971, but retained the right of residence and paid the property taxes during the rest of her life. It is she who compiled the extraordinary *Concordance to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Prasanna was Tantine's niece, who sat on Swamiji's lap when she was two years old and ran for his pennies on the lawn at Ridgely. Every January 1, Kalpataru Day, Prasanna gave a tea to encourage householders. Prasanna insisted that the food chant be translated into English in her house.

Ambika's (Gerda Zinn) interest in Vedanta came about by reading Vivekananda's *Jnana Yoga* when she was still living in Berlin. She then learned of Prabhavananda's *The Eternal Companion*, and in the flyleaf of that book she found the address of

the Hollywood Center. She wrote Swami Prabhavananda, and shortly after, was able to meet him at the home of Franz Dispeker in Switzerland. Having seen the swami only twice on that visit, Ambika battled various immigration problems before being able to leave Germany and come to this country. She had been a star of German theater, but here, Ambika found it necessary to clean houses and wait tables in order to support herself. She was able to buy a small house the other side of town from the temple (which she re-roofed herself when in her 70's) before building her home on the 12-acre property across the canyon from the temple in 1983. Since her passing in her late '90s, it has been rented. We are forever grateful to Ambika for her cassette library of the classes and lectures of Swami Prabhavananda, which had been faithfully taped by Krishnananda, and for her thousands of hours of data-basing them for the VSSC Archives. She also learned the art of stained glass when in her 80's, and made many beautiful frames and portraits for the Society to sell, as well as hangings for several centers in India.

A major fire broke out in the foothills above Santa Barbara five or six miles west of the Vedanta property where Coyote Road dead ends at Mountain Drive, thereby naming it the Coyote Fire. It began about 2:00 in the afternoon on Tuesday, September 22, 1964. Fanned by winds, it quickly spread and could not be controlled by local firemen. The winds were capricious, blowing first in one direction, and then in another, which intensified the flames. Their severity sent the fire quickly across canyons, farther and farther from the source. Edith Tipple, who lived at the foot of Ladera Lane, relates going 3 miles toward Santa Barbara to the heart of Montecito Village to evacuate her mother, seeing the foothills the entire way as one solid flame, with firestorm bombs bursting into the sky and flying through the gusty winds. Nearly a third of the home of John (Vice-president of the VSSC) and Lowry Hench was destroyed. On Wednesday, because of the heavy changeable winds, the fire spread in the hot and dry climate and by afternoon the nuns began to gather valuable and movable property, including sacred shrine relics, packing them in their and devotees' automobiles. The fire continued to make its way closer to the Vedanta property, the mountains to the west and north ablaze with flames soaring two hundred feet into the air. Lobo, the convent's German Shepherd, was placed in an automobile, and a sprinkler system and garden hoses were used to wet down buildings, lawns, and gardens. As darkness fell, the police ordered all people to evacuate the area. The sprinklers continued to run.

The relics were placed in a clean secure container in the home of a devotee. Brahmachari Bimal (later Swami Amohananda, 1911-2011) and Charles Rock (the future Swami Ganeshananda, 1926-2006) remained there all night. At 2:00 a.m. Thursday morning fire engines sprayed the area with water. At 6:00 a.m., a solid wall of flame raced up the canyon on the Vedanta property to the west of the small shrine. Bimal, Rock, and a fireman sprayed the grove of eucalyptus trees. The fire stopped advancing within fifty feet of the shrine because of the spraying, along with firemen setting backfires, and a change in the direction of the wind. But it spread in the mountains north of the convent, and down-mountain winds were expected on early Thursday evening to carry the fire into the Vedanta property.

Eighteen hundred professional fire fighters were not adequate to contain the blaze. Swami Prabhavananda dispatched nine monastics from Hollywood and Trabuco to make a stand. The mountains above Ladera Lane were all ablaze. Miraculously, the down-mountain winds did not arise on Thursday evening as they had the two previous evenings, and the fire did not race down into the foothill area. In the aftermath of this major Santa Barbara brush fire, the County enacted new and stringent fire prevention regulations. A standard fire hydrant was placed at the entrance of the temple driveway, which involved extending the six-inch water main six hundred feet south on Ladera Lane, resulting in an appreciated increase in water pressure through the convent properties.<sup>78</sup>

Two new oil paintings of the Trabuco monk Brahmachari Nirmal (later Swami Tadatmananda) were installed in the Santa Barbara Temple in 1965. A full-size figure of Sri Ramakrishna sitting in the lotus position was placed over the altar and a full-size standing picture of Christ to the right of the podium. A standing figure of Lord Buddha was in the process of being painted, and it was placed to the left of the podium. The three paintings were a beautiful addition to the temple.<sup>79</sup>

Edith Tipple told us about Hungarian-born Steve Drammer (1903-1965) who had worked on building the temple. He enjoyed being the temple doorman and attended nearly every class and every lecture. When he was dying, his wife wanted to hold him in her arms, but he told her, "No! Leave me alone!" Then he sat bolt upright in bed and three times repeated, "Om. Om. Om." And he was gone. Another devotee she mentioned, Jack Mershon, also had an auspicious death. He asked his

nurse to bring a picture of Sri Ramakrishna, because he was coming for him, and to put it on his bedside table. She did as he asked and then turned around to do something else. She heard a sigh, turned around, and Jack was gone. Surprised, she thought, "I didn't think he meant then!"<sup>80</sup>

At the request of Lulah Riggs, in 1970 the Santa Barbara Temple received a gift from Riggs' client, Daniel Donahue, of a large antique bronze Chinese bell, dating back to approximately the Sung dynasty (960-1279) period. The beautiful bell with its soft green patina is rung daily before the worship services, producing deeply resonant tones.<sup>81</sup>

In 1976, guest speakers at the temple included Raimundo Panikkar (b. 1918), a leading Indian Catholic theologian at UC Santa Barbara 1976, and the author of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964); Arthur L. Basham (1914-1986), a distinguished University of London professor and author of the classic cultural-historical textbook *The Wonder That Was India* (1954); and Gerald James Larson (b. 1938), from UC Santa Barbara, the foremost Sankhya philosopher of the Western World. Panikkar wrote:

What gave Indian nationalism its dynamism and ultimately enabled it to weld at least the major part of India into one state was the creation of a sense of community among the Hindus to which the credit should to a very large extent go to Swami Vivekananda. The new Shankaracharya may be well claimed to be a unifier of Hindu ideology. Traveling all over India he not only aroused a sense of Hindu feeling but taught the doctrine of a universal Vedanta as the background of the new Hindu reformation.

