

An Artists Impression of Holy Mother's Garden
(The Holy Mother is overlooking Her Garden)
Painted by Mrs. Cynthia Hurley



"Oh no, it is not that. It was revealed to me in a flash. I didn't calculate about it. It was shown to me that each plant was a bouquet adorning the Universal Form of God. That was the end of my plucking flowers. I look on man in just the same way. When I see a man, I see that it is God Himself who walks on earth, as it were, rocking to and fro, like a pillow floating on the waves. The pillow moves with the waves. It bobs up and down."

- - - Sri Ramakrishna



The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma, the lotus, of Bhakti, and the rising-sun, of Jnana. The encircling serpent is indicative of [Raja] Yoga and the awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the swan in the picture stands for Paramatman (Supreme Self).

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The goal of human life is the realization of the Ultimate Reality which alone can give man supreme fulfilment and everlasting peace. This is the essence of all religions.

The Ultimate Reality is one; but it is personal as well as impersonal, and is indicated by different names (such as God, *Ishvar*, etc) in different religions. The Ultimate Reality can be realized through various paths taught in world religions. All religions are true in so far as they lead to the same ultimate Goal.

--- Sri Ramakrishna

- He is born in vain who, having attained the human birth, so difficult to get, does not attempt to realize God in this very life.
- You see many stars in the sky at night, but not when the sun rises. Can you therefore say that there are no stars in the heavens during the day? O man, because you cannot find God in the days of your ignorance, say not that there is no God.
- One cannot have the vision of God as long as one has these three – shame, hatred, and fear.
- Be not a traitor in your thoughts. Be sincere; act according to your thoughts; and you shall surely succeed. Pray with a sincere and simple heart, and your prayers will be heard.
- Do not let worldly thoughts and anxieties disturb your mind. Do everything that is necessary in the proper time, and let your mind be always fixed on God.
- You should remember that the heart of the devotee is the abode of God. He dwells, no doubt, in all beings, but He especially manifests Himself in the heart of the devotee. The heart of the devotee is the drawing room of God.
- Pure knowledge and pure love are one and the same thing. Both lead the aspirants to the same goal. The path of love is much easier.

- - - Sri Ramakrishna



God is one's very own. It is an eternal relationship.

Ordinary human love results in misery. Love for God brings blessedness.

One who makes a habit of prayer will easily overcome all difficulties.

As wind removes the cloud, so the Name of God destroys the cloud of worldliness.

- - - Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

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- Ordinary human love results in misery. Love for God brings blessedness.
- One who makes a habit of prayer will easily overcome all difficulties.
- As wind removes the cloud, so the Name of God destroys the cloud of worldliness.
- My child, you have been extremely fortunate in getting this human birth. Have intense devotion to God. One must work hard. Can one achieve anything without effort? You must devote some time for prayer even in the midst of the busiest hours of the day.
- Do the Master's work, and along with that practise spiritual disciplines too. Work helps one to keep off idle thoughts. If one is without work, such thoughts rush into one's mind.
- One must perform work. It is only through work that the bondage of work will be cut asunder and one will acquire a spirit of non-attachment.
- One should always discriminate and strive hard for the realization of God.
- Even water, which has a natural tendency to flow downwards, is drawn up to the sky by the sun's rays. In the same way, God's grace lifts up the mind which has got a tendency to run after sense objects.

- - - Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

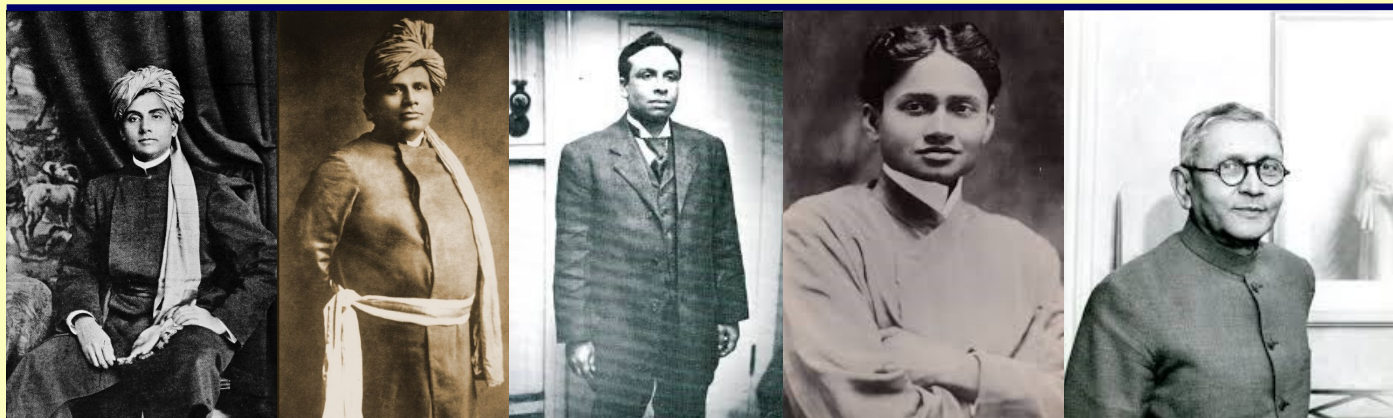


My ideal, indeed, can be put into a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.

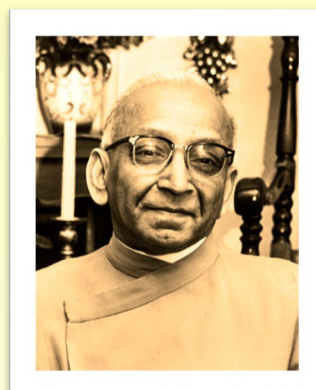
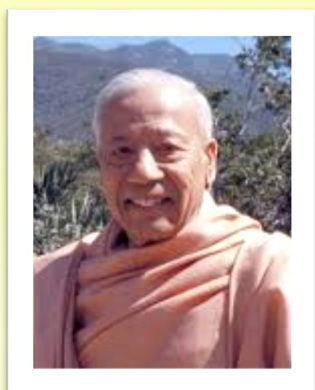
Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.

We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.

--- Swami Vivekananda



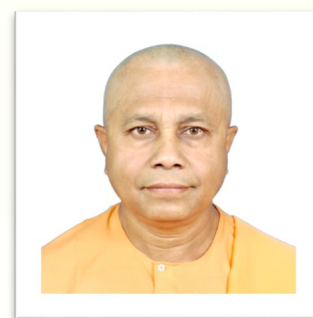
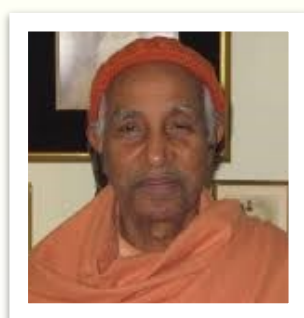
Distinguished visitors: Swamis Abhedananda, Trigunatitananda, Prakashananda, Paramananda & Madhavananda



Pioneers: of the Center Swamis Prabhavananda and Vividishananda



Main Architects and builders of the Vedanta Society of Portland: Swamis Devatmananda and Aseshananda



Flag bearers: Swamis Shantarupananda, Aparananda and Chandrashekharananda

A Landmark in Time

- - - Swami Chandrashekharananda

We are very happy to state that the Vedanta Society of Portland has completed fifty years of its services to the society from the present premises. Though the Vedanta movement was formally started in Portland on October 6, 1925, it took time to have firm footing here and grow to serve the society. The activities were conducted from rented places and houses in the initial days. The society found its first home in April 1934 at 1206 NW 25th Ave during Swami Devatmananda's ministry. The need was felt for more space so the Society was shifted to a bigger place at 1877 SW Park Avenue in 1943. In 1966, during Swami Aseshananda's ministry the Society had to move from the very convenient and beautiful location to a rented house at 1120 NW 25th Ave because Portland State University needed that house for its expansion. It took another two years to come to its present location at 1157 SE 55th Ave. Thus the young sapling was planted and uprooted a few times and finally settled in the Mt. Tabor neighborhood.

It is not a small feat for a spiritual institution to survive and thrive for such a long time where it is very difficult even to preserve the movement from various hostile forces. Therefore this is really a great occasion to celebrate. On this occasion we offer our tributes to our predecessors for their hard work, dogged tenacity, purity of purpose and also the dedication for the Divine dispensation.

The Future

This is an occasion to pause not only to look back but also to plan for sustainable growth in the future. Because Organizations are like organisms. They exist in seed form, then they are born, grow, gradually change, decay and die. If any organization is not growing certainly it is deteriorating. No organism or organization stay in a passive state. Therefore we are to grow continuously on physical, mental, intellectual and more importantly on the spiritual plane.

The urgent questions concern the means and the goals of growth, what to achieve and for whom.

Societies are not created in heaven and dropped down from there. Societies are nothing else but associations of human being. Therefore the best resources of any society are its members. Any society is as good or as bad as its members. Each and every member contributes to the society to help it grow to its fullest possibility. Therefore the resources and energies of its members are to be dedicated for the sustainable growth of the Society.

There are four main human pursuits that have been mentioned in the scriptures - *dharmā* (righteousness), *artha* (resources or means to survive and enjoyment), *kama* (legitimate enjoyment) and *moksha* (freedom). That society is dead which has embraced the goal of fulfilling the desires without righteous conduct. On the other hand that society is ideal which strives for resources with righteous means and aims for freedom having legitimate and necessary enjoyment.

A spiritual society like ours endeavors for the fifth pursuit, i.e. *bhakti* (devotion to God). All our efforts are to be dedicated to God. Sri Krishna said in Bhagavad Gita—"Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform O son of Kunti – do that as an offering to me." Swami Vivekananda said, "This world is objectified God." and "Strength is in goodness, in purity." He also said "Man is born to conquer nature and not to follow it."

Therefore, all our services should be dedicated to the Divine as worship who appears before us in various objectified forms. To see that these forms are nothing else but Divine Himself we need to conquer the natural tendencies and propensities by cultivating purity and goodness. Our offered services will certainly purify us and will lead us to freedom from the natural bondages and ultimately fulfill our lives by attaining devotion to God.



History of the Vedanta Society of Portland

- - - Dr. Terrance D. Hohner and Mrs. Jane Harrison-Hohner



Swami Vivekananda never came physically to Portland, Oregon. But some of his dedicated students and brother monks did. Whether his students came from California, the Midwest, or the East Coast is unknown, but their dedication and inspiration were stimulated by their common bond. In July, 1901 Swami Abhedananda, Head of the New York Vedanta Center, was invited to visit the Portland students of Vedanta on his way from Tacoma, Washington to San Francisco, California. The same group of students then wrote a letter in January, 1904 to Swami Abhedananda petitioning for a Vedanta Society in Portland.

