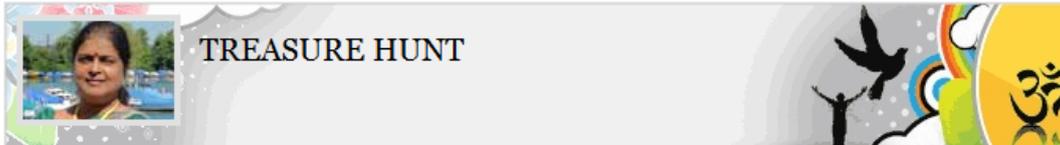


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'Finding Happiness' is no easy task, but how about some cosmic croutons for starters?

[Naravani Ganesh](#)

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I'd never been to the West Coast of USA before. As soon as I landed in San Francisco on March 10 I remembered what I'd been told by seasoned visitors: "California is a country by itself!" And I had just read Philip Goldberg write in his new book, 'American Veda' that from his home in Los Angeles, California, he only has to head out 20 minutes any which way and he would reach an ashram or centre inspired by an Indian spiritual guru as the radius has at least 20 different such organisations or visiting gurus.

Well, I too was heading toward a spiritual community inspired by Yogananda's teachings; the Ananda Village near Nevada City established by Swami Kriyananda and his team of devotees in 1968-69, adhering to the philosophy of an illustrious lineage of gurus: Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Yuktेशwar Giri, Yogananda and Kriyananda (earlier known as Donald Walters, a direct disciple of Yogananda who passed away last April). The visa officer at the US embassy did ask me quizzically why when everyone from America was headed to India to enrol in a yoga retreat, I chose to go in the opposite direction and do the same thing in California!

After an overnight stay at their Palo Alto community in San Francisco and driving some four hours to Ananda Village, you come across another, even more different world than San Francisco. Spread over some 900 acres, its 300-odd residents all live in complete harmony, now led by Jyotish and Devi Novak, the couple who had been with Kriyananda from the early days of setting up the ashram here.



FINDING *Happiness*

Santoshi Nancy Kendall, Raja Yoga teacher, life purpose guide and workshop leader, a long time resident of Ananda village and an accomplished fingerprint reader, drove me and another journalist colleague around the campus, pointing out various landmarks: Swamiji's Crystal Cottage that now serves as community centre and venue for weddings and other parties and meetings; the permaculture farmland that is an experiment in sustainable agriculture; the goat farm where ducks and geese waddle around even as bearded goats stare into the distance; a community residential block where inmates share a common kitchen, living room and courtyard/ garden; the Ananda Living Wisdom School that seeks to not just give knowledge to children but help expand their consciousness; the Dental/ medical / behavioural health clinic; the car and other vehicles repair centre; the reception, mail room, Thrift Store and..... aaah, the Master's Market.

The Master's Market is a grocery store where you can get almost everything from Chandrika ayurvedic soap, Sarsaparilla root beverage and green coconut drink to brown rice, kale leaves and sunflower seeds.



FINDING Happiness

But have you ever heard of Spirulina Green Bliss Balls or Cosmic Croutons? Well, they're all made here, to health specifications, guaranteed to promote your well-being. And the croutons indeed taste heavenly... er, I mean, cosmic. I haven't steeled myself yet to try the Bliss Balls but for sure I will, before I leave! And there's so much more to savour - classes on yoga postures, energisation and meditation, introduction to kriya yoga, a nature walk around the lake, class on Self-realisation, and..... a meeting with Elizabeth Rohm, the beautiful Hollywood actor who plays the mayor's wife in 'American Hustle'.



That's because Elizabeth features as the only actor in a film, 'Finding Happiness,' conceptualised by Swami Kriyananda and created by his team with Ted Nicolaou directing the film. She plays a journalist sent to Ananda Village to do a story by her magazine editor and the community unfolds before you, through the journalist's sceptical eyes...

'Finding Happiness' is due to release simultaneously in 20 cinema halls across India on April 11 this year.

<http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/treasurehunt/entry/finding-happiness-is-no-easy-task-but-how-about-some-cosmic-croutons-for-starters>