Concerning Vivekananda, A. L. Basham wrote:

The passing of the years and the many stupendous and unexpected events which have occurred since then suggests that in centuries to come he will be remembered as one of the main molders of the modern world, especially as far as Asia is concerned, and as one of the most significant figures in the whole history of Indian religion, comparable in importance to such great teachers as Shankara and Ramanuja.<sup>82</sup>

## 5. Trabuco Monastery

Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother initiated the young Swami Areshananda (1899-1996) in 1917 at the Udbodhan before he became a monastic. He said:



Swami Areshananda

I was attracted to Vedanta when I first met Swami Turiyananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna in Benares.... His words gave me courage. His personality gave me assurance. My hesitant steps became steady. I made up my mind not to falter. That day I made the final decision to renounce, and embrace the monastic order of Sri Ramakrishna.<sup>83</sup>

So he joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1921, receiving initiation into brahmacharya from Swami Brahmananda in 1922 and his final vows of sannyasa from Swami Saradananda in 1923. He served as the personal secretary and attendant (he used the word *bodyguard*) 1921-1927 of Swami Saradananda (1865-1927), a direct disciple of Ramakrishna and the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order. Areshananda related, "Whenever I went to Swami Saradananda with a distressing thought, a few words from his lips would soothe me. His presence would bring cheer and hope to my soul." After working at the Varanasi Advaita Ashrama and the Madras Students' Home in India, he assisted Nikhilananda at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York from 1947-1949. This tour of duty was followed by a few months' stay at the Vedanta Society in Boston-Providence in 1949, and then onto Southern California from October 1949 until February 2, 1955.<sup>84</sup>

Swami Aseshananda had the unique distinction of being the last living monastic disciple of Holy Mother. About her, he often said:

I bow down in reverence to Holy Mother because of what she has done for me, I cannot express.... She has become the source of strength, the source of knowledge, and the source of my infinite realization. Through her grace I have seen Her face, I have touched her feet. I long for release so that I can realize the highest truth in this very life.

A DVD titled “Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi” in which he and three other swamis tell us about their personal experiences with Holy Mother is sold by the Vedanta Catalog.<sup>85</sup>

During Prabhavananda’s absence in India, from October 1949 to July 1950, Aseshananda was placed temporarily in charge of the Santa Barbara, Hollywood, and Trabuco Centers. Prabhavananda left for India in anticipation of selecting a new assistant. It was thought that Nityabodhananda would come to Southern California and Aseshananda would return to Providence, but when Prabhavananda returned from India, Aseshananda remained as a permanent assistant minister. He was transferred to Trabuco to be the resident spiritual head of the monastery. He provided weekly public Sunday evening lectures in Laguna Beach at the American Legion Hall in 1950 and 1951. When he shifted his location to the Trabuco Monastery, he presented weekly year-round Sunday lectures from September 9, 1951-1955 and biweekly lectures in San Diego December 1954 until January 1955.

At the monastery, in 1950 a large photograph of Sri Ramakrishna was installed in the meditation chapel at Trabuco.<sup>86</sup>

One morning at breakfast in January 1951 Swami Prabhavananda gave an impromptu talk on how to build up a friendly atmosphere in the monastery. The monks commented on the wonderful spirit of the sisters in the convent. Swami mentioned that the nuns, unlike the monks, had gone through a formative period of some years. He described the means whereby we can learn to love one another by seeing God in the other person. A spiritual person, he said, does not weigh heavily upon other people.<sup>87</sup>

On February 13, 1951 the Ramakrishna Monastery received a Western Union telegram from U.S. Senator Richard Nixon (1913-1994), the future President of the United States. The telegram concerned sending a shipment of grain to India in order to avert a famine. Nixon later made four visits to India. It was not until December 1959 that Dwight David Eisenhower (1890-1969) became the first President of the United States to visit India, where he received an enthusiastic welcome.<sup>88</sup>

In August 1895, Malvina Hoffman (1885-1966) had met Swami Vivekananda as a ten-year-old girl. Her mother had taken

her to meet Mary Phillips, a relative of her father, who lived in a modest boardinghouse at 19 W. 38th Street in New York City. Swami Vivekananda had stayed at her boardinghouse from August 8 to August 16, 1895 and taught evening classes there every night of his stay. In 1931 when she visited Vivekananda’s Temple at Belur Math she “offered the garland of jasmine to be laid on the altar” and “recalled, with emotion that the only time I had seen this holy man, he had revealed to me more of the true spirit of India, without even uttering a word, than I had ever sensed in the many lectures on India, or by Indians, which I had attended since.”<sup>89</sup>

Malvina Cornell Hoffman was to become one of America’s foremost sculptors. She is best known for her monumental 1929 bronze series “The Races of Mankind” commissioned by the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Over a three-year period, she formed over one hundred bronze ethnographic sculptures of people, representing the various sub-races of the world. The esteemed American Association of



Malvina Hoffman

University Women voted her as the 1957 Woman of the Year.<sup>90</sup>

In 1950 Swami Nikhilananda, Director of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, asked Malvina Hoffman to create a bronze sculpture of Swami Vivekananda. The next year she did an alabaster bust of Sri Ramakrishna, which “is the central figure on the altar of the center’s chapel,” and a bronze sculpture of Holy Mother in 1953. All three are found in the chapel of the New York Eastside Center. Hoffman explained, “I felt both appreciative and dedicated and I did the best I could for them.”<sup>91</sup>

Swami Prabhavananda thought so highly of the Vivekananda statue that he commissioned a copy of it to be made for the monastery at Trabuco. It was a great day for the Ramakrishna Monastery when the 420-pound bronze cast statue of Swamiji arrived on April 17, 1951. It was installed in the courtyard, with a lily pond in front of it and a sweeping view of the valley and hills behind. The compelling image is visible through the arched doorway as one walks up the path to the main building.