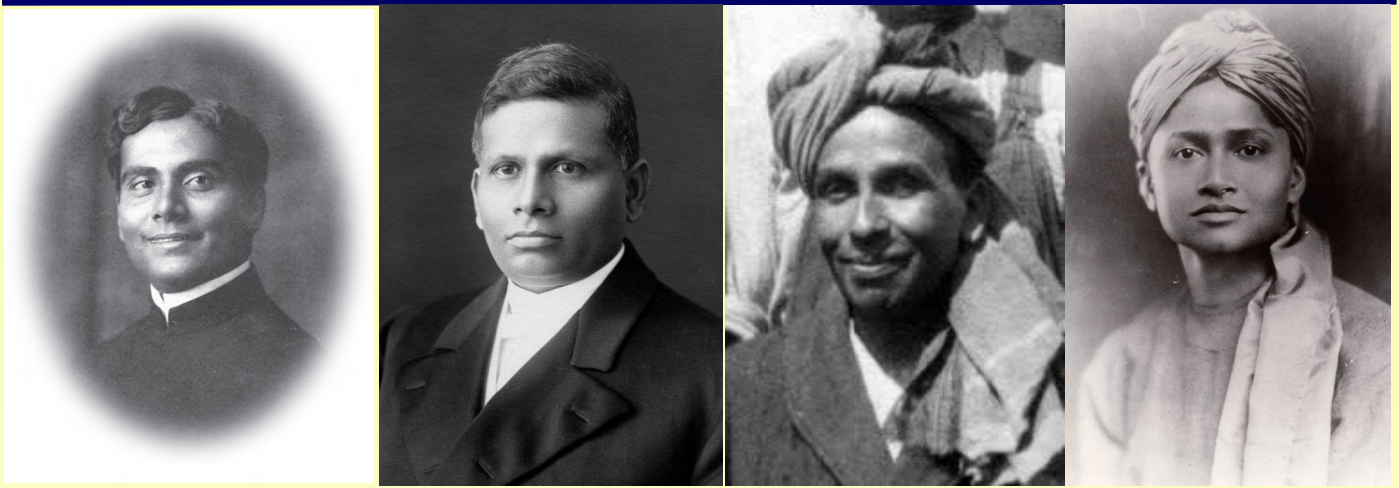
In the summer of 1905, Swami Abhedananda traveled with Herschel C. Parker of Columbia University and “President of the New York Vedanta Society” to Portland. They spent a few days meeting with the Portland devotees and attending

the Lewis and Clark Exposition. In the same summer of 1905, Swami Trigunatitananda, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, paid the Portland group a visit and conducted some classes.

Swami Prakashananda, Swami in Charge of the San Francisco Vedanta Society, arrived in Portland in 1914. He spoke to many friends and students of Vivekananda at the Advanced Thought Society of Portland.

These Portland students of Vivekananda, inspired by direct contact with two other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, met at various homes to read the Jnana yoga lectures. By holding occasional meetings at the ‘New Thought Group’ (aka ‘Advanced Thought Society’) their numbers continued to slowly grow.

In April of 1918, Swami Paramananda, traveling through the West Coast, presented three lectures to the students of Portland. He returned for more



Swamis Abhedananda, Trigunatitananda, Prakashananda and Paramananda

lectures in 1920.

By September 22, 1925, Swami Prabhavananda arrived from San Francisco, California via invitation of the students of Vedanta in Portland.



Swami Prabhavananda

Swami Prabhavananda spoke at the Library Hall of the Public Library on September 23rd, and then on September 30th spoke at the Assembly Hall at the Portland Hotel. He offered four classes in Raja Yoga at both the Library and Portland Hotel, as well as other locations.

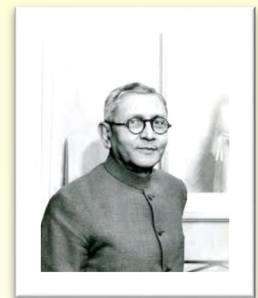
It was following a class and lecture by Swami Prabhavananda on October 6, 1925, that seventy devotees held the first meeting of the Vedanta Society of Portland. That night, at the Portland Hotel, the group elected Mr. Hal Child as President. Parenthetically, the site of the former Portland Hotel is currently Pioneer Square designed by the renowned architect Will Martin. This same architect provided the design for remodeling the building which houses the present Vedanta Society of Portland (1157 SE 55th Ave).

One month later, November 6, 1925, Swami Prabhavananda and Swami Prakashananda dedicated a meeting space in room 616 at the Old Kraemer Building (SW 2nd and Washington). That winter Swami Prabhavananda delivered a course of eight lectures on the Gospel of St. John. By 1926, the Society and its membership published a 16-page booklet "Sub-Conscious Mind and Its Control"

followed by a second booklet "Super-Conscious Vision".

After outgrowing their initial space, the Vedanta Society of Portland moved to a hall at 164 1/2 SW 11th Avenue on September 9, 1927. In this site Sunday services and classes two nights a week were conducted. Two more booklets, "Cosmology" and "Dynamic Religion" were published the same year.

Swami Madhavananda, future General Secretary and President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, traveled from his post in San Francisco in June of 1928 to speak to the growing numbers of Portland Vedanta



Swami Madhavananda

members. On September 14th 1928, Mrs. Carrie Mead Wyckoff (Lalita) of Pasadena, California, offered to deed the Vedanta Society of Portland 10 acres of land in Lake Oswego for use as an *ashrama*. On October 4th the Vedanta Society became incorporated and gained legal status with the State of Oregon. Later that winter, Mrs. Wyckoff's \$1,000 down payment was returned to her after Lake Oswego neighbors objected to the purchase.

Then in March 1929, the Vedanta Society Board resolved that the President, Mr. Hal Child engage Swami Vividishananda as Assistant Minister. All throughout the summer and fall of 1929, Swami Prabhavananda and Swami Vividishananda gave many lectures throughout Portland. But as fate would have it, Swami Prabhavananda left Portland in 1929

for a full-time commitment to set up the Hollywood Vedanta center, leaving Swami Vividishananda in-charge of the growing Portland Society.

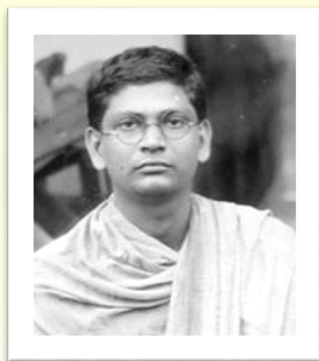


Swami Vividishananda

Times were difficult as the Great Depression swept over the nation. In January of 1930, the Board of Trustees struggled to meet basic expenses. By the end of March 1930, Swami Vividishananda left Portland in poor health for San Francisco. Thus, for the first time in five years, the devotees were left without a residing Swami.

From mid-1930 and all of 1931, the dedicated members still met regularly. The home of Theresa Olson was a common meeting site where they would read from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda on Tuesday evenings. Swami Prabhavananda would return to Portland during vacation time.

Then in February 1932, Swami Prabhavananda spent three weeks in Portland preparing for Swami Devatmananda (Assistant Swami of New York Vedanta Center) to take leadership of Vedanta Society of Portland.



Swami Devatmananda

On February 14th 1932, Swami Prabhavananda introduced Swami Devatmananda at 8 PM for a public talk.

Two days later the then President of Vedanta Society, Mr. Ralph Thom, appointed a committee to find a new home for the Society. They settled on a house at 721 N.E. Halsey St. as the Temple and home for Swami Devatmananda. In April, they placed advertisements in The Oregonian and publicized Swami Devatmananda's open discussion, "Has the Present Depression Any Useful Purpose on Life?"

The financial constrictions of the Great Depression had their effect on the fledgling Vedanta Society of Portland. During this time, seeing that no collection plate was passed after the service, one person asked, "How does the Society manage to continue?" So many people ask that," Swami Devatmananda smiled, "and I really don't know. The Lord provides. When I first arrived in Portland, there was not even money to pay the milk bill. And yet we have managed. Our needs are very little." "Members' devotion to the Society seems to be the answer," someone present remarked.

In 1934, when many non-profit religious institutions had to close on account of financial difficulties, the Vedanta Society of Portland purchased a substantial house at 1206 N.W. 25th Avenue. Two years later, on February 27, 1936, on the occasion of the 100th birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna, the Society purchased 120 acres of partially wooded land near Scappoose, Oregon. This acreage, overlooking the Columbia River Valley, was to be used as a Retreat for meditation and contemplation. There was a log cabin (now gone) with a kitchen and large living room, also a tool house. A small shed was later rebuilt to house a small meditation hall. In 1938, a small cabin (Shanti Kutir), was built for the Swami. Later, on Easter of 1941, the members laid a foundation for a ladies' cottage (the current Sarada Cottage). The money for the cottage came from Theresa Olson after the passing of her mother, Mary Olson.

The Society's membership grew as the Portland devotees embraced their new Swami-in-charge. He engaged his students in various picnics, evening classes, interfaith discussions (Divine Science Church) and Sunday lectures.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the advent of the Vedanta Movement in America, a house at 1877 S.W. Park Ave. was purchased. Move in date was June 30, 1943. Henceforth the majority of activities of the Society were held here, including a special worship of Mother Durga on October 6, 7, and 8. During this time Swami Ashokananda (San Francisco), Swami Vishwananda (Chicago), and Swami Vividishananda (Seattle), were in attendance. On the evening of October 8th, the Chapel was dedicated. The next morning, Saturday October 9th, a

group traveled to the Retreat to lay the foundation stone for a future Temple on Temple Hill.

On the occasion of the 100th birth anniversary of Holy Mother, the actual construction began at the “New Temple at the Retreat” in 1953. Subsequently the first Hindu Temple of its kind in the Pacific Northwest was dedicated with the sanctified presence of Swamis Prabhavananda (Hollywood), Pavitrananda (New York), and Devatmananda (Portland). This dedication on August 1, 1954 was only four months from the departure of Swami Devatmananda back to India.

Because of prolonged ill-health, Swami was urged by the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order to return for rest and treatment. Accordingly he left Portland, accompanied by long standing member Lotta Rader, a nurse, on December 11, 1954 for Belur Math, where he remained until his passing on August 8, 1958.

