



THE KROTONIAN

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KROTONA INSTITUTE OF THEOSOPHY, OJAI CA

Krotona is an international center inspired by a vision of the oneness of all life and dedicated to the spiritual awakening of the human family.

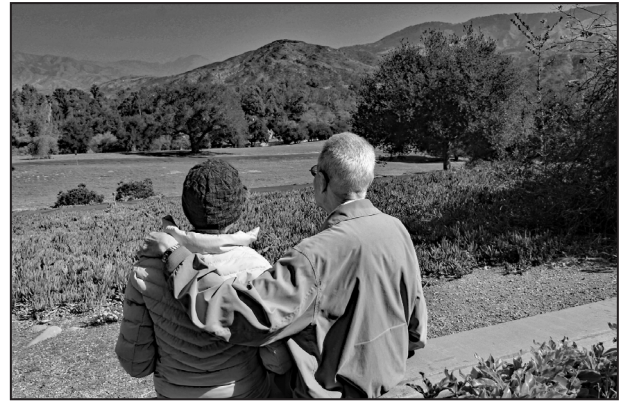
Sanctuary Cynthia Overweg

The word “sanctuary” is derived from the Latin “sanctuarium,” which means a sacred or holy place. Since ancient times sacred places have been part of the human journey to spiritual understanding. In the early civilizations of East and West, specific mountains, rivers, forests, and deserts were designated as holy places because sages and mystics experienced spiritual transformation there. For example, it was on the holy mountain of Sinai where the prophet Elijah heard the “still small voice of God.” In the forest wilderness of northern India, the Buddha searched for spiritual truth and found it while sitting silently under a Bodhi tree in Bodhi Gaya. And in the silence of the desert, the Sufi sage, Rabi’a of Basra, discovered sublime peace after years of hardship and turmoil. Today, spiritual pilgrims from around the world travel to these and many other sacred sites as part of their own inner search.

The unspoiled natural world of antiquity is almost gone now and so spiritual sanctuaries have been established in tranquil landscapes to help us reconnect with the deepest part of our being. These sacred spaces support renewal and spiritual inquiry, where visitors can take walks, be on retreat, participate in classes, or simply enjoy the quietude. For thousands of people around the world, Krotona is such a place. The sense of sanctuary can be encountered throughout its 115 acres of majestic landscape. Surrounded by mountains that often turn pink at sunset, Krotona’s beautiful vistas, stately oak and deodar trees, rose gardens, lush meadows, and quiet meditative spaces, provide a place of sanctuary and spiritual inquiry that dates back to its founding in Ojai in 1924.



Mihaela Wachsmann and granddaughter, Juniper, visit the labyrinth.



Residents enjoying a quiet sunset in front of the Library.

Krotona is a place where people can find equilibrium just by sitting on a bench and listening to the hoot of an owl, or by walking the labyrinth near the Krotona School. A sanctuary is a respite from our chaotic world, and Krotona is one of those rare places where body and mind can rest for a while just by taking a stroll around the grounds.

Wildlife also has a sanctuary here; they have the freedom to thrive in a shared living space with the residential community. Whenever a deer, white egret, or bobcat is spotted roaming the land, residents spread the news via email or phone texts to share the sightings with others.

In addition to being a sanctuary as a whole, the grounds of Krotona include a peaceful garden and statuary area called the “Sanctuary of Connections,” providing a quiet place with some benches, where those of diverse or no faith can walk the links connecting each spiritual tradition. Each has a representative symbol, and the quotations embody the core of their teachings.

In these times of personal and collective upheaval, the need for inner and outer sanctuary has never been greater. Krotona’s beautiful, quiet spaces and its dedication to the uplifting of human consciousness make it a unique all-encompassing sanctuary for anyone who wishes to be in communion with the sacred dimension within. Krotona is always here for you.

Welcoming the Cantemir-Lawson Family Ananya Sri Ram Rajan

Krotona's new residents, Liz Cantemir and Chris Lawson, along with their two young daughters and two dogs, arrived at their new home here in January. Liz, no stranger to Krotona, is the daughter of Mihaela Wachsman, long-time Krotona resident since she was 17.

Liz says, "We are blessed to be living here at Krotona. The peaceful, calm energy and nature are just how I remember it. My favorite thing to do while living here when I was younger was exploring the wilderness and finding sacred nature groves in the oaks, especially after the rains when everything is so verdant. Now I get to share this with my children. I am so grateful!"