A special worship was conducted at Trabuco to dedicate the sculpture on July 4, 1951. Since that time, every year on the Fourth of July (Vivekananda’s mahasamadhi date), an annual Open House is held for the public at the Ramakrishna Monastery. The five guest speakers at the dedication included Swami Pavitrananda (New York: Westside), Ernest C. Brown, Walter Y. Evans-Wentz, John van Drueten, and Christopher Isherwood. Ernest Brown, who corresponded with Prabhavananda, was the President of the Vedanta Society of Northern California. He recounted many interesting anecdotes concerning Swamiji’s work in America. He had the good fortune of meeting Swamis Vivekananda, Turiyananda, and Trigunatitananda.

American-born W. Y. Evans-Wentz (1878-1965) spoke of India and expressed a sympathetic understanding of her spiritual culture. He was a former Buddhist monk, known for his translations of several important texts on Tibetan mysticism, including the well-known *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1927). In the preface of his 1935 book *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, he referred to his “good friend and helper, Mr. E. T. Sturdy” who had previewed his book, particularly reviewing the Sanskrit terms and Evans-Wentz’s exposition of Vedantic doctrines. Sturdy was Swamiji’s key assistant in England during the 1890s. Evans-Wentz had previously spent two weeks at Trabuco College with Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley, and he had a desire to visit the Ramakrishna Monastery.<sup>92</sup>

John van Drueten (1901-1957) gave an impressive talk at the dedication speaking of “Swamiji’s stupendous knowledge in every department of learning,” and presented him as being, “not only the most lucid interpreter of Sri Ramakrishna’s otherwise somewhat enigmatic personality, but also as the greatest exponent of Vedanta the world has ever known.” Van Drueten also acknowledged:

I met several of the Vedanta swamis, and knew from a moment’s listening or conversation that there, in their eyes and spirit, was real goodness like a light. I knew that these were men who had known and seen something that, whether or not I myself could ever know it as they had, was proved true and miraculous by the radiance that shone from them.<sup>93</sup>

During this period of time, van Drueten wrote five articles for Vedanta and the West (1950-1958), and worked as an editorial advisor for the magazine 1951-1957. He gave talks at the Vedanta Temple during 1950-1955, and his writings appeared in *Vedanta for the Western World* (1945), *Vedanta for Modern Man* (1951), and *What Vedanta Means to Me* (1961). In 1952, Van Drueten won the prestigious New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for the best play of the year, “I Am a Camera” that was later adapted as the screenplay for the movie Cabaret (1972) winner of eight Academy Awards. He also wrote the screenplay for Gaslight (1944) and Bell, Book and Candle (1958).<sup>94</sup>

On September 9, 1951 weekly Sunday services for the public began at 3:30 pm at Trabuco.<sup>95</sup>

At the Portland Vedanta Society on November 11, 1951 a bronze life-size sculpture of Vivekananda was dedicated. It also owns a bronze head of Sri Ramakrishna sculpted by Malvina Hoffman.<sup>96</sup> The Santa Barbara Convent was gifted Hoffman’s terra cotta model for that bust in 2006.

Seeking a congenial spiritual atmosphere, on February 9-10, 1952 eight members of the University of Southern California (USC) School of Religion made a special visit for a two-day weekend conference. Professor Earl Cranston, Dean of the School of Religion, directed the conference. Though the group had visited the monastery previously, at its close, they mentioned

that the retreat was an inspirational experience and provided an ideal setting for their work. The professors' attitude throughout was most respectful, cordial, and jovial. Floyd H. Ross (b. 1910), an ordained Unitarian-Universalist Minister who was Head of the Department of Religion at USC as well as a Professor of Comparative Religions, organized the retreat. In 1953 he went to India on a Fulbright fellowship to study the educational work of the Ramakrishna Mission. He wrote about it:

One of the most vital contemporary religious and educational movements in India today is the Ramakrishna movement. Under the leadership of men trained in the spirit of Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, the Ramakrishna Centers are living examples of how the timeless truths of the past have value when they are continuously relived and reinterpreted in the present.... In 1893, Swami Vivekananda went to America with his message of Vedanta. He received an excellent hearing not only at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, but also in many other centres. Many in the United States were stirred by the profound presentation of a religious way of life that transcended sectarian differences and dogmatic brittleness.<sup>97</sup>

Ross, an old friend of Swami Prabhavananda, lectured at the Society and wrote for *Vedanta and the West* in 1951 and 1952. On April 23, 1954 Dr. Ross presented a slide show of his visit to the Ramakrishna Mission College in India.<sup>98</sup>

A 1954 newspaper article pointed out that most of the monastery acreage had been leased for grazing. The monastics cared for a vegetable and flower garden and a small family orchard representing many varieties of fruits. Milk was provided by Brownie, the resident cow. A flock of over one thousand Stone White Leghorns were housed in a large modern house. Brother Kenny (later Swami Anamananda) was a key figure in the development and care of the chicken-raising business. Brother Phil Griggs (later Swami Yogeshananda) was also active. Eggs were gathered, candled, and then sorted by machine in a modern plant. A cow gave birth to a calf, thus supplying milk and butter for three monastic households.<sup>99</sup>

Before leaving Portland in December 1929, Prabhavananda had told the congregation, "They should not look upon his leaving as a farewell, since he would continue to have an active interest in the Portland Center." He trained Vividishananda to be his successor, and in 1932, he spent over three weeks in Portland preparing Devatmananda to take control of the organization. After Devatmananda returned to India in 1954, Prabhavananda arranged for Aseshananda to be the new Head of the Portland Center. Recognizing his greatness, Swami Prabhavananda remarked, "I couldn't have asked for a better assistant than Swami Aseshananda; I've seen so many swamis!" They differed in age by only five and a half years, knew Holy Mother and some of Ramakrishna's disciples, and had a similar Bengali background. Aseshananda was replaced in Southern California by Swami Vandanananda, who spent the bulk of his time at the Trabuco Monastery.<sup>100</sup>

After spending five years in Southern California, Aseshananda assumed direction of the Vedanta Society of Portland, from February 1955 until he left the physical body in 1996, and he eventually became the dean of the Indian swamis in America. Under his leadership, the Portland Center grew considerably. He made several guest visits as lecturer to the Southern California Centers between 1975 and 1990. Unlike most other swamis sent to the U.S., he never returned to visit his homeland. He was once heard to say that Holy Mother had sent him to the West, and thus he would stay.

