

Filling Your Cup: A Small Escape



Our lives can be the repetitive wheel of wake up, work, work, sleep, maybe eat. Sometimes, if we are lucky, we can even exercise or watch television. Living in Los Angeles can be very loud, with little quiet surprises. When I have a chance, I make a little trip to the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) Lake Shrine, in Pacific Palisades. After the horrific and devastating Palisades fire of 2025, one of the few places that survived the tragedy was the Lake Shrine. A family of fire-safety professionals who are also long-time members of the SRF utilized water from the lake to extinguish some of the small flames and dampen the wooden structures of the buildings to avoid them burning. After surviving not just a horrible natural disaster, but also a global pandemic, it continues to thrive.

Approaching the lake, there is a short, circumferential trail. When I go, I am greeted by butterflies, flowers, and hummingbirds. There is a light stroll to a world

peace monument, which contains some of the ashes of Mahatma Gandhi. I like to sit at the benches there and be in the moment. The view of the lake is very beautiful from here. There is a very soft breeze, and the waves of the lake harmonize with the branches of the trees.

Some of the lake's residents include swans and ducks. I watched a swan and his entourage of ducks, approaching spectating humans with hope that a bread crumb or two would land in their path. On the day I went, a snowy egret was also competing for space and attention.



Though I love hiking, I feel less urgency when I visit the Lake Shrine. It is a great place to exercise mindful walking, where I can observe briefly what I see, hear, smell, and feel. More butterflies and colorful flowers make my acquaintance, and I find myself in a meditation chapel. There is seating, and the images of various gurus and deities provide inspiration for a peaceful session of meditating, praying, or just being. It is

virtually unoccupied, except for a volunteer. The quiet and calm gives a perfect backdrop for releasing thoughts, stress, and any other burdens weighing us down.

Though there is a bit of effort, it is worth taking the time and making a plan to give back to yourself. It is a habit to continue the repetitive cycle of daily living. As I continue to learn and grow with age and experience, I realize how important it is to step away from this pattern, and give myself a place to rest, recollect, and return with a new perspective. Connecting with the calm and beauty of nature helps us connect with ourselves.