Chris and Liz have been married for almost nine years, but have been together for twelve. Chris is a native of Ojai and the couple started their life together living in a school bus in Ojai, but eventually moved to a local ranch where they raised goats and chickens. The birth of their daughter, Juniper, did not stop them from their love of travel. In Juniper's first five years of life, Chris and Liz have visited the countries of Nicaragua, Romania, and have camped in Washington State.

When Juniper started kindergarten, the couple moved to Maui so their daughter could attend the Waldorf School there. Their fortunate ability to travel is due to Chris working in animation, which he is able to do from anywhere in the world. "Otherwise, we wouldn't have been able to do it at all! We've been very grateful for that. We both traveled a lot in our early twenties and it's one of our favorite things to do! We really hope to visit [the International Theosophical

Society Headquarters in] Adyar, India one day, too. My mother did take me traveling a lot as a child so maybe I get the travel bug from her." Liz explained.

In 2019, Liz and Chris welcomed another daughter, Teo, into their lives and realized that it was important the children be near their grandparents. This in turn brought them back to Ojai and, now, to Krotona. Liz stated "We are glad to be part of the community and we look forward to when we can gather again. The only difference I find [at Krotona] is the amazing elders I knew once like Joy Mills, Shirley Nicholson, Lakshmi and others are no longer here. But it is a blessing still to be here."

Welcome Liz, Chris, Juniper, and Teo!



Request for Email Addresses

Would you like to receive announcements of special Krotona programs? During this challenging time when our in-person programs are canceled, we are offering several online classes and webinars. If you would like to subscribe to this email list and receive information about them,

please contact schoolinfo@krotonainstitute.org

All email addresses provided to us will be used only to share information about our programs and will not be shared with any other person or organization.

Ananya Sri Ram Rajan: Krotona's New Resident Nelda Samarel

Ananya Sri Ram Rajan remembers her first visit to Krotona in the early 1990s. Her daughter was still an infant and she was hesitant to leave her, even for a weekend. But Ananya's late aunt, Radha Burnier, seventh international president of the Theosophical Society (TS) at the time, was scheduled to give a program at Krotona and Ananya's husband insisted she go to California. As a blurry-eyed new mother, she didn't recall much of the trip, except for walks with her aunt and the feeling of the mountains as old protective companions. Despite the quick trip back and forth, Krotona left an impression on Ananya, along with a feeling of calm assurance.



Years went by before she was able to visit again, as mothering two little ones always took precedence. But while Radha was alive, she would encourage Ananya to dedicate time to her spiritual aspirations. Krotona, a short flight from Chicago, provided a space for her to reconnect to the deeper side of life and introduced her to mentors who practiced a similar path.

As a resident of the Chicago area for the last thirty years,

Krotona has remained one of Ananya's favorite places to visit in the US. After living at the international headquarters of the TS in Adyar, India, for six years, she sensed very similar energies despite the distance between the two places. In her opinion, often what creates the serene atmosphere of such places, aside from the natural environment, is the devotion and dedication of the people who work there.

Ananya grew up in a Theosophical family. She is the granddaughter of the late N Sri Ram, fifth international president of the TS, and has strong impressions of him from her early childhood. At the age of five, she asked her parents if Sri Ram was God because he emanated the sensitivity, gentleness, and love that she, as a child, thought was God-like. While Sri Ram was not an anthropomorphic God, he had a profound effect on Ananya's future life.

For Ananya, moving to Krotona seemed like a natural progression to her work in Theosophy. After being actively involved as a young theosophist in Adyar, she worked at the TS national center in Wheaton, IL, on the *Quest* magazine and eventually became active in the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), the service arm of the TS. She currently is president of the TOS in America and edits its journal, *OneHeart*.

Ananya says, "Knowing that I wanted to dedicate more of my time to the beings of beneficence, it does not surprise me to find myself here (at Krotona). I do hope that, as the year moves forward, we are able to open the campus and have in-person programs. It will be such an honor to offer the same warm welcome to visitors as was offered to me before I moved here. But for now, I will enjoy the serenity with my old protective companions—the mountains."

Ananya will be volunteering at Krotona School as a programming assistant and also will work on community outreach and marketing.

"The whole order of nature evinces a progressive march towards a higher life."

-- H. P. Blavatsky

School Highlights Maria Parisen

Krotona School's spring classes are all via Zoom. Details for classes are listed on our website, www.krotonainstitute.org, including options for registration and scholarships.