Swami Bhaskarananda wrote:

Swami Aseshananda had a very loving heart. Those who came to know him closely were touched by his loving concern for them and felt spiritually uplifted by his company. As a monk, his life was exemplary and he always exuded the deep love and devotion he felt for his guru—the Holy Mother Sarada Devi.<sup>101</sup>

Aseshananda has been described as follows: "A dynamo of spiritual energy who profoundly affected the lives of countless beings through constant worship, personal instruction, public outreach, and untiring attention to other facets of spiritual life, Swami exemplified the best of Sanatana Dharma teachings." He spoke in at least six Universities and Colleges in Oregon.<sup>102</sup>

Besides sending Swami Aseshananda to Portland, Swami Prabhavananda continued to offer his support to their center as he had promised in 1929. As another example, Portland State University took over the Vedanta Society's property in March 1966 for their new library site. Todd Thomas related:

One day Swami Aseshananda mentioned in a group meeting that Portland State University was supposed to take over our property, so we should find out some suitable place for the Society. And, surprisingly, he mentioned Mt. Tabor. That kept ringing in my mind all the time. About September 1965, we made a trip to Hollywood Vedanta Society. At Santa Barbara we had dinner with Swami Prabhavananda. During the course of the dinner Swami Prabhavananda referred to our searching for a new site. He turned towards me and said something to the effect that Swami Aseshananda needs help. “Will you help him?” It was a shock to me—that he came at me so strong! I dropped my head and turned within. Pretty soon he said, “Well, you say something.” “Well, I’m thinking, Swami. We have been looking and don’t know what we should do,” and finally I said, “Yes, I will.” From that point on I spent every available spare time looking for property all over the city of Portland.... I prayed to Sri Ramakrishna, “O Lord, I looked everywhere, but I don’t know where to go now”; and in the twinkling of an eye the vision of this property came into my mind very clear. I knew where it was, what it exactly was. It was Sunday morning. After the Service I came up to this property and walked into the centre; and I can’t express the feeling that I felt. The sky was clear. It was a nice warm day. It was a kind of heavenly feeling that I had about the property, and I thought, “This is it.”... Subsequently, we purchased the present property of approximately one acre in Mt. Tabor District on January 8, 1968.<sup>103</sup>

In 1958, a reporter for the Long Beach newspaper asked Swami Prabhavananda, “What will be the future of the monks?” “Who can say?” smiled the Swami.

“Well, then, to what end are they being trained?”

“They are here to work to realize God,” he explained patiently. “They are here to lead a pure chaste life. Is there any other end than that?”<sup>104</sup>

According to a 1959 newspaper report, an oil painting of Swami Prabhavananda at the monastery was painted by Ernst van Leyden (1892-1969). The well-known Dutch painter, sculptor, and muralist lived in Los Angeles in the late 1940s and was a friend of Aldous Huxley and Thomas Mann.<sup>105</sup>

## The 1960s and Afterwards

Over the years the Trabuco Monastery stirred considerable interest. By 1961 multiple reports of its activities appeared in featured articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, *San Diego Union*, *Santa Ana Register*, Laguna Beach’s *The Post*, the *Garden Grove Daily News*, *Orange County Press Telegram*, Costa Mesa’s *Globe Herald* and *Daily Pilot*, Anaheim’s *The Bulletin*, *Los Angeles Examiner*, Riverside’s *The Press*, and *San Francisco Sunset Magazine*. News of the monastery also reached far-off publications like the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *Hindustan Standard*, and the *American Reporter*.<sup>106</sup>

Six acres of land on the southeast boundary of the property adjoining O’Neill Park was sold to the Santa Ana Mountain Water District. The District selected the land as the most suitable in the area for a water reservoir, and filed a condemnation suit to acquire title in 1965.

During 1965-1969, under the direction of Swami Amohananda, the monastics worked together with lay devotees to build an attractive four-bedroom house with air-conditioning. Brahmananda Cottage was dedicated with a special homa fire on July 3, 1969. It was built for the use of Prabhavananda and his assistants who came to visit.<sup>107</sup>

In 1973, Swami Asaktananda had the idea of constructing a shrine trail at Trabuco. The monastics, under the leadership of Buddhananda, designed and constructed a series of outdoor religious shrines along a mile-long hillside trail. The trail “serves as a place where devotees can spend some time in solitude when on retreat.” After leaving the monastery, the picturesque trail begins on a hillside with a crescent moon and star placed on a small stonewall as a monument to Islam. Next, “we come to a lovely oak tree with a circular wooden platform around its base.” This shrine symbolizes the Panchavati at Dakshineswar where Sri Ramakrishna underwent many spiritual practices. After leaving the Panchavati, a wood cross stands on a small knoll between the trees. At the base of the Christian cross is a brick sunburst design. The winding trail then leads to a statue of the Buddha. Four wooden pillars represent the Four Noble Truths, and the dharma wheel in the center behind the Buddha designates the Eightfold path. Next, we come upon a Jewish “Star of David mounted on a granite boulder representing the Altar of Abraham.” The trail proceeds uphill to a Vedanta Om symbol mounted on a tall gate with

the sky in the background. Next, a Native American shrine features five poles within a stone circle. “The centre pole represents the Supreme and the other four poles, the powers of the different directions.”<sup>108</sup>