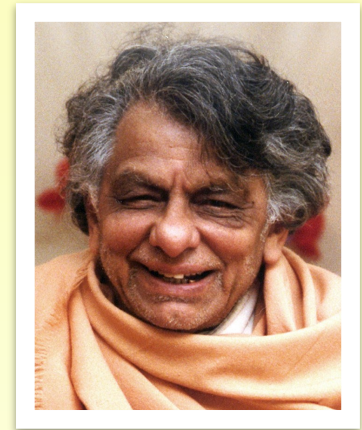
Once again Portland devotees were without a Swami-In-Charge, but this time it was only for two months. Swami Aseshananda arrived in Portland on February 5, 1955 (Brahmananda’s birth anniversary) from Hollywood. Since his arrival in November of 1947 he had been assisting at the New York Center, and next the Hollywood Center, including the role of abbot at the Trabuco Monastery.

Following a precept of Swami Brahmananda, who gave him brahmacharya vows, that work and worship must go together, Swami Aseshananda introduced new instructions. In addition to the daily work of the Center, morning meditation, noon worship, and evening vespers were stressed as essential parts of spiritual discipline. When the basement of the Retreat Temple was finished, the downstairs was designated “Brahmananda Hall”. With a special worship and Homa-fire ceremony held on May 16, 1959 a picture of Swami Brahmananda was installed.

Portland State University forced a sale of the Vedanta Society’s property on S.W. Park Ave. in March 1966. The house was razed, leaving only the well-established rhododendrons, planted by Swami Devatmananda, now gracing the University’s Branford Millar Library. During the search for a new, permanent home, Swami Aseshananda and

Stuart Bush (President of the Vedanta Society) moved Vedanta Society headquarters back to N.W. 25th Ave; this time to an apartment (#4 at 1120 N.W. 25th Ave). Sunday morning services were conducted at the Retreat Temple. All other services were held at the Y.W.C.A. at 1111 S.W. 10th Ave. Meetings were held in Swami’s apartment.

Repeated searches for a new site for the Society were made. Finally, the present property of one acre at 1157 S.E. 55th Ave. was purchased on January 8, 1968. The existing structure was very dilapidated following long years of vacancy; the building had to be gutted and rebuilt with Swami moving into the new Temple at the end of July 1968. Formal dedication services were performed at Durga Puja on September 29, 1968.



Swami Aseshananda

In 1973, a small Buddha Shrine was built and dedicated in the backyard of the Portland Temple. Shortly thereafter the building of the original shrines at the Retreat began with Shrines to Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi (1974), Buddha, Christ, Jewish and Swami Vivekananda (1975), Islamic (1976), and finally Native American (1977). Designed by Shanti, and built by Sarada and Shanti with only hand tools, virtually all were constructed with wood obtained from Retreat trees. Most of the shrines were assigned a budget of under a hundred dollars by Swami Aseshananda with the Vivekananda and Native American receiving the luxurious sums of two hundred and fifty dollars apiece for construction.

For women devotees wishing to live a more guided spiritual life, two houses were purchased: Holy Mother’s House at 7207 S.E. Salmon St. on September 29, 1981, and Sri Sarada House at 7514 S.E. Market St. on May 10, 1983. Although the women residents did not take formal vows, they lived a dedicated life. Most worked outside the home, and attended all the various activities of the Society including meditation, worships, vespers, and

other celebrations. Sri Sarada House was sold in 1996; a married devotee couple now occupies Holy Mother's House and continues with the twin ideals of work for the Temple as worship.

In June of 1990, Swami Aseshananda, who was then ninety-one years old, became ill. Swami Shantarupananda came from India in July 1991 to assist him, assuming co-shared Sunday lectures and administrative duties until 1995. Despite the performing of daily worship, evening vespers and taking a keen interest in all the activities of the Society, Swami Aseshananda's health gradually declined. Finally, in 1995, he was unable to go down stairs, and his personal care was performed by a group of men devotees supervised by Swami Shantarupananda. On Tuesday October 16, 1996, Swami Aseshananda discarded the body.



Swami Shantarupananda

Swami Shantarupananda recommended to Belur Math for the final vows of the two long term brahmacharins initiated during Swami Aseshananda's time. Shantichaitanya (Harold), later Swami Atmajayananda, architect of the Retreat shrines, was sent to Western Washington Vedanta Society receive the vows of sannyasa in 2000. Saradachaitanya (Marvin), later Swami Harananda, dedicated weaver and dahlia gardener, received his sannyas in 2001 at Belur Math.

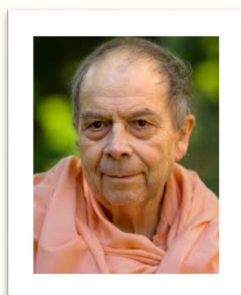
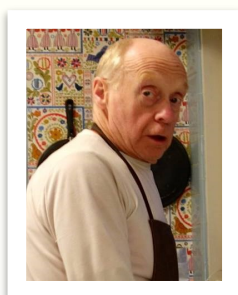
As a remodeling project in the upstairs of the Portland Main Temple, two separate rooms for men were added in 2010. Space for the existing Sunday School was enhanced.

There was a resurgence of work at the Retreat in 2010 as well, commencing with placement of a meditation bench at the newly repaired Ramakrishna Shrine. Nine other benches followed. Re-dedication of many shrines at the Retreat began on July 4, 2011 with the rituals conducted by John Bravehawk of the Sicangu Lakota at the newly renamed "Native Peoples' Shrine".

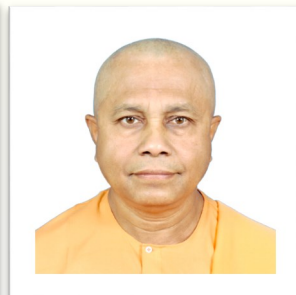
Swami Shantarupananda was notable for numerous outreach efforts, especially to young people. He lectured at Portland Community College, and precepted student projects at Reed College. He rekindled a Sunday School for children, and encouraged inclusion of children's performances at Temple functions

In 2015, Swami Shantarupananda had a final recurrence of a long standing illness and passed away on June 10, 2015 in California. By Grace, Swami Aparananda, former Head of the Vedanta Society of Berkeley, California, was visiting the Portland Temple. A long-term friend of the Portland Center, Swami Aparananda was assigned to be interim Swami-in-Charge from June 2015, until December 2015 when Swami Chandrashekananda assumed position of Swami-in-Charge.

Within Swami Chandrashekharananda's initial four years of leadership there was an expansion of both membership, and activities. Activities of cultural and spiritual natures were completed in short order. Within the Main Temple, the Shrine underwent a three month remodel, a new wooden floor replaced the original red carpet, all chimneys were repaired, a new roof applied to the Main Temple buildings and a devotee-built green house was dedicated. At the Retreat, many new shrines and trails were constructed and subsequently dedicated: Sikh Shrine (2016), Advaita Shrine (2017), Mind-Mirage meditation site (2018), and Jain Shrine site (2019)



Swamis Atmajayananda and Harananda



Swamis Aparananda & Chandrashekharananda

Happy Days with my Guru

- - - Lenoir K Hayward

Forty-four years ago in the month of October my husband Harold Hayward and I were initiated by Swami Aseshananda in the Shrine of this Temple during Durga Puja, having met Swami that previous August. Little did we know the true nature of the mystical journey upon which we had embarked that day. Nor did we know the full extent of Swami's lasting commitment to our spiritual lives and that of everyone he initiated. Our years of studying Eastern Philosophy had led us to the door of one who was a living embodiment of his monastic vows, who greatly resembled the Jedi Knight 'Yoda' in Star Wars and who roared like a fire-breathing dragon at what seemed to be the least provocation!

In the early 1970s quite a few householder families like us joined the Vedanta Society of Portland, attracted by the extreme devotion of Sri Ramakrishna to the Divine Mother Kali, by the inspirational teachings of Swami Vivekananda and by the exemplary life of Sri Sarada Devi in the midst of her family duties. And we were mesmerized by a senior Monk of the Ramakrishna Order who had been initiated as a young man by Holy Mother, who daily worshipped God as Mother, and whose dark piercing eyes glinted with Divine Love.

Along with the other devotee's children, our son and two daughters regularly attended Sunday School at the Temple and participated in seasonal events, such as narrating the Christmas play and joining the



Swami Aseshananda

Easter egg hunt. There was also the day long Saturday school at Sri Sarada House in the mid 80s. And particularly memorable were the many *Antaryogas* for women and children that were held at the Vedanta Retreat near Scappoose from a Friday night to Sunday afternoon.

First, I have to say that Swami Aseshananda directed every detail of the *Antaryogas*, and he kept a firm grip on the wand! Each of the attendees was listed, often including an out of town visitor or two. The menu for the *Antaryoga* was spelled out. Duties, both housekeeping and spiritual, were assigned. The time schedule was created and meant to be adhered to. (An interesting aside is that Swami himself was seldom 'on time.' He barely made it to the airport before they closed the airplane doors for takeoff, leaving all those in attendance with heart palpitations!) Who rode with

whom to the Retreat was specified. Where each person slept was identified and not to be changed.

All were expected to attend the short Friday night lecture at the Temple. The children waited in the library. Afterward, Swami held two plates of Prasad as we walked past him in the hall. Having gathered up the all important gate keys, we then caravanned to the Retreat. For many years Swami came out that evening as well, to see where everyone was sleeping and to perform a short vesper upstairs with a few words of blessing. I seem to recall having hot chocolate in Brahmananda Hall afterward. Once we turned off the lights, the deep forested darkness and

profound peace of the Retreat soon enveloped us with blessed tranquility in that sacred space.

Early in the morning we meditated in front of the altar upstairs, sitting between the welcome warmth of the two crackling fireplaces. After a hearty breakfast, we devotees shared thought-provoking Spiritual readings in our group discussions. Then some began making preparations for the Saturday midday lecture and potluck, which Swami, additional devotees and the public would attend. Others worked in the flower beds or tending to the Shrines or watching over the children. The children prized every minute at the Retreat and were given great freedom there. Swami loved the children. He blessed them constantly.

On Saturday afternoon, after Swami and the other's departure, a dusty hush settled upon the Retreat grounds. Typically, then, we went on a walking pilgrimage to the Shrines, with candles, flowers, incense and a pertinent inspirational reading offered at each one. The Shrines were built to honor the universality of world religions, as well as our spiritual lineage of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. The dedication of the elaborate Native American Shrine had included an authentic blessing ceremony by a Northwest Tribal Medicine man.