March 16, 18, 23, 25, 30, April 1: Ravi Ravindra, **"Understanding Death and After"**

March 19, April 16, May 21: Sr. Gabriele Uhlein, **"Quantum Presence: Exploring Tele-connections as a Collective Spiritual Deepening Evolution"**

April 6, 13, 20, 27: Elena Dovalsantos, **"Key Teachings in The Secret Doctrine and Their Relevance Today"**

April 8, 15, 22, 29: Cynthia Overweg, **"Silent Awareness: The Revelation that Changes Everything"**

April 24: Catherine Ann Jones: **"WB Yeats, Mystic and Poet"**

May 3 through 6: Linda and Pedro Oliveira, **"Crisis, Interdependence, and the Fabric of Compassion"**

May 14 through 16: Eneida Carbonell, Martin Leiderman, Pablo Sender, and Gaspar Torres, **"Antropogénesis, Las 12 Estancias de Dzian"**

Our fall classes will be scheduled around two extended, on-site gatherings listed below. We anticipate recording all sessions, along with selective streaming.

October 15 through 22: Partners In Theosophy Week, **"The Golden Stairs: A Guide for Spiritual Living"**
A TS members' intensive program combined with the Partners in Theosophy project, this year's gathering explores the work published by HP Blavatsky in 1890. According to her, it came "from the letter of a Master." Presenters include Betty Bland, Robert Ellwood, Barbara Hebert, Maria Parisen, Nelda Samarel, and Pablo Sender. The week includes lecture, inquiry, Partners projects, and student presentations.

November 2 through 6: **The Secret Doctrine Forum**, Krotona School's second, biennial forum focuses on Stanzas I, II, and III of Volume I of *The Secret Doctrine*. Following the success of the first forum two years ago, the program is divided between morning lectures and afternoon workshops by different presenters enhancing, expanding, and sharing views which may include new information on modern cosmology. Faculty include Eneida Carbonell, Alex Bianchi, Kirk Gradin, Martin Leiderman, and Pablo Sender.



The Krotonian

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Annie Besant - Practical Idealist Joy Mills

This article is reprinted from the Fall, 2009 Krotonian, Ed.

Besant Road, Besant House, Besant Hill School - the Ojai Valley still echoes the name so familiar to Theosophists throughout the world. While members everywhere may know Annie Besant best as the second international President of the Theosophical Society, here in this beautiful sacred space surrounded by the mountains of the Los Padres Range, we are daily reminded that she once walked these streets, looked out across our valley to the distant peaks, and here envisioned the beginnings of a new civilization. Her impact on the development of the Ojai Valley, however, cannot be measured in terms of road signs or place names.

Yet those signs and names are the visible evidence of the once-upon-a-time actual presence here of one of the most remarkable women of the 19th century, a practical idealist who worked tirelessly for numerous social causes, for India's independence, and for the ideal of a world in which all peoples would live in harmony and peace. Other Ojai landmarks are also associated with Annie Besant: Krotona, Taormina, the Krishnamurti Foundation, and the Happy Valley Foundation in the Upper Ojai. Space does not permit a detailed account of Besant's relationship with each of these institutions, but it was her purchase of nearly 500 acres of land in the Upper Ojai and the establishment of the Happy Valley Foundation to manage that property that best exemplifies her role as a practical idealist and her influence on the Ojai Valley in general.

That Besant is still remembered in Ojai was evident when the Spring 2009 *Ojai Valley Visitors Guide* featured a two-page article on her contribution and vision for the Valley. This was given further support when the Summer 2009 *Visitors Guide* appeared, with its cover being a beautiful color photo of the morning assembly at the Besant Hill School. That school, formerly known as the Happy Valley School, situated on the Happy Valley Foundation land, is a private residential high school embodying Besant's vision of creating an educational climate that would foster the overall intellectual, creative, and emotional development of each student. Besant's ideals of practical service, respect for all living beings, concern for the welfare of the less fortunate, and interreligious understanding are fundamental to the school's college preparatory curriculum.



Recognizing the incredible scope of Annie Besant's contributions to theosophical literature, as well as her unique association with Ojai, the Krotona School opened its Fall term of studies with a two-week program devoted to her life and work. As those participating in this program discovered as they explored the multifaceted career and amazing breadth of vision of Annie Besant, her impact on Ojai and the world at large, hers was indeed a voice that calls us all forward into a future of peace and brotherhood.

We can do no better than to quote the closing words of the article on Annie Besant in the *Visitors Guide*:

Today, the vision Besant and others helped bring is evident all over Ojai. It's in the schools, libraries, art, music, yoga, nature activities, and the many perennial service projects of the community.

Perhaps the vision Annie Besant dreamed of for the Ojai Valley was, in miniature, the vision for the entire world. And here at Krotona her memory is honored by the large photo of her which hangs in the foyer of the Library greeting every person – member and visitor alike – who comes to share with us in the discovery of ever new insights into the Ageless Wisdom of Theosophy to which she gave unparalleled devotion.