By 1963 the O’Neill family had donated 398 acres of canyon bottomland to Orange County for park purposes. As a result of yearlong negotiations with the Orange County Board of Supervisors, the size of the Trabuco property was greatly reduced. In January 1974 the Orange County Supervisors approved the deeding of 232 acres of Trabuco land to O’Neill Regional Park in Orange County for use as open parkland. A condition of the donation was that the area would remain uninhabited open space for all time and not be used for housing development. According to the strict restrictions, it would be used solely for riding and hiking trails, not for camping or building. The Society no longer had to pay the increasing yearly real property tax burden that had risen to \$20,120. Twenty-eight years later the Ramakrishna Monastery “vowed to take back the land if a [housing] development goes through.” In addition, 12 acres fronting Live Oak Canyon Road on both sides of the entrance gate were sold to Orange County. The Vedanta Society could have sold it for \$67,000 without restrictions for use by the County. Instead they received only \$15,000 in 1975, plus the added benefit of strict legal restrictions forbidding future construction and camping on the property. This move left the monastery with 41 acres of land, which they considered to be adequate for their purposes.<sup>109</sup>

Swami Prabhavananda once said, “When I was at Trabuco, I had a vision of Swami Abhedananda and Swami Turiyananda. They were visiting Hollywood, and Swami Abhedananda went into the temple. I told them, ‘Now you have blessed these children. You have to come to Santa Barbara and Trabuco.’ They didn’t have time. I remember telling them how many acres of land we had in each place. When I asked them to bless the girls at Santa Barbara, and the boys at Trabuco, Swami Turiyananda said, ‘I feel as if Maharaj is sending them all.’”<sup>110</sup>

Cliff Johnson (Bhuma Chaitanya) formerly a resident monk at the Trabuco Monastery 1965-1975, later published the following reminiscences of Swami Prabhavananda:

Regarding the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna [the swami] said, “These were not men, but gods who came to earth.... Ah, I wish that you could have met just one of the direct disciples. When I think of them now I weep.... When I was being examined for an operation, it was necessary for the doctor to make a painful incision. I was lying down. Suddenly, I was overwhelmed with the thought of Brahman and lost consciousness. There was no feeling of bliss or joy—nothing. Then I suddenly realized that I was Brahman and beyond pain. They thought I was dead. The nurse began to cover my head, when I suddenly awoke. She ran out of the room!...”<sup>111</sup> It is Krishna who gives one the intelligence to struggle for Him.... I remember someone telling me that he knew someone who had said that Swami Premananda taught us to be somebodies. ‘No,’ he answered, ‘he taught us to be nobodies.’... I think I can say after more than fifty years as a monk that the final goal of life, above all else, is to love God.... When the experience of God comes, you become confirmed in your faith and love grows. This I can say from experience. If you meditate on Him, you become convinced he is here (pointing to his heart). You begin to think of Him. At last you begin to realize how much love God has for you.”... After taking a walk, when two women stood up as he approached them, he said: “Oh, don’t stand up! I am not some king.” “But you are to us, Swami,” they replied. “No, I am only a humble servant at the feet of the Lord.”... “I see you are all laughing at this body. But that is the nature of the body—old age, disease and death.”<sup>112</sup>

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V. The Swami Prabhavananda Era: the Period of Fruition (1950-1976)

The word meanings for the abbreviations used in the endnotes can be found at the end of the eBook in the “[Bibliography Alphabetized by Abbreviation](#)” Section.