We repeated the *Antaryoga* schedule Saturday evening and Sunday morning, then went to the 11:00 lecture in Portland. Some of us went back to finish the karmayoga projects at the Retreat, pack up and the last one out had to be sure to return the gate keys to the Temple.

In his capacity as head of the Portland Vedanta Society, Swami Aseshananda lectured year round, every Sunday morning, Thursday and Friday nights, after each Puja, and for many special occasions. Typically he donned a well-worn sweater over a white fully-buttoned long sleeve shirt, dark wool pants and wrapped in disheveled layers of ocher meditation cloth around his shoulders.

Generally Swami's talks became unstructured after the first ten minutes, and were then interwoven with random reminiscences of Holy Mother and the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, with his clear philosophical insights, with his oft repeated jokes,

and with those righteous indignant outbursts against America's "cash system" and the "painted meat balls."

There was always a relevant topic, such as Sri Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads, Yoga Sutras or the lectures of Swami Vivekananda, to which Swami returned after every digression of his rambling discourse. Often however, it was while on those serendipitous side roads, that he answered our unspoken question or shed light on our hidden fears or gave us a little encouraging boost. He always managed to express just what we needed to hear at that moment.

Swami Aseshananda, likewise, was an exceptionally sincere and intensely single-minded Pujari. He worshipped daily in the Temple Shrine with offerings of food, flowers, incense, lights, bells and chants of praise and prayer. Beginning in October with Durga Puja and ending with Sri Ramakrishna's birthday in March, there were several special daylong celebrations.

For each celebration Swami prepared rice pudding to be offered as Prasad. The lecture hall was transformed into a south facing Shrine, all chairs removed. Low altars were set up for the holy pictures which, during the worship Swami draped with lush flower garlands made by the devotees. Plates were piled high with beautifully prepared fruit, cookies, candy, cakes, cooked food and colorful fresh flowers. As incense swirled skyward, Swami made the offerings to the Deities while intoning Sanskrit hymns in his rich voice, waving the yaks tail fan (*Chamara*) and ringing of bells.

The inside of the fireplace on the south wall had been scrubbed in anticipation of the *Homa* Ceremony, an ancient Vedic fire ritual which Swami then performed immediately following the worship. It was often at this time, after hours of focused worship, during the unsettling of the altars and the setting up of tables for Prasad, that Swami's dragon-fire was likely to erupt and blast an unlucky (some would say lucky) devotee against the wall. And we all felt the ripples of his roar!

Visitors from far and wide came to Swami Aseshananda for blessings and many hoped for initiation. He was very gracious to one and all.

Generally though, he was averse to having people take the dust of his feet. Swami particularly enjoyed the company of his fellow monastics whose occasional visit was cause for extra lectures and events at the Retreat and Temple, and always potlucks. He often said, "There's never a dull moment in Vedanta and always plenty of good food. Potluck means what's in the pot is your luck!"

In 1977 a few Hollywood Vedanta Society devotees began to arrive in Portland, armed with a movie camera and audio recorder, intent upon capturing something of Swami Aseshananda, which they did. That summer there were at least six outings in rapid succession of about twenty-five devotees and Swami. We caravanned in cars southeast from the Temple out Highway 26 to Mt Hood's Timberline Lodge at 6000 ft. Afterward we drove down the mountain and had potluck at the Wildwood BLM (Bureau of Land Management) Park on the Salmon River. Alternately we drove westward out Hwy 26 to Cannon Beach on the Oregon Coast followed by a potluck at nearby Ecola State Park atop Tillamook Head.

The potluck was no mean feat! After all, the "plenty of good food" had to be prepared in Portland, then kept hot/cold during transport to either Mt Hood or the Oregon coast for seemingly magical distribution with nothing omitted or out of place! Occasionally when visitors came, we continued to have potluck outings to Mt Hood or the Coast.

To Swami the snow covered mountain was Shiva, nonattached, changeless and pure, while the constantly creative, dynamic ocean of existence was Shakti. At Cannon Beach wearing his sturdy brown shoes, heavy dark overcoat, warm hat with ear flaps down and woolen scarf tied loosely around his neck, Swami touched the waves and offered flowers to Shakti while we clustered around him on the sand chanting. Swami also ceremoniously offered flowers and prayers into the clear waters of the Salmon River flowing from Palmer Glacier to the sea, after we honored Shiva at Mt Hood.

There were two dwellings nearby the Portland Temple, Holy Mothers House and Sri Sarada House, in which several women lived and visitors stayed. The residents paid no rent, but were allowed to give a small monthly 'love offering.' Unless they

were retired, they maintained at least a part-time job, yet were expected to behave as obedient novitiates, attend all the Temple functions and be of service to the Society. And they truly were the stalwarts of the karma yoginis!

On a regular basis at each house, Swami held informal talks with the women devotees. Upon arrival he performed a simple worship, then he sat on an upholstered chair in the cozy living room, while we were clustered in chairs around him. In that setting when he spoke about Holy Mother, especially, it seemed as though she was there with us.

In the foyer at the Temple after each noon worship and evening vespers, Swami distributed *Prasad* on individual plates of either fruit and nuts or cookies and candy. He then sat with the devotees and shared his insights. Likewise, during potlucks, after lectures, on outings, at the Retreat and wherever we gathered, Swami gave us answers, advice and encouragement.

Until his passing in 1996 Swami Aseshananda continued to give of himself ceaselessly, a perfect 'hollow bone' through which Divine blessings freely flowed. I am eternally grateful to the Mother of the Universe that he was is and ever will be my Guru.

Jay Ma!



"The moment I have realized God sitting in the temple of every human body, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him - that moment I am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes, and I am free."

"The whole secret of existence is to have no fear. Never fear what will become of you, depend on no one. Only the moment you reject all help are you freed."

"Where can we go to find God if we cannot see Him in our own hearts and in every living being."

- - - Swami Vivekananda



Memories of Swami Aseshananda and His Time

- - - Fae Dougan in collaboration with Eve Prior

In early 1955 my husband and I were in the Los Angeles area where by chance I met a couple who were from the Hollywood Vedanta Temple. I knew nothing of Vedanta, but they gave me a copy of The Bhagavad-Gita and told me of their assistant Swami who had just been sent to Portland in February to be in charge of that Vedanta Society of Portland. Swami Devatmananda, who had been head of the Portland Vedanta Society since 1932, had returned to India because of ill health, and the members of the Hollywood Temple were sad to lose Swami Aseshananda. They told me to look him up when I returned to Portland.

Initial Meetings

My sister Vera Edward's husband was familiar with the area near Scappoose where the Portland Vedanta Society's Retreat Temple was located; so Vera and I went to a lecture there, probably in May or early June of 1955. After the lecture everyone attending gathered in the area near the old meditation cottage and the log house, both original buildings on the property, and, in bad shape, old and literally falling down. Swami Aseshananda talked and there was food, and a small social gathering. Swami sent Laverne Kutchler over to us with an invitation to tea one day the following week at the Portland Temple, which we accepted.

I assumed it was to be a tea for a group, and on the day, Vera and I went to the Old Temple on Park Avenue bordering the Park Blocks in southwest Portland and rang the door bell, feeling very strange, entering into the unknown. The Temple was a large old house, three stories with a large porch and portico and lots of shrubbery, rhododendrons, trees, etc. in a large yard with a gravel driveway through the portico from Park Avenue and exiting on SW Harrison Street.

We waited for what seemed a long time before Swami Aseshananda opened the door and welcomed us into the foyer. We realized we were

the only ones invited for tea! He invited us to sit in the parlor and then disappeared into the kitchen and was gone for what seemed like a long time while we wondered about it all - the place and strangeness of it to us. I don't remember the details of what we talked about, but Swami invited us to come again. The Fourth of July was celebrated at the Retreat in Scappoose and Swami invited us to come then, which we did.

My husband was still in California and I was to join him there soon. We were in the process of relocating to the Bay Area and it was an unsettled time for me. I had several interviews with Swami - he was very supportive and strengthening for me at that stressful time and wrote to me over the months while I was away from Portland until the following June when we returned to Oregon instead of staying on in California

Swami Devatmananda's devotees were the main group at the Portland Temple at that time: Lois and Ralph Thom; her sister, Ruth Henderson; Lotta Rader; Alfred Paulson and John Rotzer; Babs Bohlman and Agnes Swanson, Theresa Olson, and Laverne Kutchler. Sarah Albright was the pianist. She had studied at the Royal Academy in London and had been a fine musician in her day, but was now quite old and hit many sour notes as she played at the services.

Mother's blessings and Devotees

Theresa Olson once told me she had been at a board meeting during Swami Devatmananda's time while they were discussing the purchase of the Retreat property, when she sensed the presence of Mother Durga, could hear the rustling of her garments. And from that point Theresa felt Mother's blessings were on their endeavor and that somehow it would all work out.

These early devotees all worked very hard to establish the Society in Portland. Swami Devatmananda himself did considerable hands on physical labor at both properties. None of these members were wealthy; most had modest incomes as nurse, teacher, day laborer, etc., so buying the house

on Park Avenue and the Retreat property was a major accomplishment, all of which occurred during Swami Devatmananda's years as head of the Portland center. When he returned to India in ill health, Lotta Rader, a nurse, accompanied him and spent several months in India visiting different holy places.

Prior to Swami Devatmananda's arrival in Portland in 1932, both Swami Prabhavananda, who later became head of the Hollywood Temple, and Swami Vividishananda who became head of the Seattle Temple, had each spent time in Portland in the 1920's, but had been unsuccessful in getting established. At that time Portland was not open to other races and dark skinned cultures which made it very difficult to rent spaces for meetings or to secure good housing.

After my sister Vera's and my arrival at the Temple in 1955 Swami Aseshananda began attracting other new devotees. Frances Bernie, who was devoted to Swami, followed him up here from California. We all spent lots of time at the Temple, working in the garden, attending lectures, and participating in the worships and rituals. Several of the women maintained the shrine and prepared for the worships, gathering flowers for the offering, making sandalwood paste and food offerings. Frances Bernie, and then I, mended Swami's clothes - and there were mends on previous mends as Swami didn't like to spend money on new things unless absolutely necessary. Ruth Henderson did the flower arrangements. When she moved to California I inherited that job and at one time was arranging thirty seven vases for the shrine, chapel and the many pictures throughout the Temple, all which had a fresh flower vase.