Spanish Language Outreach Nelda Samarel

Here at Krotona we are starting a stronger outreach for Spanish-speaking members, not only in the USA, but throughout Latin America and Spain. We currently have two Spanish programs yearly (currently done via ZOOM) and are thinking about a retreat in Spanish. Several of these programs are at no cost to participants and scholarships are available for others. Also, we have excellent programs given by Gaspar Torres, a long-term member of the Theosophical Society and student of Theosophy, who guides three study groups via Skype. His programs are well-attended and at no cost.

We would like to provide information about these programs to all Spanish-speaking members of the Theosophical Society, as well as to interested non-members. To this end, we have created a special email list and invite any who may be

interested in these programs to provide your email address so that we may notify you of these programs.

All email addresses provided to us will be used only to share information about Theosophical programs in Spanish and will not be shared with any other person or organization.

If you would like to subscribe to this email list and receive information about programs in Spanish, please contact spanishemails@krotonainstitute.org

If you have any questions, you may send them to the same address. For more information about Gaspar and his study groups, please use the following link: <https://www.krotonainstitute.org/es/school/3571-2/>

Of Note Nelda Samarel

Gracia Fay and Robert Ellwood, Krotona residents since 2001, moved to Diamond Bar in Eastern Los Angeles County to live with their daughter, son-in-law, and grandson. The Ellwoods have been active members of the Krotona community during their 19 years here, with Robert offering many programs at Krotona School, being on the Krotona Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, and volunteering in the Krotona Quest Bookshop. Gracia Fay volunteered in the Krotona Library and, with Robert, held the weekly Theosophical Order of Service Healing Network meetings in their home.



When the Ellwoods returned to Krotona in early February to visit their son, Richard, who resides here, they donated a statue of Christ the Good Shepherd to the Sanctuary of Connections here.

The beautiful Krotona estate has been a haven for many of Krotona's neighbors and visitors, affectionately known as "walkers," especially during the recent challenges when everyone is seeking sanctuary in nature and also to maintain social distancing. Walkers may be seen alone, in pairs, and in small groups, and many with their canine companions, all enjoying the surrounding beauty and the opportunity to absorb the stillness that greets them as they walk.

Tessie, Bim, and Minko Goddard, out for their daily stroll. (Minko is the one without the mask.)



Dear Friend of Krotona,

It has been a year since we closed Krotona Institute to the public due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been an experience that is unlike any in our lifetime. There were no guidelines, tutorials or past precedents on how to navigate through these uncertain times. However, our residents and staff have done an outstanding job of providing basic functions so that all of us can contribute to the efforts of Krotona in any way possible.

As of now, it appears that there is a reduction of Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations, and because other metrics are also declining, there is a ray of hope. It seems that we may be close to normal sometime in the fall if we continue to practice social distancing, wear masks, and follow the guidelines of respected organizations such as the CDC.

Despite the campus being closed at this time, we are making plans to reopen Krotona. We will follow the guidelines provided by local and other government agencies, and carefully monitor the status locally and elsewhere. We will err on the side of caution as we make our plans. While there is encouraging news about the reduction of Covid-19 infections and other important related statistics, we will wait until early summer to decide whether to open the Krotona School for on-site classes. In any event, most classes will be available through online participation. It is also possible that the Krotona Library and Quest Bookshop will open earlier in a limited way.

The recent rains, although minimal by seasonal standards, have caused gaping holes on the roofs of several structures. We will undertake the repair of these roofs to the extent our limited finances allow and defer the rest to subsequent years. Any contribution you can make to support this and other efforts at Krotona is very much appreciated.

It is with deep gratitude that I would like to thank the Friends of Krotona. Our appeal for donations go out twice a year to a limited circle of friends. We are very grateful that so many of you are contributing to support the efforts of Krotona Institute. Tax-deductible contributions may be made through our website www.krotonainstitute.org or by mail.

We hope that when Krotona opens to the public in a safe manner, you will visit us and spend time here attending classes or being on retreat. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Thank you very much for continued support.

Guru Prasad



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Compassion is the Law of Laws.

HP Blavatsky

As a Theosophical community, Krotona:

1. Nurtures living in harmony and compassion with self, others, and nature;
2. Inspires spiritual transformation through an earnest quest for Truth and living the Ageless Wisdom, Theosophy.
3. Offers a peaceful, welcoming environment to encourage a life of self-inquiry, study, meditation, and selfless service.