- <sup>1</sup> “A letter from Sarada to the Santa Barbara nuns” (Nov. 1949); “A letter from Prabha to the Santa Barbara nuns” (Nov. 29, 1949), VSSC Archives.
- <sup>2</sup> Varadapranai, pp. 10-11; “A letter from Sarada to the Santa Barbara nuns” (Dec. 1949), VSSC Archives.
- <sup>3</sup> *WARHD*, p. 274.
- <sup>4</sup> Brahma-prana (May 1991), pp. 184-85; (July 1991), pp. 268-69; Gargi, p. 292; *Directory*, 1930, 1940.
- <sup>5</sup> Yogeshananda, p. 85; Brahma-prana (July 1991), p. 269.
- <sup>6</sup> *WWSV*, pp. 181-82; *WARHD*, p. 276.
- <sup>7</sup> Varadapranaz, p. 45; *Vedanta*, pp. 44-45; *VK* (March 1955), pp. 419-20; *PB* (April 1955), p. 191.
- <sup>8</sup> *Standard & Poor’s Register of Corporations* (New York: Standard & Poor’s, 1975), II, p. 351; Member’s Letter (1950-81); Diary (Dec. 26, 1949; June 8, 1950).
- <sup>9</sup> Varadapranaz, p. 46; Member’s Letter (April 13, 1951; Sept. 22, 1953); Bhaktiprana; *Times* (Sept. 13, 1953), p. D6; (March 8, 1954), p. A3.
- <sup>10</sup> “General Ledger Account Book,” VSSC Office; *Vedanta*, pp. 41-42; Varadapranaz, p. 46; Amiya, p. 144; Member’s Letter (Sept. 11, 1954; April 10, 1956; Sept. 7, 1956; April 5, 1957; April 5, 1958).
- <sup>11</sup> Yale, pp. 155.
- <sup>12</sup> Isherwood2, p. 984; Bhaktiprana; Varadapranaz, pp. 43-44; Varadapranai, p. 10; Member’s Letter (June 21, 1952; Sept. 22, 1953; Sept. 11, 1954; Sept. 7, 1956; Sept. 10, 1957).
- <sup>13</sup> Bhaktiprana.
- <sup>14</sup> Member’s Letter (Sept. 11, 1954; April 16, 1955; April 10, 1956).
- <sup>15</sup> *Vedanta*, p. 54; *AV* (Summer 2007), pp. 21-23; Bhaktiprana, Member’s Letter (April 16, 1955); Jackson, p. 128; Gambhirananda, p. 430; Diary (July 22, 1955; March 18, 1958).
- <sup>16</sup> Web: [www.rkmissiondel.org/inside/swami\\_vandananda.htm](http://www.rkmissiondel.org/inside/swami_vandananda.htm)
- <sup>17</sup> *AV* (Summer 2007), pp. 21-22.
- <sup>18</sup> Email from Rina Chand to the Vedanta Archives (Oct. 3, 2005).
- <sup>19</sup> “Detail about Mr. Erickson,” VSSC Archives.
- <sup>20</sup> “The ‘Festival of Faiths’” (1957), VSSC Archives; *Times* (April 22, 1956), p. A3; “History of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington,” VSSC Archives; Diary (April 22, 1956); Member’s Letter (April 13, 1951; Dec. 15, 1951).
- <sup>21</sup> *Times* (Feb. 1, 1958), p. 14; (Feb. 22, 1958), p. 11; Vidyatmananda4; Burke, V, p. 141; Isherwood4, p. 231.
- <sup>22</sup> Henry Miller, *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (New York: New Directions, 1945), I, pp. 18, 26, 31, 46-48, 164-65; “Letters from Henry Miller to Miss Ursula Bond” (Sept. 25, 1958; June 15, 1962), VSSC Archives; Pravrajika Vrajaprana, “Vedanta in America: Where We’ve Been and Where We Are,” *PB* (Feb. 2000).
- <sup>23</sup> Vidyatmananda5; Bhaktiprana; ELC; Member’s Letter (Aug. 7, 1959; April 11, 1960).
- <sup>24</sup> Yale, pp. 118-19, 213.
- <sup>25</sup> Yale, pp. 183-84, 213-14.
- <sup>26</sup> Varadapranai, p. 16; Bhaktiprana; *Times* (Oct. 25, 1964), p. R1.
- <sup>27</sup> Clementine Rigby, “Reminiscences of Swami Prabhavananda” (Jan. 1991), VSSC Archives.
- <sup>28</sup> [www.kappedu.com/RayKappe.html](http://www.kappedu.com/RayKappe.html); Email: [rkappe@verizon.net](mailto:rkappe@verizon.net)
- <sup>29</sup> Member’s Letter (April 11, 1960; Jan. 22, 1961; April 10, 1963; Aug. 31, 1963); “Today’s Best in Apartment Design,” *House and Home* (Aug. 1963), pp. 87, 98.
- <sup>30</sup> “General Ledger Account Book,” VSSC Office; Member’s Letter (April 10, 1963; April 22, 1966; Sept. 4, 1970).
- <sup>31</sup> Vidyatmananda6; Yale, pp. 82-90; Tathagatananda, pp. 197-98; *WARHD*, pp. 897-98.
- <sup>32</sup> *PB* (Dec. 1977), pp. 519-20; Jackson, p. 110; Tathagatananda, pp. 214-19; ELC; UCLC.
- <sup>33</sup> *VK* (Feb. 1964), pp. 588-92; (March 1964), pp. 628-30; Isherwood4, pp. 268-71, 281-82; Yogeshananda, p. 106; Member’s Letter (April 10, 1964); “Swami Prabhavananda’s Ashram,” *Dharma Yuga* (April 29, 1962), VSSC Archives; “Swami Vivekananda Centenary” Program (Dec-Jan. 1964), VSSC Archives; Indian newspaper clippings, VSSC Archives.
- <sup>34</sup> Catalog (Sastrananda); “History of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington,” VSSC Archives; Member’s Letter (April 10, 1964; April 12, 1967);

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<sup>35</sup> Varadapranai, p. 16; *Santa Barbara News Press* (Sept. 27, 1961; Dec. 28, 1964; Feb. 3, 1965); "A Letter from the Director of the Adult Education Division" (Feb. 11, 1965), VSSC Archives; Bhaktiprana; "History of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington," VSSC Archives.

<sup>36</sup> Member's Letter (Aug. 31, 1965; Sept. 5, 1968).

<sup>37</sup> *PB* (July 1983), p. 319; Catalog (Budhananda); ELC (England).

<sup>38</sup> Gargi (2003), pp. 275, 347-48; Yogeshananda, pp. 140, 145, 167.

<sup>39</sup> "What is Vedanta?" (1968), pp. 53-54, VSSC Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Member's Letter (Sept. 15, 1966; April 16, 1968).

<sup>41</sup> *PB* (Dec. 1967), p. 519; *VK* (Oct. 1967), p. 288; Member's Letter (Dec. 20, 1966); Pravrajika Bhaktiprana, A Meeting with the Hollywood Nuns (Aug. 16, 2005); *Santa Barbara News Press* (Feb. 12, 1956).

<sup>42</sup> Isherwood4, pp. 293-94; Yogeshananda, p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> *AV* (Fall 2000), p. 24; [www.vedantawest.org/pdfs/Vol\\_6\\_No\\_3.pdf](http://www.vedantawest.org/pdfs/Vol_6_No_3.pdf); "Member's Letter" (April 15, 1971); Voices (Oct. 2000).

<sup>44</sup> "Narendrapur." Hinduism for Schools. [www.hinduism.fsnet.co.uk/namoma/appeals/appeal\\_narendrapur.htm](http://www.hinduism.fsnet.co.uk/namoma/appeals/appeal_narendrapur.htm); Member's Letter (April 12, 1967); Lotus (Spring 1989); Voices (Sept. 1999; Nov., Dec. 2000).

<sup>45</sup> *Vedanta Voices* (Nov. 2009).

<sup>46</sup> Catalog; Vedanta Society of St. Louis. [www.vedantastl.org/StLouisCenter/StLCenter.htm](http://www.vedantastl.org/StLouisCenter/StLCenter.htm); ELC (Library of Congress, Canada).

<sup>47</sup> Member's Letter (April 6, 1973); *Times* (Oct. 4, 1970), p. B1; (Nov. 24, 1970), p. D16; (Nov. 29, 1970), p. H16; (Aug. 19, 1972) p. A24; (April 14, 1973), p. 27; Jnana Chaitanya, A Meeting with the Hollywood Nuns (Aug. 16, 2005); Email from Jnana to the Vedanta Archives (Sept. 29, 2005).