Excursions

During the 1960's and '70's (and probably during the '80's) Swami would gather some of the devotees for a day excursion outside of Portland. Sometimes these were occasioned by a Swami visiting from another center or from India and a trip would be taken by car to the Retreat, or the Rose Gardens, Multnomah Falls, or up to Timberline Lodge. Stuart Bush, who lived at the Temple, used to rent a house for a month during the summer on the central Oregon coast to spend time with his children and I remember a few trips taken to visit him there.

One day-trip we made was in the fall of 1961 on a beautiful day to a fire look-out tower. A young devotee, Paula Jackson, whose boyfriend Dick Townsend (whom she later married) was manning the tower as his summer job. Marge Thomas prepared a picnic lunch (including a roast leg of lamb) for us and the party included Swami, Stuart, Joan Fox, Paula and I. We drove to Estacada and from there via a gravel road through the forest for some distance. The road ended at a small parking area from which then hiked at least a mile to the very tall tower. There was a spiral staircase to the look-out room at the top. As I recall, Swami had no difficulty making his way up (or on the trail in and out), but I had not been feeling in top form that day and had to lay down for a while when we reached the top. The views were magnificent.

On a few other occasions we went to visit Jo and Wes Hawksley who had a cabin up near Mt. Hood and would picnic in an area near their cabin. Swami liked being in the mountains. He would stand on the shore of a stream, bend down and take water into his hands and sprinkle it over himself.

Glimpses of Swamis past life

Swami often told of his joining the monastery after graduating from university of Calcutta and being assigned the duty of making cow dung patties which were used as fuel. We too were given training in humility. A common exercise was being told to return items we had purchased, such as digging up plants to return to the grower after having been given a special price. This could be quite embarrassing. Swami also told us that after joining the monastery his mother tried to get him to come home and put great pressure on him, but he was dedicated to Holy Mother and held firm in his resolve.

Initiation

In 1958, after Swami had been here for three years, he was allowed to give initiation. And so during Durga Puja time I took initiation, as did my sister Vera and her sister-in-law Mae Edwards.

Often, as a blessing, Swami would put in the palm of my hand some holy rice *prasad* from India and Ganges water, and then he would put his hand on the crown of my head in blessing.

Occasionally a homeless man, I think his name was

Bob, would come to the door of the Temple and Swami would invite him in to sit in the foyer and Swami would bring him tea and something to eat which he prepared for him himself.

Many a time, just when we were leaving to go home, Swami would ask whoever was there if they would mail a letter for him – and then Swami would go upstairs to write the letter while we cooled our heels waiting for the letter.

Other Swamis

During these years there were many visits from Ramakrishna Vedanta swamis who were head of centers here in the US, as well as visits from swamis from India and Europe. Many were first generation, who had been initiated by either Holy Mother or Swami Brahmananda. Swami Nityaswarupananda was one of my favorites. He was the Director of the Institute of Culture in Calcutta and visited here several times while he was in this country.

Swami Vividishananda, the head of the Seattle center often came to Portland. He and Swami Aseshananda were very close. He was a great story teller and he and our Swami loved to tell about their early days in India. I took them around Portland and to the Retreat many times and they would sit in the back seat of the car having animated conversations in Bengali. I remember one occasion when Frances Birnie and I drove Swamis Aseshananda and Vividishananda, and Swami Akhilananda from the Boston Center, to the Retreat where we meditated together in the little cottage.

A Special Moment

I will never forget an especially important event that occurred once at the Retreat. It was late in the day and I was driving Swami from the Temple over to the meditation cottage. Vera was in the back seat. I parked near the meditation cottage and for a while, I don't know how long, we sat there very quietly. There was stillness. Suddenly I heard the flutter of wings. No one spoke. There was quiet. And then, Swami got out of the car and went into the meditation cottage. Vera and I didn't say a word. After a short while Swami came back and got in the car. We sat there quietly for a few moments, and then he said something like "We'll go now". He never spoke of his experience and neither of us asked any questions. In fact, I don't remember if Vera and I discussed what had transpired that day until a long time after. It seemed we had been allowed to be present for a very Holy happening for Swami and not something to be talked about.

At the time, my thought was that it was a visitation from another plane, something like breaking the sound barrier. I thought of artists down through the ages depicting holy angels, always with wings. Only in recent years have I talked about this. And yet, how to find words to convey such an experience...to have received the blessings of our Guru, to have had the privilege to be present at a moment like that, to witness the rare glimpse of the Divine.

When the Park Avenue Temple was sold to Portland State University and the move into the current Temple was completed in 1968, all these closer connections changed as the new Temple was now also a monastery.



Fae Dougon Completed her 100th year on October 2, 2019, please see a report on page 18

A few Devotees

- - - Eve Prior

When my husband Jim and I (Eve) joined the Society in late spring of 1967 Swami Aseshananda and Stuart Bush were living in an apartment on NW 25th Avenue. Oddly enough (or not) this 4-plex apartment was just across Northrup Street from the house that had been the Society's first Temple in the early 1930s. Swami was living in an apartment because the second Temple that had been located in a large house on the South Park Blocks had been sold to Portland State University and a new Temple had not yet been found. Every Saturday morning during the summer about 10 to 14 of us would meet at the Retreat near Scappoose to work in the garden or in the Temple or on projects in the property's woods.

Some Devotees

It was during these Saturdays at the Retreat in the late 60's that Jim and I got to know some of the devotees who had been with Swami Devatmananda prior to his return to India in about 1955. These included Alfred Paulson and John Rotzer, both probably in their 80s. during Swami Devatmananda's time, as well as during the years Swami Aseshananda lived at the SW Park Temple, Mr. Paulson lived there as well and did a lot of the hard labor and maintenance. He looked somewhat like a gnome and had an interest in the occult. He told one devotee that his mother wove the fabric, out of which she made the suit he wore when he left Norway as a young man for the United States. We speculated this was the very suit he was still wearing. He was a rascally fellow who seemed to live mostly on cookies and coffee (except for the big Saturday lunches) and who loved to try to provoke Marvin (later Swami Harananda).

Mr. Rotzer, of a sweeter temperament, was from rural Switzerland. He was raised in poverty by a single mother and had worked as a goat herder as a child. He came to the United States as a young man and shortly thereafter joined the Marines. By the late 60's the work both he and Mr. Paulson did at the Retreat was mostly in the garden, but in their

more vigorous years, they both had put in many hours of hard labor. At that time the water supply involved a dam with a ram system that pumped water up to the water tower. It had been their job to keep the system functioning – no small task as beavers were often trying to build their own dams in the same area. The beavers also at times managed to shut down the ram which made a noise they found annoying. This responsibility was later taken on by Jim Sanderson who lived with his wife Marina in the house on the property near the old meditation cottage.

Lotta Rader was always there on Saturdays. She was probably in her 70's at that time. She had been a nurse and had escorted Swami Devatmananda when he was ill back to India. Lotta was small and beautiful with her gray hair pulled back in a bun. She wore shoes that reminded me of Minnie Mouse and when I think of her the image that comes to me is of her walking determinedly up SE 55th Avenue to the new Temple from her apartment on Hawthorne Blvd. She was a hard worker, very orderly and practical. She and another devotee were good friends and one of the things they liked to do when they got together was rearrange the furniture in their apartments.

Colleen Engle and I would alternate Saturdays cooking a hot lunch, and usually she would bring with her two daughters, Catherine and Cheryl, who were in late grade school. Around 3 PM Swami would arrive with Jim Selig who taught English at Mt. Hood Community College. Work would stop and we would sit around the table with Swami and enjoy the ice cream they almost always brought with them. There would be lively discussions, not always on spiritual topics – one of these I remember being the Vietnam War, a subject about which we all had our heated opinions. Swami would let us carry on and then he would say something that would bring us all back to the philosophy of Vedanta....one comment often being, "The world is a dog's curly tail", i.e. try as you might to straighten out that tail, as soon as you let go your grasp it will quickly curl right up again.



A Devout Family, their Mentor and a Lesson

- - - Kathe Fradkin

Great Change in the Family

Our family of six grew up to be good Presbyterians, with my father as a proud deacon and the four children dutifully attending Sunday School every week. This all changed when my older brother, Jay, attended UC Berkeley in the fall of 1964 and one day checked out the nearby Vedanta Center. From this day on, he was changed due to his immediate deep interest and love for the Vedanta philosophy. It made total sense to him and, in a short period of time, he was committed to devote this life to it. His first visit home afterwards was met with skepticism, as he chanted, meditated and talked about this new philosophy. He had serious thoughts about dropping out of college and becoming a monk. This news was shocking to our family!

My mother, one of the biggest skeptics, had noticeable physical and emotional reactions; this rocked her world! She needed to see what this religion was all about and hopefully, find a way to convince Jay to reconsider his plans. Meeting Swami Ashokananda in Berkeley was her next move. In her first visit, she learned about the Vedanta philosophy and it made total sense to her, fulfilling her desire for deeper meaning in her life. She was delighted that there was a center close by, in Hollywood only two hours from where we lived. There, she could learn if this was the real thing! After meeting Swami Prabhavananda, she knew indeed it was right for her as well. For years afterwards, she travelled to the Hollywood Center every weekend for lectures and classes. She then started to understand why her son wanted to become a monk.

The next one to become interested was my sister, Nancy. As she attended Cal State Fullerton in the late 60s, she lived close to the Hollywood temple. Like our mother, she too was curious about Vedanta as she had seen the value of spiritual practices and knowledge with two family members she loved. In Swami Prabhavananda's presence, she was changed also. Her weekend partying was soon replaced with

lectures and meditations. At the beginning of her senior year in college, she moved into the working world and used her knowledge in biology as a cytologist. In 1974, knowing that she wanted to devote her life to God without getting distracted by the worldly affairs and attachments, she became a brahmacharini and joined the Santa Barbara Convent. Following Swami Prabhavananda's instruction, she completed her Bachelor of Science degree and ever since has been a fully focused Vedanta nun.

As I completed college and began my professional career, I too became more curious in Vedanta. In 1983, my mother and other dedicated devotees supported Swami Swahananda in starting a Vedanta Center in San Diego (in a home in Del Mar, a different place than its current location). There, I attended more lectures and Vedanta gatherings with many swamis from all over the country who visited the Center for special events. What a blessing to be in such holy presence! As I discussed the philosophy more and more with my two monastic siblings and the swamis, I became immersed with Vedanta and its many practical applications in my life. Like other family members, it filled a void that I had been feeling. I had seen dramatic positive changes in my family as a result of them following their gurus' spiritual guidance. Even though monastic life was not for me, I did want a guru to help me on my spiritual path as a householder.

