

Miscellaneous

The Name “Aseshananda”

“Asesha” means “infinite,” “ananda” means “bliss,” so Swami Aseshananda was “Infinite bliss.” Swami Aseshananda and Swami Ashokananda both took sannyas on the same day and were both given the name “Aseshananda.” Swami Saradananda then contacted Swami Shivananda and told him to change his “Aseshananda,” and that’s how the other “Aseshananda” became “Ashokananda.” (Information provided by a monk)

Temple Dome Incident

According to two disciples of Swami Aseshananda, some members of the Portland center wanted to improve the appearance of retreat temple’s dome. After repeatedly asking Swami whether they could take it off, Swami reportedly relented at a time when he was ill and continued to have misgivings. Several men removed the dome and threw it to the ground, where it broke into pieces. [One of the contributors to this report said he actually numbered the various parts, thinking that it would be reassembled.] When Swami awoke from his nap that afternoon, he reportedly said that the Vedanta Society had taken the head off of the Lord under his direction. The disciple recounting this incident described how Swami subsequently wrote to the president of the Ramakrishna Order begging his forgiveness. According to the disciple who saw the reply, the president wrote saying something to the effect that, “Now, now it isn’t all that bad. It will be OK. I’m praying for you, and don’t worry any more about it.” Swami reportedly told Jim Sanderson [a disciple who lived at the retreat] to put the dome back together but Jim apparently said, “I absolutely won’t do it.” Swami took him to the back kitchen [of the in-town center] where all the real confrontations took place and convinced him. So the original dome was reassembled and put back in place.