<sup>48</sup> *PB* (Aug. 1973), p. 360; Jackson, p. 110; Yogeshananda, pp. 207-08; Swami Adiswarananda, "Swami Nikhilananda 1895-1973," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* (1973-74), pp. 225-26; Pravrajika Brahmaprana, "Vedanta in America (1893-1993)," in *Swami Vivekananda A Hundred years Since Chicago* (Belur: Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, 1994), pp. 478-79.

<sup>49</sup> "Newsletter." The Zen Studies Society. Web: [www.daibosatsu.org/oldsite/ss98lead.html](http://www.daibosatsu.org/oldsite/ss98lead.html)

<sup>50</sup> Vidyatmananda6; *World of Invention* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1994), p. 122.

<sup>51</sup> *DAB* (1966-70), Sup. VIII, pp. 70-72; Richard Layman, ed., *American Decades 1950-1959* (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1994), p. 429; "Chester Carlson." Inventors Hall of Fame. [www.invent.org/hall\\_of\\_fame/27.html](http://www.invent.org/hall_of_fame/27.html)

<sup>52</sup> Member's Letter (April 8, 1974; April 5, 1975); Swami Amohananda, Annual Member's Meeting (April 25, 1974).

<sup>53</sup> Member's Letter (Dec. 14, 1975; Dec. 15, 1975).

<sup>54</sup> *Los Angeles Examiner* (July 5, 1975), p. A7.

<sup>55</sup> Member's Letter (April 8, 1974; April 1, 1976).

<sup>56</sup> Vidyatmananda1.

<sup>57</sup> Yale, p. 156; Vidyatmananda: Epilogue.

<sup>58</sup> Member's Letter (Dec. 14, 1975).

<sup>59</sup> Swami Krishnananda, "Final Days" (1976), VSSC Archives.

<sup>60</sup> Isherwood4, pp. 333-34; Varadapranai, p. 103; Bhaktiprana; Krishnananda, (1976).

<sup>61</sup> Varadapranai, p. 103; Member's Letter (April 11, 1977); Pravrajika Prabhaprana, Annual Member's Meeting (April 28, 1977).

<sup>62</sup> Varadapranai, pp. 288-92.

<sup>63</sup> Isherwood4, p. 205.

<sup>64</sup> Yogeshananda, pp. 45-47, 61, 81-82, 99.

<sup>65</sup> Yogeshananda, pp. 66, 70-71.

<sup>66</sup> *VK* (Oct. 1954), pp. 198-99.

<sup>67</sup> Vedanta, p. 42; Prabhaprana, pp. 13-14; Varadapranai, p. 8; Varadapranai, p. 42; Isherwood3, IV, pp. 15-17.

<sup>68</sup> *Times* (Oct. 17, 1966), pp. C1, 13; (Dec. 13, 1966), p. E1; (Jan. 4, 1967), p. V1; "Women in Architecture." ARVHA.

[www.arvha.asso.fr/archi\\_fem/arvha\\_french/info\\_arvha/document\\_info/us-archi.html](http://www.arvha.asso.fr/archi_fem/arvha_french/info_arvha/document_info/us-archi.html); *ANB*, XVIII, pp. 506-07; *WWIA* (1976), p. 2634.

<sup>69</sup> Varadapranai, pp. 12-13; *Santa Barbara News Press* (Sept. 13, 1959), p. C-12; *Times* (July 19, 1964), p. H11; (Oct. 17, 1966), pp. C1, 13; David Gebhard, *Lutah Maria Riggs* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1992), p. 119.

<sup>70</sup> *VK* (May 1956), pp. 84-85.

<sup>71</sup> Vidyatmananda6.

<sup>72</sup> *VK* (May 1956), pp. 84-86; Varadapranai, p. 46; Prabhaprana, p. 23; Vedanta, pp. 42, 63-64; "Dedication of Vedanta Temple Program" (Feb. 19, 1956), VSSC Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Vedanta, pp. 42, 60; Varadapranai, p. 102; Prabhaprana, p. 22; Member's Letter (Aug. 7, 1959); *Santa Barbara News Press* (Aug. 30, 1959; Sept. 13,

1959), p. C-12; (Sept. 14, 1959), p. A-7; Diary (Aug. 27, 30, 1959).

<sup>74</sup> *Santa Barbara News Press* (Sept. 14, 1959), p. A-7; "Address of Welcome" (Dec. 28, 1959), VSSC Archives; Diary (Nov. 18, 1959).

<sup>75</sup> Swami Prabhavananda lecture; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University Press, 1957), II, p. 94; Saradaprana, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> VSSC Archives.

<sup>77</sup> *Santa Barbara News-Press* (Sept. 13, 1959); Varadaprana, p. 14; Member's Letter (April 1, 1976); *PB* (April 1930), p. 207.

<sup>78</sup> Member's Letter (Sept. 28, 1964; Aug. 31, 1965).

<sup>79</sup> Member's Letter (Aug. 31, 1965).

<sup>80</sup> Edith Tipple "A Speech on the History of the Santa Barbara Convent," Hollywood, VSSC (May 2005).

<sup>81</sup> Member's Letter (April 12, 1967; Sept. 5, 1968; April 10, 1969; April 9, 1970; April 15, 1971); Varadaprana, p. 13.

<sup>82</sup> Member's Letter (April 22, 1966; April 1, 1976); Jyotirmayananda, pp. 168, 295; Ghanananda, pp. xii, 210, 214; Bulletins; *WARHD*, p. 564.

<sup>83</sup> Asehananda, Swami, "What Vedanta Means to Me" *PB* (Oct. 1951), p. 400.

<sup>84</sup> "Holy Mothers Disciple." SRV Associations. [www.srv.org/asehananda.html](http://www.srv.org/asehananda.html); *GV* (Dec. 1996), p. 15; "Obituary Swami Asehananda." VSSC Archives.

<sup>85</sup> Catalog.