My First Personal Meeting

In August of 1980, a friend and I drove up from California to meet the swami whom I had heard about and seen from afar for many years. As we drove nearer to the temple, my heart pounded harder. I finally was able to meet the special man whom the Southern California Vedantists so lovingly spoke of. Upon arriving at the Portland temple, we were greeted by one of the monks who immediately directed us to the library. My friend and I looked at each other and cautiously proceeded as directed. After about ten minutes, we heard someone coming

down the steps shouting orders at the monks all the way. “Yes, Swami, yes, Swami,” were the endearing responses. From what I previously knew about Swami, I surmised that must be Swami Aseshananda. This was confirmed as he entered the library, greeting us kindly and openly. Swami gave his kind regards to my family, asked many questions about our travels, and gave us a short history lesson about the Portland temple. We were captured by his focus and warmth as he looked directly into our eyes when speaking and as he smiled so freely. He had a certain peace about him that we had never experienced before. It was then time for prasad. Swami left the library, taking a well-worn path to the pantry to chop the fruit and prepare the plates of food. Upon his return, he gave us a plate of sliced oranges, nuts and one See’s candy, and then he led us in the offering chant. Swami’s voice was strong and filled with conviction and devotion. I realized that even though he had done this thousands of times, it had not become mundane. Instead, his dedication to the chant and the message behind it had grown stronger and stronger. This was obvious by the strength in his voice, his posture and the power behind the words. I soaked up every minute of it. Swami left shortly afterwards to attend to other devotees. Then alone, I looked at my friend and said, “Wow! He is one powerful dude!” That first impression has lasted to this day.

A lesson learnt

One summer day, my sister, a nun in the Santa Barbara Vedanta convent, and another nun came to Portland to see Swami and attend one of the summer *Antar-yogas* at the Scappoose Retreat. The day before we went to the Retreat, Swami wanted to treat the nuns to a sightseeing tour. All four of us—Swami, the two nuns and myself—packed in my car and headed for Multnomah Falls. What a memorable drive and visit—sharing conversation with ones I loved and seeing one of the most spectacular sights in the Northwest’s beautiful Columbia Gorge. We spent longer than we expected there, soaking up the sights and walking with Swami. We needed to get back in time for the evening worship. As I was driving home on the I-84 freeway, Swami told me which exit to take. I tactfully let him know that I was very familiar with

the Portland area and that I knew how to get back. He said nothing in response, even though my sister was mortified at the thought that I would not immediately follow Swami’s advice. One of my intentions was to enable Swami to visit more with the nuns rather than giving directions. I must admit the other intention, though, was to protect my ego from having someone tell me directions. That was my first mistake! I proceeded to get off on an exit that took me further west than we needed to be. As I retraced my steps to go east, I became hopelessly lost! That was my second mistake! When all in the car noticed that I was lost, Swami calmly stated, “Now, follow my directions to get back to the temple.” With a lesson so humbly learned, I did follow his advice and we got back safely—just in time to prepare for worship. Lesson learned and applicable upon many subsequent occasions! Swami made a tremendous impact upon my life through his words and, more importantly, through his actions. His faith and trust in Holy Mother consistently and continuously radiated from him and, as a result, he deeply touched everyone who was fortunate enough to have met him. He was, and continues to be, an inspiration in my daily spiritual life.



“One party says thought is caused by matter, and the other says matter is caused by thought. Both statements are wrong; matter and thought are coexistent. There is a third something of which both matter and thought are products.

As particles of matter combine in space, so mind-waves combine in time.

To define God is—grinding the already ground; for He is the only being we know.”

- - - Swami Vivekananda



The Journey from Lower Truth to Higher Truth

- - - Kaustava Roy

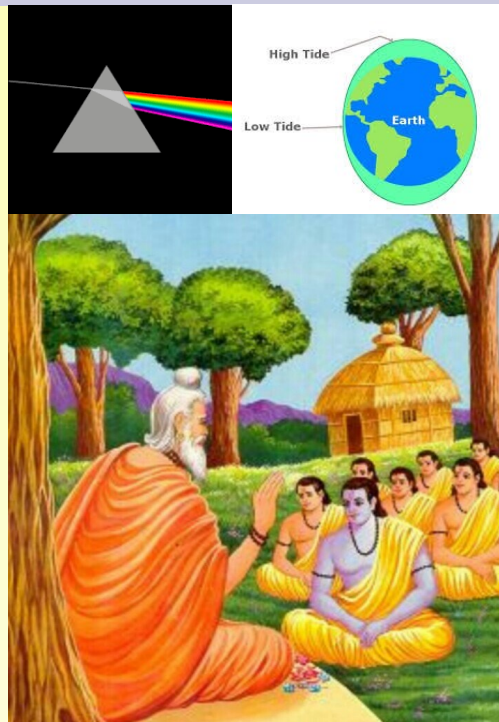
In the Vedic tradition that is championed by the Vedanta Societies, the highest place is given to love for truth. Sri Ramakrishna says truthfulness is the *tapasya* of the Kali age. By practicing this one gains the power to understand spiritual truths.

Sri Ramakrishna further recommends that those engaged in office work or business - where it is tempting to twist the truth for a profit - they too should stick to truthfulness. One who does not stick to truth gradually loses all spiritual merit.

So complete was Sri Ramakrishna absorbed in this statement that he would try to live it to the letter. If he happened to blurt out something he would fulfill it no matter how inconvenient. And whereas there are many advantages for a monk vis a vis a householder on the spiritual path, the fact that it is magnitudes harder to stick to truth as a householder makes this discipline of special and extraordinary value for the latter.

However, a key lesson that we learn from Swami Vivekananda is that there are levels of truth. One may ask how can that be? Truth is truth. How can there be a lower or higher? This confusion is the cause of the greatest grief the world has seen due to religious dogmatism. Not understanding this has led to large scale persecutions of people based on religious beliefs.

The followers of Abrahamic religions, especially Islam, who have in the past, looked down on and persecuted millions of Hindu and other "idolaters" displayed an appalling lack of love of truth and understanding. So we can see how important it is to grow a love of truth in all people so they can sift out



Evolving Perspectives

what is true in their scriptures from that which degrades mankind.

Here is what Swami Vivekananda says about the journey from lower spiritual truths to higher ones, an understanding of which can end religious conflict in the future:

"The other forms of worship are not errors. This is one of the great points to be remembered, that those who worship God through ceremonials and forms, however crude we may think them to be, are not in error. It is the journey from truth to truth,

from lower truth to higher truth. Darkness is less light; evil is less good; impurity is less purity. It must always be borne in mind that we should see others with eyes of love, with sympathy, knowing that they are going along the same path that we have trodden."

So how do we understand a spiritual path to be true, and how do we understand it to be a lower or higher manifestation of truth? Moreover how does it matter if it is a lower or higher path? For this, I think we should take refuge in the language developed to systematically and logically uncover truths - mathematics.

Laws in the sciences and social sciences are expressed mathematically. The laws that are more general and yet accurate in application are considered to be higher. Similar should be the case with spiritual laws and truths. Often we may use a simplified version of the law for practical purposes - and that should be fine since it is ultimately very beneficial.

Let's take a couple of examples from various fields:

(Please turn to page no. 18)

Self-effort, Surrender and Prayer

- - - Kavita Goldowitz

The word *saranagati* (surrender, taking refuge) is comprised of two words – *saranam* (to seek refuge/shelter) and *gati* (to move towards). Often times, when we are seeking protection in our lives, we have come to a deep realization that we are powerless and can't have that protection for ourselves. The question then arises – how do we know that we are helpless and powerless? When do we recognize that there's nothing in our power to bring about that shelter and security? We generally arrive at this conclusion only when we are fully convinced that "I" have tried everything possible in my control, and haven't attained the desired result.

This concept does present an interesting paradox, since the ability to truly surrender to the Lord and seek His protection, we first have to invest in full self-effort and come to an intuitive understanding of the ego's limitations and perhaps hitting a metaphorical brick wall. Therefore, self-effort is important in being able to reach a point of full surrender.

Most of us have had experiences of reaching a point of intense desperation, with a deep knowledge that there's nothing more "I" can do, or that "I" can't bear it anymore". This allows for the heart to open up and seek help from a Higher Power. If we take an intimate look at this situation, what are we finally "giving up"? It is the "I sense"; the ego sense; surrendering of our thoughts, words and deeds. Though on one hand, it sounds powerless, on the other hand, it is a liberating thought – "there's nothing else I need to do and I can let go". We can place ourselves at the feet of the Lord, and allow him to use his infinite resources to support us.

For most of us, this recognition comes as a last resort in moments of desperation. Perhaps, for some evolved person this ability to bypass the self-effort and go directly to surrendering their egos might be possible. But for the rest of us, until we have to come to the end of our tethers and recognize the

limitations of our individual ego/"I", it is difficult to cultivate the complete surrender.

A wonderful example of this philosophy of true surrender emerging after full self-effort is described in the beautiful story of *Draupadi* in the Hindu epic, *The Mahabharata*. *Draupadi's* husband, *Yuddhisthira* had lost his kingdom, army, wealth, along with his brothers and wife to their cousins, the *Kauravas*, and were now considered their slaves. As a result, she is about to be dishonored and disrobed in the front of the entire assembly at the royal palace, and her five husbands, the *Pandavas* are powerless to take action and protect her. *Draupadi* put in immense effort to plead her case - she appealed to the righteousness of all the elders present, talked about justice, threatened them with dire consequences, and yet nothing changed in the situation. *Dushasan*, one of the *Kaurava* brothers, soon started to disrobe her. *Draupadi* then prayed to Sri Krishna, her friend and Lord, seeking his support to protect her honor. However, there was still a small part of her that believed that she could protect herself or perhaps doubted if Krishna would in fact come to her aid. She manifested this internal conflict by clutching to her *sari* with one hand, while seeking protection from the Lord with the other. Only when she recognized that she has exhausted all her efforts and raised both her hands in supplication and surrender to Sri Krishna, did He run to her immediate aid and support. He sent an unending supply of *sari*, which made it impossible for *Dushasan* to disrobe her, and thereby protected *Draupadi's* honor and she was saved.

Sri Ramakrishna has a succinct analogy to describe this very concept. He has stated that the first stage of *sadhana*, seeking, is like that of a baby monkey – it has to hold on for dear life, while the mother monkey jumps from tree to tree. The baby monkey has to exert a tremendous amount of self-effort, concentration and *Shraddha*, devotion, to keep itself safe and secure. However, Sri Ramakrishna

compares the second half of *sadhana* to the kitten – the mother cat gently and safely carries the baby kitten by the scruff of its neck and carries it along with no effort on the part of the kitten. The kitten is rest assured in its mother's protection, and has a sense of calmness and exudes full faith in its safety.

Prayer and devotion are like bridges connecting self-effort and surrender, enabling us to access our inherent wisdom. Surrendering to God is in essence allowing him to channel his power through us, which is possible when "I" the ego is not in the way. The intellect ceases to be active in prayerful surrender. It is in tune with the infinite; linking ourselves with the inexhaustible cosmic powerhouse of energy. Here's a heartfelt prayer by Saint *Tukaram* – a 17th century Hindu saint and poet of the devotional tradition from India. He beautifully captures the essence of surrender of the ego and merging with God-

*Take Lord, unto Thyself
My sense of self, and let it vanish utterly.
Take, Lord, my life,
Live Thou my life through me.
I live no longer, Lord,
But in me now Thou livest.
Aye, between Thee and me, my God,
There is no longer room for "I" and "mine".*



(From page no. 16)

1. Economics: Given an annual rate of return, how soon will your investment double? Mathematically, there is a longer accurate formula, but for practical purposes, if rate of return is below 15%, simply divide a number near 70 by this rate. So, if rate of return is 9%, the investment will double in $72/9 = 8$ years.

2. Physics: classical laws of mechanics fail at the quantum level, but are used very effectively to build all sorts of practical things.

3. Spirituality: even if one's definition and understanding of God is very narrow and limited, by loving that very God, the power of love for something higher definitely grows.

This in turn can lead to wider and deeper views, but without a love for truth, this often is not seen.

To summarize, the Vedanta societies, by developing a love for truth and an understanding of the reality of lower and higher truths, is helping build bridges among the various religions of the world for the betterment of mankind.

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Fae Dougon Completes a Century

On October 2 2019, Fae Dougon completed a century on this earth. On this occasion she remembered her sister Vera. They were the only siblings in their family and were brought up Seventh Day Adventist and Vegetarian in a beautiful setting in Laurelwood where the Ananda Ashrama is situated now. They were very close in their entire lives and always looked out for each other. They even shared the same job for years. She told us how once she ran on to a rabbit. She also recounted her best memory that she had in the Retreat at Scappoose when she and Vera took Swami Aseshananda to the Retreat. She experienced exceptional stillness and quietness while waiting in the car near the small meditation cottage. She also heard the flutter of many wings. Swami opened the car door and went into the small meditation cottage. After a while he came back to the car, but during this whole time there had been a palpable spiritual atmosphere and ambiance. It was the most special time Fae had ever spent with him, in that silence. Fae said she had many experiences at the Temple. When asked if she wanted to live another hundred years, she said, "spare me."



My Sanctuary

- - - Shubha Ranganathan

My Cove where I grow
My Cove on the 55th Avenue
At 1157, I turn into it and know
I have come home to myself
In Vedanta Pdx.

What happens as I step out of the car
Is just the beginning
And with every step I find
My Being blossoms
Grows with an Enthusiasm
Knowing Mother is there.
She looked like this
She spoke like that

She served us with food and knick-knacks
All the same She knew we were needed
Some small task arose to be attended to
And hands and hearts gently bent to serve
One child leaves another takes that place
The flux that arises shakes us from the gut
Yet we need to know

The One spirit that expresses
Through a form and name assigned
To bring that training alive again
For whom was it, one wonders?
There is a Mother there
Bringing the wish to Fulfillment
In Sri Ramakrishna and in Her too

Though She has bequeathed
With an abundance one cannot yet imagine
That profusion continues unabated
To the hearts which are deepened
With yearning and goodness emerging in us

What does It hold, do we realize?
It is emptied of grudges and vanities
Aggression and Timidity both are quelled
What lies closer to the Heart still is petalled close
A touch here of kindness
A word there of welcome
A look of understanding
A guidance of restraint
A work to engage on higher plane
With intent flowing into thought, word and service
All pointing to Those Who are Divine
Who are That
We too are transformed into adaptable ones
More receptive to guidance coming from still
Higher endurance, deeper commitment
She is the Anvil, taking the pounding
While changing us, holding Herself unchanged.
Can we too be so absorb yet?
Can we hold back a little more?
Can we spread some cheer from the heart so
controlled?
Can we swallow ugliness and arrogance quietly?
We are children in the journey
To know Ourselves or God
Decades though we need to be molded

Still like children many still are
Can we be like Mother
As She exemplified?
Come let us keep working on!



Assimilation and Harmony and Tantra

- - - Swami Shantarupananda

Excerpt from the lecture delivered on November 10th, 2013 at “Chicago Calling” in Chicago.

Swami Vivekananda said to “help and not fight.” Why did he say this in America? Because in my opinion, this is the major country in the world where you find that, if there is any calamity, help is sent as soon as possible, wherever they are. This is my view, but not only my personal view. It is my experience also. Wherever I go, people come forward and ask, “How can I help you?” That is the spirit of America. No wonder why Swami Vivekananda said “help and not fight” from here, in America.

Sorry, my brother monks from other countries may not like this. My brother monk from Brazil yesterday mentioned that in Brazil there is more freedom, but I must point out that this fact does not have the same meaning as what Swami Vivekananda was referring to.

Swami Vivekananda read a paper on Hinduism in Chicago on the date 19 September 1893. I am not going to read the whole thing. It would take a long time. Towards the end he says, referring to the concept of Universal Religion, “Ashoka’s council was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar’s though more to the purpose, was only a parlor meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the lord is in every religion.” In America we see these qualities of freedom and courage.

Let me speak something about this subject of Tantra. It is very interesting to note that despite the considerable number of scriptures on Tantrism, it has been one of the most neglected branches of spiritual studies. Even today many people think Tantra is a kind of black magic. The study of the antiquity of Tantra dates back to 5th – 9th century AD. And the Atharva Veda is considered to be one of the sources of Tantra tradition.

You can find that there are three traditions; the Vedic tradition, the Puranic tradition, and the Tantra tradition. Tantra’s definition is “Tanyate vistaryate

jnanam anena iti tantram” which means, tantra is the scripture by which the light of knowledge spreads. It also means ‘to weave, and to expand’. So *tantra* is not confined to a particular group of people or a particular nation.

Tantra takes into account the whole world, both good and bad, to achieve this goal. But remember, unless – and until – you know what tantra is, you might become more worldly, more hypocritical, and dangerous to you and to others if you practice it.

In tantra, there are three ways of reaching the goal, and these three ways are meant for those with different qualities and tendencies in life. The first one is called Pashu Bhava, animal disposition or bestial mode. These are people in whom lust, anger, and other animal tendencies are predominant, and they will try to reach the goal, avoiding all objects of temptations, maintaining external purity, repeating God’s name, and performing purascharana (repeated recitation of a holy mantra). They have to transcend these temptations to reach the highest goal. The idea is not to get stuck in these.

The second one is called Veera Bhava, heroic mode. This is meant for those people whose animal propensities are not as strong. They should remain unperturbed while living amidst the temptations of lust and gold and try to devote their minds to God. They take the challenges and eventually overcome them. But this can be dangerous. The third one is called Divya-bhava, divine-mood. It is meant for those whose minds are free from lust and anger. Their intense longing for God overpowers all kinds of temptations. From them, the practice of forgiveness, sincerity, kindness, contentment, truthfulness, and other virtues has become quite natural. This bhava is where you find divine nature. Sri Ramakrishna, practiced Divya Bhava, which is more suitable for those who are spiritually developed.

There are great subjects within tantra, Hindu tantra,

Buddha tantra, etc. It is a very vast subject. Sri Ramakrishna practiced Divya Bhava which is taken from Vishnu Kranta. There we find this message of unity and “help and not fight” in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, who really practiced tantra. Hearing the name of karana (wine), his mind went beyond everything and merged in the underlying cause of the universe and went into deep Samadhi. When he heard the word yoni, female organ, his mind went into the beginning of creation, God. Yoni is the source of all creation – man, woman, good, bad and even dust – everything.

From the life of Sri Ramakrishna, we find that he gave us the concept that we can go ahead with this Tantra sadhana without having a woman companion. Sri Ramakrishna took a great teacher, Bhairabi Brahmani, who taught him sixty-four disciplines of the Tantra. According to Tantra, we have six chakras in the physical body. We have kundalini power and that power needs to be awakened. When this power merges at the top, sahasrara, the place of Shiva, one gets Samarasha Anubhuti, the union of my individual soul and the cosmic self. That is the whole purpose and the goal or the aim of tantra.

Look at this grand function organized here today. It is that great power, Shakti, which helped organize this celebration and it is the same power that inspired Swami Vivekananda to come and preach the universal message of unity. Now what is this power? This is the power of tantra. That is this chitshakti, the power which is in all of us. This great message of unity we also find in the tantra in the form of kundalini jaagaran. When our energy is awakened, we find the same thing there in all of us.

It happened to Sri Ramakrishna. I do not have time to deal with that, but can read the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, where he gave a description of tantra. He describes in his own words in the Gospel, what tantra is, what Veda is, and what Purana is. Then he added some new words:

Satchidananda Brahma, Satchidananda Krishna, and Satchidananda Shiva.

Among the Westerners, John Woodroffe was the first serious person attempting to know this branch of knowledge. He practiced it also, and gave the

West the two concepts of Shiva and Shakti. Chitshakti is the highest goal in tantra, like Brahman is in Vedanta.

The Vedantic tradition takes us to the highest goal through a practice a neti-neti, or “not this, not that.” So, these are the three branches of spiritual knowledge which Sri Ramakrishna beautifully reconciled and combined. He said, “The Truth established is but one Satchidananda. In the Vedas, It is called Brahman, in the Puranas, It is called Krishna, Rama, and so on, and in the Tantras, It is called Shiva.”

Sri Ramakrishna did not know much English, but there a few words he did use. Once in a discussion with a Vaishnava devotee, Sri Ramakrishna said about Vaisnava and Shakta that their goal is the same but their ways are different. Then he mentioned, that those who are really Vaishnava, they do not criticize Shakti. The Goswami, a Vaishnava devotee, said, “Shiva and Parvati are like our father and mother.” The moment Sri Ramakrishna heard this, he said, “Thank You – Father and Mother.”