<sup>86</sup> Yogeshananda, p. 69; Amiya, p. 149; *Times* (Oct. 8, 1949), p. A3; Bulletins; Varadaprana, p. 11; Member's Letter (Sept. 27, 1950); *South Coast News*, Laguna Beach (Dec. 14, 1950), p. 5; Diary (Dec. 26, 1949; Oct. 1, 1950; Sept. 9, 1951).

<sup>87</sup> Diary (Jan. 25, 1951).

<sup>88</sup> Telegram from Richard Nixon, VSSC Archives; Diary (Feb. 14, 1951); Kamath, pp. 100-01, 211. Incidentally, shortly before the 1988 presidential election, George Bush Sr. received a traditional Hindu greeting in Michigan complete with tilak, arati, and garland. His Indian hosts gave the candidate a silver statue of a Hindu God and Goddess as an omen of good luck for the up coming election. The article mentioned, "Considering the presidential hopeful's bleak standings in the polls, he may well need divine intervention to win the oval office." Bush won the election and became the forty-first president of the United States. *Hinduism Today* (Sept. 1988), p. 20.

<sup>89</sup> Malvina Hoffman, *Heads and Tales* (Garden City, NY; Garden City Publishing Co., 1943), pp. 306-07; Malvina Hoffman, *Yesterday is Tomorrow* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965), p. 323; Burke, III, p. 184.

<sup>90</sup> Laurie and Kevin Hillstrom, eds., *Contemporary Women Artists* (Detroit: St. James Press, 1999), pp. 289-91.

<sup>91</sup> "Malvina Hoffman Sculptures." Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York. Web: [www.ramakrishna.org/hoffman.htm](http://www.ramakrishna.org/hoffman.htm); "History." Hoffman (1965), pp. 323-25; Hillstrom and Hillstrom (1999), p. 289; *WARHD*, p. 458.

<sup>92</sup> Amiya (1951), pp. 121-25; Diary (July 4, 1951; Nov. 27, 1955); "Evans-Wentz," *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* (2001), I, pp. 524-25.

<sup>93</sup> Yogeshananda, pp. 77, 105; Yale, p. 64; Sister Amiya, "Vivekananda Statue in California," *Hindustan Standard: Puja Annual* (1951), p. 125.

<sup>94</sup> *CA* (1998), CLXI, pp. 382-83, 386; Web: IMDB, John van Druten.

<sup>95</sup> *Santa Ana Register* (Sept. 9, 1951), p. A8.

<sup>96</sup> Sister Amiya, "Vivekananda Statue in California," *Hindusthan Standard: Puja Annual* (1951), pp. 121-25; Varadaprana, p. 12; "Ramakrishna Monastery." VSSC. Web: [www.vedanta.org/vssc/centers/trabuco.html](http://www.vedanta.org/vssc/centers/trabuco.html); "Letters to Malvina Hoffman," VSSC Archives; *Times* (July 1, 1951), p. B12; Diary (April 17, 1951; July 4, 1951); "Vedanta Society of Portland." *PB* (Jan. 1994), p. 39.

<sup>97</sup> Possibly in *American Reporter* (Dec. 9, 1953); *WARHD*, p. 615.

<sup>98</sup> "Faculty Members at U.S.C. Visit County Monastery" (Feb. 1952), VSSC Archives; Diary (Feb. 9-10, 1952; April 23, 1954); *CA* (1995) New Rev. Ser., VL; *VK* (Oct. 1954), p. 198.

<sup>99</sup> *The Register*, Santa Ana, CA (April 18, 1954), p. B1; Diary (Feb. 24-25, 1952); Member's Letter (April 10, 1956).

<sup>100</sup> Yogeshananda, pp. 71-72; Portland Vedanta Society.

<sup>101</sup> "Holy Mothers Disciple." SRV Associations. March 2, 2004. Web: [www.srv.org/asehananda.html](http://www.srv.org/asehananda.html); *GV* (Dec. 1996), p. 15; Bhaktiprana; *PB* (April 1930), p. 207; Diary (July 31, 1954; Jan. 14, 1955); Web: [www.vedantasociety.org/history\\_p7.html](http://www.vedantasociety.org/history_p7.html)

<sup>102</sup> [www.srv.org](http://www.srv.org); *PB* (Jan 1994), p. 40.

<sup>103</sup> *PB* (Jan. 1994), pp. 41-42; [www.vedantasociety.org/history\\_p7.html](http://www.vedantasociety.org/history_p7.html)

<sup>104</sup> "Hindu Monks' Live Simple Life in Canyon Retreat," *Long Beach Press-Telegram* (Nov. 18, 1958), p. B-2.

<sup>105</sup> *The Register*, Santa Ana, CA (July 5, 1959); Peter Falk, *Who Was Who In American Art*, III, p. 3389.

<sup>106</sup> VSSC Archives.

<sup>107</sup> [www.vedanta.org/vssc/centers/trabuco.html](http://www.vedanta.org/vssc/centers/trabuco.html); Member's Letter (Aug. 31, 1964; April 13, 1965; Aug. 31, 1965; April 22, 1966; April 10, 1969; Aug. 28, 1969; Sept. 4, 1970).

<sup>108</sup> *PB* (March 1981), pp. 146-54.

<sup>109</sup> Member's Letter (April 8, 1974; Dec. 15, 1975; April 1, 1976); *Times* (Jan. 3, 1974), p. OC-A1; (Aug. 14, 1983), p. L5; (Dec. 22, 2002) p. K1; Swami Amohananda, Annual Member's Meeting (April 24, 1975). Philip Schwabacher, Annual Member's Meeting (April 25, 1974; April, 22, 1976); Swami Chetanananda, "An After the Lecture Talk" (Sept. 4, 2005).

<sup>110</sup> Conversations, I, p. 49.

<sup>111</sup> The doctor had to cut into the organ with a knife, and no anesthetic could be used. Swami entered into jada samadhi where the heart stops beating, the breath is suspended, and the doctor and nurse thought he was dead. Conversations, II, p. 79, VSSC Archives.

<sup>112</sup> Cliff Johnson, "Memories of Swami Prabhavananda," *AV* (Winter 2004), pp. 13-19.