This is Sri Ramakrishna, who gave this teaching of unity in and through everything, including tantra, which is not sometimes taken in good spirit around the world. But there are some good aspects of tantra in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

Before I conclude, I want to mention that we are talking about harmony. Harmony of what? Harmony of different religions and faith. But until there is some confusion, how can there be harmony? Swami Vivekananda noticed it and added before he gave this message, “in spite of resistance, harmony will come.” In our Ramakrishna Order, you can see all the Gods and Goddesses (Ramakrishna, Jesus, and Buddha) are all on the same altar. I am waiting for that day – and maybe it will take couple of centuries to see – when all will come to respect each other.

I would like to conclude with Swami Vivekananda’s words, “Hail Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbor’s blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one’s neighbors, it has been given to thee to march at the vanguard of civilization with the flag of harmony.”



A Compassionate Heart

- - - Meera Parekh

I saw Swami Aseshananda for the first time at the St. Louis center and felt inside my heart that he will give me what I was searching all these years in my life. It was just like feeling instant Divine Love inside. So, I wanted to be able to be close to him to see him closely and feel his Divine Love which I was craving for.

When I came to Portland for the first time, I was reluctant to bow down to him. In India, at certain times, ladies do not touch holy men or go inside the temple when they feel impure. He said 'There is nothing like impurities here and that I could touch his feet.'

During the interview, he told me that he was connected with my initiating Guru and told me that I was not meditating in the correct way and should meditate in the way suggested to him by my Guru. I felt that Swami Aseshananda was connected to my Guru through Divine Mother, as it was all Her power and Grace that he bestowed on me. Thus, he was quite attentive to my spiritual practice and my movement of mind. For instance, during this visit I just wanted to be around Swami and not go for sight-seeing or to visit other centers. One day I was standing in the hallway for *prasad* with other guests whom swami instructed to go to Seattle Center, Whereas he asked a senior devotee to convey to me to feel free if I wanted to stay back and not go to Seattle. Thus, he was always in touch with our thoughts, emotions and feelings and was working to help us in the best way.

Another incident that comes to mind. I was working in one of the agencies and had some issue with my supervisor; it was almost impossible to resolve those issues. All my friends suggested that none could help me except the Swami. So, when I talked to him on the phone, he said he will pray to Mother. By the grace of Mother my supervisor's mind was completely transformed and my issues were resolved. I knew it happened because of his prayers.

In another time I lost my job and I was supposed to go back to India. When I met him to have final

guidance from him he assured me that he would write letters to me. I responded to him 'I know that you don't write many letters and that you could keep me here if you really wanted me to be here.' And I kept on urging him to let me stay in USA. He was smiling hearing my words and said nothing and gave us *prasad*. A devotee-friend remarked that the Swami was so sweet and gracious where as I was upset. Swami Aseshananda called a devotee and said "She wants to stay but she could stay here if she gets a job." He was so compassionate enough to read 'Chandi' every day for me, so that I can find a job. After a while, I got a job in another state. When I went there, I called him to express my gratitude for everything he had been doing for me. He responded gracefully and told me to call him every late-evening. In spite of his busy schedule, the Swami talked to me for a considerable length of time. His Compassionate heart was always ready to help devotee so that they have '*satsang*' and experience love of Holy Mother. I would never forget, that at the end of the conversation, usually Swami used to say, 'Mother loves you, Mother loves you very much.' It was as if Mother was telling me through him.

He would everyday bless the devotees by saying, 'Depend on Mother, depend on Mother, depend on Mother', as if the blessings of Mother was directed through him to everybody.

He was also particular that I should attend the service in the Center every weekend and travel alone by myself and while travelling I should listen to his lectures. Once I came from Seattle to the Retreat function in Portland without informing him, yet he told me to stay in one of the houses overnight. That time a doctor devotee was also visiting. In my mind I was thinking that he would accommodate me in the basement thinking that the other person was wealthier than me. But, to my surprise he gave me a room upstairs and to the other devotee the room in the basement. He was beyond material discrimination and his focus was on the devotee's welfare.

(Continued at page no. 24)

The Reluctant Master Swami Vivekananda

- - - Toby Pollock

In the life and living of a Divine Incarnation, we observe the human aspect side-by-side with the Divine Aspect. This in no way diminishes, but rather augments the true greatness of the Avatar, making Him easier to relate to, and accept as an Ideal, for ordinary human beings like us. At our Vedanta Society, we usually refer to Sri Ramakrishna as the Divine Incarnation, but, over time, we come to see Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda are in fact inseparable from Sri Ramakrishna.

Like Sri Ramakrishna Swami Vivekananda also was referred to as "the Master" or "my Master" by many great souls. He could be referred to as a reluctant Master, perhaps. This was noticeable from time to time, primarily at the beginning of his role as a disciple, but, also later as an orator and Guru. While admitting this, it is very clear that he completely overcame this reluctance, and went on to manifest overpowering confidence, charisma, intellectual brilliance, and passionate commitment to His Mission (also known as the Divine Mother's Work).

In his youth, Narendra was recognized by his peers as the born leader and the one they looked up to. Naturally self-confident, fearless and also due to his training, education and heavily influenced by Western logic and critical reasoning he would insist on proofs or convincing arguments for any claims made by anyone, or any rules and regulations presented to him. He was averse to accepting old fashioned, traditional Hinduism, with its emotionally feverish drama and ritualism. In this connection, his brilliant intellect was naturally inclined to skepticism, even scorn. However, along with his rationalism and pragmatism, Narendra's heart was nourished and inspired by the ancient tales of sages, saints, and Godly Heroes, as in the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and a lover of Truth. This conflict of head and heart had to be resolved and balanced. His intense energy would manifest as passionate enthusiasm for any project, interest, or

occupation he decided to take on. His iron will and steely self-discipline at the loving heart worked in his favor for the ultimate resolution and balancing of his head and heart.

Many other examples of Narendra's tendency for reluctance was revealed. His critical view even disagreement of almost every aspect of Hindu religious traditions, i.e., image worship, the need of a guru, unity of existence as in Advaita (non-dual) viewpoint and the essential divinity of the soul. On acceptance of Divine Mother Kali he made very clear why he was reluctant. He said, "If I accepted Kali, all would follow me, therefore I cannot..." He definitely did not care for the idea of giving up his independence by accepting a guru with "blind faith", or to give up his sharp and critical eye for every detail, or the sceptic's view of testing, experimenting, and verifying for himself everything that he would be taught, or presented as fact, by Ramakrishna, or anybody else.

He was also averse to be a teacher but before he gave up His body, Sri Ramakrishna wrote on a piece of paper, "Naren will teach people." "I will not!" replied Narendra spiritedly. The Master's response was both prophetic and powerful: "Your very bones will make you do it." Another scene illustrates Naren's preferred future lifestyle, from his perspective: Sri Ramakrishna asks, "What do you want?" Naren responds, "I want to remain immersed in Samadhi, and every few days, come back and eat some food to maintain my body; then, go back to the Transcendental State." "What a small minded person you are....I thought you would be a great banyan tree, under which many world weary souls would take shelter from the scorching sun, but, now, I see you only want your own liberation".

Narendra's (later Swami Vivekananda's) natural bent of mind was toward solitude, meditation, and peace. He was shielded and insulated from the fatal attraction and temptation of name and fame conjured by Maya, and even worse, "spiritual pride." This can

referred to as a healthy reluctance. There are many examples of this trait of his, but three can be sited here. First, after His Master's *mahasamadhi*, when all looked to Narendra for leadership, inspiration, and courage, he confided to "M" in a private conversation, "I don't care for anything; you see, I'm talking to you, but I feel like getting up and running out of this room." Second, even though many influential people, including Indian royalty, encouraged Swamiji to attend the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he refused and put them off. Even when he had a very clear vision of His Master beckoning him to go to the West, and commanding him, "Go!", he still hesitated, until he got Holy Mother's blessings for the great adventure that awaited him. Only then did he feel certain of his destiny. Third, when he was at the Parliament of Religions on the platform that fateful first day, he was hesitant to speak, and like all the other speakers he had not prepared a speech. Finally, when Dr. John Henry Barrows introduced him, he bowed down mentally to the Divine Mother Saraswati, and stepped up to the podium to address the large crowd. And the rest is history.

Swami Vivekananda experienced a recurring attraction to retreat to a remote, quiet place, like the Himalayas, forget the world, and dive into the deepest depths of meditation. Over and over again, he would try to do just that, but would be drawn back to do the Mother's Work. A scene that exemplifies Swamiji's preferred way of life is as follows: "the other night at Greenacre (The Humane Conference), all went to sleep under a pine tree, a nice night under the stars, sleeping on the lap of Mother Earth, and I enjoyed every bit of it. I cannot describe to you that night's glories, after this last year's brutal life that I have led." (Referring to his hectic lecture tours and busy life being the Guru for so many).

Ultimately he had to obey his Master and had to perform the Mother's work. Therefore, it is true that Swamiji was a reluctant Master, Guru, and responsible leader of society. Yet, all of the world, and especially all the Vedanta devotees around this world, are very grateful to him and much enriched by his willingness to take on the great challenges that he did.



(Continued from page no. 22)

At times, he would scold me before leaving for Seattle. I would be resisting his scolding in my mind and I would not listen to his tlectures on the way back. And I had to force my mind to call him to inform him my safe arrival in Seattle as per his instructions. He knew exactly what was going on in my mind. He would say that what I was thinking was not right. He was so sensitive about the thoughts and feelings of our minds and try to direct us in an appropriate fashion.

Whenever I visited Portland Center, he would be waiting for me near the door or would be doing karma yoga so that he could see me driving in. It is just like mothers do in India for her child.

After some time, I got a job near Portland and that I was able to stay in one of the women's houses. There he used to take classes just for the women once a month. Then I used to get crazy in picking up the best flowers in the garden to put in the vases. When he came, I would wait for his comments about the flowers. He used to pick up my thoughts and would comment invariably something about the flowers. For instance, 'These bouquet of flowers are like the flowers on the bushes offered to the Divine Mother'. My heart would be very happy to hear these.

So, in essence, Swami's compassion, his sensitivity and his guidance were based on his love and individual needs of the devotees.



Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man, and man unto God.

External nature is only internal nature writ large.

The motive is the measure of your work. What motive can be higher than that you are God, and that the lowest man is also God?

The observer in the psychic world needs to be very strong and scientifically trained.

To believe that mind is all, that thought is all is only a higher materialism.

- - - Swami Vivekananda





Glimpse of the past

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